

PAPER CHURCH

Becoming: More Christlike – 1 Corinthians 1: 18-31

Sunday 6 September 2020

Before you begin

Our hope is that this is a resource that will help us to engage meaningfully with God's word and invite us into a sense of worship, despite being unable to meet face-to-face. Use it in a way that feels comfortable and helpful to you.

A table of contents has been added to give you a sense of what will follow and allow you to move more easily through the worship elements.

Prepare: Have your Bible close by and some food and drink prepared for communion. It doesn't have to be bread and grape juice; it could be whatever is available (tea and a biscuit) to use in this symbolic time.

Create a 'sacred' space: When we are not physically in a dedicated worship space (like a church building), it is important to mentally and spiritually shift into a sense of worship.

Be intentional. Sit somewhere where you feel receptive and responsive to God (e.g. a cosy chair or outside in the garden). Have some visual representation of God (perhaps a small cross, your Bible, a symbol or image) or you might play some reflective music. Start with a few moments of silence and deep breathing.

Consider your environment: What will work for you in the space you have. If you have others in your house (house-mates/family), consider sharing this time with them, each reading or participating as appropriate. You might simply reflect individually, in your own time and space. Afterwards, you might connect with others through technology to share your reflections, or an encouragement, with them.

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Tell us what you think

We'd like to know how you are finding paper church and in what context you are using it. Send an email to: office@ringwoodchurch.org.au to let us know how you're using paper church (e.g. with or without the worship video, by yourself or with others), things you've found helpful, any frustrations and any ideas you have to help us improve your paper church experience.

Call to Worship

Brendan Petty

Thank you for welcoming us into your worship space today. I trust that this resource will help you in your engagement with God. Your worship is something for you to own with God - and I'd love to hear your feedback of how you're using these resources and how we can better support your spaces of worship.

We're wrapping up our Becoming series - and at the same time we're ushering in the first weekend of Spring. It brings so many symbols and reminders of restoration and of new life! Our first song is about surrendering - our possessions, our agendas, our power - for the sake of becoming more Christlike.

Song: I Surrender All

I surrender all
I surrender all
All to Thee my blessed Savior
I surrender all

All to Jesus I surrender
All to Him I freely give
I will ever love and trust Him
In His presence daily live

All to Jesus I surrender
Humbly at His feet I bow
Worldly pleasures all forsaken
Take me Jesus take me now

All to Jesus I surrender
Make me Savior wholly Thine
Let me feel the Holy Spirit
Truly know that Thou art mine

All to Jesus I surrender
Lord I give myself to Thee
Fill me with Thy love and power
Let Thy blessings fall on me

All to Jesus I surrender
Now I feel the sacred flame
Oh the joy of full salvation
Glory glory to His name

CCLI Song # 4669731

David Shippis | Judson Wheeler Van DeVenter | Winfield Scott Weeden

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Song: Heaven to Earth (We are Blessed)

Throughout this series we've been using Andy Flannagan's song *Heaven to Earth* as a space for reflective prayer. There is some dissonance between the prayerful and hopeful words of the song alongside the following images of both heaviness and hope - around our world at the moment. Enter into the dissonance as your prayer space - we ask God that you would Bring Heaven to Earth.

Bring heaven to earth, Lord
Bring peace where there's fear
Bring life where there's death, Lord



Bring joy in these tears
 Bring love where there's lust, Lord
 Bring hope where there's pain
 Bring rest where there's chaos
 Bring faith where there's fame

You invite us to partner with you
 To see your kingdom come



We are blessed, to bless a world in pieces
 We are loved, to love where love is not
 We are changed, to be the change you promised
 We are freed, to be your hands, O God



Bring home to the homeless
 Bring keys to the chained
 Bring worth to the purchased
 And touch to the shamed
 Bring flesh from your word, Lord
 Bring truth where there's spin
 Bring risk where there's safety
 And grace where there's sin



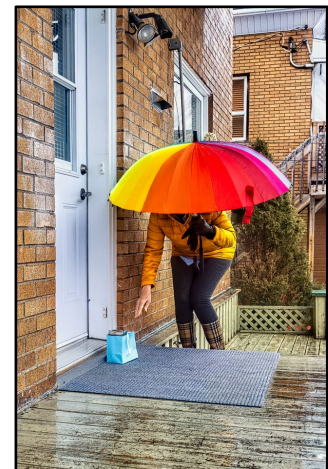
In the broken, we shall see restored
 The image of our King

We are blessed...
 Lord we cry out to you
 Change the atmosphere
 Breathe new life in all who gather here



We are blessed...
 Bring justice to profit
 Bring patience to growth
 Bring wisdom to progress
 Plant trees on this road
 Bring freedom from debt, Lord
 An end to excess
 Bring closer your kingdom
 By quiet success

May we grow in the knowledge of you
 Through every heart and face



We are blessed...

