

HUNGER FOR GOD

**SIX WEEKS OF PRAYER, FASTING,
REFLECTION AND SEEKING**

**Creekside Community Church
August 30, 2010 thru
October 10, 2010**

“Grant, O merciful God, that your Church, being gathered together in unity by your Holy Spirit, may show forth your power among all people, to the glory of your Name, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.”

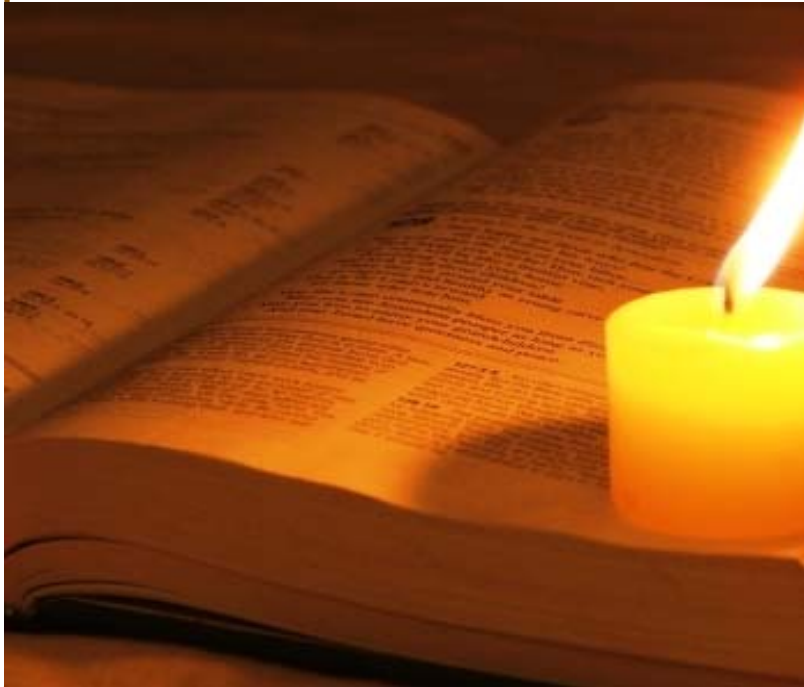


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Introduction:

God has put it on the hearts and minds of the elders to lead the body in a period of prayer and fasting in order to reflect and seek the mind of the Lord. Our hope is to see God work in our lives to bring about a heart change regarding our view of our lives while giving us a clear vision as to the purpose of our lives and our church body. Scripture is very clear when it comes to the mission of the church and could be summed up in the Great Commission (Matthew 28) and the Great Commandment (Mark 12). Even though the mission may be clear, what that looks like for Creekside Community Church and your involvement has not been as clear.

All of us want our existence on earth to have meaning and deep down you surely sense a longing to love and serve God with all of your heart. Yet we live at a time and in a place that presents many obstacles to living a life fully devoted to Christ and His mission.

Every tangible and delectable fruit of the world is in our reach if not already in our grasp here. Money fuels our desired lifestyle. We must have careers that can support us to live in this place. And what a place! Fantastic weather, beautiful hills and neighborhoods with the ocean and the Sierra a short car ride away. Our kids enjoy some of the best schools, private or public, you can find anywhere. We live in an extremely kid savvy community where we parents will organize our whole lives around what is best for our kids. The best technology in the world is first available to us in this place. Brilliant minds and entrepreneurial gurus abound. We live in a hotbed of political debate on every topic and the environment has become a religion in itself. Even though the Bay Area is one of the most unchurched and faithless metropolitan areas on the planet...we love it here. But why are we here? Really?

That is one of the important questions that will linger in the back of our minds the next 6 weeks as we seek the Lord. Why are we on the planet and not home with the Lord? Most of us know the answer to that question but is something missing among us at Creekside? I might suggest that what is missing is the changed heart...corporately speaking. What are we most passionate about? What do we want most out of life? What are we working so hard to attain? If those questions do not relate directly to God's plan for our lives then the only possible outcome in the church is mediocrity, a self serving ministry, complacency and apathetic if not entertaining.

What if *the* Plan is to be on a mission and not merely to attain a happy life with a little God sprinkled on top? The alternative is to allow the Holy Spirit to speak to us and convict us and direct us...to change our hearts. During these six weeks all of you are being asked to join a Forgotten God small group to discuss the work of the Holy Spirit in your life and in the life of the body. The work of the Spirit is a critical part of the changing of a human heart. A heart cannot be changed and a life "on point" for God cannot be sustained without the empowerment of the Spirit of God.

The glass is half full at Creekside, not half empty. We have enjoyed the blessing of solid Christ centered teaching along with a genuineness among our people. You are a people truly searching and seeking what God wants out of your life. You care deeply about the direction and future of our ministry. You trust the leaders. This is a critical time. The elders sense the movement of the Spirit to shepherd well and lead boldly while still holding on to a humility of servanthood. Jesus told his disciples that they must serve and not be served in order to carry out the mission before them.

Before you in this booklet are six weeks of daily readings that pertain directly to our lives as members of the Creekside family. You will be directed to consider praying daily and throughout the day, specifically for things related to our lives here in the East Bay and as Creeksiders. We are encouraging the body to practice several spiritual disciplines including the fast. Some of you may have never fasted so you will perhaps find this a good opportunity to begin applying the fast to your life now and on other occasions during your life. Regarding fasting, we are simply asking the body to fast at times during this six week period. We might suggest a few certain days where the whole body can fast together but primarily we are suggesting that people pick one day a week and fast for a full day. Fasting is a practice that is intended to turn hunger into an opportunity to pray and think deeply about our lives and our relationship with God. There is nothing mystical or magical about fasting and that is why it is called a "discipline." It is not an easy thing to do. I want to be clear on fasting so that you know we are not requiring or commanding the body to fast. We are only asking the body to fast.

Remember, the point of fasting is not fasting. It is your heart before the Lord and the prayers that come from hunger. Ultimately, we are examining our hunger for God when real food is not being consumed. Jesus told his disciples that His food was to do the will of His Father. Please take note of the next section which addresses fasting and gives some direction for you on how to fast.

May the Lord Jesus Himself be our Spiritual Director during this time and not only change hearts that need redirection but also unite our hearts to a common goal of doing the will of our heavenly Father in this place at this time, all to the glory of God!

Love to you all,

Nick

Tips on Prayer and Fasting

The spiritual discipline of fasting is always **tied to prayer**. Thus the focus of fasting is not fasting but dialogue with God whether for personal reflection or seeking of direction, life change, answers or to fast regarding a corporate body matter. Sadly, the practice of fasting is not common in the church today and while it is true that Jesus never commanded that we fast it was obvious that he was very familiar with the practice in His life. We don't have the space to go into a full treatise on the subject here so allow me to just give you some pointers. Fasting creates hunger. When we are fasting and hungry we are provided an opportunity like no other to consider our hunger and make a parallel between our hunger for food and our hunger for God. Jesus said that his food was to do the will of His Father. In a food fast we invite hunger and use that powerful urge to turn to God and seek Him in prayer. Instead of meeting our need for food on our own we simply turn to God and dialogue with Him. I want to make this as simple as possible. Use hunger to turn to God and talk with Him. Instead of filling yourself at every urge like we so often do in our lives, discipline yourself to focus your hunger on God.

In our six weeks of Hunger for God use this devotional to guide you daily. These pages are full of all kinds of possibilities for prayer and reflection. Our main focus these six weeks is on the body of Christ but you will not be able to ignore your own walk with Christ so lay it all out there. The hope is that during this time the Holy Spirit will work in all of our hearts to bring us closer and to also bring clarity and direction in our ministry as a body.

Practically speaking I might suggest the following: Pick one day a week and fast. If possible, try to fast a whole day—morning through evening. Try it though only if you are physically able. If you have health issues then there are other ways to fast. This is not meant to be torture. Some of you may want to skip two meals in a day or just one. The idea is to create hunger. The more hunger you create the more dependence you will discover. But be realistic and not legalistic. If you fast for a day drink plenty of water all day. If you would like to drink your coffee or juice go ahead. If you give in to snack on something don't necessarily give up...stay hungry and try to continue fasting. The point is to try some kind of fasting to create sustained hunger that results in you praying and focusing on the Lord while presenting to Him matters of the heart and matters of the church body.

If you can fast more than one day a week great. If you need to work up to a full day fast...great. If you want to be creative...fast from TV for a week, two weeks or six and use that time to pray and read the Word. Fast from going out to dinner for six weeks and use the money you would spend to give to the Mercy Fund. Fast from surfing the internet, reading the paper and use the time to be with the Lord and/or in the Word. The point is...use any kind of fast to go to the Lord in prayer. On days you are not fasting use this devotional to keep in step with the body on the subject matter it covers and the prayers for you to offer up. If you need further advice or direction on fasting or any of the spiritual disciplines then contact me or any of the elders. Fasting is called a discipline for a reason. The more it is practiced the more it becomes essential.

August 30, 2010: The Great Commandment Nick Vleisides

Note: We are recommending that as many people as possible fast and pray today as we start our six weeks together. If you have prior commitments involving meals or for health reasons are unable to completely fast, then be free before the Lord to practice any kind of fast possible. Skip one or two meals. Maybe it might suit some to go spend a few hour in solitude or reading the Scriptures or both if you can not fast for some reason. If it is not possible to fast or practice any other discipline then find another day this week. Keep that spirit during the whole 6 weeks. Let the Spirit guide you as to when, how and especially why.

Today we are going to ask you to consider meditating on **Mark 12:28-31** which reads, ²⁸ *One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, "What commandment is the foremost of all?"* ²⁹ *Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE Lord OUR GOD IS ONE Lord;'* ³⁰ **AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE Lord YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.'** ³¹ *"The second is this, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' There is no other commandment greater than these."*

We refer to this as the Great Commandment. Some of you learned this as children and heard it all your life. Perhaps you are new to the faith and are only recently discovering the intense focus of this command. This is what our lives are to be ALL about it. With every fiber of our being we are to love God and then...as a result...we love those around us. So today, read over these verses many times. Consider memorizing them today or this week. Examine your life. Compared to everything and everyone else in your life besides God, how much do you love Him? Many of us will realize and be honest with ourselves that we spend way more time focused on things and *other* relationships (making money, buying things, caring for our homes, caring for our family, recreating, etc.) rather than on tangible ways of loving God. Why is it so difficult to worship during the week? Utter constant praise and adoration? Thank God for the good things constantly? Why are we not frequently overwhelmed with God during the day? Maybe today you can do some business with God on this. Who orders your life...the way you live? You or Him? What do you hunger for in your life?

