

life groups' sermon guide

ready to run: why kingsway?



"You cannot pray 'Thy kingdom come' until you first pray 'My kingdom go.'"

Greg Laurie

"We are addicted to comfort"

Joyce Meyer

Small groups exist at Kingsway to provide authentic relationships for the life application of the CORE 4 elements of worship, grow, serve, and share

Lip Service

As a kid growing up I remember a TV commercial – I believe it was for Close-Up Toothpaste (does anyone besides me remember this product?) – that featured the tagline of “Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is”. I believe it was a reference to the toothpaste being a little more expensive than standard brands of the day. The paste contained a whitening agent that the others did not. I’m not sure if that phrase existed before then, but it has come to take on a deeper meaning than just justifying shelling out more for a pricey toothpaste. Now this phrase is a more in-your-face kind of challenge to prove by your actions what you’re professing with your mouth. In Christian-ese, we may say: “don’t just talk the talk, but walk the walk”. If we’re not careful we can say that we believe something, yet act in way that reveals it to be a surface belief and not a deep conviction.

Q :: What are some ways we expect people to “put their money where their mouth is”?

Q :: When does a belief become a conviction?

Q :: Is it important that our actions ALWAYS back up our words? What are some potential consequences if they do not?

I recently read something online really resonated with me. It was a sort of paraphrase of the Greatest Commandment from the Bible (Mark 12: 30-31) - but with an important disclaimer. The phrase was: ***Love God. Love others. Prove it.***

I think this encouragement to “prove it” is a powerful one. If we are going to make so bold a claim as to love God more than absolutely anything else, and to love others as much as we love ourselves, there should be evidence of that, right? Otherwise, we’re just making a bunch of noise. Look at how important Paul says this idea of proving our love by our actions (and not just our words) is in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.

Joyce Meyer would call this putting your money where your mouth is, where love is concerned, your “love walk”. It is possible to talk the talk of a Christian without walking the walk. I’d venture to say that many of us do not see ourselves as having a “love walk”. Yet we are called to walk as Jesus walked, and we know that He walked in love. His life was one of continually living out the idea of loving God and loving others. And not just in his words, but in his actions.

Q :: 1) How did Jesus prove that He loved God? 2) How did Jesus prove that He loved others?

We know that all people matter to God – especially those who are outside of faith in Christ. By extension they should matter to us as well – and not just matter in word alone, but as characterized by our intentionality in reaching out to them in love.

Q :: As Christians, we say that we love God more than anything – how do we go about proving that?

Q :: We are told to love our neighbor “as ourselves”. What are some of the ways that we (show/prove) love to ourselves?

Q :: How can we show love to others in the same way we show it to ourselves?

The Transforming Church Index that almost 1,000 Kingsway members participated in recently revealed that Kingsway folks LOVE Kingsway Christian Church. I have been wondering since hearing this, just how we demonstrate this love. In a church

that averages 2200 people in our services per weekend, we have roughly (these are general, ballpark numbers) 800 people sharing life with other members in Life Groups; 700 people loving others through serving in some capacity; and only about 120-150 people attending an Adult Bible Class. What does it say about our successfully fulfilling the “making disciples” part of the Great Commission when a great opportunity for growing in our faith (Adult Bible Class) is utilized by only 5% of the church body? So, to me it begs the question:

Q :: What do we really mean when we say we love our church? What is it exactly that we love, and how do we show it?

Q :: How can we encourage other believers to more aggressively pursue discipleship? What can the church do to this end?

My fear is that what we love about the church are the things that have been made for our ease and comfort and that make it all the easier to be spectators while in church building – and to be compartmentalized in our faith and detached from the true mission of the church’s calling when away from the church building. How we do we motivate church members to ENGAGE in the church’s mission? And what is the mission of the church

Rethinking Our Mission

I came across a great article from Francis Chan that speaks to the church’s biblical mission (excerpted below):

When I first started Cornerstone Church, I asked myself the question: What things do I need in order to start a church? The answer was obvious: find a building, a person to lead the singing, a sound system, a childcare area, and put together a good sermon. There were other things that I wanted, but these were the essentials. You can’t have church without them. Every evangelical knows you need a building, a sermon, singing, and a program for the kids. Other elements are negotiable, but these are the absolutes.

