

## **Generous Living — The Love Of Christ Compels Us To No Longer Live For Ourselves.**

**October 1, 2017**

Welcome to a special week at CrossWinds. We just finished our summer study, which was a guided tour of a Christian's life after death. Last week, Pastor Stephen taught us the importance of abiding in the Word of God. Next week, we begin our fall study in the book of Colossians, which is all about Jesus.

Today, I want to take a few minutes to talk about our vision at CrossWinds for the year. This year, we are making a special emphasis to reach our community with the good news of Jesus. This morning I will talk about three actions we will take to help us focus on reaching our community for Christ. They all fall under one broad but very important heading. Let me give it to you up front. It is "*The love of Christ compels us to no longer live for ourselves.*" This is found in our key verse for the morning which is 2 Corinthians 5:14-15.

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. 2 Corinthians 5:14–15 (NIV)

In this world, most people live for themselves. What matters is, "What do I want?" or "What makes me happy?" Most Americans live for more comfort, popularity and money. It is natural to live for ourselves. Even this week, in the news we see football players not willing to kneel to the American flag. One of the reasons many people in our nation are frustrated is because it shows football players not willing to live for something greater than themselves, the unity of our

nation and the respect of those who fought for freedom. If you want to protest, don't protest against something greater than yourself, like the American flag.

As Christians, many of us have subconsciously bought into this me-centered attitude where the day-to-day question we ask is, "What is best for me?" not what "How can I bring more honor to Christ in my life?" 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 reminds us that as Christians, we are different. We aren't about living for ourselves. We are living for the one who died for us and rose again; his name is Jesus. The reason we live for Jesus instead of ourselves is because of what Jesus did for us. We are no longer the objects of God's fully deserved wrath but through Jesus we are now the most blessed beings in the universe. Every good thing we have in our lives we owe to Jesus. Being completely saved from our sin and becoming the most blessed beings in the universe is all due to Jesus. That means in everything we do, it is only right to ask the question, "How does Jesus want me to live?"

This morning, we are going to look at three ways Christ's love compels us to no longer live for ourselves but for Jesus when it comes to reaching our community. Our vision for the year is that the love of Christ would compel us to constantly ask, what does Jesus want from me in every moment of life, especially when it comes to telling more people about Jesus.

**1. Christ's love compels us to no longer live for ourselves, so we share the gospel message.**

When was the last time you shared with someone about Jesus? When was the last time you told someone what it means that Jesus died on the cross? Have you ever invited someone to repent of their sin, trust in Jesus to pay for

their sin and be born again? If you haven't done that, have you ever invited someone to church to hear about Jesus? My guess is most of us haven't done many of these things recently. This may be because we are not letting the love of Christ compel us to live differently.

Let's be honest. Some of us don't talk about Jesus in public because we are afraid of people laughing at us. The Bible tells us many people will think the message of what God has done for us through Jesus is foolishness.

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 1 Corinthians 1:18 (ESV)

Some people won't just think the good news of Jesus is foolishness, but they will go out of their ways to make you suffer for sharing it. In many countries of the world, this is true. We saw this happening in the book of Acts, which describes the beginning of the church. In Acts 5, after the apostles talked about Jesus in Jerusalem, they were called before the religious leaders and warned not to talk about Jesus. They were even beaten for talking about Jesus. Rather than becoming silent, the love of Christ compelled them to keep talking. In Acts 5:29, when the religious leaders told them to be silent about Jesus, they said, "We must obey God rather than men." Then it says,

Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus. Acts 5:41-42 (ESV)

Why did the apostles keep on talking about Jesus even when they were beaten for it? The love of Christ compelled them to no longer live for themselves. "What a privilege to suffer because I am talking about Jesus. It means I must be doing a good job." They couldn't help but tell people the good news of what God

has done for us through Jesus.

Today, very few people talk about Jesus in public because we are afraid of being laughed at or being passed over for a promotion.

This morning, one of my hopes is that the love of Christ would compel us to share the gospel message even if we suffer, just like the early apostles. To accomplish that goal, I need to re-anchor the gospel message in our minds so we can speak it to our friends at school, work and the community.