Prayer: Grant, O merciful God, that your Church, being gathered together in unity by your Holy Spirit, may show forth your power among all people, to the glory of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who live and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

August 31, 2010: Discipleship at Creekside *Nick Vleisides*

My 10 year old and I went fishing on the Delta yesterday. The night before we went over to Dick Ponder's house to learn a few things about fishing for bass and tying up the right rigs. Dick knows a few things about fishing...at least a lot more than I do when it comes to bass fishing. He showed Trevor how to tie "one of the strongest fishing knots there is"...the Palomar knot. Dick showed us where to go on the Delta, what kind of bait to use, what kind of action to use on the rod if we fish for stripers too. Basically Dick was discipling Trevor to fish. Wouldn't it be ridiculous to disciple Trevor in fishing if he really didn't care that much about fishing? I mean you have to love fishing when you consider the time and patience it takes. Catching bass requires skill, practice and "discipleship." They are hard boogers to catch! You see, a love for fishing is absolutely critical for any kind of discipleship to be learned or dispensed.

At Creekside, are we in love with the mission God has for us? Are we even clear on the mission? Why would we begin discipling anyone if the mission was not clear AND if the disciples were not already sensing a deep passion for the mission forming in their hearts and minds? Churches do this all the time in reverse! "We need to disciple people! They need to learn the Word! Learn to serve!" TO WHAT END??? Friends, do we LOVE THE GOSPEL? If we are going to be fishers of men, then do we love to fish? Do we even like it at all? PRAY! Pray for our church that our hearts would be drawn together for the sake of the gospel! Pray that God would put a heart of compassion in each of us for the lost around us. Yes, as we learn to love the gospel we make disciples who make disciples who make disciples.

Go make disciples (Matt. 28:19); You shall be my witnesses! (Acts 1:8); I will make you fishers of men (Mark 1:7); that they also may be in us Us, so that the world may believe that You send Me. (John 17:21); For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified (1Cor. 2:2)

Trevor and I fished all day long on Saturday. We caught a few bass and of course, the "big one" got away. It was rather slow and we had to work hard at catching a few fish. I looked at Trevor at one point when it was slow and late in the day, "Are you ready to go in?" He thought about it and then looked at me and shook his head, "Nah." I thought to myself, "That boy really loves to fish!" I told him so. Lord, help us to love your ministry!

Prayer: Lord, change our hearts at Creekside. Give us a heart that loves the Gospel. Jesus, You are the Gospel! Why are we not finding our hearts burning with desire to make the message relevant and known around us? Help us Jesus. Deal with us. Teach us. Have mercy on us. Direct us. Love us into loving the mission! Amen.

September 1, 2010 The Great Commission at Creekside *Nick Vleisides*

While we are seeking direction from the Lord as a body of believers it would be worth noting that we have very clear instructions from Jesus which tell us what we should be doing. One of the most clear directions from our Lord is to "GO" found in **Matthew 28:18-20**. *18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

The operative words are "go", "make disciples," "baptizing," and "teaching." This passage has been the focus of debate with it comes to understanding what it means to "make disciples." Most commonly accepted is the idea that making disciples infers going out and spreading the gospel as the precursor to making a disciple. It naturally makes sense that you can not "go" where few have gone and find people to disciple unless they come to faith in Christ first...which is what God wants more than anything...relationship. Second, some might read this and think, "well, Jesus is speaking to the disciples not me...not us today." Well, let's be clear: we believe the body of Christ is indeed the body of Christ on earth with the same mission from the Father that Jesus had...to proclaim the kingdom of God...to proclaim the gospel...to make disciples.

Now at Creekside, we are not confused about this but we are seeking from the Lord "how" to go about the Great Commission in our East Bay communities with all of our unique challenges and battles. Seeking direction in this one area is not asking, "Should we be about the Great Commission Lord?" Of course we should be! Examine your understanding of the Great Commission today and always. How "great" is it in your life? What part does/will the Lord have you play? Are we going to be a church about "going"?

Our Prayer Today: "Lord, examine our hearts. Are we ready to make this our aim as you have commanded? Are our hearts and minds focused on giving our lives to Your mission? God, what does it look like for us to be "going," individually and as a body? How do we organize and lead the body in the Great Commission? Holy Spirit, open our eyes to the world around us and the great need for the gospel and for making disciples who carry out Your plan for the Church. Deep down we all want to give our lives to You and have all of our living...all of our breathing...all of our plans...all of our hopes and dreams directly related to the very purpose you have us living, breathing, planning, hoping and dreaming on earth. Give us a clear vision for how the Great Commission is to be carried out in our midst."

September 2, 2010 Being Witnesses at Creekside *Nick Vleisides*

The last thing that Jesus said to His disciples before He ascended to heaven was, “*but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.*” (Acts 1:8) We would agree that the last words someone speaks before they go away for a long time are probably important words...especially if they are a command or request. As was addressed yesterday, we are the body of Christ so any assignment, command or directive given to the disciples applies to the body of Christ today. Therefore, we are all called to be witnesses. Being a witness is not being an evangelist. An evangelist has the gift of evangelism, which is rather rare in the body of Christ even if necessary. But all of us can be a witness giving testimony as to what we’ve experienced firsthand when it comes to our relationship with Christ. Jesus seems to be saying in the context of this verse in chapter 1 of Acts that his return to earth is somehow related to the effectiveness of the body of Christ being a witness to Christ.

So at Creekside, we view being a witness as having an evangelistic purpose but it is not exercising gifts of evangelism which most believers do not possess. I wouldn’t even call it “doing evangelism” because that makes it sound like it is something programmatic or outside of ourselves. Being a witness is a Spirit led aspect to our lives which means we have this sense about our lives that we are constantly on the witness stand in every aspect of our lives...at home, in the workplace, at school, on the soccer field, in the grocery store, at the hospital, on vacation, working in the front yard, attending Christmas parties, dealing with trouble or hardship and on and on. We must always be ready to give an account of our experience in Christ whenever God opens a door with someone.

I sat in on a jury years ago where an off duty firefighter went to sell some pit bull puppies only to be robbed at gun point by the prospective buyer at their arranged rendezvous. He wrestled a shotgun away from the robber and the robber fled. The assailant was later captured and went to trial. I’ll never forget when the firefighter was on the witness stand and was asked to identify his assailant. Without hesitation he stood, look directly at the defendant and with a tone of complete confidence pointed his finger and said, “That’s the guy! Right there! That’s him.” I’ve got to say, his testimony was very powerful given the defense tried to convince the jury the defendant was not the guy. We are a part of a trial that is going on around us every day. The judge has not made a ruling yet but He is allowing for all the testimony to be given such that a “not guilty” verdict would be pronounced on all those who are swayed by the testimony of reliable witnesses—you and I. Jesus—He’s the guy! A savior!

Prayer: Lord, give us Creeksiders a clear sense of calling that each of our lives are to be lived as witnesses of what You have done in our lives...and what you are doing...and what you will do. If there is a reason why we are afraid to bear witness of You please work in our hearts. Holy Spirit come. We plead for you to make us a church of called witnesses!

September 3, 2010 The Work of the Ministry at Creekside *Nick Vleisides*

All right, I’ll shoot straight on this one. My job should be to completely work myself out of a job, in a way. A mature body will realize their own potential for exercising the spiritual gifts which exist among everyone in the church. They will not look at “the church” as an “organization” for which the “hired staff” is responsible to run. Instead, people will be serving, teaching, visiting, praying, counseling, baptizing, sharing communion, worshipping and more without demands or commands from a top down structure. It will be natural because the mature man or woman is responding directly to the Lord Jesus Christ...the prompting of the Spirit and the truth of God’s Word.

The work of the ministry belongs to the saints and we are all the saints in Christ. We see this so clearly in **Ephesians 4:11-12** “*And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;*” In the church, the leadership is to equip the people for the work of service. Equipping the saints means equipping everyone. The work of service is based on the giving of gifts to all men in Christ which we read about just a few verses earlier in Ephesians 4:8. Yes, pastors and elders, along with the ministry of prophets, evangelists and apostles serves an important leadership purpose. So at Creekside, let’s get one thing straight. If anyone comes to us and is looking for a church where *someone else* is to be doing the work of the ministry and they only want to enjoy relationships and good programs, they will soon discover that we teach Ephesians 4:11:12 and there is a job for them to do according to what God has planned. Our job is to help people discover their ministry and prepare them for it. As we’ll learn during these six weeks, ultimately the work of the ministry relates to the proclaiming of the gospel.

Prayer: Father, help us know how to best equip the Creekside body. God, does our body want to be equipped? Is there an attitude or a belief among us that somebody else should be doing the real work of ministry? Or are we just so distracted or attracted to other things that even in spite of our knowledge of the truth in this matter, we just believe something else? Lord, help our leaders...help our elders...help Nick, Sean, Tim and Kerri...help Pete, Brian, Rhonda, Patsy Doug, Kimberly, Ron, Jim, Deborah, Josh, Jesse, Mollie and other leaders/teachers/disciplers equip the saints in the body for the work of ministry. Make the work of ministry clear to each and every one of us. Call us God. Inspire us. Bring perspective to our lives. Please Lord Jesus. Have your way with us! To Him who is able to do exceedingly, abundantly more than all we could ever ask or imagine, according to the power that is at work within us... to Him be the glory in the church forever! Amen.

September 6, 2010 Being Missional People at Creekside *Nick Vleisides*

OK...If you are well read in Christian books and articles you will know that this word “missional” has been popularized the past 10 years or more. It is a word that was coined some years ago to take the idea of “mission” and apply to the life purpose of Christ followers. Until this phrase was introduced into Christendom, the word “missions” or “missionaries” usually applied to those rare individuals or couples who heed a call from God to leave their homes and travel...usually abroad...where you must wear sandals and use a mosquito net at night...to do Christian work. What developed was this notion that there were “missionaries” and there were the rest of us commoners who simply strived to live Christian lives in our homeland...being good people.

“Missionaries” are on the front lines, right? They are the ones who are really called into a specific and adventurous “mission.” Chah! The idea of “missional” turns that notion on its head. We must come to accept that every believer is a missionary on the mission field. I would argue that the mission field here at home is much more difficult, riskier and costly than being a missionary abroad to a Third World country. I think it is much more difficult for you and I to overcome our fears and anxiety about reaching out to the neighbors on our streets. You might find it far easier to travel to India and share the gospel straight up to Hindus who are living in abject poverty. Yes, Jesus called us to be witnesses to “utter ends of the earth” but He also made it clear that we are to first be a witness in our “Jerusalem,” i.e., our hometown.