Here’s the million-dollar question: Is that what I would conclude from searching the Scriptures? --- Of course not.

I simply followed what other churches in America had done. I didn’t even think twice about it. But as I look back, I’m amazed that I didn’t consult the Scriptures as my primary resource. Had I done so, “church” probably would have looked different.

If I had consulted the Bible first, I probably would have created a gathering that emphasized loving one another. Instead, I spent years running a service that left little room for love. It quickly became the most popular service in town. It was “successful.” The problem is, we defined success as a lot of people coming, enjoying the service, and receiving some sort of benefit. Our motives seemed pure, and good things were happening, so we didn’t question much.

How would we define success if the Bible were the only standard by which we judged our church? If you had no theological training or previous church experience—if you did nothing but read through the Bible fifty times—what would you consider to be essential for a gathering of believers? How would you measure the success of a church?

There are many things that could be listed, but I’ll limit it to these characteristics because they seem to be the most emphasized. I mention these not because I found a verse about each of these, but because these are the things that I see over and over in the Scriptures. These practices were obvious in the life of the early church and they appear to have been given priority. If we were to follow an exegetical model of the church, then we would:

1. Love one another (which motivates all the “one anothers” in Scripture – see list on last page) - This would have more to do with actions than with feelings. We would care for each other in such a way that we would be moved to intense prayer and giving in order to meet the needs of the people around us. An intense, love-based fellowship would exist because of our common, deep-rooted devotion to Jesus and His teachings. This love and commitment to each other would continually spread to larger and larger circles.

2. Proclaim His message - Our lives would be devoted to proclaiming the amazing news of the gospel to the world. We would announce that salvation has come through faith in Christ. We would teach people to “obey everything that Christ commanded”—not just assenting intellectually to a few core doctrines, but dying to self and becoming immersed in Jesus, His teaching, and His mission. We would be gathering with other believers to remind them of this gospel and to encourage them to stay focused on the mission. In proclaiming Christ’s message, we would be joining Jesus on His mission to rescue the physically and spiritually impoverished by leading them to an all-satisfying God.

3. Practice Communion and Baptism - This was important to Jesus and the early believers. We need to devote ourselves to gathering with like-

minded followers to remember Him. We would make sure that His death and resurrection were always at the center of our gatherings, always our motivation and priority. As we baptized new believers, we would be reminded that they are committing themselves to a new life that begins with the death of the old one.

4. Pray - We would gather with other believers in order to pray. We would come into His presence, asking Him to further His kingdom. We would ask Him to lead us according to His will. We would pray fervently for one another.

One of the major changes we need to make in the evangelical world is our speech. We have people claiming to be followers of Christ even though they don't actually follow Him. In the same way, we have people claiming to be the church even though they don't practice the "one anothers" of Scripture . . . There ought to be a desire to gather together to practice the "one anothers" of Scripture for the sake of the mission. Whether we continue our Sunday services or not is almost irrelevant. What is relevant is that we gather in a biblical way and for biblical purposes.

I believe Satan has distracted us through programs, entertainment, and comfortable substitutes for what the church really is. It's time for us to wake up, cut the fat, and be who we are: a people redeemed by Jesus, empowered by the Holy Spirit, on a mission to show the world the glory of God, and waiting for the day when all things are subjected to Him (1 Cor. 15:24-28).

Q :: Looking again at Chan's closing statement? – How has the church become an entertaining distraction and/or a comfortable substitute for what the church really is?

Q :: When I read Chan's first practice (look back and read that again), I am reminded of Hebrews 10:24. How, as believers, are we motivated toward love and good deeds (probably not coincidental that these things are grouped together)?
– How can we then motivate others to the same end?

"Stunningly few churches have a church of disciples," states pollster George Barna, even as he recognized that most churches have programs for this purpose. "Never before in the history of the United States has the gospel of Jesus Christ made such inroads," George Gallup observed, "while at the same time making so little difference in how people actually live."

