

PENINSULA
CHRISTIAN
FELLOWSHIP



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Sunday Service 10:00 am

2009 Pastor's Corner



Demonstrating Love Changing Our World

I was sitting in the Student Union Building at Shoreline Community College in 1968 the first time I ever heard the question. A far deeper looking guy than me asked, “Why are we here?” I was 17 or 18 years old, and I remember thinking, “I don’t know why you’re here, but I’m here to meet people, eat and enjoy myself.”

My favorite cafeteria meal was a shrimp patty sandwich and a slice of chocolate cream pie, which cost \$1.10 of my hard earned money. When I couldn’t afford that I would pull into any local high school, get in line in the lunch room, and plop down 35 cents for a hot meal. The high schools were large and crowded, and didn’t have today’s security issues to deal with.

I’ve gained some depth since then, and now take the question more seriously. So, why are we here? God and His word have convinced me we are here to love. Yes, that answer got a little twisted out of shape in the 60’s. But, God is love — He loved so much He gave His only Son so we could experience all of His love, and He wants us to love as well as be loved.

Who should we love? We should love God in response to His love for us. We should love those who have received His love. And we should love those He gave His Son for who don’t know of His love yet.

How should we love them? I believe we should **express** our love for God in direct relationship with Him. We should **exercise** love among those we love God with. And we should **demonstrate** love to those who don’t know Him yet.

Where should we love them? We should express our love to God everywhere, anywhere we are, whatever we’re doing. We should exercise love for those who love God, among them. We should demonstrate love for those still separated from God, wherever we can outside the congregation.

We spend more time away from church property and gatherings than we spend at them, so we often have more opportunity to demonstrate love to those outside of God’s family than we have to exercise love for our church family. In recent years we have begun to enjoy more of the benefits of expressing and exercising love for God and each other. I believe 2009 is to be marked by deliberately demonstrating love for the many people we rub shoulders with outside the church on a daily basis.

Jesus came and changed the world by loving people who didn’t expect to be welcomed by Him, one at a time. Their world was changed, and they became world changers as they began living toward others the way Christ had lived toward them. That is still how God changes the world, and we are authorized to be about the business of changing it, one life at a time, one day at a time, on purpose. How many lives can we impact with demonstrated love in 2009? I don’t know yet, but I think we should do our best to find out. **Hebrews 10:24**

For Christ’s sake, Kurt



What are neighbors for?

When I was 19 years old I moved into a house I lived in, off and on for 10 years. The first year I had two roommates, and then lived alone there for a few years. The last four years Revell and I lived there together.

Looking back, I'm sure I was quite a shock to that neighborhood. I was a committed hotrodder and motorcycle enthusiast, who used the street in front of the house for a short test track. I practiced hole shots (drag race starts) with grossly over powered cars, producing clouds of smoke from burned rubber, deafening noise and large, long black marks on the pavement. The street was three blocks long, between two arterials, so my practice runs were mostly limited to 1st and 2nd gear; 50 to 60 MPH, max. Of course I then needed some serious braking power.

I also had some motorcycles without mufflers that made things exciting for everyone; sometimes at 1:00 or 2:00 AM. I admit I was not inclined to receive well intended criticism, though little was offered. I also liked blowing up unusually large explosives in the street, and I think some of the neighbors feared I might be crazy, rather than just exuberant and fun loving. I nearly killed myself once testing a bike, and had one minor collision. It never occurred to me that what I did was of any interest to the other people living on that street. Les and Sylvia Hackbarth lived right across the street from me the whole time.

Les and Sylvia were about 25 years older than I and the nicest people you could ever meet. They maintained the most perfectly manicured lawn and gardens I have ever seen, and I once changed engines in a car, at the curb right in front of their house. They never objected, and always went out of their way to be kind and gracious to me.

When I returned to that house with Revell, after

a few years absence, I had become a little more civilized. Revell continues to have that influence on me. **(Genesis 2:18)** I maintained the office for my small business there, and then went to work for a large corporation, wearing a suit and tie to work every day. I also attempted to keep our yard as nice as Les and Sylvia did, though always remained second best. Then Revell and I came to Christ.

After surrendering to the Lord Jesus we wanted to tell Les and Sylvia what had happened to us, and I wanted to ask their forgiveness for all I had put them through over the years. As we sat at their kitchen table, they both wept openly for joy because of our new lives of faith. They also told us they had prayed for us every day for years — me more, because they had known me for years without Revell. In fact, they said, "We are so blessed by your faith, Revell... but YOU, Kurt!" They had persevered in their faith for me when I gave them no indication it was doing any good.

