

Christ Community Covenant Church  
5 Smooth Stones – Stone One (Part 2)  
A Family Church – “Think Orange”  
Mark 10:28-31; Acts 2:43-47  
Pastor Randy McNeal – June 17, 2012

### **Father's Day**

I'd like to take a moment and refer back to Dave's message last week about families. He talked about us having to live and fight for our families in a post fall world. I saw an example of this in an email from Covenant Heights this past week where Jesse quoted a statistic that:

"On average a parent has a deep conversation with their child for 3.2 minutes/week."

Now I've shown you these charts before but let's put this into perspective.

[Church graph] The church has an average of 40 hours a year with a child, or adult for that matter.

[Parent graph] The parents have an average of 3,000 hours and yet they spend only 3.2 minutes per week in deep conversation.

So the question I have is: As parents, are we using our time with our children well?

Now I know what you are thinking "Randy, you don't have kids" and it's true. But I don't have a doubt in my mind that someday I will be an amazing father to my kids because for the last 27 years I have had an amazing example of this in my own father. So on this father's day I want to take a moment and encourage the fathers with a story about how influential my dad was in my faith with perhaps less than 3.2 minutes of actual conversation per week.

You see my dad is not one of many words. Some would say he's not one of any words. We didn't have many deep conversations growing up but I remember 4 that changed my life and made me who I am.

There was a time where as a teenager I was struggling to feel loved. My dad took me out to Dairy Queen and assured me of his love for me. I never forgot that.

When I was later into high school I began to doubt my faith, to doubt God and I'll never forget my dad sitting down with me in the office at home and helping me regain my grasp on my faith in God.

After college I was struggling with a very hard break up and after golfing with my dad one day he opened up to me about his past hurt in a relationship. The advice he gave helped me get through a very difficult time and is advice I continue to pass on today.

Finally, this last year my dad gave a speech at the rehearsal dinner before our wedding. I have no clue what he said because I was bawling the entire time. What I do know is that my dad loves me and is proud of me because of who I am and my faith in God. And that is so important for a child to know.

And even more than the words he said, or lack of, my dad set an example of faith by reading his Bible and praying every day. I saw him do this every morning. He didn't need to have the right words because his life demonstrated his love for me and his love for the Lord. It is a reason why I'm here today.

Dads, you may only get 3.2 minutes per week. Use them wisely but know that it's so much more than the words you say but also the example you set in your own faith.

Let's pray [pray for fathers]

***"Think Orange"***

How many of you have seen this [pull out construction cone] around lately?

[Ask] what words would you use to describe your emotions when you see it? Remember we are in church!

I'd like to change the way you feel about this item. I'd like this traffic cone to represent everything we are about to talk about regarding the church as a family so that every time you see this cone you will be reminded of one thing: Think Orange.

Here is what I am talking about:

Yellow (slide of yellow circle) is the color of light. It's bright, sometimes obnoxious but it is overall something that shines. The church, as an institution, is called to be "a light of the world". We provide truth, hope, and something to look to when darkness threatens to overtake us.

Red (slide of red circle) is the color of love. Your nuclear families are full of love. They are nurturing, supportive, and responsible for the overall care of each other.

When you combine the church and family together you combine light and love, yellow and red, and you get the color.....orange. So think orange. Today we will be discussing this combination of the light of the church and the love of the family because when combined together we are better equipped to "Love God, Love others and advance the kingdom together".

[Slide of orange book] "Think Orange" is a book written by Reggie Joiner and a great resource on this topic. He brings up my favorite passage in Deuteronomy chapter 6 that many of you have heard me talk about. If you hear it again it's only because it's that important. When Moses gives the greatest commandment for the first time to Love God with all heart, soul, and strength and to love God alone he follows it by saying "talk about it when you sit at home and are on the road".

So when you are on the road and you inevitably see this [motion to cone] orange cone Think Orange. Have 3.2 minutes of deep conversation about your faith with those in your car or just between you and God. Do this every time you see an orange cone, so much so that your kids begin to groan when they see one because they know some deep question is about to come from you. Talk about your faith always at home and on the road. Use the love of family with the church and Think Orange. In partnering together with the church you will begin to acknowledge that...

***"We are not only a church for families but also a family church"***

What I mean by this is that we exist for so much more than our regular programming. Sunday mornings are an hour of your week. Small groups, youth group, KICK/C4 maybe another hour or two. These programs exist for families, designed to equip and encourage you to become a family church. Being a family church means active participation in not only regular programming but in the lives of each other as if you were family. Like Dave mentioned last week, our families live in a post fall world; they are broken. Here, in this church family, we get a taste of what it should have been like if we try really hard. Here is what Jesus had to say about the family of the church and its reward in the kingdom now.