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Bible Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 (NIV)

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written:

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”

Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.”



Message

Kaye Reid

Me: Hey God.

God: Hello ...

Me: I'm falling apart. Can you put me back together?

God: I would rather not.

Me: Why?

God: Because you aren't a puzzle.

Me: What about all of the pieces of my life that are falling down onto the ground?
 God: Let them stay there for a while. They fell off for a reason. Take some time and decide if you need any of those pieces back.
 Me: You don't understand! I'm breaking down!
 God: No - you don't understand. You are breaking through. What you are feeling are just growing pains. You are shedding the things and the people in your life that are holding you back. You aren't falling apart. You are falling into place. Relax. Take some deep breaths and allow those things you don't need anymore to fall off of you. Quit holding onto the pieces that don't fit you anymore. Let them fall off. Let them go.
 Me: Once I start doing that, what will be left of me?
 God: Only the very best pieces of you.
 Me: I'm scared of changing.
 God: I keep telling you - YOU AREN'T CHANGING!! YOU ARE BECOMING!
 Me: Becoming who?
 God: Becoming who I created you to be! A person of light and love and charity and hope and courage and joy and mercy and grace and compassion. I made you for more than the shallow pieces you have decided to adorn yourself with that you cling to with such greed and fear. Let those things fall off of you. I love you! Don't change! ... Become! Become! Become who I made you to be. I'm going to keep telling you this until you remember it.
 Me: There goes another piece.
 God: Yep. Let it be.
 Me: So ... I'm not broken?
 God: Of course Not! - but you are breaking like the dawn. It's a new day. Become!!!

By John Roedel, Hey God, Hey John. What happens when God writes back.

We tend to see and focus on what is broken, a lack, a failing, a sense of guilt or fear or shame. And not surprisingly we might then expect that this is how God sees us. However, what God sees and calls us to are the possibilities of becoming; both seeing as it is, and bursting with possibility. God is able to see, and show us, the now and the not yet.

Our reality is that some aspects of ourselves may have experienced renewal and transformation while others have not yet been opened to, or surrendered, or have been kept separate and off limits.

Bob Mulholland, author of "Invitation to a Journey", says:

"Wherever there is something in our life that is not conformed to the image of Christ, there is a place where we are incapable of being all God wants us to be with others ... a place where our life with others is hindered and limited and restricted in its effectiveness and in its fullness ... a place where our life will tend to become disruptive and even destructive to others. We can never be all God wants us to be with others as long as that point of unlikeness to the image of Christ exists within us." M. Robert Mulholland, Jr

What are the things in our life that have not yet been redeemed? What are the idols of our culture that we are held by - fashion, appearances, body image, lifestyle, design, ownership, success,

belonging, travel, shopping, food and drink, entertainment. These are not necessarily bad things in themselves but they are often defining and driving for us. What are the behaviours and attitudes that are destructive for ourselves or for others? What are the aspects of character that have not been reshaped to better reflect the fruit of the Spirit? Are we patient, kind, gentle, and exercising self control? To what are we giving authority in our life. Where would we like that authority to be? The scripture reading is from 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 as the Apostle Paul points the people of Corinth towards God's wisdom and power which is found in the foolishness and weakness of Christ on the cross.

Read again [1 Corinthians 1:18-31](#) (Click on the passage to go back to the reading)

It is the self-emptying love of Christ that is God's 'wisdom'. We can be as clever or as well honoured by our world's standards of wisdom that we can hope for, but that might not give us the knowledge of God. Often it is this very wisdom of the world that blinds us to God's wisdom and ways. The reversal of this is evident in what Paul is saying. What seems most foolish to the world in its 'weakness' is the power and wisdom of God. Christ bridges the gap between the human and divine by offering us "the mind of Christ" (2:16). Our identity is "in Christ" as those who are "taught by the Spirit" (2:13). Becoming more in Christ, exercising the mind of Christ, can help us to be able to distinguish between our human resourcefulness and divine power.

The 'message of the cross' (1:18) reinterprets the Corinthian culture which is self-serving and competitive through the lens of the cross. Paul is redirecting the people of Corinth by indicating that they have been focusing on the 'already' of Christ's triumph over sin and death to the neglect of the 'not yet' of Christ's complete reign that Paul, and we, are waiting for. We are called to be living in Christ, becoming more Christlike. We can't just be doing whatever we like as God's work is not yet complete.

When we are authentically in Christ, our living will be more Christlike. It's as simple as that. As we experience the love of God, being a beloved child of God, our harsh edges and as yet untransformed aspects will be softened and reshaped in the light of God's loving concern. It's ok that we aren't there yet, but let's be heading towards there. Becoming more Christlike.

