

LOVEWELL : A THEOLOGY

God is love, and
All who live in love live in God

Lovewell. It is a word, a theology, a mission and vision statement, and looks good on a t-shirt. But for those of us in the Crosswalk universe of churches, it means so much more. It is a way of looking at the world, looking at God, seeing what we are supposed to be doing and finding a way to live in this world that we often find so lacking in love. It is the way we wake up in the morning, the way we go to bed at night, and the hope that we have for not only how we will be treated, but how we will treat others as well.

Crosswalk has 5 End statements that guide who we are and how we interact with each other and the world. They are statements that we have spoken of before, and they are what we want anyone who is looking into becoming or starting a Crosswalk church to understand and take to heart. However, we have not always done the deep theological work that needs to be done in order to really understand how these statements are actually theological in nature and speak of a God who has these same values.

It is important to note that we would never presume to say that we have either figured out God or that God agrees with us entirely; that is the foundation of fundamentalism, and that is a deeply dangerous theology. What we hope is that through the deep study of scripture we will uncover the value system of Jesus and incorporate that into our understanding of our End Statements.

When we have had a Lovewell series previously, we have focused on the practical aspects of loving well. This time, we are going to think more theologically than practically. However, our orthodoxy (our right thinking) should always inform our orthopraxy (our right doing). So knowing the theological underpinnings of the Lovewell End Statements helps us to enact and activate them in our lives. As you take this theological journey with us, we are hopeful that you will not only incorporate this thinking into your life, but into your heart.

This word "Orthopraxy" literally means right action. When our understanding of God is focused on understanding God's love for us, we can move that knowledge into right action in a myriad of different ways.

What I love about the Crosswalk network of churches and lovewell groups is that in each situation each group and church will figure out how they will make this happen in their own context. The contextualization of loving well is what makes it so exciting, dynamic and applicable in each context. So as we study these texts, and get to know the love of God in more intimate ways, it is our prayer that God will awaken a new love for others, as you understand even more profoundly the love that God has for you. This feedback loop of love is what drives us, what innervates us, and what compels us to live beyond ourselves.

As a quick reference, here are our end statements:

1. Crosswalk will be a community of Belonging.
2. Crosswalk will be a community where people learn and grow in an authentic relationship with God.
3. Crosswalk will be relevant in living out the ways of Jesus in our place and time.

4. Crosswalk will be a community that lives beyond herself by caring and advocating for the powerless, oppressed and abandoned

5. Crosswalk will be a community that exemplifies servant leadership.

Thank you for taking this journey with us.

Pastor Tim and the Crosswalk Series Guide Team

Day 1

Matthew 19:14

14 But Jesus said, "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children."

Mark 9:41

41 If anyone gives you even a cup of water because you belong to the Messiah, I tell you the truth, that person will surely be rewarded.

You belong to God.

If you want to talk about a community of belonging, we should start by talking about the community of belonging that comes from the Trinity. We encounter this idea early on in scripture; Genesis 1:26 And God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness." This conversation, not monologue, hints to us that God is constantly in community and communication with himself. He is not bifurcated in purpose or mission, but God does show up as three distinct and individual persons.

However, scripture is also very clear that God is one! Deuteronomy 6:4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Mark 12:29 "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.'"

There should be no mistaking that God presents as one purpose, although in community. This tells us a few things: 1. God is a God of community, relationships, and values both. 2. God is not divided in his love, hopes and desires for those that are created.

So this means that when you belong to God, you belong to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. It is without reservation that God loves you, has sacrificed for you, and is deeply committed to your understanding of what love really is through the works and sacrifice and even the words that were said on God's behalf and by God. (Scriptures and the words of Jesus)

Whether a child as seen in Matthew 19:14, or whether the underserved, you belong to God—to the whole community of God. And this belonging is forever, is ubiquitous, and is accessible to you. You are not someone who has been forgotten, left behind, or leftover. You are someone that God sees as worthy of relationship, worthy of saving, and worthy of continuing a relationship with.

This community that you have been invited into has existed forever, and has never experienced mission drift. That means that God is as for us as was true at the very beginning of creation. There is no difference between today and back then. Regardless of what you believe about the origin story of the earth, to acknowledge that God loves you and is part of the community to which you have been invited means to affirm that God, in the infinite love and wisdom that is held within, has been in love and loving you from the very beginning.

Let me reiterate again.

You belong to God.

What does it mean to belong to God?

How can you be sure?

What does it feel like to belong to something greater than yourself?

How can you continue to belong to God throughout your life?

What sort of relationship with God are you searching for?

Do you feel like you belong to God?

Day 2

John 8:47

47 Anyone who belongs to God listens gladly to the words of God. But you don't listen because you don't belong to God."

What does it mean to belong to God?

This text seems to note that if you belong to God, you actually listen to those words that God says. The text itself is an indictment of those who were accusing Jesus of having a demon possessing him. Jesus wasn't having it, and reminded them that one of the reasons that they don't understand what he is saying is that they have never decided to belong to God in the way that God is offering belonging. Once they have belonged to God, they begin to listen differently.

What do you believe it means to belong to God? Is it salvation? Is it forgiveness? Is it something more tangible? And how can you know for sure that you belong to God? I guess this concept of listening is worth a mention. Jesus says that anyone who belongs to God will "gladly" listen to what God has to say. And I wonder how often we can say that about ourselves?

Sometimes, listening to God is pretty painful. Sometimes, the words of God are less a healing balm, but words that are to evoke action, movement, and of course, love. While those words can be difficult to hear, when we have an understanding that God has included us in everything that he has for us, that we belong to God and that belonging isn't going anywhere, we begin to hear those words very differently.

This may be a bad metaphor, but when you are dating someone, words of criticism, true or not, often lead to a breaking of the relationship. However, once there has been a commitment made through marriage, those words of criticism are taken in a different spirit. (of course, if there are only words of criticism, there are other issues in the marriage that need to be addressed). However, once my wife and I were married, those words were heard not as a simple criticism of behavior, but as a way to better understand this person that I belonged to now! Understanding began to be the mission and vision of the criticism or misunderstanding. What I mean is that when I stopped having to worry about anyone leaving the relationship the way I heard those things changed. A good relationship will move critique toward understanding, and understanding becomes the way that we continue to belong together so many years later.

Without this understanding of unmitigated belonging, the words that we hear from God can at times seem harsh and critical. However, when we understand that these words are given from a place of belonging, then we understand that sometimes hard words come from those that love us the most and are for a greater purpose, for self-understanding, for correction, and for trajectory. The words we hear from a God of belonging become wisdom, hope and grace, rather than simple criticism, direction, or declaration. The words are softer, mean more, and are given in a spirit of care and connectedness. We don't cease to belong to God just because there is something that God would like us to understand. Rather, we belong to God more profoundly because of the

willingness that exists to continue to grow, to learn, and to share the important things about our lives together.

When you listen to the voice of God in your life, what does it say?

How can you be sure it is God's voice?

Do you take these words in a spirit of gladness, or frustration and fear?

Do hard words continue to grow your understanding of belonging and how much God loves you?

Are these words tempered with grace and compassion?

How do we know what God is wanting to say to us specifically?

Day 3

John 15:19

19 The world would love you as one of its own if you belonged to it, but you are no longer part of the world. I chose you to come out of the world, so it hates you.

Who do you belong to? Because the text above seems to indicate that if you are one who loves Jesus, then the world can't be what you belong to. However, this also means that the world doesn't really understand you either. In fact, it seems to indicate that the world will actually hate you, which is a strong word.

Now, I want to make sure we understand something at this point. When we talk about "the world" we need to be a bit more specific. It is not just unbelievers, or those who don't think the same way that you do. But it is those who have not made love to be the highmark of what it means to be human. And, unfortunately, it means that there will be times that people within the church will hate you just as much as those outside of the church will hate you as well. To be hated by "the world" is to be hated and misunderstood by those who find other values ahead of those that we see espoused by Jesus.

For Jesus, love of God and love of a brother or sister are the full extent of the law. (Matthew 25, Romans 13, Galatians 5). These words of Jesus echoed by the words of the Apostle Paul show us clearly that love is the value that is most important to God, and we see this again and again in the life of Jesus. Those who chose piety over love, those who chose law over grace, those who continually choose perfection over charity, and those who choose ideology that excludes love for one another that includes could be classified as "the world."

The world is different from the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God values inclusivity, graciousness, compassion, love, and hope as the highest of all values. The world values position, purity (whether it is in race, nationality, social class, or even doctrinal purity), and possessions as the highest things to value. Of course those of us who have found love to be the measure of the law will be hated and will be seen as deep sinners to those who value something else.

Yep, that is right, they will see themselves as the saints, and you, who have chosen love, will be seen as sinners. It feels impossible for this to be true, but it is.

Why? Why would moving toward love be the thing that makes you a sinner rather than a saint?