Are you willing to consider yourself a “missionary” here? Is your neighborhood, workplace, school and community a “mission field” in your mind? Is your “mission” on earth clear? If so, you are being “missional.” If most of us at Creekside look at our lives that way, then we will be a “missional” church. God is calling us to be “missional” and we must see that calling in the two fold Great Commandment; the Great Commission and the calling to be witnesses. Think about your missional life today.

Prayer: Lord, we often ask for clarity and focus in our lives. We sometimes feel adrift even if things are working out well for us. It could be said that success in the material world comes at a high price...we become so focused on meeting our own needs and wants...maintaining what we have earned and received that we miss the call to our mission field around us. God create in us... as a church...this deep longing to be missional as a people. Break through whatever barrier might exist which keeps us satisfied with maintaining a lifestyle of comfort and safety. Yes, we do pray for safety and strength to make it through each day, but we also realize those prayers are said in the context of a battle raging around us. God, help us in the battle for the human soul. May we have focus and clarity today like we have never had before. Oh Father...lead on.

September 7, 2010 Visitors at Creekside *Nick Vleisides*

I’ve heard from many people over the years that Creekside is a friendly church. People who “stick” at Creekside after visiting usually comment that they felt very welcome at Creekside and people are friendly. I know most of you at Creekside at some level and I think you are some of the most kind and loving people I could possibly know. You guys are the real deal. Having said that I don’t know what to make of the large number of visitors we have had over the years who have not “stuck.” I’ll bet we have had at least 800 visitors or the past five years. I believe that when people make immediate connections with other people and are made to feel special and are recognized...it is a very powerful draw.

Our Frontline Team does an excellent job of greeting everyone while being on the watch for visitors. I love all of you but if I may, under the umbrella of grace, exhort us. We are a friendly bunch and we respond very well to visitors who are in the “go getter” category. I think of the Gibsons, Sayers, Cerullus, Vinogradovs, Peis, Johnsons and the Hales who visited us and immediately took initiative to meet people and get involved. Yet, many of our visitors... arguably most, need you to reach out to them in ways that supersede the “stand and greet time” in the service. We should come on Sundays prepared to pursue anyone who is visiting or even folks we don’t know for that matter. We should take such genuine interest that on occasion you find yourselves inviting visitors to breakfast after church...or asking if they would like to have coffee sometime during the week...or getting a phone number to call and follow up to see how their visit went and invite them back.

I stand up on Sundays and I see a whole handful of people who are not known at all by most of you but ya’ll have been in the same room for 5 years on Sundays. I’ll often be talking to a guy after church I’ve known for years and another guy I’ve known for years walks up to talk and I’ll always ask the two if they know each other (unless I obviously know they do). I can’t believe how many times I’ve introduced men who have been fellowshiping together for years and who have never met. I don’t know what you call that phenomenon...seriously. I know ya’ll have a great capacity to love. So let me prod you...GO NUTS OVER VISITORS! That is part of you building up the body at Creekside. If God is leading someone to Creekside then we honor God by taking a very special interest in visitors. If any of you have any ideas about how we can do better at this, let me know! In the meantime, go get em!

Prayer: Lord...you know our hearts. Deep down none of us wishes for any visitor to ever come into our midst and not feel like the most special person in the room that day. If every one of us could spot a visitor when we saw one, we could shower such love on those who nervously visit and experience the anxiety of being in a crowd of people whom they do not know. Work in our hearts Father. If people come to us and are not sticking because of our neglect, how can we ever go out and reach the world for you? Help us to practice hospitality as if each of us were homeowners on Sundays with visitors coming over for dinner. In five years Lord, might we see hundreds of people find real fellowship among us right off the bat and stick!

September 8, 2010 How Do I Endure? Mike Duensing

My wife and I are acquainted to difficult times. We have found ourselves on occasion asking each other with tears in our eyes how much longer we can endure.

Hungry for comfort and answers, I then turn to ruminate on God's word, and am comforted to see that we share a common experience with people over the ages that have endured difficult times. For example, look at Paul who wrote about how he had experienced hardship beyond what seemed impossible to endure, but God was with him and gave him the strength to continue, not by human power, but by the power of His Spirit:

"⁹for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned. ¹⁰For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory." (2 Tim 2:2, 9-10)

By sharing the deep parts of our lives within our community at Creekside, we have also been greatly comforted to know that we are not alone in our struggles. We are heartened to learn of God's faithfulness and victories, and the models of faith and hope from those in our community.

But most importantly I am reminded that God is with us, that God understands, hurts, and cries with us, and promises to never leave. He gives us power through the Holy Spirit to press on and hope for the future. No one and nothing else in this world can make such a promise.

Indeed, many in our community are familiar with hardship especially in these time of economic crisis and uncertainty. We must look to God's Word and put our hope in none other than Him:

"⁴For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. ⁵May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus" (Rom 15:4-5)

Prayer: Father, what a remarkable comfort it is to know that you understand how I feel, and that your Holy Spirit is with me and will always provide the strength and hope I need to persevere no matter the circumstances with my finances, my employment, my relationships, my health, my children, my business, and all the other areas of my life.

September 9, 2010 Small Groups at Creekside Kerri Sadigh

Since April, most of you know that I have been cruising the halls and classrooms on Sunday mornings for our Children's Ministry. How great it is to see how God is already working in them at a young age. As I spend time outside of the auditorium, I've had a good friend who has been visiting our church since Easter off and on. She comes with her son who is in a classroom and sits by herself during the service. It is hard for me not to think of her as I am outside of the auditorium and hope that she is having a great experience inside as she is a seeker and going through some struggles where I know she needs some love and support. I think, coming to Creekside...what a perfect place for her to find the TLC and from that, more spiritual growth that she is seeking. However, there have been many times before, during, and after the service where I peak in and notice that she is still alone. No one seems to have approached her or is making her feel connected to the body. It dawned on me this past Sunday when I saw her once again sitting surrounded by chairs with Bibles and purses on them rather than people that I will not ever be able to sit with her and connect her with others due to my schedule and only God can orchestrate those moments among His people. Until she has a special interaction with someone at our church and starts to feel connected, she will come and go on Sundays and never get to taste all of the love that God would want to show her through His people.

I know many of you have felt like her at one time or another...feeling distant and alone and trying to figure things out on your own. I know there are currently more people in our body just like her who are hoping that someone would reach out so they can feel part of something larger than themselves. For me, it wasn't until I had joined my first small group at Creekside where I developed deep relationships with other believers and was the core of what had kept us at Creekside for all of these years. Jim Garfield stopped by my office yesterday full of wisdom and he shared his heart about small groups and how they are what make up the church body. A Sunday morning should be a time where all the small groups come together to worship he said. Ephesians 21-22 says this: "*In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*"

Together. That is what God intends for us. That is why Jesus traveled with 12 disciples. Are you connected? Have you experienced a small group at Creekside? Have you sat with a group of people who love the Lord and discuss scripture and how it applies to your daily life? Are you reaching out to others like my friend who visits to help connect them to a small group? I urge you to not go through this life alone.

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September 9, 2010 Small Groups at Creekside Kerri Sadigh *continued*

Take the first step and find at least one person to connect with on a regular basis in the body. Before you know it, that one person will turn into 4 and then 10. I know what you are thinking...I am too busy and don't have time. We are never too busy to do what we want. Pray for the *want* if it isn't there. We have many options for small group involvement at Creekside and I hope you consider praying for how you might be a part of a ministry larger than yourself.

Prayer: Lord, forgive me for the times that I think I can stay strong spiritually without the help of my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. Pray for those who come to Creekside who are not feeling connected to the body or You. Be with me this week as I commit to the following: 1. Contact a member of the Body you haven't talked to for a while 2. Do something nice for a current member in the Body (offering prayer is always a great option!) 3. Intentionally meet someone new in the Body whether it is going up to someone on a Sunday or visiting one of our small groups.

September 10, 2010 Salvation and Discipleship Are Inseparable Rod Simmons

Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:31-32 NKJV

Read John 8:25-36

As Jesus spoke about His Father, being taught by His Father, being obedient to His Father, and His complete dependence on His Father, many believed in Him. But Jesus didn't stop there. He wanted those who believed to understand and experience that salvation and discipleship are inseparable. Without being a disciple, there is no salvation, there is no freedom from sin, and there is no relationship with God.

As you meditate on this teaching of Jesus, consider three things: 1) what does it mean to be His disciple, 2) what is the one thing required for discipleship, and 3) what is the result of discipleship. The word disciple means learner. But a disciple is much more than a student. In the context of Jesus' teaching a disciple is a faithful follower of Him, one devoted to Him and His teaching. Just as Jesus was dependent on His relationship with His Father and only spoke and did those things taught Him by His Father, the true disciple of Jesus is fully dependent on Jesus, and is committed to speaking and doing the things taught by Jesus. A disciple of Jesus imitates Jesus and endeavors to become like Jesus.

Recently my daughter graduated from college and she had a decision to make: "do I move back home". At first I was frustrated by how much she was agonizing over this decision. Then as I listened to her, I understood that this was not just a simple choice about where she would live, but also a sober reflection on the new responsibilities she faced and the impact this decision may have on her future. She had to consider her relationships, finding a job, and her independence versus continued dependence on her parents. Although this is an imperfect analogy, the one requirement Jesus has for true discipleship, "*abide in MY word*", is also both simple and sobering. It is simple in that all that Jesus demands is that you "abide". You don't have to accomplish anything, know anything, or have any particular ability - just make His word your home, be completely dependent on His word, love His word, and live in His word. It is sobering in that it requires the highest level of commitment; the commitment to live by His word. To be Jesus' disciple you must be committed to the truth in Jesus and continue in that truth forever.

Forbes magazine just published its annual list of America's best colleges. The criteria Forbes uses to differentiate the best colleges are largely based on student satisfaction and success. Many desire the satisfaction and success these educations offer and will work hard for the chance at it. The value of the institution is tied directly to value the student finds in it. Likewise, being a disciple of Jesus is also about the student, but not some temporal success and

Continued on next page

September 10, 2010 Salvation and Discipleship Are Inseparable

Rod Simmons continued

satisfaction. Discipleship is about liberating the student. Jesus says the goal of being His disciple is simply and profoundly that: *"you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free"*. By truth, Jesus is referring not only to the facts concerning Himself as the Messiah, but also to His teaching, and the experience of knowing Him as Lord and Savior. Knowing this truth sets you free by removing the corruption and guilt of sin. It sets you free by establishing you in God's family, and opening the door to the great and many privileges of being His child. It sets you free to enter into the most wonderful of relationships with Him and His people.

