

Cornerstone CONNECTED

Spring 2011



CORNERSTONE
CHURCH

Church: Is It Boring or Is It A Joy?

Russ Wilson - Lead Pastor

I am absolutely convinced that following Jesus is anything but boring. In fact I believe that we in the evangelical church have achieved a rather unusual feat in making it seem boring to follow Jesus. I am not sure which parts of the Bible we can read that make the life of Christ boring but it certainly cannot be found in the gospels.

Jesus fed 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish and that's not boring. Jesus walked on water which I would have to think is pretty unusual. Jesus healed sick people, made blind people see, deaf people hear and dead people rise with new life. Not really sure how we can read that and think...boring. Why is it that church more often leads to yawns than wows? Why do we seem to bore people rather than inspire people? Why are people sleeping on Sunday morning in church and not laughing at the very outrageousness of God?



We turn people off when we communicate that following Jesus results in a ho-hum lifestyle. Come follow Jesus and you will never smile again! Not really a catchy slogan is it? Come follow Jesus and nothing exciting will ever happen in your boring religious life ever again. Can't sell that very far can we? Jesus makes me smile. It is simply crazy that the God of the whole universe would look at me and say, "I can use that guy" but that is exactly what God has done.

It puts a huge amount of joy in my soul when I think about the ways God has taken my little life and used it. I visited with a man recently who told me about an opportunity he has to go overseas and be used by God. He had this big smile on his face as he was telling me what he was going to be doing. He was not bored! I was having coffee with a group of guys when one of them said he needed to tell us something. He opened up about a struggle he had been facing and losing. He asked for forgiveness and then said he needed to grow. Every one of us around that table was affected by his challenge to us even though he did not think of it as a challenge. Boring? Not a chance! Challenging? You bet! I walked away from that meeting smiling from ear to ear at the privilege of having my life intersect with other men

struggling to walk the walk.

I had another man sit at my favorite coffee shop with me and ask me to speak at a function that was going to bring a group of pastors together from all over western Canada. In January I was in Haiti speaking to pastors and leaders about godly leadership. None of these events have fallen into the category of boring. I am amazed that God

would take my life and use it for His purposes. Are you amazed at that? Not that God would use me but that He would use you too! As I have interacted with these various men it has brought me a great deal of joy to work with them, share with them, grow with them and be used by

God together.

I had a phone conversation with a man who was telling me that God was challenging him to step it up a notch. I smiled as I listened knowing full well this was once again one of those God moments for him that I was privileged to hear about. As I hung up the phone a joy welled up within me that this God I serve is active here in our church touching lives, changing hearts and using people for His great glory and honour. These are not boring moments but rather smile and joy filled moments.

Do you have that same sense that God is using your life to accomplish His incredible purposes? Are you aware of the incredible joy of being not only chosen by God but used by Him for eternal reasons? Are you bored with your faith? Do you need a wake-up call? Are you willing to totally surrender to Jesus Christ for the very purpose of being used by Him for reasons that are actually out of this world? Do you often find yourself smiling at the way God is involved in your life? If someone asked you why they should give their life to Christ would you ever think of

saying it is because of the wild ride God will take them on?

Go back and read the gospels once again or just read them for the first time. Ask God to take your life on an adventure that involves His purposes. Even in the tough times remember Hebrews 12 where we read, "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy (Read that again!!!) set before Him endured the cross..." Even in the toughest times we can have joy because we know who we are connected to.

This is the culture I want to cultivate here at Cornerstone. We will be a church where adventure becomes part of our church DNA. It will be part of the very core nature of what we as a church family are about. Our children and grandchildren will grow up with stories of joy and adventures as part of their spiritual heritage. They will pass on to their friends and families the great stories of the adventure of serving God. Whether the joy comes from helping someone in need here in our city or across the world we will have that story to tell. Whether the adventure comes from inviting an unchurched friend to church or going across the world to help in a foreign country we will have stories to tell.

Smile, our God is so good!

Live the adventure...



Shhhh... be quiet!!