Unfortunately, this happens when we begin to value other things, and love has a tendency to ignore station, forget possessions matter, to get dirty while showing compassion to others who are dirty as well. Love is not easy, love is not perfect, love is not clean, love does not hold one person above the other, rather it creates equity and justice for those who are oppressed, and it does not care if you are offended by it. Love perseveres. Love is not that which looks good on the outside, or looks just like you and your group, or me and my group. It is messy, ugly, unkempt and hard to manage.

Maybe that is why Jesus loved it so much. It looked a lot like his disciples, all of whom became deeply hated by "the world."

So next time you are thinking that "the world" hates you, make sure you understand who the world is that you are making angry, and if it is because of love, then that is okay.

Has the world ever hated you?

How can you show love even if you are being shunned or frustrated for it?

What does love look like in your life?

How can you give it more profoundly?

When you are giving love, does it ever make you uncomfortable?

What do you think Jesus felt as he was being hated by "the world?"

Day 4

Colossians 2:20

20 You have died with Christ, and he has set you free from the spiritual powers of this world. So why do you keep on following the rules of the world, such as,

Now, I don't love using a text that seems to be bifurcated right in the middle. I hope you understand that. However, this text really puts an exclamation point on what we have been talking about. In fact, the language of dying with Christ and being set free is powerful, and clearly defines what we have been talking about.

The next text moves on to how the people at the time were still being slaves to the law and were not experiencing the freedom that comes through Christ. They were still letting the things of this earth, the rules and the guidelines of their particular religion be the measure of belonging, as opposed to letting the cross be the belonging that makes the difference between belonging or not.

So what does this mean to us, at Crosswalk, if we are to be a community of belonging? Does it mean that you have to believe that Jesus died for you in order to belong?

The answer is no, you don't.

Do we want you to? Yes. Of course, we want you to know the saving grace that is Jesus Christ. We want you to know the remarkable forgiveness that comes from Christ. We want you to understand that Christ is for you and not against you, and that you have been freed from the burden and judgment of sin. We would love you to understand all of this and more as his grace is always more!

However, this knowledge and acceptance is not a requirement to be a part of our communities. Our hope is that you would feel so loved that these are the places that you want to be. The places where you find the most love, the most acceptance, the most belonging, and the deepest joy. If we have done that for you, then you have experienced the love of God through us, and our hope is that you will understand that this kind of love comes from somewhere. It comes from being accepted by the greatest love in the universe, and that love never ending. This is why we give that love away all the time.

I mentioned before that love like this is something that is forever overflowing. The truth is, we need to give it away to continue its flow through us. God has been so gracious and generous with us, we can do no less.

So what this means is that you have been freed not only from sin, but you have been freed from being an outcast. You are accepted, acknowledged, and you belong. And you don't belong because you got it right, you belong because that is what God does, he creates communities of belonging, and you have entered into one of those communities. Welcome, I hope you stay for a really long time!

What does "dying with Christ" mean to you?

How can you tell if you belong to a community?

Where does the community that you belong to need to work on its messaging of belonging, and how can you help?

What happens when you feel isolated and stuck in an old system that wears you down?

How can you create communities of belonging around you?

Day 5

Genesis 2:18

18 Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him."

God never wanted us to be alone. As stated before, one of his greatest values is that of community. So much is this a value of God's that God lives in a community and has forever. We call this community the Godhead, or the community of God.

When God created the world, there was an understanding that "it is not good for man to be alone. . ." Therefore, God was able to make a suitable helpmeet (someone who completes the man, is equal to, and is not in any way subservient by way of gender.) In other words, God created a community for humans from the very beginning.

We were not meant to be isolated beings. The poet John Donne wrote: "No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as any manner of thy friends or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee." (MEDITATION XVII Devotions upon Emergent Occasions)

These words were written so that we could be reminded that there is nothing more difficult than being alone. I was sitting with a 64 year-old gentleman today, and he reminded me that even at 64, he just wants to belong. He was honest and forthright with that statement. He wasn't ashamed to admit his need for others.

We do damage to the image of God in our lives when we think there is an rugged individualism that must be kept and it is somehow God's ideal for humanity. It is not ideal, in fact, it is the opposite. God is a God of relationships, seen in the trinity, and therefore, to be isolated is to deny what the image of God looks like in us. If God is a God of community, then we should be in a community; contributing, serving, leading and growing.

The image of God is not simply how we look, or even how we act, it is our ability to connect with other people. Our humanity exists in the context of relationships. Therefore, being in community is actually what makes us more human, more holy, and more within the image of God. Without these connections, we do damage to what God wants us to be and how we are to live, laugh, love and linger with one another.

What are the best relationships that you have?

How can you grow more relationships that are meaningful to you and to others?

How important is time in relationships?

Where do you give your time when it comes to relationships?

How can you cultivate relationships that are not burdensome on you, but bring you joy?

What do you do with toxic relationships in your life?

Day 6

Romans 12:5

5 So it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.

1 Corinthians 12:15-16

15 If the foot says, "I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand," that does not make it any less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear says, "I am not part of the body because I am not an eye," would that make it any less a part of the body?

I believe that we have made the theological case for belonging as a value of God from the very beginning. This has massive implications for how we are to live our lives. We are not to be doing this alone, we are to be in community, and those communities are to be easily accessible and places where people feel as if they belong. While we create these communities, we do it based on the belonging we experience that comes from being in the presence of God through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit everyday.

As we begin to understand the importance of belonging, we are also urged to understand that we belong not just to God, but we belong to one another in and through the church. By belonging to one another we begin to take responsibility for each other, and care for each other in different ways.

I have three children, and they are starting to find lives of their own. We are incredibly excited for them, but at the same time, our house, this community of people is starting to feel like it is empty compared to how it has been for years. Our little community of belonging is changing. What is important is for us to understand that those kids can come home at any point and will always belong, no matter what happens.

When communities change, it can feel as if we no longer belong to them, or that we are a little rudderless. But true communities of belonging are places where you will always belong. They are places that you can always go back to, and places that will make sure you are greeted and welcomed back with open arms.

One of the hardest things as a pastor is when you see someone you haven't seen for a while and you greet them. People who haven't seen you in church have a tendency to feel a little guilt and I am often greeted with, "oh pastor, I haven't been there for a while, I'll come soon. . ." When the truth is, that was not why I was greeting the person. I was greeting them, because I believe in communities of belonging, and when I see you, you are still part of my community, in church or not. If our orbits have spent some time in parallel, you and I are connected. This is why we make sure that no greeter at the church will ask someone where they have been, rather, will just say, "we are glad you are back, you are always welcome!"

Where is your community of belonging?

What role do you play in that community?

How often do you go back to that community?

Has it ever changed and left you feeling rudderless?

What did you do to reconnect with it?

What do you do when you feel like you are isolated and not connecting with the other parts of the community?

How can we help?

End Statement #1 - Crosswalk will be a community of belonging.

INTRODUCTION

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion. Feel free to add or subtract or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

OPEN

Outside of your family, what is a space or a group that you truly felt like you belonged to, and what was it about that space or group that fostered that feeling?

HEAD

Read Matthew 19:14, John 8:47, John 15:19, Colossians 2: 20, Genesis 2:18, John 8:35, Romans 12:5, and I Corinthians 12:15-16 together and share any wisdom, insights, or questions in response to the reading.

Think about and reflect on the theme of “belonging” throughout these verses. What stands out to you? What do you see as a common thread?

Jesus emphasized the importance of everyone belonging to God and His kingdom, even the children (the lowest members of importance in their society). Can you remember a time as a child you were ostracized by a group? What was that like? How about the reverse; accepted without condition? (reference Matthew 19:14 and Mark 9:41)

How do you and I practice “listening to God” as mentioned in John 8:47?

How can loving like Jesus, with reckless abandon and without condition, cause you to be hated by the world?

We were made by community (Trinity) for community (each other/church). Do you think it's healthy to be spiritual without community as many say these days?

HEART

So many churches, civic clubs, and other groups require you to adhere to a certain set of standards or beliefs before you can belong (including church when we tie baptism and membership together, saying you can't fully belong until you're baptized). At Crosswalk, we want everyone to know that they can belong first, even if we believe different things. Why do you think this emphasis on belonging is so important that it's our first end statement?

Belonging often comes before trust, we have to help people sense belonging before they begin to trust us. What are some ways to build that sense of belonging to newcomers in your group or church?

In Romans 12 and I Corinthians 12, it speaks to the body and how each part of the body is needed even though it functions differently. In a world so divided on so many different issues, how do we as the body of Christ set a better example and work together?

What does the knowledge that you could lose your job, your social status, your friend group, or even your family, and still belong to God, mean to you?

HANDS

Belonging is so important to God that from the moment His creation had to leave the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3, He's been chasing after us, seeking to reconcile (2 Corinthians 5: 17-21) us to Him. That journey took Him to the cross. Who in your life and circle of influence appears disconnected or lonely? Pray about an opportunity to invite that person to church one weekend or to join your discussion group.

LIVING WORDS for YOUR WEEK

“See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are! But the people who belong to this world don't recognize that we are God's children because they don't know him.² Dear friends, we are already God's children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is.”

I John 3: 1-2

Day 8

Mark 10:21

21 Looking at the man, Jesus felt genuine love for him.

"There is still one thing you haven't done," he told him. "Go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

End Statement #2

"Crosswalk will be a community where people learn and grow in an authentic relationship with God."

Jesus made disciples. I don't think he did it on purpose, rather, I think disciples sort of sprung up around him. The word in English for a disciple is "learner." And I think there was this way that Jesus seemed to make people want to learn more about him, and therefore learn more about God.

Becoming a disciple of Jesus was not much more than being interested in what he was saying and trying to figure out how to get more information and more proximity to the one who was saying these amazing things.

But the thing that I think I love best about Jesus was and is his ability to make authentic relationships to those around him. It is probably little wonder, in that he had insights that were certainly beyond their understanding. But more than that, he seemed to get right to the heart of what was going on in each of their hearts. In this interchange, it was clear that the man was holding onto something that he needed to let go.

We all have that friend who knows us so well they can call us on our foolishness when we are trying to avoid the real problem. The one who listens to us and then reminds us of what is really true about us. We love and hate that friend so much, because we need them, and more than anything, we need the authenticity they offer our lives.

Jesus seemed to be that kind of person to everyone he met. He was able to get to the core of what they were feeling and thinking and made sure that they understood what was authentic in their lives. Their real problems, the real things that were holding them back, or the truth of what they were really feeling about themselves and their situations. He must have been infuriating.

But he always led with the authentic.

How can we become people who are willing to have an authentic relationship with God and with others around us? How can we begin or continue to live the authentic truth of our lives?

I have never had a problem with someone having a real conversation with God. I know some people are uncomfortable with pushing back on God, with being frustrated and even angry at God at times. I've been okay with it because I figure that God knows what I am feeling, what I am going through, and how to fix it either way. So nothing I say will surprise or confuse God in any way. In fact, I think what we see from the Psalms is a God who is actually expecting us to have a seriously authentic relationship with Him.

Have you ever been angry at God?

Do you think it is appropriate to express that anger?

How can we be angry at a God who loves us so much?

What do you think an authentic relationship with God looks like?

What is the most authentic relationship that you have in your life right now?

What do you love about it?

How can you replicate that more often?

Day 9

John 13:34

34 So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other.

What does authentic love look like to you?

A discipling relationship with God and other people is a relationship where we are honest with one another, we cherish one another, and we speak words of truth over one another and into each other's lives. Without this kind of honesty, are we really in relationships at all?

If Crosswalk is to be a community where people are living in authentic relationships with one another and with God, then it stands to reason that we must be people who are willing to love in ways that are not always comfortable, but are truthful. This can be particularly dangerous when we don't have the trust that it requires.

What does it take to build trust?

I think trust has a few ingredients that must be present in order for it to grow. Here are the ones that I think are important:

Intention. We must trust the intention of the other person. With God it is easy, in that we have a myriad of examples of God wanting what is best for us. But with one another, it can be more difficult. If we do not trust the intention of the other person in the relationship it is difficult to really be authentic. Listening. To have authentic relationships built on trust, we have to learn how to listen to the other person. That means really listening, not just listening to respond. It means that we have to stop our priorities and listen to hear theirs. Are you a good listener?

Honesty. Honesty is something that goes both ways. It goes forward by the one speaking, but it is received by the one listening. If we are honest with ourselves, with God and with others, we begin to really build trust.

Boundaries. These are important for authentic relationships as well. Without knowing your boundaries, you might get taken advantage of, but if you don't understand other's boundaries, you might be taking advantage of them, even if you didn't mean to or plan to.

Service. This may sound strange, but when we take a position that we will serve those around us, we can build that trust, as others begin to know that you don't have other plans or agenda's other than serving the person with whom you are building relationships.

Reciprocity. Relationships go both ways, you shouldn't always be the one listening, but you also shouldn't be the only one speaking. A reciprocal relationship is important for trust.

This text tells us that love is reciprocal. How are you finding reciprocity in your authentic relationships? And how is there reciprocity with God and the relationship you have with the Creator of the Universe?

Who are your best friends?

What words would you use to describe your relationship with them?

How many more of those relationships are you interested in maintaining?

What makes you trust someone?

How quickly is trust built?

What can you do in order to build trust with those around you?

Day 10

John 17:23

23 I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me.

This is the idea of intimacy. It is really more than intimacy, it is so close to being almost as one. In theological circles we would say that it is a perichoretic relationship. If you have been around Crosswalk for a while, you know I love that word and that concept. It is the idea of the Trinity, the idea that there are three in one, so close to be the same in unity, purpose and mission.

If we are to build authentic relationships with others and with God then we are going to have to get comfortable with being pretty close to those with whom we share a deeper proximity. Jesus used this perichoretic language, this language of relationships, in order to show us how close he is with his Father and with the Spirit. Then, he tells God that he is actually in the same type of relationship with us that he is with the Father. This is amazing! It means that we have the same sort of relationship with Jesus that he has with the father. This all means that we have been brought into the community of God in a powerful and almost unreasonable way.

Have you ever been brought into someone else's family? Growing up, we are often such good friends with people that we sort of get adopted into their families. After a while, we are even fine with being at their house even if our friend is not there. Many times I have waited with my buddies parents for him to finish a lesson or a tutoring session. Sometimes, we just become such good friends that we become brothers, sisters, or at least like very familiar cousins.

In some ways, this is what we are called to when we become part of the body of Christ and when we declare that we are going to learn and grow together in authentic relationships with God and with others. It means that we have a willingness to connect, move closer, and allow our orbits to be as close as we can be. The scripture says "may they experience perfect unity. . ." That sounds pretty good if you ask me. Jesus is really the only one that can bring about such perfect unity. I am writing this on a day where the country is deeply divided; the day after midterm elections. While this has not been as contentious a campaign season, it hasn't been great. How do we find ways to be in unity when the world is so continually divided?

Perhaps we need to learn to focus on Jesus in a way that we haven't before. Rather than thinking about "what would Jesus do" in this situation, what if we asked what is "Jesus already doing" in the situation that we are in now. Perhaps then it would be less an exercise in conjecture, and more an exercise in seeing where God is already working.

How can you see where God is currently working in your life and in the world?

What are you doing to break down the barriers between you and others so that you might be in greater proximity to them?

What would living in Perfect Unity look like for you and those around you?

What can you do, in this divided world, to bring a little healing?

Day 11
John 3:16-17

16 “For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. 17 God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.

From this text, we see that it seems that authentic relationships are twofold; 1) they are sacrificial, and 2) they are non-judgmental. Let's talk about #2 first.

Being non-judgmental is more than not caring what other people do or think. Rather, it is trying to understand where they are coming from, and why they are doing what they are doing or thinking what they are thinking. This is the only way that we can come into closer proximity to them. It is so easy to simply walk away from someone who is different from us. But the harder thing for us to do is to try and live in a way that is understanding, hopeful, and learning. While we may not agree with everything someone says or does or believes, we can live in close proximity, authentically with them.

However, we have often taken the word “authentic” to mean that we have to tell them the “truth” about what they think.

A good example of this comes from the play “August: Osage County.” My wife and son and I went to see this on our last trip out to Chattanooga. It was done by a local playhouse, and the acting was really great. However, there was a scene in the play where the protagonist keeps saying “I’m just truth telling. . .” and continues to create incredible damage to everyone else in the house at that time.

Authenticity does not mean giving your opinion all the time. Authenticity is building relationships that are strong and honest enough to continue through disagreements; but those disagreements must live in a non-judgemental space.

Now, let's deal with #1. Authentic relationships are sacrificial. That means that we give more than we get, and sometimes it doesn't feel fair. God was willing to give us his only Son in order for us to be in an authentic relationship with him, and that is in no way fair. But he did it because God understands that love is sacrificial in nature.

This means that we have to take a different look at what love might look like in our lives.

This is not to say that there are no relationships that are abusive when it comes to love, and we should always be on the lookout for those. However, we also need to be continually looking for what sacrificial love does for us and what we can do for it in our relationships with others.

Love has never been easy, and authentic relationships fall under that same banner.

Who can you love sacrificially today?

How will you show that sacrificial love?

Are you a truth-teller?

Can your relationships handle the truth you need to tell?

Do you need to tell that truth?

Is there a way that you can tell that truth non-judgmentally and not only maintain, but grow the friendship?

What does a friendship look like that is non-judgemental?

Day 12
John 6:44

44 For no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me, and at the last day I will raise them up.

What is the drawing power of an authentic relationship? In this text, we see that Jesus is reminding people that even their attraction to him is the work of the Father. We call this prevenient grace, or grace before grace. I have spoken and written about this before. What it means, in the easiest sense, is that before you knew you needed Jesus, the trinity was prompting you to understand that you needed Jesus. Even your act of conversion was a gift from God.

This means that God is constantly on the lookout for those who might be interested, who's walls of cynicism are cracking, and to those who have realized that life is about so much more than what they have been pursuing thus far in their lives. It means that God is proactive in finding you in the midst of your sin, your frustration, and even in the midst of your joys and triumphs. You are never forgotten, and you are always sought after.

How does this fit into the idea of authenticity?

It means that there was never a time, no matter how far into sin, how deep into despair, or how calloused with discomfort you had become that God was not searching for you. God was never under any question about who you were or are, God knows, and God loves you regardless of what you have done. His love for us has always been authentic in that you cannot fool God with fancy words or with running away. God knows, and God still loves. . .

Perhaps that is the lesson we need to learn from this text. God cannot have anything but authentic relationships with his people because of God's perfect knowledge of them. But this has never made God feel as if we were not worth being in a community of belonging with us. The truth is, what we are learning about communities of belonging is that they work best when the relationships are authentic, honest, trustworthy, and real.

When we recognize that God is always searching and always finding us, we begin to realize that we have nothing to lose from the truth about who we are, and that we will never truly be lost, because God is constantly on the search for us.

How can we be sure God is chasing after us?

What does it mean to you that God is in love with you even though he knows everything about you?

If you were to share what you were thankful for when it comes to God's love, what would it be?

Do you have a friend that you can be authentically real with?

Reach out and let them know how much they mean to you!

Day 13

1 Samuel 16:7

"But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Don't judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The Lord doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart'"

This is perhaps why God can have such amazing and authentic relationships with us, because he knows even more than what we know about ourselves. We know what our heads know, but sometimes, we are confused about what our hearts feel. However, God looks on and into our hearts. Because of this, God actually knows our intentions as well as our actions, and this makes all the difference.

I am constantly surprised by people. Truly, when someone does something that I am not expecting, it surprises me. I have been married to Sara for over 27 years now and I am constantly surprised by her thoughts, her observations, and her wisdom. I shouldn't be. I've known her for a long time and she is amazing. But sometimes she still surprises me! I don't think that God gets very surprised. I think that God knows our intentions, even when our actions make it seem like our intentions are different than they might actually be. So God's knowledge of us is probably even deeper than our knowledge of ourselves. This may seem scary, but it shouldn't be.

Even though God knows all this, he loves us, and loves us a great deal. So much that he wanted Jesus to come and lay down his life for us. That is a lot of love. And while we probably don't surprise him, I bet there are times that we do make him proud, and probably times he wishes we would have gone a different way. All of this does not seem to diminish his love for us in any way!

If God loves us this much, even with all this authentic knowledge, then shouldn't we give ourselves a break now and again? Shouldn't we give the grace to ourselves that we have also been asked to give to others? We are sometimes the least graceful with ourselves, and we need to give ourselves at least some of the grace that God has been giving to us. He loves us, shouldn't we love ourselves a bit more too?

Why do you think God loves you so much? Do you think it's because you were made exactly the way that he wanted you to be, for a particular purpose in this world? You know, there is something that you can do that no one else can at all. There is something that you have been called to that no one else could do. Whether it is to a particular person that only you have influence over, or if it is a particular decision, or word, at just the right time that only you can make or share.

I guess what I am saying is that it is important that you are in the world. God wants you here, and so do we.

Thank you for being you, and stay that way!

Have you ever been afraid of someone knowing the authentic you?

What have you done to try and hide it?

Does the realization that God loves you because you are you make any difference?

What would you tell someone who is trying to hide their true selves away from God?

Week 2 of 8

Mark 10:21; John 13:34; John 17:23; John 3:16-17; John 6:44; 1 Samuel 16:7

INTRODUCTION

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion. Feel free to add or subtract or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

OPEN

Think about and share a time when your true self (authentic self) was revealed. What happened and what was that experience like? Positive or negative??

HEAD

Read Mark 10:21; John 13:34; John 17:23; John 3:16-17; John 6:44; and 1 Samuel 16:7 together and share any wisdom, insights, or questions in response to the reading.

Think about and reflect on the theme of “authenticity” throughout these verses. What stands out to you? What do you see as a common thread?

In Mark 10:17, the rich young man asks Jesus a very specific question: "What must I do to be saved?" Why do you think he asked that? What do you imagine was lacking in his life?

If Jesus evaluated your current situation in life, what do you think He would say is holding you back from being totally committed to Him?

How important to you is the unity that Jesus speaks about in John 17:23? Who do you share that unity with and how can you experience more of it?

HEART

In John 13:34, Jesus outlines love in a beautiful and compelling way—love as He has loved. He says love is how the world will know we're connected to Him. So...how would you rate yourself against this standard of love? How would you rate Crosswalk? How could you/we increase this score?

John 3:16 is such an iconic verse and because it is so great we sometimes overlook the next verse. What do both of these verses say to us about God and what He did and still desires to do for us? When did you begin to experience God saving you rather than condemning you?

David was known to be “a man after God’s heart” (Acts 13:22). But before he was chosen to be king he was considered the least of his brothers. In 1 Sam. 16:7, we see Eliab, his brother, being favored because of his outer appearance by Samuel and God correcting his misguided thoughts. Knowing that the Lord looks at the heart, what can you do to be more authentic and congruent with your life and make your heart more attractive to God?

HANDS

God is in the business of drawing people to Him. We see this in Jeremiah 31:3 (drawn by His loving kindness) and again in

John 6:44. What has that process been like for you and your life? Do you know of anyone who is being drawn in right now? How can you help/support them on that journey?

LIVING WORDS for YOUR WEEK

"I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are—I in them and you in me, all being perfected into one. Then the world will know that you sent me and will understand that you love them as much as you love me."

John 17:22-23

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Acts 1:8

End Statement #3: Crosswalk will be relevant in living out the ways of Jesus in our place and time.

Why is the gospel always relevant? And why do we seek to be relevant in living out those ways in our place and time?

So then, why do we seek ways to live it out in our place and time with relevancy?

So we seek to make love tangible, to put skin on love, and allow that skin to get dirty as we seek to serve those who are underserved in our world. As I write this, we are feeding close to 100 people at our Lovewell Dinner before our medical clinic serves those who come for help. This is love with skin on it. This is the relevancy of love in every space and time. We are blessed to show that love and care to those around us. Compassion is never in such great supply that it is not needed somewhere in the world and certainly around us.

Do you have too much love in your life?

What do you think you can do locally in order to show the influence of God's love over your family and neighbors?

How can you make sure you are starting down this path of love for yourself, your family and your neighbors? And how do you know if it will be relevant?

Day 16

Revelation 7:9-10

9 After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes and held palm branches in their hands. 10 And they were shouting with a great roar, "Salvation comes from our God who sits on the throne and from the Lamb!"

This is one of my favorite texts. Not only does it paint a phenomenal picture of what heaven will look like, it also shows us how diverse heaven will be. There are a few things that we can surmise from these texts:

There will be a great number of people in heaven! This translation says a "vast crowd" and that is awesome. While crowds can be a bit unruly and frustrating at times, it is good to know we will not be alone when we are there. Have you ever been to Disneyland on a really crowded day? It is amazing how many people they stuff into that 51 acres! (Yes, that is how small it really is, crazy to think about). The diversity in heaven will be incredible. If you think all those in heaven will look, sound, and act like you, you have got it wrong. Every nation and tribe and people will be represented in those days. That is so incredible! I love the fact that our churches are all actually very diverse places, where people are welcomed and told that they belong. It is one of the best things about Crosswalk Churches. For me, it seems to show us a little bit of what heaven is going to be like! This gospel, this expression of love must make its way to relevancy in every tribe and tongue and nation and people. That means, we are not bound by one culture or one creed or one language. Truly, the gospel is something that is to be spread everywhere, and can be because of how relevant it is to the people of this earth.

Now, not everything looks or smells or feels the same in every church or for every culture. Truly, there is a multiplicity of ways that we worship. Not everyone is comfortable with every form of worship out there.

I have been to churches where I am deeply uncomfortable with the cultural expression of worship that was being expressed, and I am sure there are some that have come to Crosswalk and feel the same way. The style of worship, the culture of the church, the music, the layout, the greeters, all of these things are less important than the focus of the worship, and that should be Jesus. However, those styles and forms are what makes the message of Jesus relevant in our time and space and place and in theirs as well.

What this all means is that we have an obligation to be open to many different ways of how the gospel is expressed into the world. The important thing is that it is expressed and annunciated to those who have ears to hear!

Who do you think heaven will be filled with?

How will you handle all the diversity that will be there?

Is it okay that different cultures and generations express the gospel differently?

How can you express the gospel in a way that makes it relevant to those around you and within your influence?

Day 17

Matthew 4:18-20

18 One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers—Simon, also called Peter, and Andrew—throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living. 19 Jesus called out to them, “Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!” 20 And they left their nets at once and followed him.

What a great story of transformation. It is also a great story of relevancy. This phrase that Jesus says “fish for people. . .” Some translations say Jesus said he would make them “fishers of men”. What I love about this phrase is that it shows that Jesus understood how to meet people where they were.