Sadly, there are those who have made it their vocation to study the life of Jesus, attend Christian universities, listen to great Christian teachers, or are members of fine churches, but never really know or experience His truth. In contrast, there are many who may have little or no formal training and yet genuinely know and experience the fullness of knowing Jesus. The difference between the two is simply that those who experience His truth not only believe in Him, they also abide in His word. They are truly His disciples.

Prayer: Lord, may we be disciples who seek knowledge and truth found only in your Word. Lead us by your Word, both spoken into our minds by your Holy Spirit as we read the Scriptures and also as we speak your Word into each other's lives. There is no abiding in your Word without abiding in You. So make us alive to You and alive to Your Word. Amen.

September 13, 2010 Evangelism at Creekside *Derek Ewin*

Evangelism has always been a difficult concept for me. What does it mean to evangelize, and how do I fill my role in the Great Commission? As a teenager, I went to a couple third world countries with mission organizations. I came back confused about whether I should be a full time missionary in a foreign country or if it was OK to do something else with my life. I spent four years at UCLA where I was encouraged by my Bible study group to walk up to strangers on campus and try to engage them in conversations about "spiritual things."

Finally, I graduated from college and law school and entered the "real world." As a government lawyer, I had to be careful about what I said regarding Christianity. In many ways, this was a big relief to me because, believe it or not, I have always been uncomfortable about "sharing my faith." I have always had the desire to talk with people about Christ, but my experiences felt so forced.

Lately, however, things have changed. I have come to realize that if I want to share the good news about who God is and how He wants to relate with us, God will provide opportunities that are consistent with my gifts and abilities. While some people are called, and have the gifts, to walk up to total strangers and start a conversation about Jesus, others are called to share in different ways.

I have been excited to see members of my family and friends evangelizing according to their gifts. My mother volunteers with an organization called Global Mission Outreach (GMO). GMO has hundreds of web sites that come up on search engines to answer questions about God. Many of the people who visit these sites have more specific questions about Christ. GMO has "online missionaries" like my mother who answer these questions and relate with these people over email. My wife heads up the Camp Creekside vacation Bible school where many Creeksiders, both adults and youths, share God's love with campers who only step foot in church that one week out of the year. Nick and others in the "dirt bike crowd" take unbelievers riding. The drive there and back often leads to "spirited" talks about who God is. My daughter, one of the biggest evangelists I know, simply invites her friends to high school youth events.

The point that I am making is that God can use us in all sorts of ways, and will give us all sorts of opportunities, to fulfill the Great Commission without us having to move to another country or without having to walk up to strangers and ask them if they know God. The question is, are we open to being used? If so, God will provide plenty of opportunities that won't be forced, but instead will simply coincide with the way we live our lives.

Prayer: Lord, draw me closer to you today. Help me to realize and understand how much you love me and want to relate to me. Use me, in whatever way you see fit, to share who you are, and how you want to relate to us, with the people around me. Help me not to draw you into my way of doing things, but instead, use me as a part of your plan. I am so thankful that I know you.

September 14, 2010 Mercy at Creekside Dave Fore

When Pastor Nick asked if I wanted to be part of the Mercy Team I wondered aloud about how much need there could be in such a wealthy area. In the past several months I've learned that there are many hurting families and individuals in our Church; most of whom are diligent, hard working and prudent people who never imagined the day that they would require financial assistance.

The goal of Creekside Community Church is to meet the needs of individuals and families in our body. Often the need is physical or financial. The Mercy fund was set up to meet needs in the short term, with the larger, long-term goal of encouraging individuals to mature in their Christian walk.

The Mercy fund offering is collected at the first of the month; it is administered by the Mercy Team as a way to provide assistance to people and unburden the Pastor and Elders. Our service is to work with people referred to us who are having serious financial problems. A Mercy Team member will come along side to understand the problem and look for resources, alternatives, and as a final resort, provide specific financial assistance. As good stewards of the Mercy fund we are diligent to determine if it is appropriate to provide financial support vs. other resources such as family assistance. If there is any doubt we always err to the side of Mercy.

In the past several months we have assisted Creeksiders with specific needs such as bridging medical insurance, paying for rental cars, counseling sessions, rents and mortgages to provide time for individuals to make other arrangements. There are other families who will require longer term support due to circumstances well beyond their control; with the Mercy Fund we are privileged to continue this support. The economy has hit many families hard. Need is up and giving is down. We will administer the Mercy Fund with the assurance that God is manifestly in control.

Prayer: Grant us O Father the depth of compassion to take notice of those around us who are in need, whether suffering from circumstances out of their control or because of their own actions. We all suffer from both, events that we have no control over and consequences of our own actions. May our Mercy Team have the wisdom and discernment needed to assess every opportunity that comes to them with the guidance of your Holy Spirit. Allow us all to consider ourselves as dispensers of Mercy and not solely depend on the Mercy Team to meet needs. Could it be that the Mercy Team serve as a back up when we might miss an opportunity among us as body members? Increase our fund Lord. To you be the glory in a life helped through our compassion!

September 15, 2010 Elders Pete Stafford

I Thess 5:12-13

The Journey class is currently enjoying a healthy discussion around Paul's letters to the Thessalonians. This church was truly a remarkable assembly of believers. Paul writing within only a month or two of their conversion says this about the reputation that this new Family had gained:

Do you know that all over the provinces of both Macedonia and Achaia believers look up to you? The word has gotten around. Your lives are echoing the Master's Word, not only in the provinces but all over the place. The news of your faith in God is out. We don't even have to say anything anymore—you're the message! People come up and tell us how you received us with open arms, how you deserted the dead idols of your old life so you could embrace and serve God, the true God. (I Thess 1:7-9 The Message)

Remarkable, yes! Perfect, no!

This church family was far from perfect. Paul's time with them was cut short as he was run out of town by opposition from the Jews and Greeks from the marketplace (Acts 17:10). There was much more to learn from Paul, but in his brief stay, Paul had grounded them in the word, and he had encouraged them to appoint Elders "in the Lord".

Imagine being a Pagan worshipper one week, and being overcome by the Power of the truth of the Gospel in the Power of the Spirit, the next week, and then sensing this call upon your life to minister to your newfound Family in Christ as an Elder/Leader the next week. This is how it was for the Elders and leaders of the church at Thessalonica in 51AD.

Seeking the mind of the Lord for calling certain believers for the position of leadership was a common custom of Paul's for all of the churches that he founded:

¹¹And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, ¹²for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; (Ephesians 4:11-12 NASB)

This church was born out of idol worship, and into a newfound joy. But they were also born into adversity. Often times when adversity hits, we think we are doing something wrong. Or, we look to place blame on others. Perhaps, though, adversity might be an indication that you and your family are doing something very right. Paul reminds his beloved of this:

Not that the troubles should come as any surprise to you. You've always known that we're in for this kind of thing. It's part of our calling. When we were with you, we made it quite clear that there was trouble ahead. And now that it's happened, you know what it's like. (I Thess 3:3-5 The Message)

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September 15, 2010 Elders Pete Stafford continued

As we look at Paul's instruction back to this new church family, it is evident that this church is struggling with their Spiritual Leaders. Paul offers the following instruction to them: ¹²*But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction,* ¹³*and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.* (1 Thess 5:12-13 NASB)

Here in our text we find Paul exhorting this beloved church family. These are words of instruction and correction and caring from their beloved Spiritual Father. Elders/Pastors are a key ingredient of a healthy family, just as leadership of a family, company, and nation are key ingredients to the health and welfare of all in those entities as well. In our text, Paul provides three simple instructions, and offers three supporting reasons about how this new church family should respond to these brand new believers, who also happen to be their leaders.

What are the three instructions? -

Appreciate your Pastor Elders – the word for Appreciate carries with it the idea of “to know, appreciate, recognize, do not take them for granted”. I couldn't help but think of the announcement this past Sunday that the Elders of Creekside will be hosting families for dessert. Perhaps, according to this instruction, we have it reversed. Perhaps the families should be inviting the Elders and Pastors over for dessert.

Esteem very highly in love your Pastor Elders – our Pastor Elders have been called to a very important work. It's a high and costly calling, and if for no other reason, they are to be highly valued. The question for us of course, is how we would go about expressing that value in very practical ways.

Live in Peace with one another – well what does that have to do with Elders and Pastors? Show me a church that argues about Elders and Pastors and *who* is better, and *who* is more talented and *who* is a better speaker and I will show you a church that is not at Peace. All Elders and Pastors are gifted uniquely. All are to be valued and esteemed.

Why should we? –

have charge over you....**IN THE LORD** – Those called to have Spiritual charge over the Creekside body have been appointed by the Head of the Church, our Lord Jesus. Our Pastor Elders have been put in place at this time and in this place. We know what we want. We think we know what we need. But Jesus knows exactly what our body needs, and He has appointed Pastors and Elders to exercise Spiritual oversight on our behalf to address those true needs....provided that we allow them.

September 15, 2010 Elders Pete Stafford continued

They **INSTRUCT** You – In other words, they are charged with speaking into our lives. We have many voices screaming at us. But we have very few Spiritual Fathers. Our Pastor Elders prayerfully consider how best to speak into our lives. Again, from the message... (***who have been given the responsibility of urging and guiding you along in your obedience.***)

And finally, our Pastors Elders deserve our appreciation, esteem and peaceful enjoyment of one another because – **They diligently labor** among us. One of the myths of the ministry is that Pastoring is an easy job...after all, they only work one day out of the week, right? Our Elders are transforming how our church family operates. We are moving more and more in line with Paul's instructions about how the church family is to conduct itself. The slogan of Christ is Head – Elder Led – Pastor Fed – Saints ahead is becoming more and more of a reality. This reality is taking place in the power of the Lord and on the backs of the leaders who have been so diligently laboring on our behalf.

Prayer: Father, we thank you for giving us your word, and how it came to us in the Power of Your Holy Spirit. We thank You that in your word, we see a model for how we can enjoy the blessings of a church family. Father, we thank You for the Shepherds called out by your Son, the Bridegroom of the Church. We thank you for the Elders and Pastors of Creekside, called at this time to serve this body as they serve you in this calling. May you grant them fresh wind and encouragement as they carry out their duties at this exciting time for our church. And may we, the body find practical ways to demonstrate to them our love and concern and appreciation for all that they do. In the Good Shepherds' name we pray, Amen.

