



New Life Christian Community

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

Sunday, November 18, 2018

Vol. 12, Issue 6

PASTORAL PONDERING

Only Jesus

Big transitions often involve a healthy mix of challenge and excitement, tension and joy. It's been a wild ride so far. Moving our family from one town and church family to another has had its share of both ends of the spectrum. Saying goodbye to our family and friends was difficult after nearly seven years in Sheboygan. But saying "hello" to New Life has been tremendously encouraging. We've been overwhelmed with a sense of God's goodness, guidance, and grace through our interactions with our new church family. Though we've just begun getting acquainted, we feel like we belong. We feel like we've been catching up with old friends more than introducing ourselves to strangers. And I believe that one of the major reasons for this is the unwavering commitment to two small words found on New Life's sign on WI-35.

These two little words put together carry an enormous and profound weight: *Only Jesus*. These two words capture the heart of the Christian faith. They encapsulate the very essence of the gospel. A right understanding of and commitment to *Only Jesus* is what sets God's redeemed people apart from the rest of the world and from all other systems of religion. All other religions are essentially rule-oriented and require the practice of moral or spiritual disciplines in order to attain salvation. So, all other religions are about our salvation coming about through our own human effort.

As Christians, our heartbeat, our life, our song, must be a constant, persistent, and a deliberate commitment to *Only Jesus*. As soon as we lose the "only-ness" of Jesus, we lose the gospel. This was Paul's major concern in writing his letter to the Galatians. The root issue the Galatians were struggling with is the same root issue we can so easily struggle with today: trying to add something to the gospel. We can slip back into a form of legalism and drift from the simple yet profound truth of *Only Jesus*.

The Galatians were prone to add the Mosaic Law to the gospel. "*Only Jesus*" was being morphed into *almost* Only Jesus: namely Jesus plus circumcision equals salvation. Today we're generally not gung-ho about saying that circumcision is required for salvation. But what *are* we gung-ho about? What are we prone to add to the gospel of Jesus?

This can get tricky. Legalism typically creeps in on us—it's subtle. Wheaton College president Phil Ryken notes that more often than not, the things we add to

continued on next page ...

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Pastoral Pondering

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the gospel are *good* things in themselves. He writes, "Christians are always trying to add something to the gospel...They elevate some aspect of Christianity to a place of supreme importance, so that the good news becomes faith in Christ plus something else" (*Galatians: Reformed Expository Commentary*, p46). And that 'something else' is often not an evil thing.

What are we inclined to add to the gospel? A particular experience of the Holy Spirit, perhaps? Some method of having devotions, or raising a family? Some particular style of worship music? A political or social cause? What are we prone to struggle with here? Jesus plus reading certain books? Jesus plus homeschooling? Jesus plus public schooling? Jesus plus abstaining from certain foods or beverages? Whatever the case may be, I'd bet that each of us can fill in the blank with something.

And Ryken is right—these additions to the gospel are not bad things; they're good! And oftentimes these values and behaviors flow out of our faith in Christ alone. But it's also true that oftentimes there is some grey area with these things—there is room for some disagreement between Christians.

Of course, there are certainly things we can take part in that are downright sinful, but that's not what is in view here. The danger here is when good things are elevated to a place they shouldn't be with respect to the gospel. When that happens, we can become self-righteous as we rely on our behavior for salvation and feel superior to others who don't share our list of rules. *That's* the danger of legalism. Are these things causing division among us? Are the differences we may have causing disunity? They shouldn't be—not if we truly embrace and live by the gospel of *Only Jesus*.

Ryken writes further down the page: "...For the gospel to be the gospel, it has to stand alone. The gospel is Christ plus nothing" (p46). *That* is the message of New Life, and may it ever be so! May we move forward together, shoulder-to-shoulder with our eyes and hearts fixed on Jesus, and *Only Jesus*.

Pastor Bennett Anderson

November Memory Verse

Romans 12:11-13

"Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality." ESV

Fellowship Tip: "Giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 5:20) This is an exhortation from the Apostle Paul to believers as they gather. Share with someone today (actually, everyday) some things you are thankful to Jesus for. Soon enough we realize that as we are in Christ, we really can be thankful ALWAYS and for EVERYTHING.

Announcements and Upcoming Events

IMMERSE SNACKS

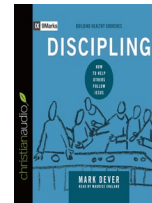
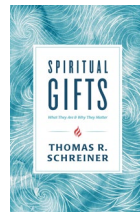
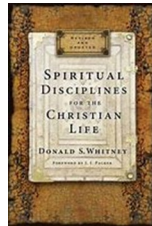
During each Immerse class on Wednesday, we have snack time with the kids. It's a fun little time of fellowship for the kids to sit around their table and talk about the lesson they just had. We have been running a little bit low on our snacks this year. We would appreciate anyone willing to donate some snacks to the Children's Ministry to contact Carly Peikert. We (and the kids!) are very grateful for the many snacks that have been donated in the past!

LADIES PRAYER AND WORSHIP

New Life Women! Save the evening of **Tuesday, November 27th from 7:00-8:30 pm**, at the building for a time of Thanksgiving, Worship, Word, and Prayer. Let's seek the Prince of Peace, Everlasting Father, Mighty God together before the distracting holiday season hits. May Jesus, the Word made Flesh, use this time of prayer to gift and equip us be the heralds of His Good News this holiday season. If you have questions or can't make it but have prayer concerns, call or text Sara Gallagher @ 715-294-0748.

Greetings from the New Life Resource Center!

We exist to assist and encourage you in your study and application of God's living Word. Currently, we are offering six new resources that you may find helpful: "Spiritual Disciplines of the Christian Life" by Don Whitney, and the accompanying study guide; "The New City Catechism" (a good tool to use in family devotions); "One to One Bible Reading" by David Helm; "Spiritual Gifts: What they are and why they matter" by Thomas R. Schreiner; Discipling: How to Help Others Follow Jesus by Mark Dever; and "A Guide to Biblical Manhood" by Randy Stinson. All resources are available for purchase at the Resource Center. *"Cause me to understand the way of your precepts, that I may meditate on your wonderful deeds" (Psalm 119:27).* May this be the desire of all our hearts!



Upcoming Potluck/Meal Teams:

Nov 25 Meal Team #7
Dec 2 Potluck Team #2

Please join us for fellowship and a meal following our service today!

Pastoral Eldership Team:

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Zachary Fugate	715.379.2918
Paul Gilbertson	612.799.4865
Dale Mattson	715.566.2302
Greg Mattson	715.417.2444
Rene Milner	715.557.0185
Jim Nelson	651.283.2132

This Week's Schedule of Events:

Nov 27 Women's Prayer/Worship
7:00-8:30 pm at NLCC

Because this is Thanksgiving week, there will **Not** be any Bible studies, Immerse, or GriefShare meetings.

We wish you all a Blessed Thanksgiving!

Everyone is encouraged to reach out to others and invite them into your home this Thursday who may not have family or a means to feast this Thanksgiving holiday.

Check out New Life Online

newlifechristiancommunity.org

• Events • Sermons Online
• New Life Connect • Set Lists • & More

JUDGES

Our Desperate Need for the King

Today's Passage:

Pastor Tony's message is from the Old Testament book,
Judges 18:1-31

Sermon Notes: