

UNTIL CHRIST IS ALL

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2017

# 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](http://CornerstonePiqua.org).

## UPCOMING EVENTS

:: **CHURCH PICNIC** | September 17th,  
12:30-4:30pm | @CornerstonePiqua

:: **TESTIFY TO THE GOSPEL CONFERENCE** |  
September 22-23 | @Grace Baptist, Fairborn

:: **MEMBERS MEETING** | September 24th,  
6:30-7:30pm | @CornerstonePiqua

:: **BABY SHOWER** | October 15th, 12:00-2:00pm |  
@CornerstonePiqua

:: **THE EXCELLENCIES OF CHRIST** | October 29th,  
6:30-7:30pm | @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.

## From Pastor Jamie

**“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”** (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Hanging opposite the desk in my office is a painting of Martin Luther, standing before the assembly of the Roman Emperor, Charles V. The inscription below him reads, “*Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me.*” Where Luther stood was on the Scripture. He was on trial for his insistence that the Church of Rome had departed from the truth of Scripture. Luther stood on God’s Word and was condemned as a heretic.

This October marks 500 years since Luther nailed his 95 theses on the church door of Wittenberg, Germany. The theological concerns of one 16th century monk lit a fire that continues to this day. God used Martin Luther and a host of other reformers to recover His church from apostasy. There are many reasons to thank God for what He did during the Protestant Reformation.

## *Why did the Reformation happen?*

Luther’s initial concern was with the Pope’s attempt at selling salvation. As Luther continued to study the Scriptures other issues led him to oppose Rome. Most important were issues of the authority of church tradition over Scripture and how a sinner is made righteous in the sight of God.

The doctrine of salvation by grace alone through faith alone as taught in the New Testament had been largely eclipsed by rituals and church tradition. The Bible was not central and Christ was not central. Clergy and laity of the medieval church were mostly ignorant of the teachings of Scripture.

What Martin Luther, John Calvin, Huldrych Zwingli and others sought to do was return the church to her ultimate source of authority—the Bible. The reformation did not bring a new meaning to the Bible; it was a recovery of the original meaning of the Bible. Fundamentally, the Protestant Reformation was a recovery of the Scriptures as the sole authority of the church.

The Reformation gave God's people God's word. Luther gave Germans a Bible in their native language. William Tyndale produced an English translation and was killed for it. For the first time in over 1000 years, God's people could read God's word in their own language. While the Lord used many great men and women to correct error, it was His Word that truly reformed the church. Even Luther admitted, "I did nothing. The Word did it all."

### Why should we care about the Reformation?

The reformation matters for many reasons. For one, God used the reformers to recover the gospel. One of the rallying cries of the reformation was *sola fide*—faith alone. This means salvation does not come by looking to ourselves to be righteous, but by looking outside ourselves—to the person and work of Jesus Christ. The righteousness required to be right before God was earned by Christ in His life and is gifted to those who have faith in Him. What is required to be made right before God? Faith, and faith alone.

The Apostle Paul put it like this in 2Corinthians 5:21, "**For our sake [God] made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**" Luther called this 'the great exchange'. Our sin was transferred to Christ; His righteousness was gifted to us. This precious doctrine was recovered during the reformation.

God's people would hear once again of "**the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.**" (Rom 3:21) The church would be reintroduced to the precious truth that "**all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus**" (Rom 3:23-24). Without the recovery of these truths, we would be left to trust in the traditions of men or in our own righteousness, and we would be lost.

Another reason to thank God, the reformers recovered Christ-centered preaching. As God's Word became central in the life of the church, preaching became central in her worship. Above all else, Luther and Calvin were preachers. As the Apostle Paul charged young pastor Timothy "**preach the word**" (2Timothy 4:2a), the reformers taught their pastoral students to do the same. The pulpit was relocated in the sanctuary from off to the side and far above the people, to the center, closer to the level of the congregation. The message was clear: God's people were to be a people of God's word.

If we care about the place and authority of God's word in the life of God's church, then we ought to care about the reformation.

### Is the Reformation Over?

The reformation is far from over. The authority, clarity, and sufficiency of God's Word are as important today as they were in the 1500's. Modern issues of homosexuality and same sex marriage are not just moral issues, they are fundamentally Bible issues. We must work tirelessly, as the Reformers did, to keep God's word central in our churches, in our homes, and in our lives.

