

UNTIL CHRIST IS ALL

MARCH - APRIL 2018

THE CORNERSTONEPIQUA CONNECTION

Welcome to the newsletter of CornerstonePiqua. This periodical is meant to inform you of upcoming events in our church community, to discuss community matters, and to address issues relevant to the culture. Each letter includes a personal letter from Pastor Jamie, an article or two on theological matters, as well as an occasional article from a special guest. These newsletters are also available in digital form online at CornerstonePiqua.org.

UPCOMING EVENTS

:: **LADIES FONDUE PARTY** | March 17th, 6pm |
@CornerstonePiqua

:: **ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION** | March 18th, 12p |
@CornerstonePiqua

:: **GOSPEL & SEXUALITY CONFERENCE** | March 24th,
9a-12pm | @Sovereign Grace, Dayton

:: **PRAYER & COMMUNION SERVICE** | March 25th, 6p |
@CornerstonePiqua

:: **RESURRECTION SUNDAY** | April 1st, 10:30a |
@CornerstonePiqua

:: **MEMBERS GATHERING** | April 8th, 6-7:30pm |
@CornerstonePiqua



CornerstonePiqua exists to proclaim the excellencies of Jesus Christ through gospel-centered preaching, Christ-exalting worship, Christ-forming discipleship, and Christlike service in Piqua, Miami County, and the world until Christ is all and in all.

THE POWER OF GOD'S WORD

"Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ."

(Colossians 1:28)

I was recently shocked by the power of electricity. Literally. I grabbed bare wires I assumed were dead and instantly learned they were not. Electricity is one of those modern luxuries we take for granted. By it we make milk cold and coffee hot. By it we bake cakes and light our homes. By it we power massage chairs and dialysis machines. By it some hippies drive cars.

Electricity is everywhere. It leaves the power plant, travels down power lines into our homes and business and grocery stores. Electricity makes modern life possible.

In a similar way, God's word makes

Christian life possible. From the preacher's pulpit, from the songs we sing, from the prayers we pray, from the Bible studies we share, God's word travels from one person to another giving light and life to our hearts. All the ministries of the church are empowered by God's word. All the discipling that happens in the church happens through the power of God's word. Christians are made by God's word, encouraged by God's word, rebuked by God's word, kept to the end by God's word.

My wife and I were reminded of this last week in our study through Colossians. In the opening paragraphs, the Apostle Paul is describing his own work and ministry among...

...the churches, endeavoring to **"make the word of God fully known"** (1:25). The effect of which, he assumes, will encourage, mature, grant assurance, and strengthen the faith of the believers in Colossae.

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This has caused me to wonder about the reverberations of the Word in *our* church. How has God's word made life possible for *our* congregation? How is the Scripture moving through our members into one another, empowering them for faithful service of the gospel? How are our people being encouraged and matured through the ministries of the word?

I thank God for the growing number of you who are meeting throughout the week to study the Bible. I am encouraged as I hear testimonies of God's grace as you help each other navigate complicated family dynamics, marriage struggles, and difficulties at work. This Winter, the Lord has enabled more LivingStones groups to begin. We now have groups which meet in Greenville, Piqua, Sidney, and even in places where Christ has not been named...like Botkins.

The New Testament knows nothing of Christians who exist on their own. God has willed His people to be dependent on one another. Consider the verse above, Colossians 1:28, **"Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ."** Do you see the community dynamic of this verse?

Four things Paul does for his brothers and sisters: (1) proclaims the excellencies of Jesus, (2) warns them of the dangers of sin, (3) teaches them with all wisdom, and (4) presents them mature in Christ. The Apostle goes on, saying, **"For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me."** (v29) While it is work, Paul is happy to announce it is work that is filled with joy (cf. 2:5).

If there were a way to measure our toil, our energy expenditures, would we see these same priorities in our lives? Is the word of God leaving the pulpit, entering our hearts, and ending there? Or is His word moving—like electricity through power lines—through us into others, as it was through Paul? When you read Colossians 1:28-29, when you lay it over your life, are you encouraged by similar fruit in your own life, are you asking God for greater effectiveness? Or, when you read these verses do they feel foreign? Are you unfamiliar with the joy Paul describes from seeing others strengthened in their faith?

If you find yourself lacking in the sort of discipling ministry Paul describes, it could be that you have a wrong perspective on church and the Christian life. For many believers, church is a service provided to us and we are the consumers. It's even in the language we use: church "service". Many people come to church to hear therapeutic messages, "pro-tips" for life, or maybe even to find ways to connect with their spiritual selves. However, the Bible says the ministry of the Word is to meant to **"equip the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ"** (Eph. 4:12). Do you see how God's word is supposed to flow through us and into others? It was never meant to terminate with us in lessons on

life-improvement techniques. It is meant to spread through us, so everyone is built up and matured into Christlikeness.

This is why we use Scripture in our congregational prayers. This is also why we use Scripture in our congregational singing. Later in Colossians, Paul encourages the church to **"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God."** (3:16) Cornerstone, even our congregational singing is a ministry of the Word to one another. Music appropriately moves our emotions to exalt in God's grace. This communal act of praise encourages your brothers and sisters in their faith. It's never been mostly about our one-to-one relationship with Jesus, but about the many-to-One relationship our church and our Savior.

If you aren't giving yourself in any meaningful way to discipling someone, may I encourage you to start today? You need two things: a bible and a willing heart. Invite someone to study the Bible with you. If you aren't sure where to start, use the previous Sunday's sermon. Pray together, commend the gospel to one another, and encourage each other.

I believe there are untapped fountains of joy missing from the lives of many Christians. God has made us to depend on each other and for others to depend on us. What unmatched delight when God's word passes through us to others like electricity! What God-glorifying joy to be used by God to encourage faithfulness in a brother or sister in Christ! How zealous I am for all of us to know those joys and delights.

Until Christ Is All,
- Pastor Jamie ❖

MindBlown

:: The fax machine was invented the same year that people were traveling the Oregon Trail.

:: A straw has only one hole in it.

:: There's a likelihood that when the pyramids were being built, woolly mammoths were still walking the earth.

:: Some words look like what they are. Example: "bed" looks like a bed; "shark" looks like a shark. Also, "llama"? And...you can spell the phrase "upside down" upside down with other letters turned upside down: *umop apisdn*.

:: *There are more atoms in a glass of water than stars in the observable universe.*

:: *A Venus day is longer than a Venus year.*

:: *Oxford University is older than the Aztecs.*

:: *Will Smith is older than Uncle Phil was at the beginning of the show Fresh Prince.*

:: *Betty White is actually older than sliced bread.*

A TESTIMONY OF RESTORATION

By JOHN JONES

Many years ago, I was excommunicated from my church, and I'm thankful to God for it.

You probably wouldn't expect to hear that reaction. But if the church had not honored God's Word, I'm afraid to even wonder what the state of my life—and more importantly, my soul—might be in today. My removal from church membership directly led to God's restorative work in my life. So now, I'm a cheerleader for church discipline. As you consider my testimony, be encouraged to appropriately exercise loving, biblical church discipline when a fellow church member is no longer walking in step with his confession.

MY STORY

My story is like so many others. I grew up in a faithful Christian home. I attended a gospel-preaching church. In every way, I looked and acted the part of a good Christian kid. I confessed my faith in Christ at an early age and was baptized a few years later. I was a popular member of our youth group and played on the worship team. I even would have affirmed the gospel and my own conversion.

But in a state of cognitive dissonance that only the deception of sin can explain, I was simultaneously pursuing pleasures of the world. What started as an obsession with pornography and masturbation led to increasing degrees of immorality and fornication. But the double life was exhausting, and eventually my transgressions were exposed. At first, I manufactured remorse when I was confronted by other Christians in an attempt to convince them that I was repentant. But as I continued to pursue my lusts, my heart became more hardened, and I no longer bothered to cover my sin. My hypocritical life was known to many members of my church, and I didn't want or know how to change.