When I turn myself inwards to that place where I have become accustomed to dwell with God, where I find myself in God's presence, I ask God to help me to see differently, to see as God does. Often this results in a gentle but stunning and inconvenient honesty, and a broader horizon, and gratitude, and a sense of beauty, and the simplicity of complexity, and awe and curiosity and wonder. And then I can live from there, touched by a spiritual dynamic which changes me and changes how I see and live and love. Being in the presence of God and being transformed has become an inner condition which I can recognise and respond to, from the practice of going there, of sitting there, through prayer, silence, meditation and being mindful. And in action and obedience and persistence and self-discipline.

We are making choices all the time as to what we are becoming. When I say yes to God I am saying no to a thousand other things, some big, some small. When I said yes to a lifetime relationship with

Paul I was saying no to many as yet unmet relationships. When I said yes to having a family I said no to every other life. When I said yes to this role I was saying no to others. When I say yes to wanting the best for people and being respectful and honouring, I am saying no to easy and sloppy ways of thinking and feeling. When I say yes to fully embracing union with God, being in Christ, becoming more Christlike, I am saying no to obvious and not so obvious things that have a hold over me and stop me from being my best self while giving the illusion of delivering just what I deserve or am entitled to.

Don't be satisfied with the things that you pursue that our culture holds up. But seek God and from that you will find the deep joy and contentment and abundance and peace.

Scripture often talks about prayer and fasting but we might not always engage in these practices. We can choose to prayerfully cut some of these things away and pursue God's authority in our lives and to lose or break the pursuit and power of these things in our lives. These things that actually bind us and hold us, promising much but not able to fully deliver and in choosing them we are missing out on so much more.

A great question for us to be pondering: Are our daily pastimes, disciplines, conversations and rhythms encouraging us in the characteristics of radical love, grace, inclusion, sacrifice, humility and joy?

I want to encourage you to be pressing and persisting daily into the disciplines of becoming more Christlike – personally and as a body.

I would love for each one of us to have a story that we can confidently and joyously tell, a story of 'becoming' in God's strength, and God's transforming love, of becoming more Christlike.

This is a story from a lady called Carol, but it could be any of our stories.

"I have always, when stymied, had to deal with my temper and anger. I can cut someone to shreds verbally. I always regret it but have been unable to stop so many of these ... behaviours."

Carol then recounts that through a process of learning, spiritual practices and transformation that this has changed.

"Amazingly, I have had many situations lately that normally would upset me a lot. However, I have not become upset. In fact, I am halfway through dealing calmly with the situation, before I am aware that what is happening would normally leave me totally frazzled. I know it is God ... acting in my life. I have never been able to do this before."

(Source: Contemplation and Action reflection email from Richard Rohr on Tuesday 25 August 2020)

In the Corinthians context, Paul is pointing the church in Corinth, as a whole, away from exclusive loyalties to individual leaders and towards the unifying one authority of God, the one who has done the redemptive work. That was writing into a specific scenario, but there are some striking parallels

for our world beyond the categories and boundaries that we draw up and then include and exclude along these lines, such as national borders and gender and ethnicity.

A few weeks ago I mentioned the experiences of astronauts as they looked back at earth. They didn't see nations, other than at night when they could see the disparity between those who had an excess of lights and those that didn't. Our national borders are an example of when some are included and some are excluded although all people are created and loved by God.

During a time of a global pandemic these categories don't make any difference to an opportunistic and deadly virus, we are acutely aware that our lives are intertwined, but it does make a difference to the provision of health care, economic support, the privilege of restrictions, and potentially affordable access to a vaccine.

As Christians together let's get involved with campaigns like #EndCOVIDForAll because it's not over until it's over for everyone. You can go to the End COVID For All website (<https://www.endcovidforall.com/>) and watch a short video about this campaign, sign the pledge and then spread the word. Share on Facebook or write to your Federal Member. You could do this personally or together with your life group.

There was a public action last week by the End COVID For All campaign asking our government to fund health support for our nearby nations during COVID. Since then the government has announced \$80 million to be contributed to a global fund towards initial vaccine availability for the most vulnerable people in the poorest of countries. This is something to express our gratitude about! However, this is being allocated from the already brutally cut aid budget rather than as new funding for this crisis. Make contact with your Federal Member asking that this be additional funding to protect the work of the already stripped back Federal aid budget.

["Australian Government backs effort to distribute coronavirus vaccine globally with foreign aid funds"](#) ABC News, 26 Aug 2020. (Click on the link to read the article.)

