

AN ORIENTATION TO DISCIPLESHIP

... BE THE ...
CHANGE
YOU WISH TO SEE IN THE
WORLD
-GANDHI

Give

“Be the change you want to see in the world.”

I know. Ghandi said that. Not Jesus. But it’s still a great saying. And it’s true. We are called to be the change that we want to see in the world. It’s part of being a disciple of Jesus and following in his footsteps. That’s what we are created and called to do by God. Don’t believe me? Here’s a quote from God on the matter.

“We’ve been created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God has prepared in advance for us to do.”

(Ephesians 2:10)

You are a new creation in Jesus! Remember? God loved you so much that he sent Jesus just for you. When he died for you, he didn’t just forgive your sins, he remade you, redeemed you, gave you the make over of all make overs! Because of Jesus, you’re one of God’s children! You’re one of his loved and lovely children. You’re part of the family! And that means you’re part of the family business as well!

What is the family business you might ask? Fixing the mess! At least right now. Remember how we talked about how God made the world perfect but because sin entered the world everything got screwed up? Well, God didn’t just send Jesus to take care of the “spiritual stuff.” He’s interested in fixing the whole thing! All of it. *(See Revelation 21:5. It’s pretty cool!)*

And in probably the coolest and most amazing move that God has made, other than sending Jesus, is that he’s asked you to be a part of fixing things! That’s the family business. Binding up the broken hearted. Healing the sick. Caring for the environment. Strengthening relationships. Sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ. God has a plan for what his world is meant to look like and we get to help in making that vision a reality everyday.

How you might ask? We do exactly what God did for us. We give. We give of ourselves, our time, our talent, and our treasure to be the change we want to see. Ghandi might have said it. But God did it. And now, so do we! We do the one thing that will change the world. We give!

If there was one thing you could fix in the world, what would it be?

So why is giving the secret to fixing the problems we see in the world? Because that's how things were supposed to work in the first place. God set up a world where we were in a perfect relationship with him, with one another, and with our world. We would do what was best for one another perfectly. But when sin entered the world, something changed. We started to look out for ourselves (*See Genesis 4*). We no longer knew perfectly how to be in relationship with God or with one another.



So God gave his people a way to show the world exactly what he had in mind, a way to stand out to show everyone what could be. That gift is the 10 Commandments. When many people look at the 10 Commandments, they hear what they can't do. As Christians, we see them differently. Sure, they tell us what not to do. But more than that, they are the start of how we can be about the family business of fixing the world.

And at the heart of the 10 Commandments is giving. The first three Commandments tell us how we can give ourselves to God and have a right relationship with him. The other seven Commandments explain how we can give ourselves to our neighbor to rebuild the relationships we have with one another. Check it out.

10 COMMANDMENTS

Strengthening our relationship with GOD

- 1.** You shall have no other Gods
- 2.** Do not use my name in vain
- 3.** Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy

Strengthening our relationship with OTHERS

- 4.** Honor authorities
- 5.** Don't kill (or hate)
- 6.** Don't commit adultery
- 7.** Don't steal
- 8.** Don't lie or gossip about your neighbor
- 9.** Don't covet your neighbors house
- 10.** Don't covet your neighbor's lifestyle

THE FIX: GIVE!

It can't be that easy, right? Well, maybe it is. You see, when we give of ourselves, we put other's needs before our own, put God in his right place in our life, things just kind of start to line up the way that God intended.

Take for instance romantic relationships or marriage. What's the answer to loneliness? Give yourself to someone else. How do you have a happy and successful marriage? When both people are equally serving the other, giving up their own needs and desires to make sure their spouse is taken care of. That's what we promise in our marriage vows right? In sickness, in health, for richer, for poorer? We are saying that no matter what, I am giving myself to you. And it's exclusive. Things don't go too well in a relationship when one of the people decides that there should be a little something on the side. Feelings are hurt. Self-esteem is crushed. Homes are broken. Assets are divided. Children grow up not knowing how to have healthy relationships. No, God had a plan, a way to make sure that loneliness was defeated and homes were strong. Give yourself fully to one other person romantically.

What about coveting? So many people are unhappy and unfulfilled because they look at what they have and its not enough. They watch HGTV and see nicer houses and think, "I wish I had that." Or they see a neighbor who is doing well and they think, "I deserve what they have." So they become a workaholic in order to achieve what they have been sold is success. Meanwhile, they destroy the relationship with their spouse or children or friends because they don't have time for them. By giving yourself to the wrong priority, you have broken a relationship with the people closest to you.

