

THE CHURCH A PARADIGM SHIFT

HOLIDAYS

THE WHY

This fall in our sermon series at The Well Community Church we have been examining the idea of a paradigm shift. What did a righted view of Jesus Christ mean to the early believers in the book of Acts, and what does it mean for His believers some 2000 years later?

The series has challenged us to consider the Holy Spirit, prayer, Scripture, suffering and evangelism from the lens of the gospel, and move from information to transformation in our lives. As we enter into the holiday season, we ask that you consider what a righted view of Jesus would lead you to do in response to a time of the year where we typically embrace consumerism. Billions of dollars are spent annually on food, decorations and gifts so that when the New Year comes, most Americans are heavier in the waistline and lighter in the wallet.

But what if the holidays didn't have to be about buying things people don't need, spending money we don't have and wasting time that could be spent in more redemptive ways? What if the church were more committed to compassion than consumption? The early church was marked by their generous deeds (Acts 2:44-45, Acts 4:32-35) toward one another. Paul reminds the church in Corinth to abound in giving in response to what they have graciously been given to them in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 8:7-9), and Jesus' parables were constantly marked with the ideas of generosity and stewardship (Luke 21:1-4, Matthew 25:14-30).

And tucked away in your Old Testament (2 Kings 6:24-7:16) is a beautiful story of four lepers who were left for dead and ended up receiving the spoils and riches of a defeated Aramean enemy. Although for the better part of their entire lives they were afflicted and rejected, they

found themselves in possession of food, silver, gold and clothes (7:8). While many would have justified these four for having hoarded the goods for themselves, it became apparent to the men that they must not. They said to one another, "We are not doing right. This is a day of good news, but we are keeping silent."

They had become aware that the Lord had blessed them with everything they now owned, and it was their job to share it with others. It was the Lord who provided. They couldn't take credit for it and they couldn't keep it all to themselves, and said, "Now therefore come, let us go

and tell the king's household" (7:9). And in their generosity they saved an entire city from death and destruction.

When your heart is so transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ that you understand how gracious and giving God has been, you in turn are gracious and giving to

others. You lead with compassion and generosity instead of consumption and greed. You call others who have been transformed by God's grace to do the same. This year we want the holiday season to be a paradigm shift for you and our church as we live out of a righted view of Jesus.

THE WHAT

Compassion and generosity should mark your life during the holiday season. There are numerous needs and opportunities for you to proclaim the gospel in word and deed during this time of the year. The key is to determine what and where.

Recently we taught a message at The Well that helped you see that you can be generous by using your time, talent and treasure.

thewellcommunity.org/podcasts/series/the-church/generous

WHAT IF THE CHURCH WERE MORE COMMITTED TO COMPASSION THAN CONSUMPTION?

It would be helpful to consider what you have in your possession that could be leveraged for others during the holidays.

- How could you set aside time in your life to be available to serve or assist others?
- What are the abilities or giftings you have that could be of use during this time?
- What money, possessions or property do you have that could be donated or offered?

Also consider the places where you live, work and play. These locations include people you can be compassionate and generous toward.

- What connections do you have in your neighborhood where you could give or care for others?
- How might your workplace offer you a place to come alongside someone and serve them?
- Where do you hang out frequently that might present opportunities for you to display generosity?

Several years ago we produced a Life Group leader guide called “Seasons of Compassion,” which gave some specific ideas tied to The Anatomy of a Disciple model for the holidays.

thewellcommunity.org/blogs/life-group-guide/acts-1823-2038-1-2-corinthians-generations-series-3440

These ideas may provide a helpful place for you to start.

THE HOW

There are many options for you to consider. It’s just a matter of deciding which one and with whom. Here are some simple steps for you to take:

1. **Pray.** God calls us to pray without ceasing and offer every need and request before the Lord. Before you begin planning, pray and seek the Lord. Ask Him to provide you with the wisdom and insight of who and what you need to move forward.
2. **People.** Life is always better with others. Who might you invite into your life this holiday season? Family members, Life Group friends, co-workers, or even people from your campus and/or service could join you. Call on a few folks to be a part of what God is going to do this year.

3. **Plan.** Do some brainstorming with others. Throw out ideas and wrestle with them. See if any stick and seem like the Lord’s leading. Make some calls and see if you can coordinate your efforts and resources. Have several options in case one falls through.
4. **Proceed.** Just go for it. Deadlines trigger the process, so set something in place. Have fun while you are doing it. Enjoy the process no matter what happens. Don’t forget to reflect and evaluate afterward.

The world was never the same once those early followers of Jesus saw their Savior in the right light, allowed the Holy Spirit to guide them and walked in obedience to the Scriptures. What we see transpiring in the book of Acts should be the same thing occurring today. May it be said of The Well Community Church that we are a people who have a righted view of Jesus, which leads to transformed lives, which leads to each one of us to say, “Now therefore come, let us go.” Let us redeem the holidays for the glory of God and the good of others.