Another way that we can collectively seek renewal and flourishing for everyone is to support Safe Water September ensuring that all people have access to clean, safe water. This is something we have been reminded about tangibly in this last week with interruption to our usually excellent and safe water, and throughout this time of COVID-19 with sanitation and hand washing playing such a vital role in preventing transmission. Jump on to the Safe Water September website and make a donation, every \$20 provides access to clean, safe water.

<https://www.safewaterseptember.org.au/> (Click on the link for more information.)

And as you make your way around your local community use your walk time to be listening and observing and praying for our city. Seeking God's Shalom.

Becoming more Christlike is a choice, an intention, a practice, a posture. We are going to become something so set yourself towards becoming more Christlike.

May these words of scripture from the book of Colossians encourage and equip you as you live into your faith this week:

“For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light” (Colossians 1:9-12).

Amen.

Song: Love One Another

We are God's family
We've got to love one another
For it is good to dwell in unity
Let's join as one in love

All will see we have peace
The power of God in our hands
As we love the Spirit moves
To reach the lost the command

Love real love
There is power in His name
As we love one another
Love real love
There is power in His name
As we lift up one another

CCLI Song # 2123451

David Holmes

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Communion

Have some food and drink prepared for this time

If you're able, join us at 11am Sunday through Zoom to share in communion together at rngwd.com/communion or via Facebook live rngwd.com/fbv.

If you are unable to join us, then please use the following reflection to take communion in your own way today and after, consider who you can call to have a chat as you would on a Sunday morning after a church service.

We are gathered together wherever we are in our homes - reading Paper Church, or on screen via Zoom, or on Facebook Live. And we are gathered together whenever we are sharing in this communion - at Sunday just after 11am, or watching on Facebook later, or reading and participating in Paper Church right now.

We gather in and around the central figure of Jesus Christ.

Our worship this weekend has been focused on Becoming more Christlike. As we gather for communion together, we might be feeling both encouraged in our becoming more like Jesus and mindful of where we fall short.

Paul encouraged the church to be able to reflect honestly on their lives, their character, their attitudes and behaviours and to be able to bring these things once again to God. Our weekly practice of celebrating communion is a wonderful rhythm in doing this.

Let us take some moments to centre ourselves in God and to allow aspects of this past week to come to our hearts and minds – moments of regret, of discomfort with our response or actions, moments of inaction and opportunities missed, moments of disappointment in ourselves - and to hand these over to God, seeking God's transforming love, forgiveness and grace ...

God,
I want you to be at work in my life,
transforming me to become more and more like you,
fill me with your love,
your true and generous spirit,
your courage and your strength,
that I might love and serve as you are leading me.
Amen

We know that deep joy and peace and contentment is found in letting God love us the way God wants to and already does. We believe that God really is love and that we are completely and utterly loved by God, whether we are experiencing illness or health, failure or success, poverty or wealth, rejection or praise. And we seek to come to a place where we can pray like Jesus "not my will but yours be done" (Luke 22:42). A posture for becoming more Christlike.

Charles de Foucauld wrote a prayer of abandonment that expresses beautifully the spiritual attitude we might all wish that we could have. It seems good to pray this prayer often. Perhaps print it and have it nearby. These are words of a person further along the journey than you or I might feel, but they show the way we are to go. We cannot make this prayer come true through our own efforts. But the Spirit of Jesus given to us can help us to pray it and grow into its fulfilment.

As we remember now the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, the one we seek to follow and become more like in Christ, we can bring to mind Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane where he prayed "If you are willing, take this cup from me" (Luke 22:42) and then on to the Passover - what would be his last supper with his disciples - where he shares the bread and then lifts the cup that he has accepted and embraced and says:

'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." (1 Cor 11:25-26)

We proclaim the foolishness of the cross, the crucified Christ. God's wisdom for us all. As you take your elements from home, everyday items that might be like bread and juice, make your way slowly and thoughtfully through the prayer of abandonment, taking several minutes for you to read and listen prayerfully, with the assistance of the Spirit of God as you ... Become.

Prayer

Father, I abandon myself into your hands,
do with me what you will.
Whatever you may do, I thank you;
I am ready for all, I accept all.
Let only your will be done in me, and in all your creatures.
I wish no more than this, O Lord.
Into your hands I commend my soul;
I offer it to you with all the love of my heart,
for I love you, Lord, and so need to give myself,
to surrender myself into your hands without reserve,
and with boundless confidence, for you are my Father.

(Adapted from: Let God Love You the Way God Wants by Henri Nouwen, Daily Meditations email, 3 August 2020)

Connect cards online

Click this link or enter it into your web browser rngwd.com/connect.

We love to know that you have been able to connect through worship today. Please click on the link (or enter it into your web browser) to our online connect cards letting us know which ways you have been able to worship, and if you want to let us know how we can praying with you.
Thank you!