Or how about "Remember the Sabbath Day." It's not just about going to church, however, that is a start. God gave us the Sabbath Day not only as a way to set aside time to hear from him and strengthen our relationship with him, but he also gave the Sabbath Day for rest. How many people do you know who are stressed out all the time and say, "I just don't have any time for myself." God built rest and relaxation into the system. When we don't give up our time, we steal rest, recuperation, and relaxation from ourselves.

Where else do you see one of the 10 Commandments being the answer to a problem we see in the world?

Have you ever considered that God loves the world enough to set up a system for it to run the right way?

IT'S JUST THAT EASY!?

So there you go. You know that problem you wanted to solve? It's just as easy as living the 10 Commandments and getting other people to do as well! No problem, right?

Well....

If you get right down to it, giving yourself to others and to God isn't all that easy is it? It means giving up control. It means giving up your time. It means giving up getting your way and winning.



If God set up the world to work a certain way, to run on the perfection of the 10 Commandments, then we have a part in making the world not perfect. I want my way. I don't want to give up control. I think I know better or I deserve to have something, and I don't care how it affects everyone else. I'm in a hurry. I'll speed, putting others at risk as I drive recklessly. Oops. I'm not honoring authority. Oh... and I'm using more fossil fuels. But I'm in a hurry. I guess I'll use more than my fair share.

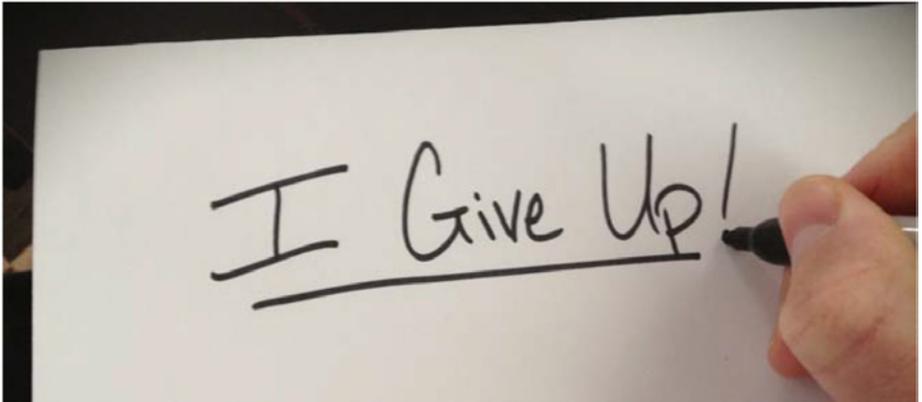
Look at that magazine. Can you believe so and so did that? I'll just buy it. I'll just click on that story on Facebook. My money will go to the paparazzi who are invading the privacy of that star. It's ok. I don't know them personally. What can it hurt? Plus, I need to be entertained. Oops. I just fell into gossiping and hurting my neighbors reputation.

Oh, this sexy picture just came across my Facebook feed. Man, she's hot! I wish my girlfriend or wife was as hot as she is. I'll just look a little while longer, maybe think about her without her clothes on a little bit. Oops. I just committed adultery in my mind... and objectified one of God's loved daughters. Never mind that she is a victim of human trafficking.

And with each of these, what was really going on? I know better than God. I should get what I want. "Look at that fruit. Did God really say?"

When we look at the brokenness of the world, no matter if it is a big issue like global hunger, greed, homelessness or human trafficking, we can't point the finger and say that it's their problem. It's out there. No, it's right here. It's in you. It's in me. We support greed. We don't feed our neighbors. We turn a blind eye to sex trafficking and pornography. I have seen the problem. And it looks a lot like me.

Is there an area where you have been struggling lately to live up to the standards you set for others?



If you feel like giving up right now or if you're thinking, "Hey, this following Jesus is a real downer," hold on. The answer is still give.

FOR YOU...

The 10 Commandments are the answer. It doesn't matter what the question or problem is in life, they hold the key. The problem is we don't live them perfectly. Scratch that. We can't live them perfectly. It's impossible for you and I. Remember, sin, the broken relationship with God, with one another, and with his creation, is hereditary. It's genetic.