I want you to listen carefully. What I am about to share is the simple gospel message. Every single one of us needs to be able to share this. I wanted to create a card for you to take this with you but ran out of time this week so I put these verses in your outline. I will create a card this week to help you. Keep it with you at let it help you share the gospel story.

### **The Bad News of the Bible**

The gospel message is a bad-news-good-news story. The good news of the Bible *must always* begin with bad news or the good news would never be good. According to the Bible, every one of us is a sinner. That means we are in rebellion against God. We are hopelessly addicted to our sin. We know the right thing to do, but we continue to do the wrong thing.

...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, Romans 3:23 (ESV)

Every one of us sins, and it separates us from God.

For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Romans 7:18–19 (ESV)

We are hopelessly addicted to sin. There is nothing we can do stop sinning.

All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.” Romans 3:12 (ESV)

We know the right thing to do, but we continue to do what is wrong.

How do we manage our sin? We manage our sin by comparing ourselves with others. The purpose of the evening news is to help you not feel so bad about your own sin because in the news are people with worse sin. When we compare ourselves to mass murderers, rapists and Kim Jong-Un, from North Korea, we don't look so bad. We figure that as long as God grades on a curve, we are fine.

The problem is God doesn't grade on a curve. The Bible says God is holy. That means God is perfect. Anything less than perfection and we are in trouble.

You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Matthew 5:48 (ESV)

While we are not as evil as we could be, any amount of sin separates us from our perfect God. Think of it this way. If God lived in Hawaii and we lived on the mainland of the United States, how many of us could swim to God? None of us! Some would make it farther than others but nobody would make it.

It's your sins that have cut you off from God. Because of your sins, he has turned away and will not listen anymore. Isaiah 59:2 (NLT)

The other thing the Bible tells us about our sin is that God knows our hearts.

...the Lord—knows the thoughts of man, that they are but a breath. Psalm 94:11 (ESV)

We are not just accountable before God for the actions of our lives but we are accountable for the thoughts of our minds. Sin in our thought lives makes us guilty before God.

You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery." But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Matthew 5:27–28 (ESV)

Who among us hasn't committed adultery in our thought lives? All of us are guilty of the sin of adultery in our minds.

You have heard that it was said to those of old, "You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment." But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, "You fool!" will be liable to the hell of fire. Matthew 5:21–22 (ESV)

Who among us hasn't been angry with someone? Who among us hasn't insulted someone or cursed them out? While adultery and murder are worse sins when they are actually committed, adultery and murder in our minds are still sins that leave us guilty before God and separate us from him. God knows the thoughts of our mind.

According to the Bible, our sin separates us from God and leaves us fully deserving of God's eternal wrath.

No matter how hard we try, we are not able to get our sin under control. The Bible tells us, the longer we live, the more deserving of God's eternal wrath we become.

But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. Romans 2:5 (ESV)

The longer we live all we do is lengthen the list of sins that make us deserving of God's eternal punishment.

Many of us like to think that with the passing of time, when our sins are forgotten, they are forgiven. That is not true. How many of you like to watch television programs about solving cold cases? When new evidence is discovered that leads to solving a murder that took place 50 years in the past, the murderer is just as guilty 50 years after the crime as he was 50 seconds after the crime. In the same way, the passing of time does not lessen the guilt of our sin before God. Even if we have forgotten our sin, that does not mean God has forgiven our sin.

The Bible is painfully honest. This is very bad news. Every single one of us has a pile of sin for which we will be justly punished in all eternity in the lake of fire. The longer we live, the longer we make the list. We may be better than most but anything less than perfection makes us guilty before God. Thankfully the story doesn't end there. While the bad news is very bad. The good news is very good.

### **The Good News of the Bible**

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23 (ESV)

The good news is while we deserve just punishment in hell for our sin, God loves us more than we can imagine. He sent his own son to take on a human body. His name is Jesus. Jesus died on the cross in our places for our sin. He suffered the death we deserved to die for our sin. He suffered the wrath of God the Father that we deserved for our sin. All of God the Father's wrath against sin, that we deserved for all of eternity, was poured out with laser-like focus on Jesus when he hung on the cross. Jesus suffered for our sin. Jesus paid for our sin.

