

For the week of October 29-November 4, 2017

Based on Pastor Reggie's message from October 29

Understanding the Freedom of Being in Christ

Best Way to Prepare for Your Group? Listen to the teaching and read the appropriate scripture. Please give emphasis to the latter. These notes are prepared on Fridays. Sometimes, the sermon gets modified right before service. So, allow for flexibility. Remember, your time together isn't meant to be a re-teaching of the most recent lesson. Instead, the discussion points and questions are designed to encourage group members to share insight and application of what they've learned from God's Word—and thereby grow closer to the Lord and each other.

[Format for the Evening]

WELCOME:

Get to know each other. Re-introduce yourselves if need be and welcome any newcomers. Invite those new to the group to share a little about their lives and Christian experience. Spend some time talking about real-life issues that may have come up during prayer or fellowship time the previous week. These Community Groups are more than Bible studies. They are designed to help believers form deep and lasting relationships.

KEY PASSAGE: *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."*—Romans 8:1

THINK ABOUT THE TEACHING: No Longer Condemned

The word condemn is defined this way: to express complete disapproval; to prove or show guilt; to sentence to a particular punishment, especially death. This key verse is not just saying that in Christ you are accepted. It says that you are dead outside of Christ. Condemnation doesn't just mean God is annoyed. When we talk about condemnation, we are talking life and death.

We live in a condemning world. Everywhere you look you see people longing for acceptance. If they don't find it, they build it. That's why we see so many sub-communities. People are looking for a place they belong. Unfortunately, in today's culture the church in general has done a poor job of making people feel accepted. Not accepting a person's sin, but accepting them as a person. Those who feel condemned could never overcome the religious mountain set before us by guilt to do better, or desire to be a good person, or the sense of failure that comes from trying to overcome that condemnation. It's so hard to let go of the idea that we are not good enough or that God is displeased with us. That God doesn't actually love us, we are unwanted. But there is amazing news for those who feel condemned: there is a God who rescues people from condemnation, death, and rejection (v. 13).

TALK ABOUT THE TEACHING:

1. How have you felt condemned or guilty?
2. If we are really freed from the flesh, really set free by Jesus, what does that mean?

THINK ABOUT THE TEACHING: What Does it Mean to be “In Christ”?

Before we look at what it means to be “in Christ,” it’s important to point out what it does not mean. It is easy to create our own answer to fit our mode of spirituality. Here are a few examples of things that in and of themselves are good, but do not set a person apart as being “in Christ.”

1. To be in church – Being in Christ takes more than just doing what Christians do. You can be part of a church community and still not walk according to the Spirit.
2. To be interested in Christ, intrigued by Christ, or comfortable with the teachings of Christ – Knowing about Jesus, or even appreciating Him, does not constitute being in Christ. Being interested or involved with Christians is not what Romans 8 is getting at.

Being in Christ means that we dwell in Him, and He dwells in us. We have received the free gift of salvation offered as a result of Jesus’ sacrifice, and we now seek to serve Him with our lives. Once that takes place, the evidence of His work in our lives will be obvious. There will be things that we now do, such as baptism and communion, that show outwardly what is being done in our inner being. But there is so much more that takes place.

1. **We are given the Holy Spirit** as a way to answer the question of whether we are in Christ. The Spirit bears witness that we are children of God. Galatians 3 says we are children of God who are in the Spirit. Because of the indwelling of the Spirit, we become people who pray in His name in ways we didn’t know how to do before. We are able to cry out to God and worship Him as an outpouring of the love we have for Him. We no longer live to please ourselves, but to please God. Although those selfish desires are still there, the Holy Spirit keeps us from the path that leads to our ultimate destruction. Instead we become people who are spiritually alive, and experience the outpouring of the joy and love He gives. Then we are able to love those who are unlovable, and be patient where we would normally lose our cool. The Spirit works in us and through us to exemplify Christ to our world.
2. **We have undeniable hope in Christ.** Because we have received Christ and are eagerly awaiting the redemption of our body, we are not people who live in depressed shells of our circumstance (v. 23). Despite the difficult circumstances of life and the weights and burdens we all feel, because we are in Christ we know everything will work out to God’s glory and to our peace. Part of that hope is believing in God’s sovereignty to work everything together for good (v. 28).