Have you ever gone to a Shakespearean play? I have sat through many that were put on by my kids' high school drama department. They were amazing. They were long! But the hardest part was when they were not changing the language to make it more relevant. Shakespearean English is not the easiest to follow. It would take me a long time to figure out what was really going on and being said. I could get there, but it would usually take the first half of the play to really begin to comprehend it. I know for a fact that I missed out on a lot of the nuances that were happening.

Jesus did not want his disciples to miss anything that he was saying. In order for this to happen, he used the vernacular language of the time, and more specifically, he used language that they could understand. This use of relevant language and idioms created a sense of belonging for them, and they were excited to be able to follow someone that they can understand.

While I was working at another church, back a lifetime ago, there was one pastor that I thought had more to say than any of us! He wasn't the lead pastor, he was very academic; but he really understood the scriptures and I was always amazed at the insights and God given knowledge that he was able to take from each text. There was only one problem; He had a hard time relating this information to the people in a way that they could access and understand. While they all appreciated what it was that he had to offer, I could sense that they sometimes struggled to understand every nuance that he was teasing out of the text. I always thought that this was a tragedy, because he, more than anyone else, was probably the most knowledgeable about the scriptures that we were all supposed to be preaching on.

What translation or paraphrase do you like to read? Some have more modern language, and some seem more formal and use more antiquated language. I am not sure one is better than the other, but they make a difference as to how we hear the gospel. I love the message bible, but I also know that it is not a direct translation. Once I understood this, I was able to take the language in the spirit it was given, rather than knowing it is a word for word translation.

How can you hear the gospel more clearly and with language you can understand? Jesus wanted his followers to really understand and comprehend the message he was trying to give them, so he was willing to be relevant in all that he did.

This is also probably why he was so good at healing before he spoke, but we can talk about that at another time.

How do you hear the gospel so it makes the most sense to you?

What is the biggest clarity you have ever had when it comes to understanding the gospel?

What makes the gospel relevant to you?

What is your favorite translation of scripture and why?

Day 18

1 Corinthians 13:1

13 If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

The heading for this section is "love is the greatest." 1

Corinthians 13 is the famous chapter on love. It goes on to tell us what love is and what love is not. Of course, we have heard this text at weddings forever. In fact, as a pastor, I actually cringe when someone asks me to use it for their wedding. I do it, but I always feel like it is a little bit too on the nose.

However, I do love this text, and particularly how it starts. This first verse sets up everything, and it speaks specifically of relevance. But before I get to that, I want to tell you a story:

A long time ago we had a dog. She wasn't very smart, and she would pee in the house all the time. She was deaf in one ear, and her back leg was just a little twisted, so, as a dachshund she would run a little crooked, never quite straight. However, we loved her, like you do. There was one thing that I learned early on; I learned that she didn't know the words that we were saying, only the tone in which they were delivered. I don't know if this is a breed issue, a dog issue, or just this dog's issue. Anyway, she would cower if we told her we loved her too aggressively, and she would wag her tail if we were angry but our voices were kept low. She was a bit of a mess.

One day, I came home from school and I wanted her to come and say hello. I started calling her name, and then, when she didn't come, I began to call more loudly and aggressively. When I finally found her she was cowering under our apricot tree, because even though I was looking for her to give her the afternoon snuggles she had come to love, my voice sounded angry, and so she thought I was angry.

This text says that no matter what I am saying, and to whom, no matter what language I am speaking and no matter how many people are listening, if I don't have love it doesn't matter. I am just more noise being put into the atmosphere.

So what is the key here? "Love", love is the key, and love is the relevancy.

Love is the relevancy.

So our relationships, to be filled with relevancy, and to show people how much Jesus loves them, should be filled with love. Love overflowing and love everlasting. It seems that we are always trying to put a cap on love. To find its limits. Perhaps, the love that we have received is the measure of the love that we should give. And I dare you to find the limit of God's love.

Have you ever heard someone speak who was a clanging cymbal?

Why did you feel this way?

Have you heard preachers who say many good things, but their words just don't ring true?

How can you be sure not to be a clanging cymbal to those around you?

Day 19

Acts 17:22-26

22 So Paul, standing before the council, addressed them as follows: "Men of Athens, I notice that you are very religious in every way, 23 for as I was walking along I saw your many shrines. And one of your altars had this inscription on it: 'To an Unknown God.' This God, whom you worship without knowing, is the one I'm telling you about. 24 "He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn't live in man-made temples, 25 and human hands can't serve his needs—for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need. 26 From one man he created all the nations throughout the whole earth. He decided beforehand when they should rise and fall, and he determined their boundaries.

Paul was used to speaking in relevant ways. He was well traveled, and as he went from place to place, he had to speak in a vernacular that made sense to the people around him. This pericope is a perfect example of speaking in a relevant language to those around him.

I was once in the Netherlands, Holland, speaking at a youth convention there. As you can imagine, I had a translator; a great guy. He, however, was not super well versed in Southern California culture. What this means is that when I used a surfing illustration, or said "dude" too many times, he would start to get confused. I, of course, didn't know this until people started yelling back at him in Dutch. It was super confusing to me, but when it was explained it made sense. I was not speaking a language or a culture that they understood at all. While some in the audience knew enough English to understand, the rest were as lost as my translator was.

Paul recognized the importance of relevance to the conversation about God that he was about to have with these leaders of the town. Therefore, when he mentions that there is a God that they worship that has no name, they knew exactly what he was talking about. He was bringing the ways of Jesus into their reality and their space and time.

When you share your understanding of Jesus, how can you find ways that are relevant to the language and culture of those who you are speaking to? We, as Christians, have a language and a culture of our own. We often forget that other people don't understand our references, might not know the backstories that we know so well, and are confused by our cultural understanding of faith.

It is not their fault, but it is our responsibility to share the gospel thoughtfully with them. If Jesus was willing to meet us where we are, then we should be willing to meet others where they are as well. It is not up to them to make sense of what we know, it is up to us to share with them in ways that are relevant, thoughtful, winsome, and interesting.

But I do want to put one caveat here. I know that we talk about sharing the gospel a great deal. But I hope that I never put undue pressure on anyone with this language. I truly believe that when we decide to love well we are sharing the gospel. We don't have to stand on a soapbox to let the gospel

be heard. In fact, we really just have to work on how we love those around us and each other to be constantly and consistently sharing the gospel. It is not always about the language you use, it is about the love that you are willing to give.

How have you shared the gospel by way of love today?

Have you ever felt undue pressure to share the gospel?

What is a way that you can comfortably give love to those around you?

Is there a greater way to share the gospel than to give love and hope by your interactions with others?

Day 20

Acts 17:27-31

27 “His purpose was for the nations to seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him—though he is not far from any one of us. 28 For in him we live and move and exist. As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’ 29 And since this is true, we shouldn’t think of God as an idol designed by craftsmen from gold or silver or stone. 30 “God overlooked people’s ignorance about these things in earlier times, but now he commands everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and turn to him. 31 For he has set a day for judging the world with justice by the man he has appointed, and he proved to everyone who this is by raising him from the dead.”

In a few sentences Paul was able to undo their understanding of God and make some pretty strong theological points. In verse 28 he uses their own poets words, and in verse 29 he takes on idolatry. The idea that Yahweh is a living God is something that has been going on since the Old Testament. This concept of a living God is also a concept that makes so much sense when it comes to the idea of the relevancy of this God that we believe in.

Okay, this is going to sound weird, and I apologize, but it might make sense. When I was younger I got into those Anne Rice books about vampires. I am not suggesting anyone read those books, but I found them out interesting. Most interesting to me was the idea that someone would live so long as to have to learn how to be relevant in so many different times, cultures and even countries. How could you do that?

The idea that God is a living God, that God transcends time, language, and culture means that the idea of God has to be made relevant in each of these spaces, cultures, and countries.

When I was in the Marshall Islands as a college student and student missionary, they had set up the church as if it were in any other place in the world. We had to wear long pants, ties, shoes (which we didn’t wear anywhere else) and socks! When it was 100+ degrees and 98% humidity, it was torture to sit through a worship service that was clearly not culturally relevant to those people in the Islands at the time.

I found myself wishing that we could meet under the Breadfruit trees outside, so that the tradewinds could cool us down. However, they had been taught that there was only one way to do church, and it had to be done that particular way. Ties, shoes, the whole nine yards.

Paul was making sure that his words would resonate with the local population, not with those whom he came from. And this is a lesson that we could probably take to heart.

Furthermore, every generation needs to re-familiarize themselves with the gospel in a language that makes sense to them. This is the reason why things continue to change and grow in the church. This is why we need new churches, new expressions of the gospel, and new ways of worshiping that keep the relevance of the gospel for each new generation.

Crosswalk is one of those expressions, but your kids or grandkids may need another take on this. All that becomes a bit scary, but Paul shows us that we shouldn’t be worried about the format, as long as the message is not lost.

What do you like about a church that is relevant to you?