Today, God the Father offers everyone the free gift of his son's complete payment for our sin and total forgiveness of sin.

but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8 (ESV)

God knows if it was up to us to pay for our sin, we couldn't do it. God knows if it was up to us to do anything to save ourselves from sin, we couldn't do it. First, we have nothing sufficient to pay for our sin. Even an eternity of hell is insufficient payment for our sin against our perfect creator God, that is why it is eternal. The only sufficient payment would be a payment for sin that an infinite and perfect God provided to pay for the sin against himself. That is what God did by sending his son Jesus. We cannot do anything to pay for our sin or free us from the power of sin other than receiving what God the Father did for us as a gift through Jesus.

Even if we could pay for our own sin, as soon as our sin was paid off, since we are so helplessly addicted to sin, we would sin again and return ourselves to being guilty before God.

The good news is that since God paid for our sin with his own son, all we need to do is confess our sin to God and repent of our sin — which means we desire to change. Then we accept Jesus' payment for our sin. What follows is the complete love and forgiveness of Christ that compels us to live for him, instead of ourselves, from that point forward.

The Bible says as soon as we ask Jesus to pay for our sin, God pays for all of the sin of our past and he covers us with the perfection of his son so when

God looks at us he doesn't see the filth of our sin, he sees the perfection of Jesus. The Bible says it this way.

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV)

In addition, the Bible says that in the moment we trust in Jesus a supernatural transaction takes place. God sends his Holy Spirit into our lives. God begins making us into new people from the inside out so our character becomes more and more like Jesus.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)

...and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. 2 Corinthians 1:22 (ESV)

The key to the gospel is realizing there is nothing we can do to pay for our sin and restore our relationship with God other than receiving what God did for us through Jesus. All the other religions of the world are about us paying for our own sin. They are about us saving yourself. They are about what you must do. The good news of the Bible is about what God has done.

Islam has five pillars to save yourself. Buddhism is an eight-fold path to save yourself. If it is up to us to save ourselves; we can't do it. This is why the Bible calls this good news. We don't save ourselves. God saved us.

Let me tell you more about what happens when we trust in Jesus to forgive our sin and God sends his Holy Spirit into our lives. When the Holy Spirit comes into our lives, he changes our desires. He changes us from loving our sin to hating our sin. He changes our hearts from being controlled by sin to breaking free from the power of sin. He changes our character from angry and bitter to

producing love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness and self-control. Do we become perfect? No. We become different people. The Bible calls us new creations. The habits of our hearts and the desires of our lives change. The love of Christ compels us to live for the honor of Jesus. We no longer want to live for ourselves.

Here is more good news, no matter how much we sinned in the past and not matter how much we sin in the future, Christ's death on the cross is sufficient to pay for *all of our sin*. We cannot out-sin the grace of God. That is the good news of the Bible that we share with people. This bad-news-good-news story is so good that like the apostles, once we understand it, we cannot help but share it with others. This incredible love of Christ compels us to share this good news with others, even if they think we are nuts.

If we have no desire to share this bad-news-good-news story with others, it is probably because we haven't understood it or experienced it ourselves. The love of Christ will compel us to share this message.

How do we share it with others? Use this outline.

What many of us don't realize is that apart from responding with trust in Jesus to the bad-news-good-news story, everybody will spend an eternity in hell. Responding to this story with repentance and trust in Jesus is the only way anyone will be his heaven. This is what the Bible tells us.

For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" Romans 10:13–15 (ESV)

Paul's point is that God's chosen method to save the world is through the verbal proclamation of the gospel message. Nobody will wake up one morning trusting in Jesus unless someone verbally tells them about Jesus. If we read the book of Acts, which is the story of the growth of the church, we find it is only through the verbal proclamation of the good news of Jesus, and responding to it with repentance and faith, that people are born again. Their lives change and the church grows. Nobody has a dream and wakes up trusting in Jesus. Let me show you. In Acts 10, Cornelius has a vision from God telling him to go to Joppa to get Peter. Peter came and verbally shared the bad-news-good-news story. Cornelius and others responded with repentance and faith in Jesus and were born again. Why didn't God simply give Cornelius the Jesus message in a dream? God's chosen method is always the verbal proclamation of the gospel message. Biblical dreams always point people to where they can hear the verbal gospel message proclaimed. They never replace the verbal proclamation of the message.

