

CROSSROADS COMMUNITY CHURCH

Core Values Lessons for Neighborhood Gatherings

Mission: The mission of Crossroads Community Church is helping people on their journey back to God. We will do this by becoming a spiritually mature community of Christ-followers, equipping ourselves to impact the world as the presence of Christ, in order that lives may be transformed, God's purpose in the world fulfilled, and our Creator honored and glorified.

LESSON 1: END THE SPIN

Value: Authenticity — We seek to be real, approachable people whose walk is consistent with our talk, whose way of being in the world is consistent with the presence of Christ.



Breaking the Ice (10 minutes)

1. What's your favorite soft drink? Do you like generic brands of your favorite soft drink? How about Egg Beaters? Tofu beef?
2. How do you feel when someone tells you one thing and does something different?
3. What is the most difficult thing you've ever done?



Discovering the Truth (20-25 minutes)

James 1:22-24; NRSV

²² But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. ²³ For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; ²⁴ for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like.

A few years ago, I became acquainted with a multisite church which originated in the southwest suburbs of Chicago. Since launching their first worship public worship service in 1989, Community Christian Church has been blessed by God with a tremendous team of artists, both traditional and technical. Among the many videos produced by their drama team is a series entitled *Christian No More*.¹

Why such a title? What the folks at Community Christian Church have discovered is what nonbelievers have known for some time — the word “Christian” has more negative connotations with them than positive ones. Nonbelievers generally like Jesus; they just don't get the same kind of positive vibes about Christians or the Church. As a result,

¹Go to <http://www.youtube.com> and search for “Christian No More” uploads from *hanshir02* or *bramsvan* to view this series.

the folks at Community Christian Church launched a campaign to educate their folks on what it means to follow Jesus as opposed to giving lip-service to Jesus. They now describe themselves not as “Christians” or even “disciples of Jesus”, but rather as “*Christ-followers.*” There is a difference, is there not?

The point is that we’re part of an era which has been immersed in hype. And increasingly, we ignore hype. When was the last time you found great joy in watching a slickly produced television commercial (forget the Superbowl ads!)? The truth is, most of us are sick of fashion models that don’t look like our friends, products that don’t work the same “as seen on TV,” and a type of *Christianity that fits a sterile sanctuary on Sunday but has no impact on life the rest of the week out on the street.*

One of my college professors used to say “*the greatest hindrance to the witness of the church is Christians.*” Christians are too often viewed by nonbelievers as hypocrites whose professed faith in Jesus is not real. Unfortunately, the world’s experience of Christians often results in such a perspective. Why is this?

I’m convinced that one of the reasons people in the New Testament chose to follow Jesus was because they saw in him a kind of authenticity they had never seen before. The life he lived among them was a genuine reflection of his spiritual life. *His relationship to the Father was mirrored in his relationship to those created in the image of the Father.* His behavior, his emotions, his beliefs, his intellect were all engaged in his life with God and with the people whom he encountered. Every part of his life was in harmony with every other part and when people saw it, they called him “the Son of God.”

Our scripture lesson this week comes from the book of James. Martin Luther called James “a right strawy epistle” because of its focus on works. It wasn’t Luther’s favorite. However, James’ focus is not on doctrine, but on the impact *our relationship with God is to have on our relationships with those around us.* James is concerned about *how a Christ-follower is to live on a day-to-day basis.*

1. What image do you think your daily living reflects in the mirror of life to those around you? Why?
2. One person has defined “authentic” as being honest with God and with others, not two-faced. What do you think it means to be “authentic”?
3. What does an authentic Christ-follower look like?
4. Can authenticity be turned on and off?



Embracing the Truth (15 minutes)

There is often a disconnect between what we say we believe and what we actually practice. Hypocrisy results in the death of the church’s effectiveness. It destroys any witness we attempt to share with others concerning the transforming power of God. It prevents us from accomplishing the mission of *helping others on their way back to God.*

1. *Not!* — What are some of the ways we display a lack of Christian authenticity?
2. *The End of Spin* — As Christ-followers, how might we effectively guard against living a double life and attempting to wear the mask of a play actor?
3. *Jesus People* — What would a church filled with authentic Christ-followers look like?
4. *Witnesses* — How can the church effectively communicate authenticity to the community of which we are a part?

5. *Truth for Life* — If time permits, have one or more group member share a *truth for life* from one of the scripture passages in **For Further Study**.



Connecting (10-15 minutes)

Be sensitive to the needs of members of the group. Does someone need encouragement? Affirmation? Guidance? Please pray for our “empty chair” and that God would give you discernment regarding who to invite to share in being a part of this group. Pray for Crossroads Community Church and the challenges we face. Lift those who serve in the various ministries at CCC and our leaders as they continue to seek God’s guidance and direction for our future. Seek God’s strengthening and encouragement for our small group facilitators as they continue to build community among us. Pray that God might be glorified in all we do together.

1. Praises from group members
2. Concerns from group members
3. Share these in conversation with God

For Further Study (Underline portions of the scriptures below that are particularly meaningful to you)

Romans 12:9-21; NRSV

⁹ Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; ¹⁰ love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹ Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. ¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. ¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. ¹⁸ If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” ²⁰ No, “if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.” ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Ephesians 4:25-32; NRSV

²⁵ So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. ²⁶ Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and do not make room for the devil. ²⁸ Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. ²⁹ Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. ³¹ Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, ³² and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you

Galatians 5:22; NRSV

²² By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.