The personal effects of the reformation are just as relevant. Our tendency is to look to ourselves and to systems to be right before God rather than to Christ and His cross. We must always remind our sin-laden hearts to trust in Christ *alone* and His grace *alone* to be made right before God.

God will always be reforming us by His word, purging us of the glory-hungry drive to be our own saviors. A Dutch reformer put it best, "*ecclesia reformata*,

*semper reformanda secundum verbi Dei*" — "the church is Reformed and always [in need of] being reformed according to the Word of God."

May God be pleased to continue His Word's reforming work on us all. By grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone on the basis of Scripture alone to the glory of God alone.

Happy Reformation, Cornerstone. Until Christ is All. ❖

## All-American Football

American Football starts up this month. Many will tune in, but few people know the history of football in America. Much of what we know of the NFL is was formed as a collision of two cultures undergoing an identity crisis.

It was the turn of the 20th century. The Civil War was over. Men, too young to fight in the war, were heading off to college. Many feared, without war to stiffen their constitution, they'd become soft ivy leaguers who'd likely spend their time reading or worse—being fashionable. In the absence of war, violent sport seemed the next best thing.

At the time, American Football was an unofficial sport, a merger of soccer and rugby. Ivy league college students organized teams to prove their strength and manliness. In the earliest iterations of football, players had no helmets or pads. Games were brutal and dangerous. People were injured, paralyzed, even died.

While Ivy Leaguers were inventing football, the rest of America was coming to grips with the terrible damage they had done to the Native American population. Efforts to redeem Natives were being made through education and indoctrination (turning them into white people). The motto was, "Kill the Indian; Save the Man".

However, many young Native Americans had a difficult time adjusting to indoor, sedentary "white life". Lt. Col. Richard Henry Pratt, a fierce abolitionist, saw a solution: the new sport of football.

Pratt's team, the Carlisle Indians, took football by storm. They quickly dominated the Ivy league teams. Early football had few rules. Pratt's Indians took advantage. They were the first to introduce the reverse toss, the forward pass, and the hurry-up offense.

The Indians invented trick plays. One strategy was to hide the ball from defenders in specially sewn pockets in their uniform. They hid players in the audience who'd enter the field of play to catch a pass behind the defenders. Many of the current rules of football were invented to prevent the Native Americans from winning against Ivy League schools.

Football began not as the collision of big men around a oblong ball, but as the collision of two cultures, both trying to figure out what it means to be an American.

# “I’d Rather Die Than Cheat.”

By Francis Chan

*“Lord, please kill me before I cheat on my wife.”*

*This is a prayer that I prayed many times when I was first married. I’m not saying that it was mature or biblical, but it gives you a glimpse into my mind. I did not ever want to bring shame to the church, and I knew that this potential for evil was in me.*

I spent my single years battling for purity and often failing. At times the battle was all-consuming. Days were filled with a paralyzing guilt that kept me from effective ministry and enjoying Jesus. I tried many things to discipline myself. At one point, I even decided that if I gave into lust, I would spend the next day fasting. This forced me to spend days in prayer, asking for more strength and self-control. I’ve found that when you refrain from eating, it makes refraining from sin easier. While it didn’t work perfectly, it was helpful.

The Bible is clear and simple when it comes to impurity: Run! *“Flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart”* (2 Timothy 2:22). Run away from temptation, and run towards righteousness. How we each pursue this may look different, but here are some pillars that have helped me in my journey.

## Fear Can Be Good

The Scriptures teach, *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”* (Psalm 111:10). I am grateful that by his grace, God has gifted me with a deep-seated fear of him.

Many years ago, I remember reading an article about a man who had a fatal heart attack while having sex with a prostitute. I imagined how terrifying it must have been for that man to enter into the presence of a holy God at that moment. If nothing else keeps you from adultery, maybe the fact that Almighty God could take your life amidst the very act would terrify you enough to repent.

It was years later that a friend of mine, a fellow pastor, committed adultery with his assistant. I didn’t see him for months after it happened. When he came into my office, he looked awful. He proceeded to tell me the whole story. He explained how one thing led to another, and before he knew it he had committed the act he preached against for years.