Jessica Braun - Christian Education

Why is it, that when we worship multi-generationally we expect kids to be quiet and sit still? It is near impossible for them to sit quietly and yet this is something we require of them during a service. Sitting still in pews and being very quiet in the sanctuary is unique to our culture. It is hindering. It encourages disengagement. But don't we come to church to worship GOD?

Think about that for a minute.

We are coming to worship the God of the universe; a Holy, Righteous and Glorious God. Do we want our children to enter church and view it only as a place of boundaries, rules and things we should or should not do? I recognize the need to fear God and to show respect, but then this is what we should be teaching our children. During prayer you don't want your children to start poking their brother or sister. Use it as a teachable moment. Don't just say "shhh, stop that"... tell them *why* prayer is important.



A family focus Sunday is meant to give you as parents and grandparents a chance to teach and model worship. It is not about having your kids learn to sit still, or to be well disciplined. It is about them seeing you worship God. It is about creating spiritual conversation (even during the sermon). These services are not just a 'break for volunteers or leaders' it is an OPPORTUNITY for you to teach your children not to be quiet, but to worship an awesome and worthy God.

These services are intentional.

I grew up in the church and know that it is my first instinct to shush a child if they are getting noisy. But I am training myself

out of this religious practice that is not at all what I believe God wants.

I heard a story from a mom who told me that during the singing time her daughter started to sing her own tunes of "God I love you, God you're great..." and it was getting a little loud. This mom told me she was about to tell her daughter to be quiet but stopped herself. Here is a child worshipping God freely and even though she's not doing 'what we should be doing' – whoever made this rule? Whoever said worship is the same for everyone? And yet we conform

to this religious practice. We conform to what we feel is expected of us and our children.

Yes people are going to look at you if your children are making extra noise or talking. So let them look! Let them see you teaching your child. Let them see you worshipping together as a family. Some may even look irritated and *that is okay!* Don't feel that you have to sit at the back so you aren't disruptive. Christ called the children to Himself while He was teaching adults – the kids were in the front row!

I have had parents tell me that their kids are bored during these family services. This bothers me greatly because there is nothing boring about worshipping God. There is nothing boring about Russ's sermons because he is preaching from God's very own

words. There is nothing boring about worshipping together as a family.

So as we head into summer with family services I encourage you to stretch yourself. Teach your children about worship, not to just be quiet. Use the kids' sermon notes and encourage them to catch things in Russ' sermon. I have also had parents say that on their way home their kids ask about something Russ said when they thought their kids weren't even listening because they were moving around so much! Encourage this conversation during the service and even the sermon. Trust me – Russ won't mind!

Barna research group says that children will have formed most of their opinions and views before age 13 and that the top spiritual influencers in a child's life are their parents. We want to equip you so that your children will grow into adults who love and worship God with their lives.

It is an amazing privilege and blessing that God has given you these children and has asked you to raise them to honour Him with their lives. I am praying that as you raise your children you are being obedient to Christ in your calling as a parent or grandparent.

"Oh my people, hear My teaching; listen to the words of My mouth. I will open My mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from of old – what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, His power, and the wonders He has done."
Psalm 78:1-4



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The Best Seat In The House

Lorn Gieck - Music & Arts

Please come in, sit back, and relax. We want to make sure the temperature is comfortable and that the lighting and sound give you the optimal experience – at least that’s the message our culture gives. Every experience is focused on me, and my comfort, and I’ll only engage as much as my environment gives to me first.

Do you remember Rainbow theatre? Maybe you still head over to Saskatoon’s budget theatre, but it’s been a long time since I’ve been there. I remember fondly the cheap movie nights, the slightly sticky floors, and creaky old theatre seats. But honestly I don’t give it much thought anymore, and the reason of course is Galaxy cinemas. I’ve upsized my movie experience. The entrance is full of flashing lights and movie posters the size of my house. The screen is slightly bigger than the size of the moon. And of course the seats are worth it as well; you really can’t beat the slight recline, and the ample headrest. I really owe it to myself not to go back to the lesser experience. Or so I tell myself.