So, who are your neighbors? Do you know their names? Do you know what they do for a living, their children's names, the condition of their health, their hobbies, or what is important to them? Do you go out of your way to talk with them and show them kindness, looking for an opportunity? Have you ever invited them to your home for a meal?

Do you know if they have personal faith, or what their thoughts about God are? Do you pray for them, asking God to open doors to build relationship with them, and that He draw them to His Son, the Only Savior of mankind who has already died for them?

Romans 5:8

Please do... for Christ's sake, Kurt



Looking for Zacchaeus

Jesus is walking in the midst of a crowd, moving along a busy city street. The hustle and bustle of humanity seems to obscure individuals; mere trees of the forest. Costco on a Saturday afternoon or the Mall one week before Christmas. Were it not for who He is, He could easily be like Waldo, just another face in a sea of faces.

Yet there is something very different about Him. He is walking through that crowd, in that city, on that day with the Father. Then He sees someone, and He stops. One face stands out from all the others. He sees someone no one else sees, off to the side, out of the usual field of vision. He sees someone others have conditioned themselves to ignore. He sees someone who does not expect to be seen, much less recognized and engaged. Why? He is allowing the Father to direct His eyes.

He turns and looks up into a tree, and makes eye contact with a man others do not want to see. They want to be seen. With eyes revealing care and warmth the man has long forgotten, if he had ever known, Jesus extends honor and value. Then, to his complete surprise Jesus says to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry down. I am supposed to spend time with you today, in your home." He almost fell from his perch.

The rest of the story is very good. The man's life was forever changed because he was seen, recognized, valued, honored and embraced by Jesus.

On another day, outside another city Jesus is sitting alone by a well. A woman approaches, expecting to be ignored. Well she should. She is of another race, looked down on by the Jewish people Jesus comes from. She is socially unacceptable, shackled up with a man she isn't married to after having run through five husbands already. Her public company is not to be desired.

To her complete astonishment Jesus speaks to her, asking her to share the common provision of the well with Him, even to drink from her utensils. She tries to explain that He is operating way outside the boundaries of acceptable social norms. He uses the opportunity to talk about what really matters in life. Once again, the rest of the story is very good, and not only her life, but the life of an entire community is changed because Jesus lived by the Father's leading rather than the human limitations of the day.

To all who choose to follow Him, Jesus says, "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." God invites us to live each day, sent by Him to recognize those He places in our path. He calls us to live among others on purpose, not forcing anything on anyone, but looking for every God-authored opportunity to demonstrate His genuine care for people made in His likeness and image — people the Lord Jesus gave Himself for in love. The invitation stands.

For Christ's sake, Kurt



A Regular Guy In The Real World

Nathanael may have been a fairly typical guy...a middle class fisherman with a wife and kids. His world was not exactly stable. Political and economic turmoil were the order of the day, foreign military troops occupied his country and religious leaders were constantly bickering with each other and angling for positions of influence and recognition.

Being a fisherman, his income was unpredictable, depending on the catch, the market and the public's ability to buy. Though he was not the life of the party, he did have friends, but was in the habit of getting away from everyone to be alone with his own thoughts when the pressures of life were closing in around him. When asked, "How's it going?" he did not reply, "I can't complain", but he kept his complaints to himself.

The night before had been long, and no fish had found their way into the nets of Nathanael and his partners. After sleeping for a few hours when their boat and gear had been stored, he slipped off to an orchard at the edge of town for some solitude and reflection. It seemed to him that something needed to change in his life, though he wasn't at all sure what.

As he sat there the feelings of frustration began to slowly perk to the surface, and by the time he realized it he was telling God just how unhappy he was with many things in his life...most of which he was powerless to change. He didn't intend to actually talk to God, much less with Him, but there the words were. Now he just thought, "What's the point?"

Philip was probably his closest friend. They had certainly been friends longer than anyone else he knew, growing up in the same town, their fathers both fishermen. And he could say it straight to Philip, no need for fluff or lengthy explanations. His friend took him for what he was and had been loyal through thick and thin. Lost in thought now, he didn't even hear him coming.

"Nathanael." Hearing Philip call his name shook him from his day dream and he leaned around the tree to look in his direction. "Over here" he said. Being one of his favorite places to get away to, Philip suspected he might find him here.

