

DEVOTION GUIDE

JULY 22ND - 28TH

WORKCAMP 2007
VANDALIA, OHIO



For the past 16 years, Faith Presbyterian Church has participated in Group Publishing's summer workcamp program. The primary goal is the spiritual growth of high school and college-aged students. Workcamps are an intensive week of community service offering teenagers an opportunity to perform hands-on home-repair projects for low income families. Projects include carpentry, roof repair, step and porch construction, weatherization, wheelchair ramp construction, painting, and drywall work.

As the campers serve, their confidence and character can grow like never before. Their faith ignites as they complete hands-on, meaningful work that really counts, and they discover a genuine appreciation for all God has given them. Some residents must choose between putting food on the table and fixing a leaky roof. The real repairs, however, are done not to the homes, but to the lives of those they touch.

This year we head for Vandalia, Ohio. Transportation Located at the intersection of two major interstates, the city has a rich history as the crossroads of America, having first been settled to serve travelers as they journeyed westward to make their fortunes. But in this city of traveling choices, many people have no choice in where they live: they are forced to remain in homes that need repair. It's time that someone served these people who have for so long served others. Their lives are at a crossroads.

*The theme for this years workcamp is **Renovate: Jesus Makes New**. This booklet will guide us through the verses that are the primary focus of this summer's devotions at workcamp (Colossians 3: 9-17.) We set aside time at lunch, during the evening program, and at bedtime to really focus on these verses and to help our faith grow. We hope you will do the same. Each day's scripture verses correspond with the focus at workcamp for that particular day (July 22-28) so you can hear God's word just as we are in Vandalia, Ohio.*

During the week, be sure to stay up-to-date with all the workcamp happenings by checking out Faith Workcamps' blog at www.FaithWorkcamps.com. You can e-mail a camper by going to www.GroupWorkcamps.com and clicking on the email a camper button. You can email the group as a whole at workcampers@faithworkcamps.com or preferable by commenting on the blogs.

RENOVATE

Seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!

- Colossians 3: 9-11

An important part of the good news of the gospel is that God loves us so much he accepts us just as we are. There are no tests to pass before signing on to follow Jesus. Everyone who wants to is welcomed. But there is more to it than that. An equally important part of the good news is that God loves us so much he has no intention of leaving us as he found us. The Christian life is about change, and a large part of this change is personal transformation – “renovation of the heart.” One of the main themes in the teachings of Jesus is the connection between what is in our hearts and the way we act. Jesus left no doubt that renovation of the heart is a key issue for those who would follow him.

One of Paul's consistent themes is that followers of Jesus are to put off the old self and put on the new. To the Galatians he writes “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” (Galatians 5:22-23) In tomorrow's passage, Paul encourages the Colossians to be “God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.” (Colossians 3:12) The goal here is not perfection; it is growth. It is the ongoing transformation – the renovation of the heart – that is proof of God's presence and work in our lives.

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When most people think of a workcamp mission trip the first image that enters their mind is home construction and/or repair. While this is a major part of our trip, it is not the main focus. In fact, the main focus of the week, and all the activities planned, are designed to create an atmosphere where everyone involved can experience spiritual growth. In order for this to happen, we must be willing to let God into our hearts. We want to become, and to help others become, closer to Christ through thought, character, attitude, behavior and purpose. This year's workcamp theme of renovation is not limited to homes, but more importantly is focused on hearts.

DISCUSS IT!

If God were to make a complete renovation of your life, what's the first thing he'd ask?

How can we use this week to evaluate and seek renovation in our spiritual lives?

WHAT WOULD SPIDER-MAN DO?

This summer, the third movie in the Spider-man series was released. As the week progresses, Spider-man will become an integral part of our daily devotions.

CHOOSE

God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. -Colossians 3: 12

Before it was a book of the Bible, Colossians was a letter from Paul to a church in Colossae, written in the first century. The teachings of the Colossae church were promising believers enjoyment of a higher spiritual life and a deeper insight into the world of spirits. Paul's letter argues against such teaching, showing that in Christ they had all things. He wrote to help them renovate their lives through Jesus. Paul knew some of the Colossians spiritual lives were like old cars, breaking down and in need of repair, but God still loved them. No matter how many times you go in for a tune-up, God is glad to have you back.

Pastor Colson's summer sermons have been dealing with scriptures that have become a part of mainstream culture. Along with scripture, Christian ideals can be seen on a daily basis on television and in the movies. Peter Parker closes the latest Spider-man movie by saying, "Whatever battle we have raging inside of us, we always have a choice. It's the choices that make us who we are and we can always choose to do what is right."

Life is all about choices. Like Peter Parker, we make choices on a daily basis. Some choices are fairly inconsequential, like what kind of gum to chew. Others are far more important, like what college to attend. When Paul wrote his letter to the Colossians, they were presented with a very important choice, the same choice each one of us has to make in our own spiritual lives. We have all made the choice to be here at camp and this week is an opportunity for each of us to evaluate our relationship with God and to make choices as to how we can best follow Christ. When we stop making choices we become stagnant and as we discussed yesterday, the growth of our spiritual lives is dependent upon ongoing transformation - renovation.