Have you been to a church that did not resonate with you? What was it like?

Why did it not resonate with you?

How can we keep speaking and worshipping in relevant ways?

End Statement #3: Crosswalk will be relevant in living out the ways of Jesus in our place and time.

INTRODUCTION

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion. Feel free to add or subtract or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

OPEN

Have you ever had the opportunity to volunteer at a local non-profit, or take a mission trip, or serve as a missionary? If so, share a story about what you found meaningful about the experience.

HEAD

Read Acts 1:8, Revelation 7:9-10, Matthew 4:18-20, I Corinthians 13:1, and Acts 17:22-31 together and share any wisdom, insights, or questions in response to the reading.

According to I Corinthians 13:1-3 and 13, what is the most important quality to have? Why do you think this is the case?

In Acts 1:8, Jerusalem was like home for the Jew, then Judea and Samaria were your known circle of influence, and the ends of the earth probably meant something different for each person. What are your Judea and Samaria' (work, social group, etc...)? What ways do you take the love of Christ to the "ends of the earth"?

One would guess that the people in Revelation had all sorts of different beliefs and perspectives. So what united the people from “every nation and tribe and people and language”?

Acts 17 is one of the quintessential chapters for an example of being relevant in our time and place, so there is a lot to take note of in this passage. What did Paul have to do before speaking, to connect the people of Athens with the gospel? How important is it to learn more about the people you are trying to reach before trying to reach them? Explain your answer.

HEART

Recognizing that love is always relevant if it is truly love, what are the ways in which we can seek to be more relevant to the world around us?

Why do you think the 2,000 year old words of Jesus, especially how He treated the disenfranchised, the lonely, and the people on the fringe in their society, continues to connect with people today?

What can we learn about the “transcendence” of time and place that the teachings of Jesus possess that we can carry into our ministry towards others?

Some people mistake relevance with being trendy or faddish because it gives the illusion of being accepted, until the trend or the fad changes. How can we at Crosswalk escape being

swayed by that which is trendy and stick to that which transcends?

HANDS

As the song says, "What the world needs now; is love, sweet love. No, not just for some, but for everyone." You need love, I need love, we all need love, spoken to us in ways we can understand and connect with. Consider this week a way to get to know enough about a coworker or neighbor that you can share a message of love in their lives this week that will connect with them on a personal level.

LIVING WORDS for YOUR WEEK

“Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.”

I Corinthians 13: 4-7

[illegible]

Day 22
James 1:27

27 Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you.

End Statement #4-Crosswalk will be a community that lives beyond herself by caring and advocating for the powerless, oppressed and abandoned.

This quote from James should probably be read by every Christian a few times each week to remember what we are called to do and be in the community. We are not just houses of worship, but we should be houses of healing, hope, and compassion as well. Without these things, we are kind of making a community for ourselves rather than being a blessing to others.

In fact, this end statement probably came from this particular text as well. The idea that religion will always be part worship but even a greater part compassion is biblically sound and should be inspiring for each of us. Everything that we do in worship should have the ultimate purpose of being a catalyst in people's lives to reach out, to work down, and to create opportunities for sharing one's resources with those who have less than we do.

Interestingly, I was at a conference listening to some pastors who had really leaned into this understanding deeply with their churches. For them, outreach wasn't an add on, but the whole point. In fact, one of them had stopped their weekend services in order to do more compassion and mercy ministries in their community. However, they learned pretty quickly that without the driving force of their worship service, people were less inclined and inspired to do the work that they found so important. I found this fascinating and it has informed my philosophy of ministry ever since.

You have to have a balance of worship and compassion in the ministries that you run and serve. Without worship, there is no catalyst to do good works, but without good works, the heart of worship remains unfulfilled.

But when there is a balance between worship and compassion, everything is possible. We know that God is interested in a religion and a relationship with his people that is not just empty songs and great sounding platitudes. God is interested in the kind of religion that makes an impact in the world in powerful and important ways. This happens through people's willingness to sacrifice and serve as much as it happens through the inspiration of word and song in our weekly worship services.

There is a last phrase in this text as well, our "refusing to let the world corrupt you." What does that mean?

I believe that to mean many things, but first and foremost, for us in church, it means that we are not to simply do church as a consumer pursuit. We don't simply entertain, keep people busy, and allow that to be all we do through church. Church is to be a conduit for the gospel into the world, and if it is not, we are just part of a club that has some membership dues and weird traditions. And no one wants that.

It should not be news to us that God wants us to be engaged in ministries of compassion and mercy in the world. In fact, we should be anxious when we are not serving the widow and the orphan and the greater community at large.

If you are a part of a Crosswalk church and have never served the community in one of our many outreach opportunities, I want to suggest that you do so as soon as possible. You may love the worship, but without the work of our hands in compassion and mercy, our worship remains unfulfilled.

How can you serve your fellow human today?

Do you have access to outreach opportunities?

What can you do in order to help someone who has less than you today?

What do you love to do to help others?

How can you build a ministry centered around this love and passion that you have?

Day 23

Matthew 19:21

21 Jesus told him, "If you want to be perfect, go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

Do you have anyone in your life who is kind of aesthetic? Someone who just doesn't seem that interested in material things. Someone who doesn't need that new cell phone, they couldn't really care about getting a new car, as their old one seems to work just fine, and they haven't upgraded their computer for 8 years now. These people are amazing, and I wish I was born with that gene in me, but I did not, unfortunately.

I find myself looking for the new gadget, being jealous of nice things, and always wanting the "new new," as the kids say!

Jesus was speaking to this rich young man, and the young man was pretty clear on the fact that he had done everything that the law required of him to do in order to receive eternal life. When Jesus heard this young man almost boast as to what he had accomplished, Jesus threw out the last thing that the man needed to do in order to obtain that eternal life he so wanted. Jesus told him to sell all his possessions, give the money away, and then, and only then, would he receive heaven.

These are tough words, to be sure. And I don't know if these are the same words that Jesus would give to everyone. I doubt it very highly in fact. But this man was too caught up in what he had. I mean, the scriptures even introduce him as the "rich young ruler". So his possessions seemed to be part of his identity. When this begins to happen, we begin to identify as what we possess, rather than by who possesses us.

Jesus recognizes this trait in this young man and he confronts him on this particular issue. Now, this is not to say that people shouldn't have nice things, or that it is a sin to spend your money in a way that benefits you. I believe these words to be coming from Jesus because he senses the deep seated dysfunction of this young man. He wants to free this young man from his affliction, the desire for material things above all.

What do you think Jesus might say to you about what is going on deep inside of you that might be stopping you from seeking the kingdom of heaven first? What might you be holding onto too tightly? What do you think you need to dig deep into in your life in order to really seek first the kingdom of God above all?

What can you let go of?

What do you need to grab onto?

How can you find what is deepest in your heart that is holding you back from experiencing and expanding the kingdom of God in your life?

Sometimes, it is good to discuss this with others who know you and love you so you can get a different perspective on yourself than you might normally have.

Matthew 25

Oh man! I want you to go back and read this whole chapter. If you only have time to do this today and not read what I have written, then DO IT! Nothing I can say will be more important than what Jesus has said in these verses, so read those first and foremost. If you have time, then come back to these words.

These texts are a masterclass on what was important to Jesus. In our understanding of these words we are taking a theological perspective into who God is. Jesus personified God's desire for us to be taking care of each other with ministries of ministry and compassion. And in this chapter, it is brought to the forefront of Jesus' ministry and his desire for what his followers might be doing.

If you go back and read the story, you know it is Jesus preaching about the sheep and the goats and final judgment. It is fascinating to me that Christians get a little crazy about how they judge others and what they think God is judging people on, especially when Jesus makes it pretty clear.

Those who do not take care of their fellow human beings are the ones who will be judged and judged harshly. When we assume that it is not our responsibility to care for others, then we find ourselves allowing our hearts to be hardened toward those who need our help the most.

Jesus was clear, if you did it to the least of these, then you did it to me. If these words are true, then we, as Christians, should probably spend less time worried about who is doing what with whom and spend more time thinking about how we are serving those who are hungry, in need, and underserved.

I'm going to keep this short today so you can go back and read that whole chapter! Have a great day and take it to heart!

Day 25

Mark 12:40

40 Yet they shamelessly cheat widows out of their property and then pretend to be pious by making long prayers in public. Because of this, they will be more severely punished.”

Well, this has taken a darker turn! I included this text in the week because I want to make sure we understand the importance of never allowing ourselves to forget what our job as a faith community and as a people of faith really is.

This text begins with Jesus making clear that he is not the “son of David,” rather, he is the son of God, as David used that nomenclature when he spoke of the Messiah. (Mark 12:35-37). Then he turns his attention to the teachers of religious law who teach great things and say they believe, yet they continue to ignore those who are most in need. Great words are empty without great action to back them up.

We have to make sure that we are not a community that sounds like we know how to lovewell, but fall short of the mark by not actually loving well. I know this sounds obvious, but it is the reality. We must always, all of our campuses, strive for ways to make sure that the love we espouse is really happening in our communities, and particularly for those who are not only less fortunate, but those who are underserved.