The only way people around us can be saved is if we speak.

Now we must understand, our job is not to make someone a Christian. Our job is to share the bad-news-good-news story as clearly and simply as we can, then invite people to trust in Jesus.

We are like farmers. All we do is plant the seed of the good news of Jesus, but God is the one that grows the seed.

What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. 1 Corinthians 3:5–7 (ESV)

Just as God is the one that causes seed to sprout, God is the one who takes this bad-news-good-news message and sprouts it in someone's heart.

Sometimes we wonder why more people aren't coming to Jesus around us. The answer is how much seed are we planting? It is our job to plant the seed. God's job is to grow the seed.

Let me talk about how people will respond to this message about Jesus. Some people respond immediately. That happened to Peter on the day of Pentecost when 3,000 believed his bad-news-good-news presentation about Jesus on the spot. Most people will not do that. They hear the good news but they need to think about it. Some people think about it for a long time. That doesn't mean the seed wasn't planted and that God won't grow it.

Some of you know my wife's testimony. She is a great example of late sprouting seed. A guy in high school gave her a four spiritual laws pamphlet. He wanted to convert her to Christ so he could ask her on a date. After explaining it to her, he asked if she wanted to be a Christian, to which she said, "Not now." She kept the pamphlet in her bureau. Six years later, she ran across it and reread the message of Jesus. She got on her knees next to her bed, confessed her sin and asked Christ into her life. She was born again and her life radically changed. Sometimes the seed of the gospel we plant won't grow for years. Don't be discouraged

Of course, some people will always outright reject Jesus. Don't feel bad for being rejected. Our job is not to make people Christians. Our job is to share the bad-news-good-news story of Jesus then invite people to trust Jesus. It is up

to God to make this message take root in their hearts. This takes the pressure off of you and me and leaves it on God.

Sharing the good news of the Bible is also not forcing your beliefs on others. It is telling people what the Bible says is the problem with their lives and in this world, then telling them what the Bible says is the only solution. The problem is always sin, the answer is always Jesus.

God planted each of us in this community and put us in our places of work so people can hear the bad-news-good-news story of the Bible from our lips. Will some people laugh at us? Yes. Will we even suffer a little for sharing this story? Sometimes we will but that doesn't mean we should be silent. Responding to this message is the only way anyone can be saved and nobody will know it unless we share it.

Christ's love compels us to not live for ourselves but to love other people. The most loving thing we can do is tell people about the good news of Jesus.

## **2. Christ's love compels us to no longer live for ourselves, so we go out of our way to love people at church.**

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. John 13:34–35 (ESV)

The love of Christ compels us to no longer live for ourselves but to especially love our brothers and sisters in the church. Jesus told us one of the ways Christians are recognized is the genuine love we have for one another, especially when we gather in church. Church should feel like a place that is family. The love, genuine connection and willingness to sacrifice for another in your church family is something that should be so distinct it cannot be found

anyplace else. The lavish love Christ has for us should flavor the lavishness our love for one another.

This is where the rubber meets the road for each of us. How loving are we to one another at CrossWinds? Does a visitor find a church of people that loves him or her or are we too busy with our own lives to care? These are gospel issues. Christ's love compels us to no longer live for ourselves. Many of us come to church and we are in the cultural mindset where we think church is about us. Church is not about you. Church is the chance for us to love brothers and sisters in Christ. Let me show you what I mean. When do you arrive at church? Do you consistently arrive at the last minute? Arriving at the last minute doesn't give you much time to talk to people or love on people. The love of Christ should compel us to arrive early so we can take the time to care about people, especially new people. After church is over, how soon do you leave? Some of us leave the main doors faster than a bullet from a gun. The love of Christ compels us to hang around so we can love on people, especially new people. The love of Christ compels us to take the time to invite new people out to a meal, to open our homes to love on them.

Christ loves us so much he went out of his way to die for us, that love should compel us to go out of our way to lavishly love one another.