Stephen Lim says this:

Too often we put people through a program or curriculum and call it discipleship. At the heart of growth in discipleship, however, are relationships of trust, commitment, and vulnerability, in which we receive encouragement, support, correction, and challenge. This requires us to change our churches from those that engage in superficial relationships to having genuine biblical community.

Q :: What does "genuine biblical community" mean to you – and how is that effective in reaching the lost in our community?

I believe that if we are to reach the 100,000 people in our community with a goal that is bigger than just building attendance at our services – if real, impactful life change is our goal – then we must motivate ourselves to work *together* to that end, and to model the love of Christ in such a way that people that know nothing about God see something inside of us that they want. You cannot lead someone further than you are yourself, so it becomes imperative that we take seriously our own spiritual growth and discipleship. And our involvement in the church's mission must go deeper than just attending services.

In the end, it will take energy and effort to form an energized and motivated congregation to carry out the vision of our church, but doing so is a necessary step to revitalize the members of Kingsway and transform them into a Kingdom Lighthouse that will ultimately bring glory – and new sons and daughters – to God.

Takeaways & Challenges:

C :: There is a wonderful little modern parable that I think demonstrates the importance of loving one another. It's called The Long-Handled Spoons. Here it is:

A man spoke with the Lord about heaven and hell. The Lord said to the man, "Come, I will show you hell." They entered a room where a group of people sat around a huge pot of stew. Everyone was famished, desperate and starving. Each held a spoon that

reached the pot, but each spoon had a handle so much longer than their own arm that it could not be used to get the stew into their own mouths. The suffering was terrible. "Come, now I will show you heaven," the Lord said after a while. They entered another room, identical to the first -- the pot of stew, the group of people, the same long-handled spoons. But there everyone was happy and well-nourished. "I don't understand," said the man. "Why are they happy here when they were miserable in the other room and everything was the same?" The Lord smiled, "Ah, it is simple," he said. "Here they have learned to feed each other."

The "One Another's" of the New Testament

A sample listing of verse references to the Greek word ALLELOUS, translated "one another" or "each other")

"Be at peace with each other" (Mk. 9:50)
"Wash one another's feet" (John 13:14)
"Love one another" (John 13:34, & 12 other references)
"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love" (Rom. 12:10)
"Honor one another above yourselves" (Rom. 12:10)
"Live in harmony with one another" (Rom. 12:10)
"Stop passing judgment on one another" (Rom. 14:13)
"Instruct one another" (Rom. 15:14)
"Accept one another, as Christ accepted you" (Rom. 15:17)
"Greet one another with a holy kiss" (Rom. 16:16, 1 Cor. 6:20 and 2 Cor. 13:12)
"When you come together to eat, wait for each other" (1 Cor. 11:33)
"Have equal concern for each other" (1 Cor. 12:25)
"Serve one another in love" (Gal. 5:13)
"Carry each other's burdens" (Gal. 6:2)
"Be patient, bearing with one another in love" (Eph. 4:2)
"Be kind and compassionate to one another" (Eph. 4:32)
"Forgiving each other as God in Christ has forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32)
"Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" (Eph. 5:19)
"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Eph. 5:21)
"In humility, consider others better than yourselves" (Phil. 2:3)
"Do not lie to each other" (Col. 3:9)
"Bear with each other" (Col. 3:13)
"Forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another" (Col. 3:16)
"Teach one another" (Col. 3:16)
"Admonish one another" (Col. 3:16)
"Make your love increase and overflow for each other" (1 Thess. 3:12)
"Encourage one another" (1 Thess. 4:18, and 5:11)
"Build each other up" (1 Thess. 5:11)
"Encourage one another daily" (Heb. 3:13 and 10:25)
"Spur one another on to love and good deeds" (Heb. 10:24)
"Do not slander one another" (Js. 4:11)
"Don't grumble against each other" (Js. 5:9)
"Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed" (Js. 5:16)
"Love one another deeply from the heart" (1 Pet. 1:22 & 4:8)
"Live in harmony with each other" (1 Pet. 3:8)
"Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling" (1 Pet. 4:9)
"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others" (1 Pet. 4:10)
"Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another" (1 Pet. 5:5)
"Greet each other with a kiss of love" (1 Pet. 5:14)