This shapes in subtle ways the expectations we bring into the Cornerstone Church worship experience each week. We feel like the environment needs to be a certain way, or feel a certain way in order for us to adequately worship God. And if we didn’t worship, or connect with God, then it is an obvious issue with the environment. Which leads me to the question: what is the best environment for worship?

Let’s take for a minute the Biblical model of Paul and Silas in Acts 16. They arrived in Philippi and were just doing as they usually do, preaching the good news and healing the sick, when inadvertently they offended some powerful men who had them beaten and thrown in jail. Under close guard they were placed in stocks and left there for the night. And of course they react like any of us under such circumstances. They complained, threatened, called for their lawyer, and asked for a representative of the media to put their unjust arrest all over the internet and cable. Not a chance. See instead their response in verse 25: “About midnight Paul and Silas were praying



and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. ”

If ever there was an environment that was not conducive to worship, you think this would be it. They have wounds all over their bodies; they are cold and by all accounts should be miserable. Yet for them this was an opportunity to enter into the presence of God. It didn’t really matter where they were, or what the circumstances had done to them. No, they had a joy that was beyond the reach of what was happening to them. They knew that God is awesome and worthy no matter the circumstance.

The key here is obedience. Instead of living life for their own agendas or desires, they were whole heartedly pursuing God’s specific job for their lives. And the suffering that resulted could not contain the sense of joy and contentment they had. Christ modeled this as well when



He went to the cross. Hebrews 12:2 says: “For the joy set before him he endured the cross...”. Jesus was obedient to the Father in going to the cross. Crucifixion wandered far beyond discomfort, into a death both shameful

torturous. But there was joy to be experienced in accomplishing the work of God.

So if we find ourselves unfulfilled and frustrated with our times of worship, it could be because we come first for ourselves. It’s a subtle form of idolatry that puts us as the center of worship. Should we really have the best seats in the house? If worship is for God, then really He should be honoured with the center of our attention. When we gather it should be to humbly consider our lives as an offering, and that extends far beyond that specific moment into every waking hour of our lives. We are not disciples at Sunday worship, or just in the church building proper. Being a disciple has to impact every aspect of our lives. If our true agenda is to do the work of the kingdom and conform to the will of God, then we will find true worship no matter where we are or what is happening. And no matter what we will live a life of joy.

Joy in Suffering

Michele Irving

This past fall my husband and I experienced the loss of our baby as I had a miscarriage at three and half months. We experienced the blessing of comfort from the Lord. I am not saying we didn't grieve or that we are done grieving or that we earned His blessing, it was God's grace, mercy and guidance. The day I was in the hospital, the Lord blessed me as He placed on my heart and reminded me again about Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (and the thought would I worship God even in this...) as well as other passages and some songs. One in particular was, "Thank you for Saving Me" by Delirious. I was also very much aware that because Jesus paid the price for my sins I would one day be able to see our baby and I was and am so thankful for this gift. Praise the Lord for His goodness! My point here in sharing this is three-fold:

1) Jesus Christ is worthy of our praise in all circumstances and all situations of life even in pain, loss and grief, whether we understand or not.

2) That all Glory and Honour are His and belong to Him, He is worthy.

3) That true joy comes from our Lord and Saviour.

We need to share about how the Lord is at work today in each of our lives, otherwise when is the Lord glorified? Jesus is alive and



present in this world, He loves and cares for everyone. Will we draw near to Him and ask for more of Him in our lives? Jesus is always the

perfect example for us to look at for our journey. All Glory be to Him!

Paul the apostle experienced joy in suffering that I can't comprehend. A book I read talks about this, "Therefore, suffering with joy proves to the world that our treasure is in heaven, not on earth, and that this treasure is greater than anything the world has to offer. The supremacy of God's worth shines

through the pain that his people will gladly bear for his name...and so it is the supremacy of God's worth that shines through Paul's joy in affliction." (*Let the Nations Be Glad!, The Supremacy of God in Missions*, John Piper, p. 99, 100).

