



FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH
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First Word

A CHURCH FAMILY PUBLICATION OF FIRST EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

MAY 2016

Living In God's New Reality BY PASTOR JAY

One of my favorite things about the Apostle Paul is his ability to weave together theology with a call to practical applications. It's an ability that I appreciate more and more as I grow in my own vocation as a pastor. Paul's theology, while often breathtaking, is never theology for its own sake. For Paul, there is always a real-world pastoral concern that drives his letters, a real life context to all of his theology. Theology provides the motivation, it casts the vision, it provides the authority to the calls to action that follow.

One of the great examples of this is in Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus. In Ephesians 4:17-24, Paul calls—"insists in the Lord"—that they cease living as the Gentiles do, and start living a life worthy of their calling in Christ. He then provides a number of concrete ways to live out this call: to be honest, stop stealing, stop the unwholesome talk and instead build each other up, get rid of bitterness, rage, slander and every form of malice. It is an impressive—and familiar—list. On its own, the list stands as a call to radical change in individual lives and a radical change in how the believers in Ephesus are to treat one another.

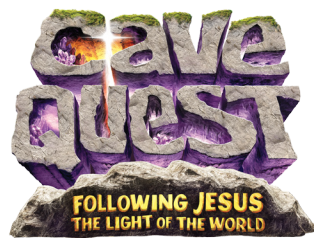
However, nice and concrete as that list may be, we need to make sure we don't lift this out from Paul's carefully and powerfully constructed theological context. And here is why: Paul of all people knows that simply knowing the right things to do isn't enough. As a Jew, Paul had always known what God required, had always had Torah (the Law) to instruct and guide him and daily life. There was just one problem: he couldn't obey it. Yes, Paul says, better to know what God requires than not, but if in the end you cannot obey it, are you really any better off? What keeps this list, as opposed to any other list of rules (e.g. the 10 Commandments), free from the same fatal flaw?

That's where Paul's theology comes in. Paul's letter doesn't move straight from rebuking the Ephesians to this new list. What Paul does is to begin with theology;

Paul reminds them of what God has already done in the world, and more to the point, in them. In Ephesians 2-3, Paul summarizes powerfully God's story of redemption and new creation. God, Paul says, has already raised us from spiritual death to life! He has reconciled us to himself, and thereby to each other so that in Christ, God has made Jews and Gentiles into one church, one people, one family. This is a powerful story about God's saving and new-creational power at work in the world—and in the believers in Ephesus. In fact, Paul gets so excited, he breaks out into a prayer of almost spontaneous thanks and praise at the end of chapter 3.

THEN, and only then, does the call to new and different behavior appear, but not as a new list that can never be kept, but as the script for living the new reality God has created in Christ. Through Christ, God is remaking all of creation, and he has started with us! Of course we could not keep the law before Christ came—we were spiritually dead (2:1-2). But now, we have (already!) been made alive with Christ. What was impossible before is now possible. But the first requisite step is to understand and believe what God has done in the world and in us through Christ. First we need to understand what God has done, then we can—and must—live accordingly.

The list in Ephesians 4 is nothing new, and nothing unique. What makes it special is the theology that goes with it. In Christ, God is making all things new, and he has started in us. Like a child learning the joy of riding a bike, we need first to believe that we can do it, that what was once impossible is now possible. That is a necessary first step. But the second is necessary too: once we believe it is possible we then need to actually get on the bike and go. If we do not, how can we know the joy of our new reality? In the same way, let us keep Paul's theology and application together. Remember—and keep remembering, that God has already raised you to new life in Christ. And having remembered, go out and live as God has created you, redeemed you, and now called you again to live.



VBC 2016: JUNE 20-24 VBC KICKOFF! SUNDAY, MAY 1 WAYS YOU CAN HELP! ALL DONATIONS ARE NEEDED BY JUNE 5TH!

GENERAL ITEMS

For Crafts: Gift cards for Target, Michaels, JoAnn Fabrics, or Hobby Lobby
For Snacks: Gift cards for Walmart, Target, or Cub Foods
For Decorating: Gift cards for Home Depot

- Paper sacks (paper grocery bags)
- Small boxes (shoebox size or smaller)
- Plastic milk jugs (washed and dried)
- Plastic tablecloths (black and brown)
- Wrapping paper tubes
- Rope of various sizes
- Brown packing paper
- Rope lights (various colors)
- Duct tape (purple or lime green)
- Cellophane
- Foil gift wrap
- Black garbage bags
- Newspaper



VBC PREP

WORK DAYS! Come when you can; snacks provided!

Dates & Times: May 25: *Paint Day!* 9:00 am-2:00 pm
June 8: 9:00 am-2:00 pm
June 14: 9:00 am-2:00 pm
June 17: 9:00 am-2:00 pm

The week before VBC, check in to see what else is needed! Questions? Contact Beth Brown



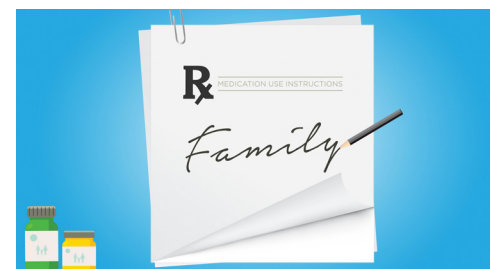
PRAY!

- For the kids
- For the volunteers
- For the leadership team
- For beautiful weather...no rain!



CAN YOU LEND A HAND?

Talk to Beth Brown, Caving Guide at beth.brown@firstfreechurch.org



OUR CURRENT SERMON SERIES: FAMILY RX

- May 1 Extended Family (9:15 am only; Annual Celebration @ 11 am)
- May 8 Children
- May 15 Parents
- May 22 Family of God

**OUR MISSION:
TO HELP
INDIVIDUALS
BECOME
CHRIST-CENTERED
& CHRIST-SENT
TOGETHER**

WANT MORE INFO?