September 16, 2010 *Worldview Nick Vleisides*

From Dallas Willard's Book, "Knowing Christ Today: Why We Can Trust Spiritual Knowledge."

Everyone has a worldview. Whenever we act, we act with a reference to a "world," a totality of facts, goods, and possibilities. A worldview is, therefore, a biological necessity for human beings, because we act, whether consciously or not, with reference to a whole (a "world"). Our "view" of that whole determines what we shall undertake to deal with or omit in our actions day by day and hour by hour. It dictates what we will or will not count on as resources and recognize as dangers. It determines our aims and our means and eventually, the quality of our life and the kind of person we will become. Our worldview is simply our overall orientation to life. You can not "opt out" of having a worldview. You can only try to have one that most accords with reality, including the whole realm of facts concerning what is generally good.

One's world view need not be recognized as such to have its effects. Much of it lies outside our consciousness in the moment of action, embedded in our body and in its social environment, including our history, language, and culture. It radiates throughout our life as background assumptions, in thoughts too deep for words. But any thoughtful observe can discern the essential outlines of what it is. What we assume to be real and what we assume to be valuable will govern our attitudes and our actions. Period. And usually without thinking. But most people do not recognize that they have a worldview, and usually it is one that is borrowed, in bits and pieces, from the social environment in which we are reared. It may not even be self-consistent.

Jesus gives an illustration of how this works in the story of the prosperous but foolish farmer in **Luke 12:16-21**. Because his crops were very abundant, he said to his soul, "*Soul you have ample goods laid up for many years: relax, eat, drink, and be merry.*" But in God's eyes he was a fool. He was not dealing with reality. He did not have many years. He died that night, according to the story, and his possessions went to someone else. "So it is," says Jesus, "with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich towards God." The rich farmer's general assumption about what was real and what was good were disastrously mistaken. Thus, because worldview is so influential, it is also dangerous.

Prayer: Dear Father, yes we all have a worldview about all things. What drives me in life? What view? What does this all mean? Why do I do what I do? Why am I here? What is real? Jesus, I don't know any other answer for those questions except that You are the Answer. Change my worldview if in any way, it smacks of the prosperous farmer. All that I have or do not have is almost irrelevant when it comes to my heart and my life and my purpose and my calling and my ministry. Oh God, help this church body to have the same exact worldview. The same exact worldview! Your worldview.

September 17, 2010 *Where the Devil Likes Me Nick Vleisides*

I started off with an elder meeting yesterday at 6AM and wrapped up at the office at 8PM with a pre-marital counseling appointment. I had a bowl of broccoli for lunch and I was already starving at 5PM. When I got home Heidi had left the taco meat and fix'ns on the stove. I overate. Then I felt guilty for eating too much. No way I could go to bed on a full stomach so I sat down at the computer to address an issue with it not waking up from sleep mode. Last month I purchased and added RAM to the computer only to have to return the modules and have new ones sent since there was a corruption issue. So after trying to come up with a solution for about an hour last night the dang computer went corrupt again. I was so mad. "I don't have time for this!" "Why does something so simple need to become so complicated?!" I gave up and went to bed working on my attitude knowing this is where the devil gets to me.

I got up this morning and after having a bowl of cereal I decided to sit outside and read my devotional and do some reading of Dallas Willard's, "Knowing Christ." The devotional went fine and then as I took a depth breath ready to take in one of the most brilliant minds in Christendom it started. We live next to a large 5 acre green belt and the landscape dudes started up their tractor mower and of all places, were running up and down the side of our fence. It was so loud. I got so mad. Just coming out of my devotional, here I am murmuring some words I, let alone a pastor, shouldn't be murmuring. This is where the devil likes to get to me. I decided to stick it out and read through.

While I was reading with noise of mowers and weed whackers going on, little did I know the fire department was calling me with a need for a chaplain. Never heard the phone with all the ruckus. By the time I went in the house and saw the call it was too late, they found someone else. I don't get called often and Wednesday is *my* day to be on call. I was so mad! By now I'm having a downer of a day...in spite of my devotional and some really good reading on "knowing Christ." Then American Express calls and tells me my account has been compromised and unauthorized charges have been made to my account. The bill came the day before so I went to look at it for the first time and didn't see the charges they were referring to but something else caught my attention. With all the sports, school supplies, registrations, school clothes and the like this past month we racked up nearly \$1000 of charges on our card! I was already feeling like we were spending way to much money the past few weeks out of our checking account, wondering if we were in "overdraft mode" yet... being afraid to even check. I was depressed. We've been in the habit of paying our credit card debt every month and it looked like it might not happen! All this took me to a low...right where the devil likes me to be.

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September 17, 2010 Where the Devil Likes Me *Nick Vleisides continued*

All this forced me to come to grips with the question the Spirit was putting on my mind, “Nick, which kingdom do you live in? Do you want to live? The kingdom of this world is broken, expensive, loud and evil. My kingdom is all about the effective reign of My will which you can participate.” Creekside... all of you can relate to my story of a short period of time. *things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

My stuff is piddley compared to the real troubles other face. But either way... the question remains...which kingdom are you really living in? Which kingdom is real? **2 Corinthians 4:18** ¹⁸ *while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

Prayer: Lord, we are to be all about the things that are unseen and not the things that are seen. Help us to know You in such a real way that doing Your will makes perfect sense. Give us a clear sign of the effective reign of your will for our ministry at Creekside. Each of us has struggles and we confess that often our struggles result from trying to make life work in a way that is outside Your will...outside Your kingdom. May You be glorified in us and keep that dang devil from messing with me. May You have Your way in us. May You reveal the truth to us about us. Redirect our hearts from saving things, fixing things, storing things, wanting things, and loving things. Lord have mercy on us.

**September 20, 2010 Knowing God’s Will for Your Life Through Prayer
*John Pamer***

Have you ever wondered how you are supposed to know God’s will for your life, much less follow it? You can be ready to face any situation if you are in continual prayer, and take responsible actions. Look at Nehemiah, who wanted to do something for God, but knew he could not do it in his own strength. For this devotional topic you are going to need your bible and do some reading in Nehemiah.

First, read Nehemiah 1:1-11

Verses 1-3: Nehemiah received an honest assessment of the condition of Jerusalem. Have you asked God or those you are accountable to for an honest assessment of your life?

Verse 4: Nehemiah prayed and fasted for “many days”. What is your response to adversity?

Verses 5-11: Nehemiah admires God (O great and awesome God vs. 5), pleads for God to hear his prayer (vs. 6) confesses individual and corporate sin (verses 6-7), intercedes for his people (verses 8-10), and petitions for himself (verse 11)

Second, read Nehemiah 2:1-20

Even after four months of praying, Nehemiah had to take a big risk. To appear sad before the king could have cost him his life. (Verses 1-2) Nehemiah made a quick prayer to God on the spot—verse 4. Then he made his request known to Artaxerxes. (Verse 5). Interesting to note that this quick prayer on the spot followed months of continuous prayer and fasting. Artaxerxes granted Nehemiah’s request and even gave him more than he asked for (verses 6-9).

Even after getting what he had prayed for so earnestly, Nehemiah immediately faced opposition. (Verse 10).Prayer gave Nehemiah a vision and a purpose. He followed God’s leading and God blessed his efforts. Others saw God’s hand in it and were motivated to act. (Verse 18)

Third, read Nehemiah 4:1

Chuck Smith, Senior Pastor of Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa, comments as follows on chapter 4:

Continued on next page

September 20, 2010 Knowing God's Will for Your Life Through Prayer
John Pamer continued

"Now we offered our prayer unto God and we set our watch (verse 9)." The prayer was not used in lieu of responsible actions. Nor should prayer ever be used in lieu of responsible actions. God expects us to act responsibly. Some people use prayer as an excuse for their laziness. It should never be. "We offered our prayer unto God and we set the watch against the enemy." God does expect us to do what is wise and what is prudent though all the while we are trusting in Him. We know that, "If the Lord doesn't watch the city, the watchman waketh but in vain" ([Psalm 127:1](#)). But the watchman still wakes up. We don't say, "Lord, watch the city," and then everybody just go to sleep. But the watchman is still there. But if the Lord isn't watching, he's waking up and he's there in vain. We realize that it is necessary that God watch the city, but we also realize it's necessary that we take the prudent actions that are required of us. So, "We offered our prayer unto our God and we set our watch day and night."

We need to pray continually. God wants us to pray continually. Prayer can take many forms, such as adoration and worship, quietly waiting to hear from God, confession of sins, intercession for others and petition for ourselves.

Prayer model: A.W.C.I.P.A.—this can be used as a prayer guide for each week.

Letter	Scripture	Jesus' prayer example
A—Admire Admire and thank God	Psalm 8:9	...Our Father in heaven, Holy is Your Name...
W-Wait Wait Quietly for God	Psalm 46:10	...Your Kingdom come... Your will be done...
C-Confess Confess your sins	1 John 1:9, Psalm 103:12	...forgive us our sins...
I-Intercede Intercede for others	1 Chronicles 4:9	...just as we have forgiven others...
P-Petition Petition for yourself	Psalm 51:10-12 John 14: 12-14	...deliver us from evil...
A-Admire Admire and thank God	Psalm 8:9	...for Yours is the Kingdom, the power, and the Glory...

September 20, 2010 Knowing God's Will for Your Life Through Prayer
John Pamer continued

By praying continually, God's plan and purpose for our lives will be made known to us. It doesn't mean we won't have to take risks or work hard. It just means we will be blessed doing what God wants, not doing our own thing and asking God to bail us out of trouble.

Our Father in heaven,
 Hallowed be your name.
 Your Kingdom come,
 Your will be done,
 On earth as in heaven.
 Give us today our daily bread.
 Forgive us our sins,
 As we forgive those who sin against us.
 Lead us not into temptation,
 But deliver us from evil.
 For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours.
 Now and forever. Amen.

September 21, 2010 Serving, Being Served, and the Sideline
Paul Vinogradov

The Scriptures undeniably instruct us to serve the Lord: “*And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.*” (Deuteronomy 10:12). Furthermore we understand from Paul’s writings that God calls us to discover our gifts, excel in gifts that build and strengthen the body, and to serve one another in love. Jesus connects this service to one another with our service to our Heavenly Father: “*I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.*” (Matthew 25:40). And certainly Jesus leads us by example in this area: “*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*” (Mark 10:45).