Regular church attendance, faithful Bible reading, and an interest in Jesus that will try to combat any kind of unsettled or difficult circumstances you have are also natural results of being in Christ. We are not worshipping and listening to a sermon and studying notes to earn God’s favor. We have already been freed. We are no longer trying to counterbalance our sin. What we couldn’t do, God did. He condemned sin; He didn’t condemn you. The sin is done. So we can be real life God-image-bearing, God-honoring humans. When we become alive spiritually, that’s where the “no condemnation” is. What if the race of religion was done and you could just be a spiritual person? You could just enjoy learning more of God and being transformed by Him into who He created you to be. No more striving, no more burning out. The weight of sin is no more.

This is all made possible not by a cosmic accident or God fumbling into your life, but because God loves you. The only reason you are living free of separation from God that leads to death is because of Jesus. In Christ Jesus you are not condemned. You are incredibly loved by the creator of the universe who did not spare His Son, so you could be free of condemnation and guilt.

TALK ABOUT THE TEACHING:

1. What does it mean to be “in Christ Jesus”?
2. What was it like to pray before you accepted Jesus into your life? Who did you pray to? Why did you believe God was listening?
3. How have you seen your prayer life come alive? How has God turned you into a person of prayer? How has He turned you into a person who has worship coming out of you? How has He taught you to have hope in the midst of difficult circumstances?

TAKE TIME TO PRAY:

Please pray that God would show believers how to live like Jesus, empowered by the leading of the Holy Spirit so that their divinely inspired and life-changing love reveals God to the world around them. Pray that the lives of the family members at Calvary Boise glorify God and draw others into His Kingdom. Pray that we will be actively engaged in pursuing revival.

TRANSITION TO REAL LIFE:

Before you head home take some time to talk about the week ahead, make note of any needs and prayer requests, and enjoy each other's company. That's what family does.

Note: *Pastor Tucker welcomes your feedback. Please email him at tucker@ccboise.org with your insight.*

WEEKLY PRAYER REQUESTS

“Now it happened when I returned again to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance. And saw Him saying unto me, ‘Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly’...And He said unto me, ‘for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.’” –Acts 22:17-18, 21

With prayer beginning, continuing and ending everything, with prayer marking every emergency, animating every act of wider obedience (in the early Church) is it any wonder that when the flames of missionary zeal and success sank away, it was because the fires of prayer had died low on the altars of devotion? Is there any other reason than this for the reiterated plea in the Epistles of Paul, that the churches he had founded would labor together with him in prayer for the prosperity of the gospel with them, and with him in all the world? No. The first two things in the early Church were prayer and missions, and the deepest alliance in the early Church was between missions and prayer. -- Robert E. Speer

About the Author: Robert E. Speer was a leading American authority on global missions and an author. A Princeton graduate, he became secretary of the American Presbyterian Mission and helped organize highly successful outreaches throughout the world. He lived from 1867 until 1947.

Our Community Group:

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Prayer Requests for Our International Missions

- Please pray for Ryan and Michelle Chatterton who have been serving in Vancouver. Michelle is due to deliver their new baby in less than three weeks and the Lord is leading them back to Boise in November. Pray for the health and strength of mom and babe, for the seeds they have planted in Canada and for the move. Ask too that God will give them crystal clear insight into the next phase of their life in Christ.
- Pray that the Commissions Series presented by our pastors during the month of October will stir hearts and inspire our church family to greater involvement and support of our missionaries.
- Please pray for Whitney and Ales Lajlar, our missionaries to Slovenia. They have been under intense spiritual attack. Ask that God will intervene and that they can enter a season of peace and rest. Pray too that their church signage will soon be complete.
- Please pray for Saul and Angela Alvarez in Tepic Mexico. Their small congregation has been meeting rent-free in a facility that will soon no longer be available to them. Pray that the Lord provides a new place.

Prayer Requests for our Women’s Ministry

- Pray that God will provide very clear direction about the next Bible study sessions. Pray that we will meet the needs of all women and especially working, single moms.
- The next Quarterly Women’s Prayer Meeting is November 6. Pray that everyone God calls will attend and that it will be an exciting, Holy Spirit-led time of worship, praise, repentance and joy.