"Hey", he said. "We've found the Messiah! The One Moses and the prophets promised was coming – Jesus of Nazareth."

"Nazareth! Are you kidding me? What a hole. Do you really expect me to believe that God would bring His best from that dump?"

Philip replied, "Come see for yourself." Because of his respect for his friend, he got up and walked beside him.

As they were approaching a Man he had never seen before, the Man looked at Nathanael and said to those standing with Him, "Here is a true countryman who will not deceive anyone." Knowing the Man was talking about him he replied, a little sarcastically, "How do You know me?" Jesus said to him, "Before Philip came to get you I saw you sitting under the fig tree."

Instantly he knew that Jesus had also heard every word of complaint he had spoken under that tree. He knew he had spoken to God, and that this Man had heard Him. This Man was God. Nathanael knew it, and it was overwhelming that He did not judge him for his complaint, poured out in frustration... He didn't even mention it. Instead He honored him by introducing him to others according to his most highly prized personal possession; his integrity. He decided, on the spot, to devote his life to Him. **Hebrews 13:8**

For Christ Sake, Kurt



Our Macedonian Call

So here's Paul ... his heart is right, and he has a track record of bringing the Life of Christ and the Word of God to people who have never considered either before. He and his partners determine they now want to bring the reality of Jesus to a part of the world they had never been to — Asia. What happens? The Spirit of God forbids them to do it. OK.

So then they decide they want to introduce some other folks they have never met, Bithynians, to Jesus. And ...? Once again the Spirit of God will not allow them to proceed with their plans. What's going on here?

In the late 1960's and early 70's many Christians on the west coast had been praying earnestly for years, asking God to bring a wave of new believers to Christ. What happened? Multitudes, floods, literally millions of Hippies spread out over their communities like locusts. And what happened next? The Jesus People. They still looked like antisocial freaks, at least by establishment standards — misfits who were not interested in wearing suits and ties or well-coiffed hair, but who had fallen madly in love with Jesus.

To be perfectly honest, the birth of our congregation was a derivative result of that very movement. Cleaned up a bit, but not here to be fit into the box previous generations had made of the church. We were immersed in something God was doing, and excited to be free in what He was leading into, and just as free from constraints that would have felt like straight jackets had we tried to wear them.

Well ... the Spirit of God was not being arbitrary with either Paul and his companions or the dear Christians praying in the 60's. He didn't just prevent Paul & Associates from helping those they wanted to, He pointed them at some people they would never have chosen on their own, in this case, Macedonians ... in the 60's and 70's, young people who had turned their backs on established society.

As we have been building our park next to the library, we have had encouraging visions of families, students, couples, and others coming onto our land and being blessed by the beautiful resource we've provided for them to enjoy. We have also anticipated being able to gain relationships with

those folks as they do, knowing that doors will open for us to tell them about Jesus after having demonstrated His love to them. And many of those people are using the park.

We have also begun to attract others, such as people with dogs who are sure the leash signs do no apply to them. And there is another group. We are consistently drawing groups of 4 to 15 anti establishment looking teenagers. Initially they littered heavily and vandalized our new picnic tables. Charles and I have gone to them and talked with them several times, asking them to simply treat us, and our things, as well as they would like to be treated by us.

After Charles sanded down and refinished two vandalized tables, we went down two hours later and the same tables had been vandalized again. We spoke with those present, and of course none of them had anything to do with it. So we are asking them to be an influence on others who want to use the park, knowing that a few could end up depriving them all of access to the area. Since that talk there has been no new vandalism, only mild littering, and today one kid came and asked if he could help me pick things up.

I admit I am both challenged and drawn to these kids. In a small way I think they may be our Macedonians, Gig Harbor's 2009 shot at what the Hippies of 40 years ago presented. I am praying a lot. Please pray too. I plan to spend more and more time among them. This is our land, and I don't need an invitation. Neither do you. I've been asking God to show me what Jesus would say to them if He walked into their midst.

For Christ's sake, Kurt



Great Expectations

Our dog Lizzy is a Rottweiler. I've written about her before. Though she is small for her breed at 80-85 pounds, her stocky build, purposeful stride and symmetrical black and tan markings easily identify her as one of her kind, even from a distance.