At Creekside we have many wonderful servants that minister to you and to your family on Sundays and throughout the week. You may be one of these servants. At times you may feel as though you can never serve enough. There never seems to be enough servants actually serving to go around, the demand for service seemingly always outweighing the supply. You may even find yourself so overwhelmed at times by the sheer magnitude of the needs of the body and our community that you feel helpless and even paralyzed, thereby limiting the overall supply of serving even further. Others of you are experiencing real needs – the loss of loved ones, physical or emotional trauma, conflict, financial troubles, and so on. You welcome the pouring out of love and service from the body with open arms. You may be a part of a third group, best described as “sitting on the sideline.” You come to church and are served simply by attending, but you are not actively serving in a meaningful way. Regardless of which group you are in right now – Serving, Being Served, or on the Sideline, there is one thing we all have in common. We must “let go and let God”. When we serve, we should serve with pure hearts and not selfish motives. When we are offered service, we must be willing to receive it with a humble and grateful heart. And for those of us on the “Sideline”, we must take more risk to step out in faith and discern how we might serve or be served in order to grow closer to God.

Our Prayer Today: “Dear Lord, as a church body at Creekside, how are we doing with our service to you, to each other, and to our community? Do we serve with pure hearts? Do we receive with humble and grateful hearts? Are we taking risks both to serve and be served? As an individual member of the body, where I am today? I pray that I might take another step toward trusting you today to both serve and to be served. God grant me the wisdom and the courage to trust you more with my life today.”

September 22, 2010 Worship Jesse vanZee

Recently my wife and I took a trip to “The Happiest Place On Earth”, the famed Disneyland. It was a highly anticipated trip that we had been planning for a while. The whole drive down I had been reliving my childhood memories of the Magical Kingdom. Even as I approached the main gates, I eagerly anticipated the thrill of everything I would encounter. You see, I had a plan to dive in deep and soak up all the fun that Disneyland could throw at me; Space Mountain, The Matterhorn, Pirates of the Caribbean and the list goes on. That night as I laid my head on my pillow, my exhausted limbs told me that I had accomplished my goal.

Now I flash to any given Sunday. As I walk into the church building I am met with an opportunity to encounter the real Magical Kingdom, to interact with the Living God of the Universe! Which, in reality, is way cooler than going to Disneyland. I recall past memories of sweet moments with my Father God. Moments of singing with reckless abandon, “Swing Wide Ye Heavenly Gates, Prepare the Way For the Risen LORD”. I also can bring to mind times of coming before the throne of God, despondent, crying; “Create In Me A Clean Heart O God, and Restore A Right Spirit Within Me”. Those were moments I had fully prepared my heart to encounter the living God. Unfortunately, now and then I find myself sitting in the back of the sanctuary mouthing the words “How Great is Our God”. All the while my head is thinking; do we have enough roast beef for sandwiches? Did I send out that memo on the new TPS report? Or thinking how cool the big copper heart around the globe thingy is. Or fill in your own mind wondering thought. Hear I am with an opportunity to corporately encounter the One True God and I spend the time thinking about the contents of my pantry. Why can I prepare my heart for Disneyland and fail to do the same thing for my Savior? What is the problem? Why am I in la-la land? I know that the LORD is near, I have encountered Him many times before. Is it that I have allowed myself to only expect to encounter God on a limited basis? Is my lack of expectation causing me to not even attempt to call on Him? Do I lack the discipline to prepare my heart for this encounter? I firmly believe that God is ever present and near. As the psalmist says;

“The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth”
(Psalms 145:18)

So the question remains: Will I call on Him? Today will I prepare my heart to encounter my Abba Father?

Realistically I know that getting myself and my family to church is no simple task. The writer of the song “Easy like Sunday Morning” clearly never had a 7 month old to get dressed and ready for church. However, as I enter into the sanctuary I am faced with a choice. Do I set aside the worries of my day, prepare my heart and call on my Lord or do I allow this moment to slip into my barren desert of wasted time?

Prayer: God give me the discipline to prepare my heart with an earnest expectation to encounter You. I desire to come before You bringing worship and praise, but my body and mind are weak. Father, tune my heart and mind to sing your praise and enter Your courts with Thanksgiving in my heart. You are God alone and worthy of all my praise and worship! Amen.

September 23, 2010 Giving at Creekside *Nick Vleisides*

Let's think about giving and how we can pray. This whole church financial thing is a quandary for me...really. On one hand giving should be an act of worship...a willing (not commanded) sacrifice to the Lord. In that regard, I'm not really sure why giving seems relatively low for us. On the other hand we have this budget that puts giving in a different light than what the Lord might desire. Focus on a budget might suggest that the body be considered a consumer and it is up to the body to show their approval by how much they give. That seems so wrong, wouldn't you agree? Do we foster that with the notion of a budget, especially if we focus too much on it?

We created a problem when we posted that we have 155 head's of household at Creekside with the average giving is around \$100 a week per unit *and* average annual income for our area is \$140K. The math suggests giving is less than 4% of income per unit which seems very low. Though many of you "tithe" (giving 10% or more) we do not teach that a tithe is required. I can't say what people should give but the tithe is a good place to start and I think the spirit of giving would lend itself to much more than a tithe. Pray about this. Some folks among us are discouraged that the giving is low. *Some struggle* with the thought that perhaps too many folks are not practicing tithing or any giving at all. Others wonder if people are holding back for some reason. I struggle with trying to understand what this all means. What I do know is that ultimately the Spirit of God working on our hearts and minds will be the source of generous giving...beyond our means when necessary.

The Lord has put it on my heart the past few years that if giving ever increased two, three, four fold...and I believe the resources are among us...we should commit to giving most of it away to those in need. We should give directly to mission work here and abroad. Minimize the "budget" focus and maximize the "ministry" focus.

Prayer: Father, bring our body together on this matter of giving. May your Holy Spirit do a work in our hearts to cause each and every one of us to delight in giving to You through this body and its leaders. God, we want to be free from the worry of money as a body. We have strived to spend much less and streamline our expenses. Is there more? More to cut or more to receive? Can we determine before you to spend wisely and line up our expenses with effective ministry and the spreading of the gospel? We need your help in spending as much or more than we do in giving. God, are we ready to give more so that we can give more for the work of ministry? Work in our hearts O Lord.

September 24, 2010 Children's Ministry at Creekside *Tim Brady*

If you're anything like me, after reading the title of this devotional I'm automatically ready...and expecting to read a list of the things the ambiguous "they" of the Church are doing in order to fulfill my desires for a kid's ministry. I would also like to know how these people are going to equip my child(ren), as we say at Creekside, "MEET JESUS, GROW IN JESUS, and SHARE JESUS." Because I am the way I am and because I think the way I think, it's important for me to regularly be reminded just how God set this up to work. We have two major influences for God in the world today: 1) The Family. 2) The Church. Think about it for a second... One is made up of the other! The Church is a collection of the Family, creating the body of Christ! That's just cool to me!

Let's concentrate on the family first. It is always the individual family who has primary responsibility for the spiritual heritage of their children. Deuteronomy 6:7 says, "*You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.*" This is in reference to loving God with all your heart, soul, and might! Proverbs 22:6 says, *Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.* A practical statement and general guideline for raising our children. Do these scriptures reflect what's going on in your home? If we were to poll the kids at Creekside about what they see, hear and learn at home, what would they say? (Relax, it's a hypothetical poll!)

For those of you without young children, you are not yet dismissed! Now, the Church (the collection of families) has the primary responsibility to "turn on a light" in our dark world by pointing people to Jesus. At Creekside we say, "Partnering with families to nurture and invest in children's spiritual growth." In other words...partnering together to point people to Jesus! We see the whole "light" analogy in the book of Revelation. God communicates with John to write letters to the seven churches. Revelation 1:12-13 says, *Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands;*¹³ *and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash.* This picture of what the church does becomes even greater when we recognize the early church's understanding of the tabernacle (God's dwelling place) and the lampstand placed in there to shine light on the "bread of presence." The book of Exodus contains the specifics. This bread served as a reminder of God's provision and presence! What an awesome picture when Jesus satisfies the illustration in the upper room the night before He was crucified.

At Creekside Community Church, we need to see the connection! The Family and The Church are not two separate entities. They are actually made up of each other! We have the same goals and desires for our children and need to simply align our methods together! The ambiguous "they", is really the very clear, You! We need each other! At Creekside, how do you represent the church family at large? Is there a chance, you might be a resource to the individual families that need your "light" and help pointing the way to Jesus?

Prayer: Lord, would you protect our young ones. Father, mature them in their love for you! Holy Spirit, raise up those who would nurture these, so precious, the future of the church.

September 27, 2010 Shepherding our Children and Youth *Sean Donohue*

I love dance music. My favorite place to listen to music is in my car with the radio. The beats are strong and loud - like I'm in the front row of a concert.

My five year old daughter Maddy has taking a liking to dance music. Danielle and I recently noticed Maddy has begun singing along to some of the often-played radio songs. This concerned us because the lyrics to some of these songs discuss issues like attraction, lust, and partying.

I was driving and watching her rocking back and forth in her booster seat moving with a song, a verse came to mind. (Which I feel like was God speaking to me).

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart; you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" (Deuteronomy 6:5-7).

I then wondered, "What is in Maddy's heart right now? How am I, and my music choice, affecting my daughter right now? And then I asked myself an even tougher question, "Am I helping Maddy to love Christ right now?"

My answer to my question left me feeling like something was wrong. I was wrong.

I decided right there that I needed to do a better job of guarding Maddy's heart and shepherding her in this area. My resolve? Country music. I hoped I would find songs with lyrics that would nourish Maddy's soul, not deplete it. I turned to 95.7 the Wolf and the first thing I heard was this wonderful song called, "Love Like Crazy". Here is the chorus:

*Be a best friend, tell the truth, and don't overuse, I Love You
Go to work, do your best, don't outsmart your common sense
Never let your prayin' knees get lazy
And love like crazy!*

This is the type of song we want children listening to- songs that glorify truth, purity, and honor in the minds. I share this story with you as an illustration of how difficult -and how important it is- for us to teach and shepherd our children in Christ.

Creeksiders, we must fight the good fight in living out Deuteronomy 6:5-7. We must be aware of the culture that surrounds them and protect their hearts and minds from worldliness.

