

## REIGNITE, PART 2 - THE PLAN

Stonebrook Church - 8/4/18 - Matt Heerema

### REVIEW AND INTRO

Last week and this week we're taking a short break from our walk through of John to talk about who Stonebrook is, and what it is we're up to as a church. You could say "our mission and vision".

Last week we talked about Stonebrook's "DNA", the things that make Stonebrook, Stonebrook. We talked about our "Seven Pillars" or core values. We desire to be a church that is:

- **Devoted to Christ** - Love the Lord with all our hearts. Matt 22:36-40. "To live is Christ." Phil 1:21
- **Biblically minded** - View life through the lenses of the Scriptures instead of the lenses of a secular world. 2 Tim 3:16-17. Rom 12:1-2
- **Walking in Godliness** - Walk in a manner worthy of him, in deed and character. Eph 4:1-3
- **Strengthening Families** - Equipping marriages, parenting, and households. Eph 5:22-6:4
- **Devoted to the Fellowship** - Devoted to the family of God. Acts 2:42. Live out the "one another" commands of the New Testament.
- **Serving the City** - Serve our community/campus through acts of mercy, neighborly, and vocation. Matt 5:14-16
- **Proclaiming Christ** - Ready to speak with one another, and with the world about Christ with boldness, love, and "fluency" in the gospel. 1 Peter 3:15

To do that, if you remember, we started though with Paul's letter to the Ephesians so we could discuss who God says the church is. We saw in Ephesians 2 and 3 that **the church is:**

- **The household of God (2:19)**, made up entirely of redeemed sinners. Who are now all fellow citizens in this new kingdom where there are no racial, ethnic, or social class boundaries that divide us. We are all a new family together.
- **Being made into a dwelling place for God in the Spirit (2:22)** - God is among us!
- Through this new family, **God's manifold wisdom is being revealed** to the spiritual beings in the heavenly realms (angels and demons!) (3:10)
- And because of all this, **Paul prays that God would grant that we may comprehend, experience, and be filled with God's love and power!** And this should be our prayer

## WALKING IN THE GOSPEL

We're continuing today with our overview of Stonebrook's ministry, in the very next verse: Immediately after Paul finishes this prayer for the Ephesians, in 4:1, he urges them to live out their identity as citizens of this new kingdom:

### **Ephesians 4:1-3 (ESV)**

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Ephesians 4 is usually taught as Paul switching from the good news of the Gospel message into the "to dos" of the Christian faith, where he starts laying out the rules, the laws, of how to be a Christian. And while its true that he does start giving commands now, don't think for a second that he is switching gears!

Do you see how the commands here (and it will continue this way through the rest of the book) are all about loving one another, as Jesus loved us?

Stonebrook's mission statement, the way we try to summarize what it is we're all about as a group of people here is:

### **"Love God and all people by walking in the gospel."**

It is shorthand for the "1st and 2nd great commandments" that Jesus gives us in Matthew 22, where he summarizes the old testament: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself."

Our summary: "walking in the gospel" - comes from Ephesians 4, and is essentially a summary of these three verses. (Several other of Paul's letters use this language of "walking in a manner worthy of God, the gospel, etc...")

Often I think we take Paul's urging us to "walk in a manner worthy..." as if he were saying "You've been forgiven, now BEHAVE!" - We take the "rules" of the Christian life as if he were a mean parent saying "I know what's best for you, now fall in line!" - Rather than what he is actually saying:

You have been adopted into a family where the Father is *immeasurably rich in mercy, love, and forgiveness. Be like your dad.*

All of the commandments of God are along this line. And all of our ministry in the church is to remind one another of this love that God has for us.

## **EQUIP THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK**

Stonebrook's whole ministry is designed around this task: ***helping one another abide in Jesus love, and live with it in full view, every day of our lives.***

### **Ephesians 4:11-14 (ESV)**

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, **to equip the saints for the work of ministry**, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, **so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.**

Christ has given the church some with a certain set of gifts, to "equip the saints" (every believer!) "for the work of ministry." For the sake of this morning, I'm going to mention the roles of the shepherds and teachers (how prophets, apostles, and evangelists work out is a different message, and a little complicated.)

Within the context of the local church's ministry, the pastor/teachers work to equip the saints in terms of doctrine: that is, *the truth about God's magnificent love*: what it is like, what its implications are, how it differs from the world's concept of love, so that we aren't all taken captive by false teaching either from within the church in false teachers and theological error, or from the world and all its self help books that Oprah promotes.

As pastors and teachers, our job is not to build the body, but rather to equip you to do it!

## **MINISTRY = SPEAKING THE TRUTH (ABOUT GOD'S LOVE) IN LOVE**

Notice what the scripture says our task in building the body of Christ is: ***to continually remind one another of the truth about God's love.***

## **Ephesians 4:15-16**

**"...speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up** in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, **when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.**" (ESV)

### **"SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE - THE TRUTH IS IN JESUS!"**

We can sometimes mis-take this idea of "speaking the truth in love" and mean something like "telling hard truths, because hey I love you." Hey, brother, that shirt is really ugly, you probably shouldn't wear it. Do you realize you have this really annoying habit that bugs everyone? Hey just telling the truth in love...

What this verse means is actually **bringing the truth of God's magnificent love for us to bear in conversations in order to help strengthen, heal, and give courage to each other.** We notice when someone is down, or angry, or frustrated, or depressed because of a life circumstance, and we point them at Christ!

And Paul is not talking just about random facts about God, he is speaking specifically about the truth of God's love for us. He says in verse 21: "the truth is in Jesus" (and he carries that theme through the rest of the letter).

REMEMBER THE GOSPEL: We are to remind one another of who, 1) who God (Father, Jesus, Spirit) is, 2) what he has done/doing/going to do, 3) who are were without him, 4) and who we are now with him.

In any given conversation with a believer (or, frankly, an unbeliever in evangelism) we have an opportunity to remember the gospel, when someone is expressing pain, frustration, hurt, or even overconfidence in pride. Redirect a conversation: "You're forgetting the gospel!"

[EXCELLENT TOOL: GOSPEL FLUENCY BOOK AND STUDY]

## THE WHOLE TRUTH: BAD NEWS AND GOOD NEWS.

This is why Paul rehearses the message of the Gospel in the first three chapters of the book. We need to remember how bad the bad news was before we can realize how good the good news is! **“We were children of God’s wrath, just like the rest of mankind!” “We were without hope and without God” - BUT GOD.**

The world has very sentimental ideas about love, doesn’t it. When it says love it means something of a benign tolerance that just sort of supports whatever whim someone comes up with. “If you love me you’d accept me for who I am.” Is the mantra, and invariably the “who I am” is something that is self-defined, and totally pliable, rather than based at all on who God says that person is.

No, God does not love us in a way that is benign and merely tolerant. God loves us in a way that a perfect parent would love their child: with a fierce passion to see that child thrive according to their design. With a fiery anger at anything that would harm that child. And the great news about our God is that he knows exactly what our design is.

So as you read the rest of Ephesians, and Paul’s commands, you will see what that design means for how we need to live in order to thrive.

## APPLICATION: STONEBROOK’S MINISTRY IS DESIGNED TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN.

### THE PLAN:

**Daily Devotion** - Abiding in the love of God through scripture reading, prayer, and meditation on the truth. All other aspects of the plan are designed to teach us how to effectively do this.

**Daily Readiness from The Gospel** - When we take the time each day to abide in the love of God, we can then face any life circumstance or situation, believing the gospel of God’s immeasurable love for us. As secure children of the merciful king, we can face whatever life or people throw at us without lasting damage because our ultimate hope is not here, it is in Christ.

We are able to speak the gospel to ourselves, one-another, and everyone else you come into contact with.

**Weekly Worship:** Join with the whole fellowship as we remind, instruct, and send one another with the gospel message. THIS IS CRUCIAL TO OUR MINISTRY

**Weekly Fellowship: In life group** - Band together with a small group of believers around God's word and prayer, to share life's joys and burdens and to care for one another in practical ways. THIS IS CRUCIAL TO OUR MINISTRY.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** We pastors feel it is important to make time in your life for both weekly worship and fellowship in small group. If you have to choose between the two, we suggest that you take stock of your various life commitments and reconfigure them so that they both fit. If you can't make them fit, make sure you are coming with regularity on Sunday, and work hard to meet frequently for lunch, breakfast, etc, with believers that know you. Get unconventional about the small group situation. Both are required. you will have an imbalanced view of the Christian life if you choose one over the other.

**Weekly Ministry Service:** Lend your gift in service to the church and the Ames and ISU community for God's glory and the building up of the church. An opportunity to share and demonstrate God's love.

**Monthly All-Church Prayer** - Join with the whole church once a month to seek God together in prayer. A good chance to learn to pray! A great opportunity to hear the hearts of those you don't normally hang out with.

## **JOIN WITH US THIS FALL**

Re-structure your life schedule if needed! I find that from time to time in my family we need to take stock of our activities and make sure they are calibrated correctly. There is such a gravity in our culture to "go with the flow" and to get so busy with extra curricular activities, with entertainment, with hobbies, or with work that we forget that for the most part we have the ability to say no, and to own our schedule!

Do what it takes to keep the gospel as the central focus of your heart, your family, your mind, at all times. Make the time in your life for daily devotion to get your heart re-centered, every morning. Make the time in your life for weekly worship with the local church. And make the time in your life to be in frequent fellowship with a band of believers in a life group who can dig deep in your life to help challenge when you get off base, and encourage you when you get scared or fainthearted, mourn with you when you mourn, and rejoice with you when you rejoice.

## DISCUSSION

Review the points of Stonebrook's ministry plan. (See also the trifold brochure that contains "the plan" and a brief description of each point.)

1. Were you aware that this plan existed? (It is what we've been doing as a church for years, but only articulated this way over the last year as part of the renew campaign.)
2. Does your current pattern of life (schedule, habits, pastimes, work schedule, etc) allow you to fully participate in the life of the church? What would need to change?
3. Do you find yourself emphasizing Sunday morning over life group or life group over Sunday morning? They are intended to be coequal in emphasis. Why do you find yourself emphasizing the one you do (if so.). What was the purpose of Matt's statement about "if you had to pick one, pick Sunday, and get creative about a small group." ?
4. Will you commit to fully participating in the life of the church together as we seek to remind one another of the immeasurable riches of God's love for us? What would hold you back from doing so?

(I'd love to help you field any questions or concerns with this week's sermon, or assist with further application if it would be helpful! Send me an email anytime: [matt@stonebrook.org](mailto:matt@stonebrook.org)).