Many types of dogs come with different strong instinct driven behaviors. Labrador Retrievers are known to joyfully chase and fetch anything you throw... for longer than you can keep up with them. Beagles are ruled by their noses and not known for obedience. Great Danes will rule other dogs that come within their domain. Afghan Hounds can run like the wind and are as quick as snakes. Newfoundland Dogs will lay down their life for any child at any time, and most likely come to pull you from the water if you have not trained them to be in the water with you. I speak from experience, having owned more than one of each of these breeds. I like dogs.

The Rottweiler's strongest natural instinct is to protect and defend. They are capable of overwhelming aggression. They are also devoted, affectionate family members. Unfortunately, some misguided Rottweiler owners have taken advantage of the dog's capabilities and provoked them to be hostile. On occasion Rottweilers have been lumped in with Pit Bulls in some bad press, and some people assume that any Rottweiler is to be feared.

Lizzy knows how to protect and defend. She was responsible for the arrest of three prowlers in our neighborhood a few years ago. An uninvited intruder in our home would be in real trouble. But we knew she would come by that naturally, so we began to very purposely socialize her when she was only four months old. As a result, anywhere outside of our home she is openly loving toward everyone she meets;

extravagantly so, even to the point of submission. If she perceives someone is nervous around her she will lay down before them to calm them and demonstrate that she is no threat. (She happily greets most people inside our home too. If we are happy, she is happy) She is an excellent dog.

Unfortunately, she has not met everyone yet. So, some people have faulty expectations of her as soon as they see her. She is cast in a bad light until she is able to demonstrate her true character. That happens with people too. Even God's people tend to evaluate others by what they look like. The prophet Samuel meant well, but God revealed that he was looking at outward appearance, and God looks at a person's heart. I **Samuel 16:7** We are called to identify people by their heart, too, but that cannot be done without getting to know them.

God is leading us through the doors of our church building, out into our community, to meet people we don't know yet. We need to decide before we meet them we will not evaluate them on the basis of any stereotypical appearance, but take the time to get to know who they really are, whether they visit our park or we meet them somewhere in public.

We need to also be aware that they may have some unfavorable beliefs about who Christians are and how they have treated people. Our job is to demonstrate to everyone we meet that Jesus is entirely trustworthy; that He is for them, not against them, and so are we.

John 3:17

For Christ's sake, Kurt



Who Do You Love?

It's been said that you can pick your friends, but you're stuck with your family. I once had a family member I genuinely disliked. Most things about this person ran completely contrary to what I valued and considered honorable. Over the years we'd had a few real clashes, and I came to believe I was working to maintain peace in the family by just keeping my mouth shut and doing my best to ignore what I believed was unacceptable, even inexcusable behavior.

Have you ever had anyone like that in your life? If not in your earthly family, maybe in the family of God, the Body of Christ, the church.

One day I was working in my yard and stewing over this least favorite family member and their most recent offensive conduct. All of a sudden God stepped to the forefront of my mind and said, "You don't love him like I do." My fleshly response was, "You've got that right! No disagreement from me there."

God didn't say anything else. The statement just hung there...lingering like the smell of smoke from a fire in a neighbor's fireplace on a clear, cold fall day. As my thoughts hovered around God's input I realized He had not said it for no reason. The undeniable implication was, "You don't, but you should." This, of course left me thinking about what would motivate that kind of love in the face of such ongoing, reprehensible behavior. And then I had to acknowledge the detrimental influence my suppressed displeasure had in our family. Because even though I may not say anything, the sentiment had to be evident.

What to do? I don't know about you, but God has always been gentle like that when confronting me. He's never been harsh or demanding. He does leave me face to face with my own error and the realization of its harmful influence on others.

Real love is not a feeling, and is not conditioned on the acceptable performance of others. Real love is a commitment. The same kind as God made, in Christ Jesus, when we were still consumed in our sin. I committed to begin actively loving this person, regardless of his conduct, because God did. God obviously cared enough about the whole thing to bring me to that point of decision.

Did I have a choice? Yes, but the other option would have been to reject God's call to allow Him to help me become more like Him. You know what happened? Our relationship began to become enjoyable, and I believe more real peace began to grow in our family.

In my convictions I have always believed it is unacceptable to behave unlike the Savior in His name. I just haven't recognized every need to put that to work in my life yet. I'm sure He plans to continue helping me with those things. My responsibility is to be willing, and to respond in the obedience of faith when called to.

The primary theme of the book of I John is loving each other. John wrote that we cannot claim to love God if we don't love each other. Jesus said that loving each other is inseparable from loving God. I hope this is as helpful for you as it is for me.

For Christ's sake, Kurt