Prayer: Lord, You are the perfect Father. You guide me, protect me, teach me. Thank you for the privilege you give me of teaching and parenting the children in my life. I ask your forgiveness for the times that I have been insensitive, lazy, or selfish in this important area. I pray that you would guide me, as I guide the *your children*. Please give me eyes to see the areas that I need to act, give me ears to hear you lead me, give words to speak that teach and shepherd, and please give me the courage to lead my family in You.

September 28, 2010 When is free time? *Phil Herndon*

Having just spent a week at Camp Koinonia with a dozen of our kids and 150 kids from another 6 churches and really witnessed hunger in action. It was a blessing and a lot of fun. I really enjoyed the time and I was able to see how hunger is the first stage of discipleship.

At the beginning of the week the joke among all the counselors was the answer to every kid's question which was simply "Three O'clock." When can I go to the snack shack? When is free time? What time does the pool open? The kids were there to play and that was their real hunger. This hunger took priority over anything else they had to do. Nobody asked when chapel was or what time we would do devotions...no 'hunger' there. But by the middle of the week we began to notice a change. The kids were open and talking about the chapel time and the teaching was being heard. We had great conversations about how the Spirit works in our lives. The draw of "three o'clock" had given way to the real reason we were together, the work of the Spirit.

I suppose that when Jesus said "*Let the little children come to me*" (Matt 19:14) those Hebrew kids had already grown tired of the distractions on that hillside in Judea. Our Lord is patient with us and the call to communion with Him is not a demand, it's an invitation. But even as adults we can be distracted by all the things of this world that so easily call louder to our nature and delay or derail our hunger for relationship with our Father.

Take a few minutes and think about those things that keep you from regular relationship with Him. Don't forsake the disciplines of the Word, teaching, fellowship and prayer and you will see the distraction of this world lose their draw. The kids at camp were getting the spiritual feeding Monday through Friday, it was a discipline, but it wasn't until they tired of the worldly distractions that the Spirit did a work in those young lives. As a side note, watching 4th graders worship and praise God is a powerful thing!

Pray: Jesus, just like children hunger for simple things like play time and to eat some sweets, might we too as adults hunger for the simple things You offer us. Can we be like little children and enjoy sitting in your lap...hearing you tell a story...asking you questions. Yes, even have you be a part of our play time. Lord, make us hungry if we won't hunger on our own.

September 29, 2010 Lighthouses and Streetlights Josh Smith

Mark 16:15 (NASB)¹⁵ *And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.*

Matthew 5:14-16 (NASB)¹⁴ *"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; ¹⁵nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.*

The Church is often referred to as a lighthouse to the world and it is. A lighthouse points people to safety and warns them away from danger. Thousands of churches are doing this and have incorporated the word lighthouse as part of their name. Unfortunately, my thinking of where I attend church on a Sunday as a lighthouse sometimes will limit my thinking of God's call for me to be light. God calls for my light to shine everyday in everything I do and with everyone I interact. The reality is that many days I forget about God during the day. Regardless of our actions God uses us. One day years ago I was at work and I asked an employee how she was doing and she said fine. Twenty minutes later she came to me and shared that she was not fine and that her husband of twenty years had left her. I listened. That day God's light shined into her life in a very dark moment.

There is a lot of darkness in the lives around us. God desires for us to reflect His light. I have realized that I am a streetlight in my neighborhood and the lives around me. We are all streetlights in our neighborhoods. Imagine in your mind the individuals of Creekside on a map as streetlights shining in their different neighborhoods. Imagine on top of that our other Christian brothers and sisters as streetlights shining with us on that map. What a beautiful image.

The next time you step out your door, walk down a street, drop a child off a school, have lunch with a co-worker, and see a streetlight be joyfully reminded that God is a light shining in you to be shared with those around you.

Prayer: Lord let me reflect your light in the lives of the individuals that surround me. Let me be reminded daily of Your greatness and to share it. Let me be filled and encouraged with your sense of purpose and a deep desire for you.

Lord I ask you to encourage the missionaries of Creekside in their walk of faith. Give them a relationship that is right with you and growing. Lord I ask for your protection over their families lives and give them wisdom in the decisions that they make. Lord help them to "fit" into their communities with the challenges of adjusting to the new cultures and climates. Lord please provide both the personal and financial support in these difficult times. And Lord please give them protection from Satan's attacks in their families, their team-work with other missionaries, and in their relationships with key local people and authorities. Lord thank you for their ministries. Thank you for their faith and commitment. Praise be to You for the work done among them. In the holy name of Your Son Jesus. Amen

September 30, 2010 "Living Sacrifices" –Romans 12:1-8

Ron & Joyce Kinch

These well-known New Testament passages say many things about the gifts God gives us. I find nothing limiting these gifts by age, station-in-life, or physical or mental condition. I have witnessed Creekside teenagers ministering to the elderly. Young Life Capernaum (physically and mentally challenged) kids have a great capacity to love others and inspire others to love.

Nor do I find anything limiting WHERE these gifts should be exercised. Our Creekside supported missionaries spread the Gospel on almost every continent. We support many local ministries as well.

You may have heard Nick and others refer to the "Missional Church", about moving Creekside to become a Missional church. Milfred Minatrea, in the book "Shaped by God's Heart", attempts to define this term. He points out that a "mission minded" (not Missional) church:

- Sometimes sees only the "called" bringing the Gospel to far-away places.
- We send them and support them. They are our representatives. They satisfy our expression of ministry.

But the Missional Church views every member of the Body as a missionary! WE are His representatives. WE participate in the life of the community declaring, demonstrating and inviting others into life with The Life-Giver! This then becomes the essence of our existence as the Body of Christ here at Creekside. *"But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that."* – (1Cor 7:7)

We have different gifts and, consequently, many different opportunities to express these gifts – right here in the Bay Area, in this Valley -- AT THIS CHURCH! Elementary, middle-school and high school youth need leaders and helpers to make sure our very own Creekside youth hear the Gospel and see it lived out in front of them.

Creeksiders already serve at the Bay Area Rescue Mission; The Macedonian Outreach; City Team Ministries; and Valley Pregnancy Center. There is a great opportunity at Shalom of Oakland, a ministry co-founded by Nate Millheim a former Creekside youth pastor. Also, there are many other opportunities -- Young Life, Youth for Christ, Teen Challenge, Campus Crusade, and many more.

The number of opportunities may be overwhelming. But just GO! –That's what Jesus commanded! GO! The Holy Spirit will reveal where He wants you and how He would have you serve. Just GO! -- and many blessings along the way.

Pray: Here I am Lord, send me.

October 1, 2010 Unity in the Creekside Body *Tim Brady*

In the past several months, I've had the privilege of making a new friend! When we originally met, we exchanged names and through conversation, discovered that we had something "Huge" in common. Jesus! In that initial conversation, we had good dialogue, laughed about a few things, and even spent a little time in prayer together. I remember thinking, "Wow, if most relationships were that focused the world would be a better place." After that chance meeting, I've continued to run in to this guy! We've stopped and spoken about five or six times since then. Last time we saw each other he called out, "Hey Tim! Good to see you!" And I returned with, "Hey...You!" -Because I can't even remember his name. About 2 weeks ago, in another "unplanned passing", he said something that caught me off guard, made me blush and then later, made me seriously think. After talking for a moment about the Lord, he looked me directly in the eyes and said, "I love you, brother."

Here, in John 17:21-23, we read what Jesus prays to The Father:
²¹*that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.* ²²*The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one;* ²³*I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.*

This is a prayer for the believers of Christ to be fully focused, committed and devoted to truth through UNITY! Not just a unity with God, but also a unity of love with each other as we represent God's glory to a world desperate for Him! Do we live this out? Do we know each other's names? Are we in a place to look each other in the eyes and say, "I love you"? Are we willing to go out of the way to share life with one another? Are we as focused as "What's His Face" with God's love in the Creekside body?

Prayer: Father we pray for you to manifest your very nature (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) through the love we share in this body. Reveal your glory to us and through us. Lord, use Creekside Community Church as a light in our community for Your Kingdom cause! Amen.

October 4, 2010 Ministry to the Hurting *Janie Sheedy*

There is a scene from a movie "Steel Magnolias" where one of the main characters, a mom, played by Sally Field, tragically loses her adult daughter to complications from diabetes. This striking scene takes place at the gravesite where her friends try to comfort her. This captivating moment portrays the mom having an emotional breakdown. She cries to her friends "I just want to hit someone until they feel as bad as I do." In essence she is saying, "I just want someone to feel what I feel, I don't want to be in this alone."

One of the greatest hallmarks of the Christian faith is the ability to receive comfort from the LORD when we are hurting. Many verses from scripture show God's heart to those who mourn: In Isaiah, God is said to be "near the broken-hearted", and "comforts all who mourn" (Isa. 61:1-2). Jesus in His sermon on the mount proclaims, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted (Matthew 5:4). God the Father models a heart for the hurting. One of the greatest gifts we can give to one another is the gift of entering one another's pain. Back to the scene from Steel Magnolias, I often find hurting people are not looking for great words of wisdom, biblical passages that explain their pain, nor particularly to be talked out of their pain. Hurting souls often simply need others to sit quietly with them in their pain, to "...weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15).

Solomon points out we will all experience "a time to weep...a time to mourn." (Ecc .3:4). In the same vein, he points out we will only experience this for a season, there will be a time for laughter, a time for dancing. Our deepest hurts will not last forever.

At Creekside, we excel at entering one another's world of pain. Let us not forget those around us who are hurting. This lifetime provides a boatload of hurts. Let us not judge the pain of others, nor expect their journey to fit a certain plan or structure. Let us continue to comfort the one who is hurting, often-times by just sitting quietly with the one who mourns. And finally, those of us who have endured a trial of hurting can experience comfort in knowing God will redeem those most painful trials often through the ability to comfort others with the comfort we have received.

Prayer: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; Who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. (2 Corinthians 1:3-5).

October 5, 2010 A Pre-School at Creekside? Nick Vleisides

Today I 'm going to put a tangible request before the body to pray about. I've had it on my mind and heart for several years that we should seriously consider having a pre-school at Creekside. As we seek ways to reach out in the community it only makes sense that we would utilize the resources we have (great facility in a great location) in a community that is very kid savvy. There is a waiting list for every reputable pre-school in or community...the need is there.

At Creekside, we also value children and are called to help families raise them up in the Lord. It seems to make sense that we should at least seriously consider this opportunity. But I want to put it before you to think and pray on this. I have to admit, I'm biased in that my mother taught and directed pre-school for 30 years and I saw the benefits and fruit of a Christ centered pre-school. At my last church in Austin, we had a fantastic pre-school and even our own non-believing neighbors enrolled their kids and gave us opportunity to witness to them. Non-churched parents would literally spend the night at the door of the church in order to be first in line to enroll their kids. Simply put, a pre-school can be a great outreach in the community.