Visit www.firstfreechurch.org

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SEE MORE INFO AT:
www.firstfreechurch.org

To God Be The Glory

A faith story by David Kriesel-Koll (interviewed by Pastor Joel)

On May 14, 2003, David Kriesel-Koll's life forever changed. It was the day that the Lord had arranged for his heart transplant. Ten years earlier, just after his 35th birthday, David had a heart attack. With his diseased and dying heart being replaced by a new and healthy one, David began a new chapter in his life he never thought possible.

So, I (Pastor Joel) sat down with David to ask him about that event and how it affected his life.

How did your life change on May 14, 2003?

I was ready when the call came; a matching heart was available for me to receive. I had gone from being a healthy, active young man to having very limited physical ability, needing to carry oxygen, limited walking and having a 24 hour infusion pump connected to me. My physical decline was evident to those around me. I was in a win-win situation after years of declining health; the new heart would give me new life or I would go home to the Lord.



David Kriesel-Koll with wife Pam and grandson Colten

Do you believe in coincidences?

Not at all. The whole process had God's imprint all over it. The heart transplant experience is unique in that one person must die in order that another might live. On that day, God followed through with HIS plan, for me. I was privileged to meet the wife of my donor on the second anniversary date of my transplant and listen to her share about who her husband was and the life he led. Often donor families wish to remain anonymous and the recipient never knows who their heart donor was. I was blessed to make the connection.

Can you describe some of the life changes?

In order for my body not to reject my transplanted heart, I will take large quantities of medications for the rest of my life that suppress my immune system. A healthy person's body can easily fight off common colds and such, but a body that is immuno-suppressed has a much more difficult time. When I agreed to having a heart transplant done if a match came in, I was made aware of a lifetime of medical care—but compared to the alternative—premature death—I gladly accepted that reality. I am fortunate that I have never experienced my body's rejection of the heart and that all other medical issues have been treatable.

I am forever thankful to the Lord for bringing my wife, Pam into my life. She has been a patient and supportive caregiver for years, who offers gentle perspective and council to me.

I can drone on and on about the medical aspects of my life, but that's not the real message. It is about the people who are part of my life, and how they are always there at just the right time. I've been blessed to live in the right community, with access to the best medical care in the region. I'm blessed with a loving family. I've been witness to both of my daughters getting married. I have three wonderful grandsons and another grand baby due later in the fall. I've been able to enjoy additional years with my wife; I'm able to be close to my mother who is 90, and I'm blessed to be part of the First Free Church community. These are NOT coincidences—there is a reason the Lord makes this happen.

There is a reason the Lord wants to keep me around. I look forward to new opportunities for service and use the gifts that God has given me.

Do you have any closing "words of wisdom"?

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and soul. HE will not lead you or me astray. It's all about relationships, first with the Lord—making HIM number one in your life, then with those who you interact with on a daily basis—family, friends, co-workers, health care professionals, strangers, and those less fortunate than you. Develop the desire to "pay it forward" from all the blessings that the LORD has bestowed upon you.

This Month @ FIRST FREE

Child Dedication: May 8 During Worship Gatherings

Interested in having your child dedicated? Contact the church office at info@firstfreechurch.org or 612-827-4705 to sign up for Child Dedication on Sunday, May 8.

Grad Night: May 18 @ 6:30 p.m.

Join us for food, and to support and encourage our graduating high school seniors, and celebrate what God has done in their lives. The whole church is invited to join us for Grad Night on Wednesday, May 18 at 6:30 p.m. in the sanctuary.

The DEEP: May 25 @ 6:30 p.m.

Worship. Pray. Refresh. Together. Join us for a time of worship and prayer together at The DEEP on Wednesday, May 25 at 6:30 p.m. Childcare will be provided.

One Worship Gathering: Sunday, May 29 @ 9:15 a.m.

Join us for our one worship gathering Memorial Day weekend on Sunday, May 29 at 9:15 a.m.

VBC Registration Is Now Open!

VBC: Cave Quest registration is now available for children (entering grades K-6) and volunteers. Nursery and preschool VBC is available for children of volunteers only. Sign up online or learn more info at firstfreechurch.org/vbc. Questions? Contact Beth Brown, the Caving Guide, at beth.brown@firstfreechurch.org.

VBC Donation Station

Looking for ways to help for VBC? Check out our Donation Station to choose specific items to donate. For more information on ideas for donations or ways you can help, see the back of this month's newsletter. Questions? Contact Beth Brown.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2016 GRADUATES!

Cullen Anderson
Kayla Castillo
Kendra Cruz
Sydney Gregg
Ryken Kreps

Sonya Beddoe
Lydia Clinton
Tess Dutton
Alex Guzman
George Rose

Daniel Bostrom
Benjamin Conrad
Abbye Good
Coya Hall

A special congratulations to those who attained a college degree, graduate degree, or who graduated from other programs this Spring.

Church Family News

We extend our deepest condolences to the family of Elizabeth Andersen, who passed away on Saturday, March 26. Her funeral was held on April 9th at Oak Grove Lutheran Church.

We extend our deepest condolences to the family of Bob Andersen, who passed away on Tuesday, March 29. His funeral was held on Tuesday, April 5th here at First Free.

We extend our deepest condolences to the family of Ardese Barrett, who passed away on Friday, April 5th. Her funeral was held here at First Free on Wednesday, April 13th.

Congratulations to Bill and Sandra Ogren on the birth of their daughter, Liliana Irene Ogren, who was born on Friday, April 15!

Congratulations to Bryant and Hannah Dittmer on the birth of their daughter, Stella Grace Dittmer, who was born on Friday, April 15!