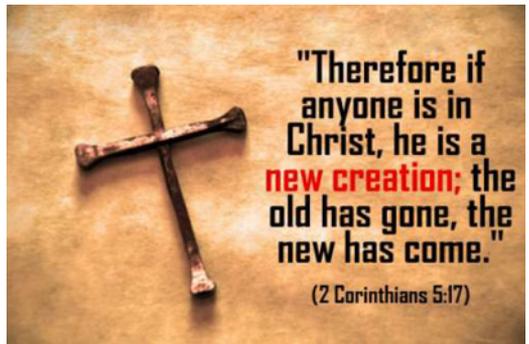
But the answer is still give. It's just that it doesn't start with you giving. It starts with you receiving. God sent Jesus. He gave him to you and for you.

You and I couldn't live the 10 Commandments so we would always despair and give up. But Jesus lived them perfectly. He did what we couldn't. He showed the world what God's perfect plan would look like. He brought peace to relationships. He helped the downtrodden. He fixed our relationship with the environment. All of it. He gave us a taste of what it can be.

And more than that, when he died, he gave us that perfection as our own. He kept the 10 Commandments in your place. He gave you his perfection as your own.

So now we give. Following Jesus means that we give him our imperfection. Following Jesus starts with us giving in to God's grace and resting in Jesus' perfection, not our own. It means giving up our shame and guilt and starting fresh, every day, every minute, every second. It means giving up trying to do things our way in order to do things God's way. We give up making a mess through our sin in order to start fixing the mess by following God's will. It's through Jesus, and through him alone, that we can truly "be the change we want to see" because we have been changed for the world to see.

We "give" because God first gave to us. He gave us life. He gave us breath. He gave us the world and everything we see. But most of all he gave us Jesus when we needed him the most, to do the thing we couldn't do. Be the change we all wanted and needed to see: a world without sin.



Now that we have been changed through Christ, everything has changed! Our relationship with God has changed. He's our loving Father, not an angry judge. And he wants to talk to us. So he gives us prayer as a way of reaching out to him in conversation. He has given us His Word, the Bible, as a way to help us on our way. God has given us everything that we have as gifts, our money, our house, our talents. All gifts from God because he loves us.

And our relationship with the 10 Commandments has changed as well. As it was said earlier, since we are God's children, he's asking us to be a part of the family business of showing the world what life with him is like. As followers of Jesus, made new and perfect through God's grace, we see the 10 Commandments as the handbook for how we rebuild relationships the way they are supposed to be. In other words, they help us to live the change that we want to see.

Now sure, we're going to mess up. Why? Because while we are perfect in Christ and because of what Christ has done for us, it doesn't mean we do everything perfectly. Think of it this way. Children in loving homes with loving parents are completely and wholly loved. That's their standing. They are always loved. That's their relationship with their parents.

But just because they are loved, doesn't mean that they don't still make mistakes as they learn what it means to show that love back to their parents. They still struggle with listening. They still want to get their way. They still feel like their needs are more important than the rest of the family. But those mistakes and missteps don't change the state they are in. It doesn't change the fundamental relationship built on love. The child is still loved. In fact, because the child is loved, the parents will try and help the child to live out that love better by disciplining the child. They do this so that a behavior that could have hurtful consequences later in life is stopped.

That's like our relationship with our Dad in heaven. Nothing can change the fact that he loves us. That's where we stand with him in Jesus. But, we still will make mistakes. And yes, he still will discipline us from time to time to try and get us to stop a behavior that might have real and detrimental consequences later. But that's just part of the process of him bringing us into the family business. He's got to show us the right way. He did that with Jesus. And he's got to teach us the right way. He gave us the Bible. And he's got to lay out the plan for us. That's the 10 Commandments.



***“I know the plans
I have for you...
Plans to give you
A future and a hope.”***

(Jeremiah 29:11)



you're **HIRED!**

Maybe you're thinking, "Ok, Ok, I get it. We give because God has given to us. But where do I fit? How do I get started in the family business. I want to make a difference!"

If that's where you're at, perfect! God has laid out the plan he has for you on how you can start to change the world. Stay right where you are! That's right. God is working through you already.

Remember that verse at the beginning? *"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God has prepared in advance for us to do."* (Ephesians 2:10) When God made you he put you together as a one-of-a-kind model of his creativity. He gave you gifts and abilities that uniquely and powerfully show who he is while also making the world a better place.