**Mark 10:28-31** (NIV)

Then Peter spoke up, "We have left everything to follow you!"

"Truly I tell you," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers,

children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

The Kingdom is both now and not yet. Here, Jesus explains the 100-fold blessing for the church family in the kingdom now. Jesus has been delivering hard messages in passages before this one. He has called out hypocrisy, defended marriage and told us that in order to follow him we must deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow him. He goes on to say that when we leave EVERYTHING, including our families behind, we receive more family than we had in the first place. He says we will receive 100 times as much in this present age/kingdom now. Then, in case we didn't understand, he explains that this is fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, children and fields! He adds persecution into that second list of rewards for the kingdom now, perhaps because we are so much better equipped to handle it with each other.

When Christ died to restore our relationship with God he did so not just for that but also for the relationship between us and the church family. You were not saved for yourself but saved to a Kingdom of intimate love, acceptance, help and encouragement. And persecutions.

You see if you come to church week after week with no desire to get to know the people, the family around you then you are throwing away the 100-fold blessing God is offering you. Your reward for your sacrifice is sitting right next to you, right behind you, and right in front of you. Don't let go of this reward that is 100 times greater than anything this world has to offer because the kingdom is now and the kingdom is in this room. When asked "what has Christ done for you?" you ought to answer "he saved me to be in this family".

1. Being an intergenerational church is more than just all being in the same room together. It is actively participating in the faith with each other. If all we do is show up here, sit for 70 minutes and leave we are not a family church, we are not an intergenerational church and we are not living in the kingdom now or advancing it forward. Get to know your family because like it or not, you're stuck with us!
2. Tate said it really well a month ago when she lamented "when someone leaves this church we grieve because this is family." The hurt, the pain, is real. As pastors we don't get upset when people leave because it hurts our egos. It hurts our hearts because part of the 100-fold blessing God has given us is leaving.
3. The 100 fold blessing is for now! Christ says "in this age and the age to come eternal life". The kingdom is now and not yet. Don't miss out on God's reward for your sacrifice of self. Your reward is sitting right next to you.

When we live in this kingdom maybe this will be our story:

#### 4Cs2015

At 4Cs we have families who live the Gospel, are nurtured by the faith of diverse generations, and have parents who model and encourage sticky faith with their lives. The process was difficult and involved a lot of deprogramming of previous misconceptions of the church in relation to sticky faith. We had to remove our preconceived notion that a program built sticky faith and replace it with a focus on people. It's like a trellis and a vine. Once there is a strong support structure (program) the focus must turn to cultivating the soil for the vine to grow (sticky faith). We have always had a great tradition of support systems in place and it was easy to trust it would continue its support as we turned our attention to the cultivation of the faith of our family.

#### The Gospel

We began to focus on what it meant to live the Gospel out in our lives. Embarrassed by the fact our Gospel had become about "being good enough" we began to ask the question asked by Jesus in Mark 8 "who do you say I am?" of ourselves. We didn't have to read much further to see

that if we believed Jesus was in fact The Messiah then we were called to “deny ourselves” and “take up our cross” daily. It was clear this meant more than a quiet time in the morning.

We moved forward in a thought. We are both saved from sin and saved for the kingdom; family. Through the process of being born again, completely changed by the Gospel, we “live on the fault line of the now but not yet kingdom.” Although we can anticipate the coming kingdom of eternal life because our punishment for sin is taken, that’s “not yet”. The kingdom “now” refers to how our lives are different because of the saving work. Namely, it refers to our trust in God for all our experiences on this earth. In this we have become willing to “waste our lives on God.”

Coming from the standpoint of Mark 14:4 where we read of a lady breaking a jar of expensive perfume over Jesus’ feet, something worth a year’s wages, and the disciples asking “why was the ointment wasted in this way?” we ask ourselves: Are we willing to waste our life in the name of the Gospel? Earlier in Mark 8:35 Jesus has told his disciples “those who lose [waste] their lives for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.” Our response is “those who waste their lives for Jesus, who squander their talent on the church, who throw away their lives in ministry—will gain it [100-fold]. Following Jesus is a waste. The Bible tells us so.”

For us at 4Cs we seek to live our lives in a way that accurately represents the kingdom now and points others to the kingdom coming. This understanding and living out the Gospel is the biggest reason our faith sticks.