ONE WITH THE ONE

What choice are the Colossians faced with?

In your life, what kind of choices can you make to grow closer to God?

FORGIVE

Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. -Colossians 3: 13

Peter Parker, a science whiz teenager and photographer for the Daily Bugle, gets bitten by a radioactive spider during a science demonstration. This causes him to gain super human powers. Learning that with great power comes great responsibility, Spider-man combats evil in the city of New York. Peter's Uncle Ben is killed by a robber, Sandman. Rage and anger fester within Peter and he seeks revenge against Sandman. The two meet high above the city for one last encounter. Sandman tells Peter his version of what happened to Uncle Ben, and then says, "I'm not asking you to forgive me, I just want you to understand." Peter replies, "I've done terrible things too." and after a very long pause, he continues, "I forgive you." After speaking these words you can feel the relief that has come over Peter Parker.

Forgiveness is not easy. In fact, many of us are already probably cringing at the idea of extending forgiveness to someone who has hurt us. It's an unnatural act. We desire justice and vindication. To truly forgive someone requires the work of God in our lives. Forgiveness releases us and keeps us from becoming bitter and resentful. Forgiveness also reflects God's character. When we forgive we reflect Christ's love. Forgive as the Lord has forgiven you. Forgiveness gives us the opportunity to extend to others what God has extended to us.

LOOKING WITHIN

Why is forgiveness so important to God?

How can we best let go of what is keeping us from forgiving?

LOVE

Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. -Colossians 3: 14

When we hear the word “love,” our thoughts often turn to dating, romance, and marriage. We think of Peter Parker and his love interest, Mary Jane Watson. When the Bible speaks of love, however, it means much more than flowers and love notes. Last year we discussed how Mother Teresa boldly displayed the love of Jesus Christ in order to aid the desperate around her. By giving people dignity and proclaiming their inherent worth as human beings, she displayed a transformative love the world will never forget.

In the real world, there is no better example of love than Mother Teresa. In comic book land, there’s Spider-man. The first movie in the Spider-man series ends with Peter saying, "With great power comes great responsibility. This is my gift, my curse. Who am I? I'm Spider-man." Peter realizes that God has given him special gifts and he can use these gifts to show God's love for mankind. He does this by constantly giving of himself to others while asking for nothing in return.

While we may not have the ability to shoot webs from our forearms and fly around the city, we have powers of our own. God has given us the gift of love and we can share this gift with the world through our actions. At workcamp this week, we are showing God's love to an entire community and asking for nothing in return.

In today's scripture verse, Paul tells us to put love above all else. We must recognize that we each have a responsibility to "clothe ourselves with love" in our own lives. If we give of ourselves, and reach beyond that which is comfortable and easy, then through our actions, the world will see Jesus as the great Savior that He truly is.

LIVING GOD’S WORD

Where do you need to be more loving? How can you begin today?

How can we use the gifts that God has bestowed upon us?

Do something to affirm and show love to someone today. You could begin with a note of encouragement to someone who is alone or by helping someone who could use an extra set of hands. Take time to show the world a picture of Jesus, the very embodiment of true love. Tomorrow we’ll discuss these acts.

PEACE

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. -Colossians 3: 15

Where we are willing to go often depends on who we are with. For instance, maybe there is a party and you do not want to go unless one of your good friends is going. In the latest Spider-man movie, Spider-man asks his best friend, and recently turned super hero, Harry Osborn (aka the new Green Goblin) to come join him in saving Mary Jane, and the rest of New York City, from evildoers, Sandman and Venom. Harry at first refuses but ultimately goes to help Spider-Man rescue Mary Jane. In the ensuing conflict, Harry sacrificing himself to save Peter.

Because of Christ's ultimate sacrifice, none of us are ever alone. In Acts 14, Paul went into a town in an effort to make Christian believers of its people. The towns peoples' beliefs were divided and those who opposed Paul's teachings stoned him until they were convinced he was dead. Then they drug Paul beyond the city limits and returned to their homes. Once they were gone, Paul got up, brushed himself off, and walked back into town to continue his teachings. What gave Paul enough confidence to return to the town? He knew he was not alone. He knew that God was with him and God was in charge. The Hebrew word shalom can be described as a deep, rich, and perfect peace. Jesus lived his life by spreading shalom in all that he did and Paul carried this with him back into the town.

We have been given the ultimate gift, the gift of Jesus Christ. Christ's death and resurrection has freed us from condemnation. All of this through his shalom. Jesus Christ lives through each of us. This week we are spreading God's love, his shalom, and we must continually choose to let that shalom flow through us in all that we do.

WHEN YOU ARE WITH ME, I'M FREE

How is the shalom that is within us being released here at camp?
When we leave camp, we will be leaving this all encompassing Christian environment. How can we continue to display God's shalom in our own lives?