The Word tells us, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." (James 1:2-4). We may not "feel" joy in suffering but the Word tells us to "Consider it pure joy..." We need to choose to trust Him and His word and know that the joy of the Lord will be given by the Holy Spirit (1 Thess.1:6). The Lord is our Shepherd and teacher and will teach us all things while abiding in Him (John 15:4).

So, let us remember to, "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer." (Romans 12:12). We can be assured that, "You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand." (Psalm 16:11). Let me encourage you to glorify the Lord and press on to maturity in the faith. Jesus Christ

A People of Unshakable Faith

By Loretta Penner - Missions & Service Team

I have now been to Haiti three times; each time has been so different. It was good to see that there have been some improvements made since the earthquake a year ago. The tents that were set up in the middle of the road on our way out of Port Au Prince were gone, and hopefully those people have been able to go back to their places. Along the route to Grand Goave you would see new houses being built. Some of them were made of concrete and there were some wooden ones as well. I noticed at the market there were much more meat, vegetables, and other supplies available than there was last year.

I also thought that the spirit of the Haitian people was lighter as well. Some of the people I had met last year who had lost their job are now working at other jobs. Now, at least, they are able to work and provide food for their families.

One thing that has not changed is their unshakeable faith and their joy in the Lord. This spoke to me again, I need to adjust my

attitude towards life and things that happen around me. I need to be more thankful to God. The people around Grand Goave have lost most everything, and their lives have been totally disrupted yet they have amazing, unshakeable faith.

Now back at home I have more time to reflect on what happened in Haiti. The situation and the state of the country in

Haiti looks so bleak and you wonder if what we are doing is of any help. But I am convinced that with God's help and assistance He can restore the country of Haiti so we need to keep praying for the people and the country.

It was great to work together with this team and especially having my sister Lisa in Haiti

as well. I am so blessed to have been a part of this team.

It was such a wonderful opportunity to have a mission team that was so mixed in age. I have to say that after reading in the book of

1 Peter where Peter is encouraging the elders of the church to mentor the younger and to learn from each other, that this trip provided that to happen. There were many times for me as I observed the younger people, (which they all were!!!) that I learned from them. What a blessing. Hopefully in the future there will be many more learning opportunities not only by going on mission trips but in the church here as well.

The next trip to Haiti is planned for Feb 19, 2011 to Mar 1, 2011. So if you are interested please pick up an application form that is at the Mission's bulletin board or check with myself, Pastor Russ or Stephen. Trust me...you will not want to miss out of the blessings that you receive when you visit Haiti.



How to Find Joy In The Lord

Stephen Thiessen - Student Ministries

This year's trip to Haiti was an incredible experience for everyone involved. But as we left for the long way home we were all wrestling with what we had seen and experienced. The difference in expression and attitude at a Sunday worship service in Grand Goave was markedly different than that at home.

This left us with some burning questions: What was different about them? What did they have that we don't? What do we need to do differently to have authentic experience like that on a regular basis?

What follows is the response we felt challenged with on our return...

What it boils down to for me is an understanding of the Joy of the Lord. The main idea behind my thought is this: I think maybe what we should be saying, "church should be like that" (in reference to the energy of a vibrant third world congregation) in the sense of all the movement and noise rather than "the church should always have a joy in the Lord like that."

It is always easy when abroad (sometimes even the next town, but more noticeable in different countries) to find things in churches we visit that we see as being "better" or in some way more honest or truthful in the hearts and attitudes of the people. The challenge in the midst of that is to actually be a catalyst for change when we return home. I have no patience for those who want to gallivant around happily and find things to complain about, only to come home and be completely disconnected from effecting any change, *even in their own lives*, and in their own approach to worship simply because it wasn't the way it was.

If, however, we are open to seeing areas we need to grow or be challenged in, and then to be part of the change process and allow our own hearts to be changed along the



way...then we're talking!