Jesus also said; “the poor will always be with us. . .” and at times that has been taken to mean that we shouldn’t have an urgency in helping those that need our help. I challenge that idea. We have to always reach out, to serve, and to show love in ways that are tangible if we are to say that we are involved in the mission of God as a church.

It is not enough to teach love, you have to express love and you have to show love, and these will always be tangible. Food, clothing, service, health and healing, all of these things are ways that we can show that love has skin on it, and that skin gets dirty sometimes.

I remember when the showers rolled up for the first time behind our church. I was a little skeptical that anyone would take us up on these showers. I was also super surprised at how nice they were.

What caught my attention was how many people were waiting in line to take showers. I felt silly for not having sorted it out earlier. While we had been giving dinner and medical care for a long time, their needs were even more basic than those. They were in simple need of a way to stay clean.

We cannot underestimate the power of the simple things that we can offer. And as you can see from the text, it is an imperative that God gives us.

What have you done today to tangibly make someone's life better?

Have you ever been involved in a ministry of compassion and mercy?

What was it and how did it make you feel?

How did it make those you served feel?

Day 26

Luke 12:33

33 “Sell your possessions and give to those in need. This will store up treasure for you in heaven! And the purses of heaven never get old or develop holes. Your treasure will be safe; no thief can steal it and no moth can destroy it.

I love the book of Luke. If you haven't read it in a while, you need to again soon. This text comes after Jesus has been teaching on money and possessions and the place they should have in our lives. It comes after that famous text when he tells us to look at the lilies of the field and to not worry about anything. How many of us actually live like that?

I have to tell you, it is a pretty difficult thing to try and get away from worrying about finances and the money that we make to live. While we often don't have to worry about where our next meal is coming from, we do worry about retirement, the loans our kids might have to take to get through school, how they can purchase their first house, and things like that. I worry about my kids, what kind of world we are going to be leaving them. I worry about our country and its ability to stay together through political turmoil. I worry about your churches and if they can make it through difficult times. I worry about your lovewell groups and if they will grow, if they are loving well, and what we can do to support them. There is a lot to worry about in this life!

But Jesus constantly reminds us that it is not our job to worry. We have something more to think about. We have the opportunity to put our trust in heaven and to make sure that we are “storing our treasure” there.

I don't know that I ever really understood this. I am not sure that I understand it right now. I think that it means we have to trust a lot more than we do. We have to trust that at the end of this life that we are living there is this great thing called heaven where God is available to us, where we spend eternity, and where we see those who have gone before us. That is a lot to take in!

This concept of heaven has, at times, been used for us to use faith as simply an escape route from this earth. I get that, and I even resonate with that at times. However, this concept of heaven does not absolve us of the responsibility of taking care of those who have less and need what we have to give. You see how Jesus ended this pericope? He ended it with making sure that we knew we should take care of others rather than amassing wealth here on earth.

Interestingly, Today Jeff Bezos announced that he would be giving the majority of his 142 billion dollars to charity before he dies. He is not the first billionaire to do this. Maybe there is a point where you begin to realize that this life is not about what we amass, but about what we give away.

I love that Jesus reminds us that what is bound in heaven can never go bad, never decay, and never fall apart.

What do you spend your time amassing here on earth?

How can you find a balance between what you gain and what you give away?

How can you begin to understand what we are really amassing in heaven, and what that looks like?

What does “you can't take it with you” mean to you?

Day 27

Romans 12:20

20 Instead, "If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads."

This last text of the week actually goes further than the previous texts. Rather than just taking care of the less fortunate than us, it is actually telling us that we need to take care of our enemies. If they are in need, we should help them. And in this way, we actually confuse and befuddle them.

It is almost comical where this goes. But remember, it is coming right after a place where Paul quotes Deuteronomy 32:25 where we remember that vengeance is God's and it is not to be ours. So if vengeance is up to God, then our job, it seems, is to be the kind of people that actually confuse their enemies with a deep sense of kindness.

I used to do this when I was playing basketball. If someone would foul me when I was shooting, I would go to shake their hand. It was confusing to them. Not everyone would shake my hand. But many would, and then sort of wander off, wondering what just happened. Or when they would foul me I would shout, "good job!" and they would say "thanks" and then walk away confused.

Why would we want to pour burning coals of shame on their heads?

Have you ever heard the phrase "kill 'em with kindness?" This is sort of the same idea. As well, it incorporates the fact that we are to take care of those around us if we can, even if they are our enemies.

Have you ever been kind to an enemy?

What did that look like?

How can you give your revenge to God and then actually do something powerful for those who you could consider an enemy?

Week 4 of 8

INTRODUCTION

OPEN

HEAD

HEART

HANDS

What is one thing this group could do to help someone in need? Is there a project or a person that comes to mind? What could God be inviting your small group to do for Him and His kingdom?

LIVING WORDS for YOUR WEEK

"Whatever you have done for the least of these...You have done for me."

Matthew 25:40

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Day 29

Proverbs 21:3

The Lord is more pleased when we do what is right and just than when we offer him sacrifices.

End Statement #5: Crosswalk will be a community that exemplifies servant Leadership.

This week, I want to do something a little different. Since servant leadership is the key to this End Statement, I want to talk about 6 qualities of a servant leader. So we will begin by talking about one quality that every servant leader should have: Integrity.

I love that definition that says having integrity is being in a state of wholeness, and undivided. This is perhaps the best definition that one can find when it comes to this concept. Someone with integrity is someone who understands the concept of not being divided in their actions, their thoughts, their values, and their understanding. They don't know everything, but what they do understand is their place in the world and how to act in it.

There are a few values of someone who has integrity.

They are interested in doing what is right before they are interested in doing what is expedient. They would rather do the hard right thing than do the easy and wrong thing. This character trait is important when we say we are believers in a God who values doing the right thing for the right reasons. Our ends don't justify our actions if the actions are wrong. They are authentic. They try to lead using their most authentic form. They don't lie, they aren't fake. This means they are not always the easiest people to be around. They may tell the truth when the truth is not popular, but they will always stand behind their words, for they have thought about them.

They give people the benefit of the doubt. They will seek to find what is best in people, not assume the worst. They are sometimes disappointed, but not in themselves and their desire to see other people with integrity as well.

They express gratitude for others because they truly are grateful for the work others do with them and for them. They see the other people around them for their value and addition to the mission and vision.

They know how to take responsibility for their actions and their outcomes. They are not the kind of people who take credit for wins and blame others for losses.

They let their yes be yes and their no be no. They don't make things better than they seem, they don't boast. They make sure that they are being responsible for what they say yes to, and they make sure they are present when things fail as well. They have a strength of character that allows for this kind of thinking and acting.

They understand the mission is not about them, and so they understand their role in it. This is a hard thing sometimes. But they are willing to give deference to the mission when someone else has a good idea.

To be someone of integrity, to be a leader with integrity means that we try to integrate these ideas and characteristics into our lives day in and day out. And a person of integrity understands that God is interested in not just in right

outcomes, but in right action to achieve those outcomes. This is what it means to be a servant leader with integrity.

Do you know someone with impeccable integrity?

Do you admire them?

Is it you? Can and do others say this about you?

How can you make sure you are moving toward integrating integrity into your life and your leadership in ministry?

Day 30

Colossians 3:12

12 Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

Humility is the second characteristic of a servant leader. A leader with humility is "not someone who thinks less of himself/herself, rather it is someone who thinks of themselves less"—C.S. Lewis.

I love this quote because it makes sense out of humility to me. There are some really great characteristics that are involved in humility. People who believe in humility are not boastful. They don't flaunt their wealth, achievements, status, accomplishments are anything else they may have. They are modest, and sometimes even embarrassed by praise, they are also really excited when someone else succeeds and they are happy to give credit where credit is due.

They are also usually pretty grateful for the things they have, and for that which has been given to them. They take time to be grateful and recognize how lucky they are to have such gifts in life.

They work hard not to belittle others, because they are not jealous of others. They don't spend time being proud, rather, they realize they shouldn't take credit for anything they didn't do.

People with humility are not rude. Rudeness is a common trait amongst those who have little humility. The other day, I was on a plane and we were about to miss our connecting flight. I was so worried that I sort of pushed through the crowd to get ahead. My wife was horrified, and when I realized that I had pushed through some people who were a bit disabled in order to get ahead, I was mortified. We need to take the time to humbly serve one another. We made it to the plane with time to spare, I didn't need to be rude to get ahead.

Humility and possessiveness are not compatible with each other. Those who are humble are not jealous or worried about what other people have. They do not try to hoard things for themselves, and they are pretty comfortable with giving things away.

Self-pity is not in the humble person's vernacular. Rather, they find ways to pick themselves up and to grow other people. They understand that every experience, good or bad, can eventually be used for some purpose greater than themselves, and so they don't need to feel sorry for themselves.