What impacted me most was when he explained his thoughts and feelings after sinning. He told me of how he kept looking at his revolver, tempted to pull the trigger. He reasoned that everyone would be happier if he was dead. The other woman’s husband would be happier. His own wife and kids would be happier. His church would be happier. It was only by the grace of God that he was still alive.

Of course, taking his own life in the aftermath of adultery would only be multiplying the sin. But I was struck by the misery he felt. He seriously thought it would be better to be dead than to have done this and to live with the consequences! His misery was both a wake-up call and a warning to me. Fear can be a great grace.

## Vigilant Discipline

My pursuit of sexual purity has been a discipline. I have said with the apostle Paul, *“I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified”* (1 Corinthians 9:27).

Early in our marriage, my wife asked me, “Can you promise that you will never cheat on me?” After thinking about it for a few seconds, I told her that even though I loved her deeply, I could not promise her. I explained that if I promised her, then I would act like I’m invincible, rather than guarding myself daily. I think it would be wiser to live each day knowing that it could happen, so I stay guarded. It wasn’t what she hoped to hear, but she understood my point.

Even to this day, though the struggle has subsided and my love for her has grown immensely, I still have not promised her. Instead, I continue to live each day with severe caution. I see it as an act of love toward my wife. I rarely counsel women, and never alone. I won’t go anywhere with a woman alone. In 23 years, I have never even been in a car alone with another woman (aside from relatives). It has felt silly at times to inconveniently tell women they had to drive separately even though we are going to the same location, but I believe it’s been worth it. My wife has access to all of my email accounts, phone records, and I don’t have a Facebook profile. There are no secrets between us.

I have alcoholic friends who were supernaturally delivered from any desire for alcohol. I have other friends who pray for deliverance, but are tempted daily. They refuse to have any alcohol in their homes, and stay away from tempting situations. I believe God is glorified by both.

## Focused Mission

Early on in my Christian journey, I focused only on running away from sin. I believe it was good and right, but not complete. It was later that I discovered the truth of Galatians 5:16, *“Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.”*

God calls us not only to run away from temptation, but to run toward him. He promises that when we are walking by the Spirit, we *will not* gratify the flesh. As I have followed God’s Spirit into meaningful ministry, it has been amazing to see the craving for sin diminish. The thrill of the Holy Spirit manifesting himself through me to bless others fills me thoroughly, crowding out sinful desires that might otherwise have had room to grow (1 Corinthians 12:7).

It’s like playing in an intense basketball game. I get tunnel vision. Winning is all I think about. My mind does not wander one bit. In the same way, when my wife and I are intensely pursuing God’s cause and kingdom, our minds don’t wander toward sin. Soldiers stay focused when they are in battle. *“No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him”* (2 Timothy 2:4). It’s when we relax, when we forget we are actually on a mission, that trouble comes.

## More of Jesus

Just this morning, I read in Psalm 73, *“I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.”* (Psalm 73:23-25)

I pictured God holding my right hand, guiding me, receiving me into glory. The longer I imagined that, the more I understood why the next verse says, *“There is nothing on earth that I desire besides you”* (Psalm 73:25). Take time to meditate on these truths. If you’re anything like me, you tend to take God’s commands more seriously than his promises. He wants us to have faith in both, and to find enjoyment in both.

While I am fifty years old, and have been walking with Jesus since high school, it has really been over the past few years that I have grown significantly in my enjoyment of him. A few months ago, I told a friend that I didn’t want to have any sin in my life because I am enjoying such close fellowship with Jesus. That was a new experience for me.

Fear, discipline, and mission are all biblical motivations – and have all helped me in my pursuit of holiness. But now that I have been enjoying deeper connection with Jesus, I feel like I’ve missed out.

*(Adapted from “I’d Rather Die” posted on [DesiringGod.org](http://DesiringGod.org), September 1, 2017.)*

“Even though the struggle has subsided...I continue to live each day with severe caution.”