The way we express ourselves is going to be different from one culture to the next, and to suggest that each one should be the same as the next is actually counter productive. God created each of us differently and



unique because each of those small nuances can bring honour and blessing to Him. In that sense I don't think the comparison

game is fair, or appropriate. The cultural context of Haiti is going to be different from the cultural context of rural China, which will be different from that of Ghana, Mongolia, Turkey, and Northern Vietnam. While in each contact you may find a deep understanding of the joy of the Lord in all circumstances, and - as Shquille put it - a people who "have nothing, and yet have everything", they will not all worship in the same exact manner.

And that's fantastic! So from that, we shouldn't feel as though we have to mimic the same behaviours back home in Saskatoon. If we want to dance, we should feel the freedom to dance, and having the courage to shuffle feet from side to side from time to time is absolutely something we can grow into. There are times that I feel like bouncing a little more than I actually do.

But what we *should* share with *all* our brothers and sisters in Christ around the globe is a deep understanding of what it means to find our sustenance, our hope, our faith, our life, and our daily understanding in the person of Jesus Christ. And that shouldn't be something we mimic, but something we commit to discovering for ourselves. In this, our affluent North American culture can work against us. But we have to commit to battling against that independence and apathy, and recognizing that we are in desperate need of God, and that we find our everything—*you baggy* in Him and Him alone.



I won't even pretend to have a complete grasp on Deuteronomy. Exploring the blessings and curses found within God's discussion with the people of Israel make for some fascinating research and Bible study. In my own reading this week a passage from Deuteronomy 28 outlines the blessings of obedience if Israel follows Him, and the judgment if they don't. What stuck out to me was verses 46-48: ⁴⁶They will be a sign and a wonder to you and your descendants forever. ⁴⁷Because you did not serve the LORD your God joyfully and gladly in the time of prosperity, ⁴⁸therefore in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and dire poverty, you will serve the enemies the LORD sends against you. He will put an iron yoke on your neck until He has destroyed you.

We absolutely live in a time and culture of prosperity. And so often that pre-occupies us from being able to serve the Lord *joyfully* and *gladly*.

As I spent some time looking up joy in Scripture these past few days, working out my own thoughts, I think what we really need to take away from church services like the ones we were privileged to be a part of is what it means to be joyful in our worship. And *this* we absolutely have to bring home with us and live out at home if we want to effect transformation.

Psalm 100 is as good a place as any to start:

¹ Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.

² Worship the LORD with gladness; come before Him with joyful songs.

³ Know that the LORD is God. It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, the

sheep of His pasture.

⁴ Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name.

⁵ For the LORD is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations.

Paul calls us to rejoice (Phil 4:4). Luke tells us to be joyful of the good news (Luke 2:10) of Salvation (Luke 10:20). James says to have joy in the midst of suffering (James 1:2). Over and over through scripture this theme of joy surfaces. Even worship itself is joyful (James 5:13; Acts 16:25; Hebrews 13:15, 2 Cor. 9:7, Luke 1:46-47; John 16:22). Paul's writings talk about having joy, or being joyful over and

over. In 1 Thess. Paul puts it bluntly enough to say that it is *God's will for us*. This is not just circumstantial. *That* is the lesson to be learned from watching people worship in places like little Grand Goave, Haiti.

Nehemiah sums it up: "...for the joy of the LORD is your strength." (8:10b)

It all comes back to the big picture we've been working through back at Cornerstone: I John 3:17: "If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God

be in him?"

There are needs here. Needs we have the resources to do something about. Yes, we can enjoy the blessings that God has given us, but we *absolutely must not miss the chance to care for the need as well*. If we as a church were challenged in this last year to give, we should be challenged all the more. They bring the last of their finances to give while going home to nothing. We bring a drop in the bucket while going home to mansions and pantries stocked full. They worship with joy,

while we find something to complain about, or nitpick over, or be bothered because there wasn't the program we wanted.

We need Haiti. Maybe even more than Haiti needs us.

But mostly, we need to rediscover what it means to feel the Joy of the Lord.