Here I was, claiming to be a Christian, faithfully attending church, and continually fornicating with little hope of repentance. The elders, many of whom had known me for most of my life, patiently loved and pleaded with me. But I continued to embrace my sin, and my church made the hard, biblical decision to purge the evil person from their flock (1Cor. 5:13).

The next six or seven years were sad. I tried to find my satisfaction in the approval of others and physical pleasure. However, after my father died, I accepted an invitation to attend a gospel-centered church where membership and discipline were practiced with fidelity.

When I started attending this new church I was quick to disclose the fact that I was still technically under discipline at my old church. The elders of both churches conferred and my new church agreed to take on the stewardship of my soul. Both churches modeled Paul's exhortation in 2 Corinthians 13 to aim for restoration. I was reading my Bible, attending service, and trying to pray. I moved in with two brothers from the church.

Still, I never thought I would be able to say no to the sin that had ruled my thoughts and body for so long. Even when it had been months since my last dalliance, I was terrified. I thought it was inevitable that I would return to my sins of the past. I've never been addicted to drugs or drink, but the compelling urge to be intimate with a woman, any woman, was a cruel master. And yet, for the first time in a decade, I didn't have sex. Weeks of celibacy turned into months—and I trudged ahead. As though against my will, I stayed on track. That narrow path was hedged by loving friends and elders. Even after 10 months of outward repentance, I wasn't convinced my heart had actually changed. I *claimed* that I wanted to love Christ more than my sin but years of falling taught me to doubt myself.

My eventual membership interview was a turning point. The presiding elder listened to my rambling, defeatist story and then had a simple observation that still rings in my ears: "Brother, what you're describing is called repentance. I'm going to recommend you for membership." These words fell with the effect of a grace bomb. Doubts diminished, and hope flooded my heart. I could see so clearly my efforts that would never save me. In fact, God had been at work in spite of me.

By God's grace, I continued to turn from my sin and my new church affirmed fruit in keeping with repentance. I was voted into membership and began to serve and thrive. A few months later, I was invited to my old church to share on a Sunday morning. I'll never forget the moment that I was publicly invited to share the Lord's Supper with them. This was a picture of the restoration Paul celebrates in 2 Corinthians.

My experience of church discipline leaves me with a few observations and exhortations:

For Church Leaders:

Church leaders, honor God's Word. Expel the immoral brother. You have to give an account (Heb. 13:17). Teach your congregation to regard God's Word as holy, regardless of how uncomfortable or unpopular church discipline is. Show them that in order to have gospel unity, we must also be willing to part with those who are walking in ways that bring dishonor to Christ.

For Church Members

Church members, honor God's Word. Expel the immoral brother. But don't wash your hands of them.

I remember a moment not long after my excommunication. I ran into my friend Rebecca in the middle of the student union. We had been friends in church for years. Youth group, retreats, college ministry, we were old pals. But this time was different. Instead of a typically familiar conversation, she asked me about my soul. Somehow, she graciously and quickly broached questions about my belief in the gospel of Jesus Christ. About repenting of my sin. It was strange. But it was loving and biblical. I felt loved by her even as I recognized the nature of our friendship was fundamentally different because I was no longer her "brother."

PRACTICAL MATTERS

Briefly, here's how to love someone under discipline:

- Speak the truth.
- Be clear that your love for the friend has not diminished, but that love is now focused on one thing: the preservation of their eternal soul.
- Invite them to dinner but not to parties.
- Don't call them "brother" or "sister."
- Welcome them, but make it clear that only believers "belong."
- Looking back, it strikes me how church discipline benefits not only the unrepentant believer, but also the faithful church. It's good for Christians when the Word of God is revered and obeyed, even when it's hard and unpopular.

By nature, Christ's true church is for blood-bought followers of Christ. Even though church discipline has been painted as heartless and divisive, it actually cultivates unity because it clarifies who's on what "team."

