



Title: Circle Up

Series: Restart

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Smythe Street Church

Review Series

Last couple weeks we have been looking at Jesus' first message after he began his ministry.

Matthew 4:17 (NIV)

From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

- This is the foundation of the gospel. This is what Jesus preached (in one convenient sentence).
- We can forget when we hear the word 'repent' that the word is an **invitation to turn around, change directions, move towards, return to, restart** our journey towards the Kingdom of God.

Jesus invites us to His kingdom life

- This is God's kind of kingdom
 - Where children and the poor are not ignored, but they are valued and even lifted up as models of faith and trust in God
 - A kingdom where the greatest are those who understand what it means to serve, and not to lord power
 - A kingdom where God's people care greatly about sin, but mostly about our own, more than the sins of others.

"BEING A CHRISTIAN IS LESS ABOUT CAUTIOUSLY AVOIDING SIN THAN ABOUT COURAGEOUSLY AND ACTIVELY DOING GOD'S WILL." ~ DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

The fall is a key time when we choose the paths that will carry us to next summer. What are you choosing?

If we are going to chose God's paths, that will not only turning towards what God calls us to, but turing away from other distractions (and sins).

The Challenge for Today

Hebrews 10:24–25 (NIV)

24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

There is a lot in this passage, but the first words are the ones that grab me right away, “**Let us consider**” we need to think about this. How are the ways that we can spur each other on towards love and good deeds. Other translations say ‘stir one another up’

As a church, it is our desire to inspire people to follow Jesus. But we can’t take for granted how to go about it. We need to consider the challenges that we face today. The challenges we face today can be different than what we faced years ago.

Things Change in the World Around Us

I was thinking a lot about how things change.

Tuesday was 15 year first-date anniversary for Heidi and I.

- Talked about how much had changed in 15 years.
- Talked about our plans, dreams and lives had changed.
- Talked about our kids.
- Talked about the **next 15 years...** (all my kids will be in their 20’s).
- Will have different opportunities, and different challenges.

How much the world has changed in the life of church

- Camp Lead had students to to different points around the city to learn about the history of our church from its beginnings in tent meetings on the Woodstock Road, to meeting in a carriage house, to Argyle Street before coming here.

- Mind goes to a story I heard of Elaine Kaley telling students about size of Fredericton, basically everything above Connaught / Dundonald in the early 70's was farm. The church was mostly people who lived in the neighbourhood. Your neighbours were your church family, were the people you shopped with, went to school with and socialized with.
- When I was a young boy, the church I attended, almost 75% of the people that went there could walk there.
- Today, the sense of neighbourhood is different.

Meeting Together...

Hebrews 10:24–25 (NIV)

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Meeting together is different when you are living together. Today we are not.

Consider: How am I putting this into my life? Who am I meeting together with?

As a church, something we believe is that we grow better when we meet together, not just in an auditorium or sanctuary in rows, but in when we interact, encourage and question each other in circles and interaction.

This has grown to influence everything we do. Upstairs with our children, we put them in small groups. Our Middle and High School students, we gather them in small groups and home groups. In our adult classes (e.g. Alpha and Foundations), we have decided that they will always include circles for discussion and connection.

This is why we encourage everyone to find a place of connection in a smaller setting than a Sunday morning. Not because we want to try to fill up your calendar, but because if we do not create the space for meeting and encouraging each other, well we end up discouraged.

Circle Groups

- Launching tonight (come back at 6 PM)
- Different types (all under one roof)
 - Young Adults
 - Young Couples
 - Mens
 - Women's
 - Couples
 - Variety
 - Recovery
 - Singles
 - Women's Bible Study (on Tuesdays)
 - Women's Prayer Group
- 4 week intro study
- Focus for the fall – Studying the Bible
- NEW – classes a group can join

My Personal Challenge

Time. - the same as most of you I suspect.

Been doing groups for 10 years (it is 10 years this week)

It is a decision to set something that sets the pace for my life.

E.G. – SUPPERS AT HOME

Sometimes I find it fulfilling and transforming for me.

Sometimes I get to witness someone else transformed.

Either way, it is about setting the cadence of my life with others.

Wrap UP –

The Third Love (Series Verner and I taught early this summer)

Jesus had given the teaching on the greatest commandment after Palm Sunday, during his last week of ministry, but then at the Last Supper, the night before he is crucified Jesus says these remarkable words.

John 13:34–35 (NIV84)

³⁴ “A **new** command I give you: Love **one another**. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

JESUS’ FOLLOWERS FORM A COMMUNITY OF MUTUAL LOVE

The key word in this passage is ‘one another’.

- It is different than loving everyone and not receiving love in return (doormat)
- It is different than expecting to be loved, without a desire to love in return (self-centred)
- It is a mutual love, a love that gives and receives, it is the love that requires and creates community.

It is characterized by service, sacrifice, compassionately providing for each other’s needs.

When we love God, love our neighbours, and then have a love for each other that is like that of Christ, we show his life to the world and we have repented, turned towards the kingdom he calls us to.

Question:

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