HEADS UP

CSM goes down Thursdays: JNR HI (gr. 6-8) 6.30-8PM and SNR HI (gr. 9-12) 7.30-9.30 (plus coffeehouse after till 10)

Dates to Remember:

May 5: JNR HI Wrap Up, 7.30-9.00PM at Harry Bailey Aquatic Centre (\$5)
 May 12: Last JNR HI Small Group Night
 May 20: JNR HI LazerTag at Merrill Dunes Adventure (date subject to change)
 Jun 9: SNR HI Wrap Up Night
 Jun 16: SNR HI Study Party
 Jun 18: SNR HI Prairie Meats Fundraiser
 Jun 19: SNR HI Father's Day Show & Shine Fundraiser
 Jun 23: Last SNR HI Small Group Night

BOOK IT! MAY 6-7, JETPACK: Kick starting Adolescence - Friday/Saturday Event for Gr. 4-6 Students and their Parents at Ranger Lake. DON'T MISS THIS! Check out the Registration Packs at the info booth, or from Stephen and/or Jessica!

Wanna know what's going on? Sign up for CSM Text Alerts. Text your name/cell number to Stephen, at 291-5533 or check out the CSM:SNR HI Facebook Page!

A Haiti Experience By Lindsay Neggers

The mission's trip to Haiti was an amazing experience for me. Prior to going, I did not know what to expect of the trip, but now I can say that it was the best thing that I have ever done. I have many highlights from the trip, and one would be the VBS camp. I really enjoyed spending time with the kids. There was one little girl that was particularly special to me,

her name was Evelyn. All three days of VBS she would find me



and even after, anytime she saw me she would come over and sit with me.

Another highlight was every morning us girls got to take a half hour break from work to be with the kids at recess. They especially loved us to help them across the monkey bars and some older girls taught us one of their hand clapping games. It was fun to watch them play because they were always so energetic and constantly had smiles on their faces.

One last thing that I really enjoyed was all the praying that we did. One specific

moment was when we got to pray blessings for each of the children individually at the



end of VBS. Praying out loud was something I had never done before. At the time it really pushed me out of my comfort zone, but looking back now I can see that it really helped me grow spiritually.

The trip was rewarding in so many ways and I feel blessed that I had the chance to go.

Easter 2011

light & Shadow

Join us for our Easter services:
Good Friday, April 22 at 10:30 AM
Easter Sunday, April 24 at 10:30 AM

The theme of Light and Shadow describes the interplay between the darkness of good Friday and the brightness of Easter. Good Friday worship gathering will include music and drama that reflects on the suffering of Christ, the hopelessness of sin, and the cost of our consequences. We will also prepare ourselves for communion.

Easter Sunday will move beyond the cross and focus on the joy, the brightness of hope, and the power of God's grace. Through music, drama and God's word, we will discover that sacrifice and suffering bear no comparison to the glory of obedience and the reward of following Christ.



Jetpack

A new 24-hr getaway for grade 4-6 students and their parents to jumpstart the adventure of adolescence.

May 6-7 at Ranger Lake Bible Camp. Talk to CE or CSM for details.

Upcoming Events:

Friday April 22 - Good Friday Service at 10:30AM

Sunday, April 24 - Easter Sunday Service at 10:30AM (only one service)

Wednesday, April 27 - 7PM Bridal Shower for Caroline Calverley
(Kurtis Janzen)

Saturday, May 7 - Men's Breakfast—puck drops at 8AM
Guest speaker Don Pogoda

Monday, May 16 - 7PM Baby Showers for:

Iona Ruth - daughter of William & Lisa Hrycan

Kesler David Emmanuel - son of Stephen & Melissa Thiessen

Sunday, May 15 - Family Focus Services 9:30 & 11:00AM

Sunday, June 5 - Child Dedication Service 10:30AM

June 5 to September 11 we have one service at 10:30AM

Sunday, June 19 - 10:30AM Father's Day Show 'n Shine. Live music & great show cars. Hot dogs & hamburgers available for purchase as a fundraiser for Cornerstone Student Ministries.



CORNERSTONE
CHURCH

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