There are certainly more traits we could talk about, but the last one I will mention is that a person with humility will not be judgemental. They won't be because they know that it is possible that they will at some point be in the same situation as who they are judging, and they would not want to be treated in that way.

What character traits do you think people with humility have? Any more than mentioned here?

Do you consider yourself a humble person?

How can you work toward being more humble today?

Day 31

Philippians 4:12-13

12 I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little.¹³ For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.

I love these texts, and I quote them often. I think one of the reasons why I like them so much is that they are showing a characteristic of servant leadership that cannot be ignored.

Flexibility.

Yes, flexibility is one of the most important characteristics that leaders, especially servant leaders can display. The truth is, things won't always go the way they are planned. There are times when servant leaders are struck with a person, a situation, or a structure that they had not expected to encounter, and as such, they are going to have to find a way to work around, go over, plow through, or dig under such obstacles.

Flexible leaders are pretty socially perceptive and they often self-monitor. As servant leaders, we go where the people need us to go, and flex in a way that allows us to be able to meet the needs of those we serve with alacrity and expedience. By seeing what is happening around us and by having a good sense of where we are, we can make the changes necessary to fulfill the needs of those we serve.

Servant leaders need to be flexible in the way that they think about things. While traditions are important, flexible servant leaders have to find new ways, innovations, and even novel approaches to problems that arise. The truth is that the way we lead today might not be the way that we need to lead tomorrow, as the world is constantly changing and morphing with new technology and opportunities.

Covid was a good example of this. In order to serve our congregations, we had to change our approach to church, to worship, and even to fellowship. It was such a strange time, but the churches' whose leaders were flexible enough to change their approach made it through, and sometimes made it through thriving!

Without understanding the need for flexibility, our servant leadership becomes as stiff as dry crackers and eventually breaks. It ceases to be able to adapt to the needs of those around and is stuck within its circumstances. Paul made it clear in this text that it is not about what situation you find yourself in, rather, it is about how you deal with what has been given. And through our understanding of Christ and his love for us, we should be able to get through anything.

Name a time when you needed to be flexible in your leadership.

Is flexibility one of your strong suits?

How can you get more used to being flexible?

What does it mean to you to be flexible in your servant leadership role?

Day 32
Hebrews 12:1-2

12 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. 2 We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne.

We are super familiar with this text. We used it for like 6 weeks in a row in the Momentum series leading up to our Crosswalk Conference last year. (Something that you should all put in your calendars for next year, October 6,- 8 2023!) But one of the things this text speaks to is resilience. Resilience as a leader is something that all of us have to learn. Even as a servant leader we are sometimes criticized, we make mistakes, we fail, and sometimes we are just lambasted by those around us for no reason at all. The moment you say you are interested in being a leader, you have to expect that you will need to beef up those muscles of resilience.

What does it look like to be a resilient leader?

Reframe how you think. This text reminds us that there are others who have gone before us, and also that there are those that are cheering us on. Leadership is not an isolated thing, and most people want to see you succeed. As a servant leader, this is even more so true. However, sometimes you need to remind yourself why you are doing this and how much it means to others and to you to make it happen. Be positive in the way you think about yourselves, others and the mission you have been given.

Become self-aware. Resilient leaders are leaders that seek self-awareness. This is important especially in times of crisis when the criticism can become overwhelming, even from those you are trying to serve. Knowing what is true in their criticism, what is fabricated, and what is completely untrue is super important for you to be resilient. Take what they say, analyze it, and if it is true, change, if it is just their issue, do what you can to help them gain perspective, and if it is a lie, ignore completely.

Purpose. Understanding your purpose creates a strong foundation for your resilience. If you are doing what you know God has called you to, you can bounce back much easier, you have a thicker skin, and you can take the struggles of leadership in a much better way. Leadership is always hard, but knowing your purpose makes a difference. Make strong connections to be resilient. As you become a servant leader, make sure that you surround yourself with those who you can share, be grateful for, complain to, and rant towards if you need to. We all need that tribe who understands us. Without others, we are less resilient because the only voices that we hear are voices that either come from criticism or our own voice.

What can you do to become more resilient as a servant leader today?

Who is your tribe that you can share with and who can help pick you up?

Why would you need to be resilient as a servant leader? Isn't everyone just happy that you are there to serve?

How can you continue your servant leadership journey?

Day 33

1 Peter 4:10

10 God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.

This text reminds us that we have all been given gifts to steward for God. As servant leaders we are given these gifts in order to be able to serve those who we find ourselves in proximity to. That means, we have to steward these gifts for the good of the kingdom of God.

Stewardship is more than just being about how we take care of the finances in our lives. When we hear the story of the servant who hid his talent, it is a clear indication that we shouldn't be hiding away these gifts that God has given us. In fact, we need to be using these gifts to the greatest ability for the mission and purpose that God has given to us.

Even Adam and Eve were commissioned to care for the creation and cultivate culture. They were told to take care of the birds of the air, the fish of the sea, and everything else. As well, they were asked to be fruitful. Loving, tending, cultivating, designing, building, growing, and using all God had made in order to glorify him was their job. And, it is ours as well.

The first thing you have to do is;

Understand your gifts. So using that which God has entrusted to you to love him and others as yourself does include finances and watching over creation, but it's even more. It also means using your mind and hands and voice to create good things, helping others flourish, and pointing everyone back to God. Many spiritual struggles I've seen simply come down to understanding who God is making and molding you to be. It's searching through your joys, passions, and what people affirm your gifts to be, and then doing something with it!

Share your gifts. What good is your gift if you don't actually share it? Would you leave a Christmas present wrapped and under the tree? If God has blessed you with a talent, then you are encouraged and called to cultivate it and give it away, because a gift is wasted if you just keep it dormant. An unused talent is not much different from not having a talent. God has blessed you with a voice like Pavarotti? Then open up that throat, take that deep breath in and sing for all to hear! Can you play a cello beautifully, serve the poor, or take care of people's money? Choose to use those gifts and honor God in the process! Maybe you can't hit a musical note to save your life but you can draw, or build, or bake, or dance! Whatever you are passionate about, whatever you are good at, whatever brings glory to God and joy to others--you do it. That is stewardship in its absolute basic understanding.

What can you do to understand your talents today?

How can you make sure you are using them for the glory of God and not yourself?

How does a servant leader use their talents to serve others?

Day 34
Romans 12:15

What can the church do to help you be more empathetic?

15 Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep.

Did you know that research has shown us that the most important leadership skill is actually Empathy?

Empathy really contributes to positive outcomes in the workplace and in places where servant leadership is required. Here are some interesting ways in which empathy helped create positive outcomes.

Innovation. When people reported their leaders were empathetic, they were more likely to report they were able to be innovative—61% of employees compared to only 13% of employees with less empathetic leaders.

Engagement. 76% of people who experienced empathy from their leaders reported they were engaged compared with only 32% who experienced less empathy.

Retention. 57% of white women and 62% of women of color said they were unlikely to think of leaving their companies when they felt their life circumstances were respected and valued by their companies. However, when they didn't feel that level of value or respect for their life circumstances, only 14% and 30% of white women and women of color respectively said they were unlikely to consider leaving.

Inclusivity. 50% of people with empathetic leaders reported their workplace was inclusive, compared with only 17% of those with less empathetic leadership.

Work-Life. When people felt their leaders were more empathetic, 86% reported they are able to navigate the demands of their work and life—successfully juggling their personal, family and work obligations. This is compared with 60% of those who perceived less empathy.
(<https://www.forbes.com/sites/tracybrower/2021/09/19/empathy-is-the-most-important-leadership-skill-according-to-research/?sh=7dcaa2a53dc5>)

With all this research, it is clear that we need to be leaders who show empathy to those who are around us. As well, as servant leaders, this is perhaps the place to begin our leadership journey.

How can you find a way to be empathetic to those around you?

What is one way you know to really listen to those who you are trying to serve?

INTRODUCTION

OPEN

HEAD

As a group, come up with a simple one line definition for each quality, thinking of one tangible example (a person) you can think of besides Jesus that exemplified that quality well.

RESILIENCE _____
Example: _____

EMPATHY _____
Example:

HEART

What are some tangible ways you could practice being a servant leader in the above areas? How about just in your home?

When Jesus washed His disciples feet on the night of His arrest, He was telling them that there was nothing He wasn't willing to do for them. What is one thing you could joyfully do for another this week that can be done without recognition?

HANDS

The hardest thing for a servant leader is to talk about how they are a servant leader. However, it's good to take time and stock to reflect on your life and the qualities of a servant leader that you have, and maybe the ones you know need work. With that said, do you feel that you are a servant leader? If so, why? If not, what are some areas that you could pray about and commit to asking the Holy Spirit to help develop in your life?

LIVING WORDS for YOUR WEEK

You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges;

he took the humble position of a slave
and was born as a human being.
When he appeared in human form,
he humbled himself in obedience to God
and died a criminal's death on a cross.
Philippians 2: 5-8

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins or other markings on the paper.

[illegible][illegible]