The idea for this has a special name. It's called a vocation. A vocation is your God-given role. Your vocation is where God has specially and specifically called you to be about the family business of fixing what is broken. If you are a spouse, that is a unique call where you have the opportunity to show God's love specifically to your spouse. You have the opportunity to show the world what God intended. But it starts with giving yourself in that role.

If you have children, you've been given the job of providing for children and showing God's love and care to them. A powerful job indeed! But you've also been called to be missionaries to those children specifically, sharing God's love in Jesus Christ with them.

Being a friend is a vocation. Being a student. Being an employee or an employer. Being a citizen. Being a customer. Anywhere you are in relationship with someone else, you are in a vocation. You are personally sharing God's unique love and care through what you are doing. And it is in those vocations that God is calling you to "be the change you want to see." It's here where you have the opportunity each day to give the world a glimpse of what could be.

So let's make a quick list of where God has specifically called you to make a difference. Use the space below if you would like.

Alright, now pick one or two and let's see how you perform that vocation, that specific calling by God is giving you the chance to change the world... or at least fight back against the affects of sin in someone's life.

Have you ever thought of yourself and what you do as God's way of caring for his world?

BUT ISN'T THIS SUPPOSED TO BE ABOUT BEING A CHURCH MEMBER?

You might have noticed that we really haven't talked too much about what it means to be a church member. There's a reason for this. Because it's what you are. You're part of the family! Remember? Following Jesus goes way beyond just showing up on Sunday and marking that off your to-do list. You are the church! Church isn't something you go to. It's something you are! Wherever you go, whatever you're doing, you are the church! We are the church!

However, being part of the Body of Christ is also a vocation, a special and unique calling that shows God's love in a unique way. And for us at Immanuel, it comes back to what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. We give.

We give of our time

- ***Sunday is a priority.*** We want to come back and be reminded of who we are. We want to have a check in with our Father to see how we're doing and if there might be something he wants to tell us to help us during the week. And we want to spend time with our fellow believers to strengthen them and be strengthened by them in our daily work to change the world. (It can get tiring and rough from time to time!)
- We are in regular prayer and study of God's word. Now any relationship where you're not talking to the other person on a regular basis is going to be a little strained. Good thing God has given us a way to talk and to listen to him. So we make time to do just that as a way to keep our relationship with him strong. Immanuel offers a Sunday morning Bible Study and a Wednesday Bible Study/Worship. If you would be interested in starting a small group or being a part of one, please let us know!

We give of our talents.

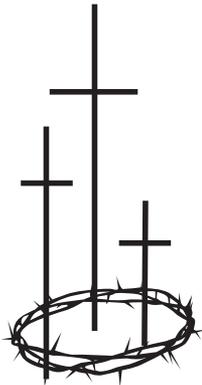
- ***We serve where we are gifted and passionate.*** As we said earlier, God has uniquely gifted and given talents to each of us. Some are great at sports, others are awesome at crafts or singing. Still others are leaders and administrators. No matter who we are, God has given us ways that we point to him through what we do. At Immanuel, we seek to help to strengthen those gifts and empower people to use those gifts as part of our ministry together. Whether it's a hobby, part of your job, or just something you're interested in, if you're passionate about reaching people for Christ and you see a way you can be of service, Immanuel is a place where you can grow your gift and your impact. If you wonder about where you might fit best, don't hesitate to talk with Pastor Schultz!

We give of our treasure.

• *We are generous with the financial and material wealth that God has given us.* Part of our calling as God's people is to be generous. Immanuel lives that out both inside and outside the congregation. We support our own ministry by being faithful and regular in our gifts and offerings. These dollars go directly to supporting what we do day in and day out! Give. Real. Grace! But we also generously support organizations outside our own congregation and in the community as part of our witness and our unique place as Immanuel Lutheran Church. Here is a list of those we support

- CITY MISSION: Organization that helps the homeless and working poor of Schenectady.
- SAFE Inc.: A shelter that temporarily houses homeless and trafficked teens in order to move them toward stability.
- SCHENECTADY INNER CITY MISSION: A cooperative effort of churches in the area that work to feed and care for basic needs in our area.

Where can your unique gifts strengthen the ministry of Immanuel?



Immanuel

Give. Real. Grace.

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