Unchurched parents...no matter what their motive is for enrolling their kids...are willing to allow us to talk about Jesus with their children if they trust the program and care we provide. Second, a pre-school is a way to build up and train the children of our own parents of pre-schoolers. Pre-school is a huge influence in a child's development with positive implications for the rest of the lives. So...a pre-school is both...an outreach and an inreach and something I'd like you to consider for us. This falls in line with our desire to seek focus and direction in our ministry and relates to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.

We have already done some leg work over the past few years and have a notebook which includes most of the state requirements and information for starting a pre-school. The facility seems very suitable. The goal would be for the pre-school to be self sustaining on the tuition even though there may be some start up cost. Shall we pursue this Lord?

Prayer: Father in Heaven, since we are talking about having a preschool can you help us determine that You are behind this idea? It sounds good but we want it to be from you and for You to bless it. Do you wish for us to reach out in to the community this particular way? Can we effectively use this resource to build up our own families and their preschool aged children? Put in on our hearts to do this. Bring someone or several people forward who would be willing to further investigate what it might require of us. Get us talking about it. Give us a desire. Bring forth the leadership. Pave the way if it is Your will.

October 6, 2010 What do we do with the Trinity? Kimberly Grassi

They say that you don't really understand something unless you can explain it to a child. I would have to admit then that I do not understand the Trinity. This subject is a recurring argument in the backseat of my car between my two children. "Jesus is God." "But how can Jesus be God if God is His Father?" "What about the Holy Spirit then; who is He?!" If you think texting while driving is dangerous, you should try explaining the Trinity to a 6 and 8 year old while driving. Although there are a great many illustrations that strive to explain the mystery of the unique relationships between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, ultimately they all fall short and many even border on the lines of heresy. Instead of trying to define exactly what the Trinity is and is not, it might be better to understand the three persons of the Trinity in terms of each one's unique relationship with us.

The explanation I give to my kids is that there are three persons who all possess the unique qualities of "God." God the Father is God. God the Son is God. God the Holy Spirit is God. They all act, react, and interact in an environment of complete trust and love for one another. They are all involved in the unfolding story of God's love for humanity. They all have expressed themselves in varied ways.

God the Father is primarily depicted in Scripture as the creator. 1 Cor. 8:6 and 2 Cor. 4:6 speak to His creative qualities. It was God the Father who, in the beginning, brought all things into existence. It was not without the presence and involvement of the Son and the Spirit, but this is primarily how we understand His role. God the Father is the architect of the universe which we inhabit as well as the architect of our very souls. God the Father wanted to create male and female and to have an abiding relationship with His creatures. The Fatherly distinction is also an important element to His character. He is a Father to His Son, and as His adopted sons and daughters, He is also a loving, devoted, faithful Father to us.

God the Son is the person of the Trinity who redeems (Eph. 1:7). It is as a result of His death on the cross that we are brought back into relationship with the Father, Son, and Spirit. Throughout the Gospels we read story after story of Jesus' interactions with people. We come face to face with a man who loves, gives, forgives, and acts with uncanny grace. We read of a man who is utterly dependent upon His Father, who is validated by the Spirit, and who lives His life with one purpose in sight. Jesus provides a glimpse into the character of God. He is the person of the Godhead who is most relatable. He is human. He has relationships with real people. He cries real tears. He gets tired and hungry. His life, His death, and His resurrection provide the undisputable exclamation point to His assertion to deity. It is through the Son that we experience forgiveness and grace.

October 6, 2010 What do we do with the Trinity? *continued*

God the Holy Spirit is the person of the Trinity who is least understood. Strange things happen when He is around, but His primary role is one who sanctifies (Rom. 15:16). He sets us apart from the rest of the world. He is the One who enables us to live out the reality of our forgiveness. He explains the truth to our hearts and grants us the ability to feel the truth. He empowers us to live beyond our own abilities. He grants us incredible gifts designed to encourage our fellow believers and draw those who do not yet believe into His presence. The Holy Spirit loves to be acknowledged. I have never taught a lesson on the Holy Spirit without Him showing up. The Hebrew word for Spirit is the word “breath.” The Holy Spirit breathes life into our daily activities. He empowers us when we ask. He gives us words when we need them. He brings to mind Scriptures and truths to reassure us, comfort, us and sometimes just to show us His delight in us.

Discussions regarding the “how” and “what” of the Trinity have been taking place since Jesus walked the earth. Although our love for God produces a desire to know more about who He is, it is not likely that we will ever completely understand the intimate workings of the relationships between the Father, Son, and Spirit. And aren't you glad we do not have Him entirely figured out? I want a God who is bigger than anything the collective minds of humanity can produce. What we can trust in is the fact that all three persons of the Trinity know us completely and their desire is for each one of us to come into a fuller understanding of how much we are loved; and to then communicate this same love to others. We can come to know the Father, Son, and Spirit in a unique way as we learn about them individually. We can relate to God as our Father, the one who will do, and has done, anything for us. We can relate to Jesus as the God-Man who understands our humanity and floods us with compassion. We can relate to the Holy Spirit as the one who gives us breath and empowers us to live in this world. I am not sure that a 6 and 8 year old can understand this. But I know they can experience it.

Prayer: Father, we pray that as our minds stumble across the subject of who you are that your infinite greatness will transcend all of our limitations. We trust in the truth that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all agreed that mankind was worth the effort not only to create but also to partake in the unique relationship that the three members of the Trinity share. We thank you for inviting us into your presence. We thank you for giving us a model of interdependent relationship. We pray that you would enhance our understanding of the uniqueness of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and how each person of the Trinity chooses to be revealed in our lives. Thank you for choosing us, loving us, and allowing us to experience You. “Peace be to the whole community, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all who have an undying love for our Lord Jesus Christ.” **Ephesians 6:23-24**

October 7, 2010 The Banner on the Wall *Nick Vleisides*

It has been on our wall for several years now. “To help people passionately experience and personally express the Christ changed life.” Even though the statement reads well and seems to make perfect sense it hasn't always been clear to folks whether or not it is a vision statement, a focus statement, a mission statement or simply a cool statement. You might argue that it is or isn't any of those kinds of statements. What it is meant to convey is this: If a man, woman, teen or child truly receives Christ and captures the essence of transformation in their understanding then the reality of a Christ changed life is extraordinary! Too many so called Christians only learned that they need to “become a Christian” in order to escape the wrath of God and the hell that awaits those who reject God. So people “accept” God as youth or even adults but they are really only accepting a ticket to heaven later NOT a changed life now. You can have belief without knowledge and you can act on belief alone but only knowledge combined with belief will provide you the best kind of life based on the truth. You can believe you are going to hell if you don't accept Christ but knowledge of the whole truth tells us that we can received a new life...a new spirit...the Holy Spirit. *“Therefore, if any man is in Christ he is a new creation, the old things have passed away and behold the new has come.”* (2Cor. 3:17)

Too many Christians were only led to believe in Jesus as the Way with very little introduction to the Truth and the Life. You see, when you and I fully understand and experience the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, your life is changed and THAT changes everything for how we “do church.” You shouldn't need someone leading you by hand all your spiritual life...He will lead you. You don't need someone to spoon feed you the Word...the Spirit will feed you if you know how to read. You don't need someone to tell you the direction of your life...God will tell you in His Word and by the Spirit. So that statement on the wall is just that...a statement. It tells the truth about what may be the main thing here at Creekside. Maybe we'll just simply call it “The Main Thing” statement. Honestly, pray about the “To help people” part. I have to say that we need the Lord to help us better “help people” through teaching, discipleship and providing opportunities to use their gifts. Yes...we could be much stronger in that “helping others” part my friends.

Pray: Lord of heaven and earth, you are indeed holding a place for us in another realm we know as heaven. We would rather be there with you NOW! But we have come to understand that we are not simply waiting for our ship to come in but that you have a life for us NOW to live with purpose. Yes, you love us so much and want us to have joy, peace, fun and take in the beauty of creation that still exists. Thank you! Help us to know our changed-ness better. Help us to live according to the reality of a changed life. Wow! What a church we can be with that kind of reality fully functioning among us!

October 8, 2010 Creekside Direction Nick Vleisides

I hope you have discovered a deeper walk with the Lord the past 6 weeks. Do you hunger for Him in ways you never have before? Did the Lord reveal anything to you about your life and about Creekside? If so and you are willing to share then email me your thoughts at nvleisides@creeksidechurch.com. I'd love to hear from you. The elders want to hear but I'm sure that during this time they have been listening and hearing from you. Remember the same Spirit that is leading the elders is also leading you and we trust the Spirit to work in the context of unity.

I'm calling this the end of our 6 weeks of Hunger for God but really, it is only the beginning of a new chapter in our church body. In churches in America, people always ask or at least want to know, if it is not obvious already, "what is the direction of this church." Some might ask, "what is the vision." Even though I'm writing this in August I hope that come October we have some real clarity on that question. Right now I already have it in my heart that the direction of Creekside is to be about the Great Commandment and the Great Commission with a calling on us to equip the body to participate whole heartedly in both. At the same time, I envision a people who even though are involved in so many things have found the Spirit of God leading them to fully devote their lives to the work of the ministry. Can you imagine? That little phrase is more than I can take in... a people in the East Bay who "fully devote their lives to the work of the ministry."

Well, it doesn't have a chance of becoming a reality without continued prayer, worship, teaching and even practicing spiritual disciplines in order to be walking in the Spirit. Please, please, please examine your hearts and your minds and your attitudes and your longings and your wants and your needs and your hopes and your dreams and your careers. What does it all add up to? Kingdom living or earthly living? I don't mean externally but internally where only you and the Lord know the real answer. Will you follow Christ with all you got? We are heading in that direction.

Prayer: Lord God Almighty, you have brought us together as a church family for a reason. We are a tapestry of human life with such extreme colors and shapes and dimensions. We've all got stuff, baggage and issues. But we also have deep longings, hopes and desires to completely follow You no matter what the cost. It scares us to consider what that might mean as it plays to our fears that our lives would somehow not be as full or complete or joyful. Where do we get that notion Lord? Help us in our unbelief and increase our faith in the truth about life. Usher us into a new chapter of reality. You love us and that gives us great comfort. Thank you. We love You too!



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