#### Intergenerational Worship

Intergenerational Worship for us is involvement in the body of Christ from cradle to grave. Knowing sticky faith is linked to students who serve with younger believers we developed a faith mentoring program. This team met together to talk about servant leadership modeled by Christ, pray together, and suggest ideas to advance the kingdom. Armed with the knowledge “beyond the benefits of the mere presence of mentors, the more adult mentors who seek out the student and help the student apply faith to life, the better” and that youth typically ranked congregations in a distant past in terms of support groups, we developed 5:1 mentoring. [Slide of project 51] Each of our students can name five adults (other than their parents) they feel comfortable seeking advice about faith and life. This has aided our graduating seniors in finding a church as they have become more comfortable with adults and time-honored traditions within church history.

Within the scope of Sunday morning worship we have, above all, sought integration over replacement. “Our research doesn’t suggest kids need to replace adults in leading worship. Our vision is kids and adults experience worship together.” It’s not enough for youth to lead the congregation in worship but is vital for them to participate with other adults in the process. This has allowed a partnership and trust to form on behalf of our adults and students. As a part of these times of worship we have integrated rites of passage to celebrate the emerging adulthood of our students. We celebrate dedications, baptisms, promotions, confirmation, graduation as well as more specific rites as the desire in an individual arises. We all participate in the forming of a faith community around our youth.

#### Parent Partnership

With parents being at the forefront of faith development in our youth we made partnership with parents a high value. The first step with us was increasing communication. It doesn’t make sense to be frustrated with parents for not backing up what we are teaching if they didn’t have an opportunity to know. We sought to bring our parents into the conversation through newsletters, cohorts, and special meetings. Through helping parents to know what was happening in youth group, parents were able to begin “planned spontaneous” conversations regarding the material we were covering whether at home or on the road. Through cohorts parents were able to meet together to share ideas about causing faith to stick as well as pray for each other. The special meetings were the most productive as we were able to talk about specific issues within our youth culture like media, sex, drugs, as well as dive deeper into Biblical principles so parents would feel more equipped to take the lead in the faith development of our teens.

Our parents continually have family devotions with their teens, sometimes; their teens don't even realize it's happening. When children are younger, planned dates and devotions can be exciting. As they grow older these times may become less and less sincere. This is why we have encouraged parents of younger children to take advantage of their excitement until it wears off, then our parents "plan spontaneous" times of talking through faith issues. Whether driving to school, during a commercial break from a TV show or after a concerning comment made by a student, our parents seek to bring up faith in the everyday life. It's reminiscent of when Moses spoke to the Israelites regarding the Shema in Deuteronomy 6:4-9 about "Love the Lord with all your heart" and to "talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise."

### Sticky Faith

If it takes a village to raise a child then it takes a church to make a young person's faith stick. "We can certainly do nothing for our salvation, but our neighbors need our work, that is, our love: "Everyone is created and born for the sake of others."

As believers our neighbors start within the church and move to the community around us and to the ends of the earth.

Maybe our story looks like this:

[Yellow Circle Slide] The church is light

[Red Circle Slide] Families are love

[Concentric circles no Jesus fish] Together we make Orange

Do you see the picture? Do you see what happens when you combine the Church and Family?

[Concentric circle with Jesus fish] Christ is here. The merging of these two earth bound entities brings about the very powerful presence of our Lord and Savior. We become a reflection of Christ to each other and to the rest of the world.

### ***What if 2015, regardless of where we are, that story represented who we are?***

Regardless of location, building, programs or any other temporal thing, what if we were known for being an orange church? Love and Light partnered together, faith that stuck with us and especially our young people, and an enjoyment of the 100-fold blessing of each other. Where will you find yourself in the story of this immense blessing?

### **Benediction**

I told you of the story, the vision God has given me for 4Cs and my place in it. Where do you find yourself? What's your story? I hope all of us find ourselves in the story of the early church.

### **Acts 2:43-47** (NIV)

Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

That's the vision of what it means to enjoy the 100-fold blessing as a family church. We have everything in common, given to those in need. We not only won't hate it here but we will actually

enjoy it! And we will advance the kingdom together. In the coming weeks we will talk about being a "multiplying church" and just as the early church, we believe this will only happen when we are enjoying the reward of each other and working together.

So, "as you go", go and partner with each other, this church family, as both light and love. Talk about it when you are at home and on the road. Think Orange.

Amen