## Male & Female He Created Them: The Gender Debate

I recently signed up for a service called Google Groups. During the sign up I was asked for my gender. The choices were "Male", "Female", and "Rather Not Say". That's not unusual. What caught my attention was a link below, labeled "Add a Custom Gender". The phrase "custom gender" was a new one for me. Facebook famously offered 51 gender options, including bi-gender and pangender. Apparently Google took the easy way out, giving users a write-in for gender "options".

What should Christians make of gender fluidity and tailoring?

We start with God and creation. In Genesis 1:27, we read the account of God's creation of mankind. **"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."** There are at least three things to note from this verse.

First, gender is God's idea. The differences between male and female are—biologically, speaking—a part of God's creation. Secondly, God created two genders—male and female. And third, God created gender before the Fall, and He called it good (cf. Gen. 1:31). Two genders, created by God, are good. Gender, therefore, is not defined by culture, it is designed by the Creator.

But that was *before* the Fall. When sin entered the world, things quickly changed. The effects of sin pervaded every part of the human experience. Gender is no exception. Sin has a dramatic effect on the way individuals view God, themselves, and one another.

When it comes to issues of gender confusion and dysphoria, Christians must be foremost a people of grace and mercy. These people are not freaks. They are humans, created in the image of God, deserving of dignity and worth. They have been affected by and infected by sin. They're hurting. They need Jesus as much as we do. Of all places on the earth, the church ought to be a safe, welcoming place where all people hear the hope and healing of the gospel.

God created humans to be more than just their psychology *and* more than just their biology. The postmodern worldview forces a reduction, sending people on a search and rescue for something that is not really lost. This creates more problems than it solves.

Consider the notion, "*be who you are on the inside*". If a biological male identifies psychologically as a female, then he is forced to ignore his biology to live as a female. This creates, rather than alleviates, gender dysphoria, as he receives conflicting messages from his body and his mind. The world forces a war between the mind and the mirror.

Scripture teaches we are more than our physiology, more than our psychology, and even more than our sexuality. Christians must reject the idea that in order to be an emotionally healthy person one must find appropriate sexual expression. The Lord Jesus was the most emotionally healthy person who ever lived and was celibate His entire life.

What the gospel provides is healing for those suffering from gender dysphoria. The effects of the Fall are felt by everyone. Gender confusion is not a lonely, isolating, unique problem, it is part of the universal human condition rescued by the cross. In this way, Christians ought to identify with transgenders. Like them, we are a people who are often conflicted about our identity. We know that we are united with Christ, but often struggle to act like it. We are free from sin, but often fail to live like it. Romans 7, anyone? The struggle is similar.

The gospel is good news for the gender confused. The word says, "*accept your birth gender, ignore it, or change it*". The gospel says, "Be born again." The gospel makes a person who God created them to be. It reverses the effects of the Fall. The gospel doesn't send a person on an blind hunt for their true self, it provides them with their true self, uniting them with Christ. It is union with Christ that makes a person whole.

This new identity in Christ is more than "male" or "female"; it is "child of God". That is a distinction that is safe and unchanging. Maybe Google is on to something. Maybe next time I will add a custom gender—"child of God".

I would love to hear your thoughts on the matter. Email me at [pastorjamie@cornerstonepiqua.org](mailto:pastorjamie@cornerstonepiqua.org).

# BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

## SEPTEMBER

BIRTHDAYS

7 :: Adelai Hines  
 10 :: Kindra Nitsche  
 11 :: Mark Cathcart  
 12 :: Audrey Binkley  
 13 :: Ava Mowrey  
 Hudson Mowrey  
 15 :: AJ Arling  
 21 :: Ethan Hines  
 26 :: Vinent Ruiz

ANNIVERSARIES

1 :: Carol & Connie Crowell  
 7 :: Rudy & Brooke Ruiz  
 21 :: Steve & Alyssa Minter  
 :: Steve & Sarah Mowrey

## OCTOBER

BIRTHDAYS

1 :: Derek Arling  
 4 :: Chloe Flora  
 Cameron Flora  
 6 :: Michael Gray  
 8 :: Darlene Cathcart  
 Matt Shaefer  
 11 :: Corah Hines  
 12 :: Steven Joyce  
 14 :: Sara Wellman  
 15 :: Isabelle Ruiz

ANNIVERSARIES

05 :: Sean & Bri McSwain  
 13 :: Mark & Darlene Cathcart