LIVE

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

-Colossians 3: 16-17

Much of life is a question of maintaining balance. Any athletic team knows that they need a balance between offense and defense and between quickness and strength. Peter Parker is constantly trying to balance life as Peter Parker and as Spider-man. In the second Spider-man movie, Peter started missing important life events, including Mary Jane's theatrical debut, because he was spending all of his time as Spider-man. This greatly affects Peter and Mary Jane's relationship and Peter overcompensates by hanging up the spider suit for good... or so he thinks... Eventually he realizes he needs balance in his life and he finds a way to make Peter Parker and Spider-man co-exist.

There must also be balance in our Christian lives. In today's scripture, Paul gives us four characteristics of a well-rounded or balanced Christian. Paul brings his thought to a fitting peak with the final words in this passage: "And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." It seems like the perfect conclusion doesn't it? The person who is well-balanced should be revealing Christ consistently.

Spider-main certainly is not without flaws, but he is a do-gooder. He makes unselfish decisions that he thinks are best for mankind; a Jesus like attitude. A Christ like attitude is something we can all strive to achieve.

As our workcamp week comes to a close, we need to take from here what we have learned. Our willingness to put ourselves in a potentially uncomfortable situation in order to spread God's love to our residents, fellow campers, and the Vandalia community, is a fantastic foundation to build our own relationships with Christ upon. We've made choices that help this relationship grow, seen God's love in one another's actions, taken steps towards true forgiveness, and learned about God's great gift of love. We all leave Vandalia, Ohio this week having shed our old selves because Jesus has renovated us, making us new.

CHANGE ME ON THE INSIDE

Our lives are a result of what we have become in the depths of our being -- what we call our spirit, or heart. From there we see our world and interpret reality. From there we make choices, break forth into action, and try to change our world. That is why the greatest need of collective humanity is the renovation of our heart.

Accordingly, the revolution of Jesus involves the objective of eventually bringing all of human life under the direction of his wisdom, goodness, and power as part of God's eternal plan for the universe. The revolution of Jesus is one of *character*, which proceeds by *changing people from the inside* through an ongoing personal relationship to God in Christ and to one another. It changes their ideas, beliefs, feelings, habits of choice, bodily tendencies, and social relations. From these persons, social structures will naturally be transformed so that "justice roll(s) down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24, NRSV). Such streams *cannot* flow through corrupted souls.

Spiritual formation for the Christian refers to the Spirit-driven *process of forming the inner world of the human self so that it becomes like the inner being of Christ himself*. To the degree in which spiritual formation in Christ is successful, the outer life of the individual becomes a natural outflow of the character and teachings of Jesus. Christian spiritual formation is focused entirely on Jesus. Its goal is conformity to Christ that arises out of an inner transformation accomplished through purposeful interaction with the grace of God in Christ. Obedience is an essential outcome of Christian spiritual formation (see John 13:34-35; 14:21)

If Christ's people genuinely enter Christ's way of the heart, they will find a sure path toward becoming the persons they were meant to be: thoroughly good and godly persons yet purged of arrogance, insensitivity, and self-sufficiency. Christian assemblies will become what they have been in many periods of the past and what the world desperately calls for today: incomparable schools of life –life that is eternal in quality now, as well as unending in quantity.

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When we say phrases such as, “He caught me off guard,” or, “That bad word just slipped out,” we refer to the truth that our outer actions aren’t accidental – they mirror our character within. When regrettable words “slip out,” we didn’t have time to dress up what was in our heart before it came tumbling out of our mouth. Unsavory thoughts leak out in objectionable words and behavior. Such “slips” reveal publicly the private inner workings of our heart. Jesus explained that “out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks” (Luke 6:45, NIV).

Our task, then, is to cooperate with God in being changed on the inside so that we take on the personality of Christ. As we let what is stored in our heart be transformed, we behave as Jesus would behave.

If our insides are renovated, what comes out of us will bring about peace and righteousness. We won’t have to *try* to love. Unloving thoughts and actions simply won’t occur to us, just as loving ones will begin to spring up without our awareness. We’ll smile at an enemy automatically. It won’t occur to us to argue. Instead, we’ll pray inwardly for the disagreeable person in front of us. To cooperate with public greed or dishonesty will offend us to the core, and we’ll find ourselves unable to do it.

Willard, Dallas & Johnson, Jan. (2006). “Change Me on the Inside.” *Renovation of the Heart in Daily Practice: Experiments in Spiritual Transformation*. Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 2006. 15-16.



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Thank you very much for supporting Faith Workcamps! Know that your support is helping to change not only the lives of Faith Presbyterian's Workcamps, but the lives of all who come in contact with them throughout the week and in the future. Please pray for our safety during this physical and spiritual journey. We will depart from Faith Presbyterian Church in Emmaus, PA at 8:15 AM on July 21st and invite all of you to attend our send off service. We will return from Vandalia, Ohio during the afternoon of July 29th.