My goal is that the Spirit Lake and Spencer campuses of CrossWinds would be the most loving churches in town because we let the love of Christ compel us to stop living for ourselves and start living for him.

This past summer, we focused on the phrase, “Don’t just attend church, be the church.” There were 10 action steps for the summer to help us be the church. Let me walk you through five of them and you will see they are all about letting the love of Christ compel us to live for Jesus and not ourselves.

1. **Sit by someone you don’t know, not in the same seat.** When you come to church, look for people you don’t know and sit by them. That can be uncomfortable, but Christ’s love compels us to not live for ourselves but to go out of our way to love people.
2. **Go out of your way to talk to someone you haven’t met.** After church, go out of our way to talk to someone new, because Christ’s love compels us to get out of our comfort zone and love on one another.
3. **Wear my name tag.** Remember the name tag is not so you know your name. It is a way of loving people. It is freaky to be in a room where you don’t know anybody. Nobody likes not knowing names. It is very awkward. The love of Christ compels us to love other people by wearing our name tags because it is a way to love others and cut down on those awkward moments where you don’t remember people’s names.
4. **Don’t tell people where to go, take them there.** Recently, I stopped by the hospital. I asked how to find someone in the hospital and expected them to give me a long list of directions to find a distant room. That isn’t what they did. Someone walked me to my location. That was friendly and loving. As a church, when somebody doesn’t know where to go, we take them there. The love of Christ compels us to love people.

Christ's incredible and undeserved love for us compels us to show that incredible and undeserved love to others. The most loving thing we can do for anyone is tell them the good news of Jesus. The second most loving thing we can do is be the church and generously love people at church. The third thing we can do is let the love of Christ compel us to love our community.

### **3. The love of Christ compels us to no longer live for ourselves, so we love our community.**

So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. Galatians 6:10 (ESV)

As Christians, the love of Christ should not just compel us to do the most loving thing of all, which is to share the gospel. The love of Christ should not just compel us to love our brothers and sisters in Christ sacrificially and lavishly, like Christ has loved us. The love of Christ should compel us to love our community. We can do this in a variety of ways. Let me share with you how the outreach team plans to do this at CrossWinds and invite you to join your church family in loving the community.

In October, we have a plan to love on our local paramedics. There are eight of them. I contacted Jason Harrington, the CEO of the hospital, to see if there was equipment they needed. It turns out they are in need of six new life jackets, six float coats, eight station pullover coats. If we were to buy everything for them, it would cost \$2,120. For the month of October, I am asking you to put a little something extra in the offering plate and earmark it *paramedics*. I am looking forward to CrossWinds blessing our local paramedics with a check to meet their needs in the name of Jesus.

In November, we have a plan to love on our local firemen and EMTs. Usually we have a church meal once a month. Instead of having a church meal in November, the plan is for us to make Italian food and bring the firemen and their families an Italian feast at the firehouse. I meet with them Monday night to iron out the details. I need you to pray we don't get a fire call during the meal or we will have lots of leftovers.

In December, we plan to love on our local police force. We are going to have cards for the policemen that you can sign in the foyer. In addition, we are going to take up a love offering for them and their families. We will then use the love offering to buy each of them generous Minerva's gift cards so they can take their families to dinner.

We also have plans to appreciate our local teachers in the school and numerous other ways to love our community through the year.

I am excited. At CrossWinds, we want to be known as the church that doesn't take from the community but gives to the community. If you have ideas on more ways we can serve our community, please write them on the back of the yellow response card today, I will see if we can do them.

## **Conclusion**

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. 2 Corinthians 5:14–15 (NIV)

The love of Christ compels us to no longer live for ourselves but Jesus. The love of Christ compels us to serve our community, to love one another in the church lavishly and to clearly and frequently share the bad-news-good-news

story of the Bible with our friends because the only way anyone can be saved is by hearing and responding to Jesus.



Dr. Kurt Trucksess is ordained in the Evangelical Free Church of America. He enjoys reading, writing, time with his family and wrestling with his sons. His favorite topics are preaching and ancient rhetoric. Feel free to contact him at [www.Christ2RCulture.com](http://www.Christ2RCulture.com) ([www.c2rc.com](http://www.c2rc.com))

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