To this day, I don't know if I was a backslidden convert or if I was a deceived non-Christian. Either way, church discipline served to expose my hypocrisy. It forced me to deal with the claims of Christ. God used membership and exclusion to show me that life in the world without God is miserable, and my only hope is Christ. ❖

Article Originally appeared: <https://www.9marks.org/article/a-testimony-of-restoration/>

Corporate Greed Keeps Strange Company

So far as I'm concerned, Netflix exists for one reason: documentaries. The other day my 4-year-old finished watching his favorite cartoon (for the 35th time) and decided it was dad's turn. He scrolled through the suggested shows, clicked on what seemed to his illiterate eyes the most boring one, and handed me the remote. I took it as the best compliment.

The show Ethan played for me is my most recent interest, a docuseries called "Dirty Money". It tells several stories of corporate and individual greed. All of them are interesting, but one episode stuck in my mind. Episode 2 tells the story of Scott Tucker, millionaire race car driver who made his fortune from issuing short-term, high interest payday loans. Most loans were less than \$500 and paid back weekly. The repayment terms were vague and the "fine print" difficult to understand. Most customers were misled into how much it cost to take out a loan. A \$300 loan, for example, appeared to cost \$90. But, in actuality, cost over \$900! Tucker is estimated to have earned \$380 million from the business.

Technically, much of what Scott Tucker did was legal, but it was wrong. It may not be illegal to charge someone 3 times more than they borrow, but it is not moral. Eventually the lawman agreed. He is currently serving a 16-year sentence in prison.

The thing that stuck with me about Tucker's story was how he presented himself as the victim of overzealous government lawyers. He made a fortune by taking advantage of poor people. Yet, he believes he did nothing wrong. What appears to everyone else as naked greed is—to Scott Tucker—just good business.

This caused me to wonder about latent forms of greed in my own heart. Greed is one of those sins which is easy to identify in others, but we rarely see in ourselves. 1Timothy 6:10 says "**the love of money is the root of all kinds of evils.**" Perhaps the reason greed is so hard to see is that it lies below ground, as the root of more visible, surface-level evils.

How have we been like Scott Tucker and justified greed in our lives? What surface-level sins are being nourished by deep rooted greed in our heart? Have you ever benefited from a loophole and just went with it? Have you ever benefited from someone's financial blunder and said to yourself, "their mistake!?" Do you lend, expecting nothing in return? Do you give, holding nothing back? Do you justify playing the lottery, telling yourself you'll use the money for God's kingdom? Do you withhold income from your tax statements? As I think about these questions and consider my own life, Scott Tucker and I are not not much different. Take millions from him and the grace of God from me and we are the same.

God is not like this. He is never greedy. His is the ultimate Giver. To show His love, He gave His own Son to die for greedy sinners like us. He offers mercy freely to all who would turn to Him in repentance. It is the riches of God in the gospel that frees our hearts from greed. Here are some of the the gospel uproots greed in the human heart:

1. The gospel teaches us that, in Christ, **we already have everything** we need now and for eternity. There's no use is stockpiling riches or accumulating power. Greed is the result of dissatisfaction with God. The more we see of the sufficiency of Christ, the less attractive money and power becomes. King David, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." (Psalm 23:1)
2. In the gospel we have confidence that **God will provide** for us. Since God has provided for our ultimate need, when it cost Him the most, we have confidence He will also provide for our physical needs.
3. **We are not own.** With His blood, Jesus redeemed us from slavery to sin. Who we are and what we have belongs to God. We are free to spend ourselves for His sake and His mission.
4. **Content with God's purposes and plans.** The gospel enables us to be content with God purposes. We know that we have come from God. What we don't have has been withheld for His good reasons.

The same greed that justified Scott Tucker's business and put him behind bars lurks below ground in all our hearts. Only the gospel of Jesus Christ has the power to root it out and set us free.

I would love to hear your thoughts on the matter. Email me at pastorjamie@cornerstonepiqua

CHRIST & CULTURE:

BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

MARCH

BIRTHDAYS

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15 :: Jane Phillips
18 :: Jacob Minnich
24 :: Brandon Powers
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04 :: Darla Schaffer
20 :: Brooklyn Flora
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25 :: Jamie Wellman
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ANNIVERSARIES