

Scott Corwin

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Subject: This Week @ ICB 1_24_2010

This Week @ International Baptist Church Berlin, Week of 24. January 2010



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Information and Quick Links to Online Resources for Quiet Time, Meditation/Prayer, Bible Study, and SERVICE Group:

This Week’s Study: The Closeness of Discipleship, 1 John 4:7-21 (for personal, family, or group study click [here](#))

This Week’s Core Practice: Single-mindedness, (Matt. 6:33)—I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” Matthew 6:33 (NIV)

SERVICE Focus: Spiritual Formation—We will assess regularly our growth as apprentices of Jesus Christ and encourage each other to set and achieve personal growth goals.

Log on to www.ibcberlin.org “resources/pastor’s blog” and check out the following online resources to support your journey of being and making disciples in authentic community for the good of God’s world:



- Introspection—Daily Office, Personal Bible Study, Prayer Guides
- Involvement—SERVICE Groups, Our Ministries, Activities, Giving
- Instruction—Encouraging Word, Bible Study Helps
- Inspiration—Sermons, Our Missions, Recommended Resources

January 2010 First Things First: Putting God First—A Call to Commitment, Prayer, and Fasting



“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” Matthew 6:33 (NIV)

“First Things First” is our January challenge to begin 2010 with a time of recommitment and renewal. A time to refocus on the heart of first—putting God first, making his priorities ours, seeking first his kingdom and righteousness. I’m challenging you to recommit yourself by putting your heart into the committing, meditating, praying, and fasting.

Committing: Look through the specific challenges that I’ve included below and make a personal vow to the Lord concerning Scripture, prayer, fasting, and fellowship. Allow God to show you where you need to refocus your heart and what you need to do in order to get back to putting him first.

- *Scripture*—commit to getting into God’s Word in order for it to get into you (e.g. read through the New Testament in 2010)

- *Prayer*—dedicate yourself to consistently pursuing an intimate love relationship with God through prayer (e.g. use a weekly prayer guide, recruit a prayer partner)
- *Fast*—choose a “fitting” fast to heighten your commitment and sensitivity as you feast on God (e.g. 24 hour food fast, give up TV/computer one evening a week)
- *SERVICE Group*—give yourself to the life of a group committed to SERVICE (e.g. join or start a SERVICE group, lead your family to adopt a life of SERVICE)

Meditating: Read through the devotional thoughts on spiritual formation I’ve included below in “An Encouraging Word” ...but read them with your heart letting the truths sink deep into the depths of your being. Let the Spirit transform your heart as you meditate on these thoughts, quotes, the Scripture study I’ve uploaded, and/or the Daily Office available online.

Praying: Use the personal prayer guide available online and the prayer suggestions below to pray for your own spiritual transformation and for our church. Pick at least one day a week where you will cry out to the Lord on behalf of our church. Join us for the “Concert of Prayer” every Sunday morning from 11:30-12:00 where I will be leading and guiding us through a time of corporate prayer.

- **PRAISE THE LORD!** *Budget 2010—God’s priorities of ministries and missions be reflected in the way we give and invest our finances in God’s Kingdom*
- *Deacon selection process—raise up those who would invest in the pastoral and practical ministries of the church*
- *Facilities Task Group—guide us as we seek solutions to our “space” needs to accomplish our mission and ministry*
- *Preschool and Children Ministries—volunteers and training; rooms for preschool toddlers and older children*
- *SERVICE Group—raise up new hosts, leaders, and groups; balanced SERVICE and healthy relationships*

Fasting: Read through notes on fasting available online and prayerfully consider heightening your resolve to the Lord through a fast. Should you choose to fast, make sure that you use the time to feast on the Lord.

Join me and others in our church in the journey of putting God first in 2010!

An Encouraging Word: Prayer—Practice, Practice, Practice!

We were sitting around the table at this past Saturday’s Christian Life Profile Workshop wrestling with answers to two questions:

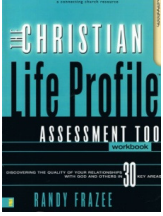
1. What does it look like to become like Jesus?
2. How do we become like Jesus?

After struggling with what it looks like to become like Jesus—how would you answer that question?—we turned our attention to the second question. There was a silence at the table while people thoughtfully considered their responses. Following a pause and in his own imitable way Rolf Schwippert broke the silence with his answer: “Practice, practice, practice!”

We had a good chuckle recognizing the truth of his response in light of the overwhelming task of actually becoming like Jesus Christ, but the longer we thought about it and the more we heard in the workshop we came to the realization that Rolf is exactly right. Think about it. How does one become a skilled footballer? Practice, practice, practice! How does one become a proficient violinist? Practice, practice, practice! The same is true of our becoming more like Jesus! The key to becoming like Jesus is “PRACTICE” ...and by that I mean developing the “classic spiritual disciplines” or the “holy habits” that characterized the life of Jesus.

We’ve identified ten (10) core “practices” drawn from the life of Jesus that are essential to becoming like Jesus including worship, scripture, prayer, and biblical community. As we by faith in God and through dependence upon the Holy Spirit, take the time and trouble to quiet ourselves before God with a “heart of first” God visits us in presence and power. (“Draw near to God and he will draw near to you (James 4:8).) Through the “inward practices,” we get to know God, his truth, his will, and his way—“beliefs”—so that our minds and our hearts are changed. In the faith of obedience we take the time and trouble to give ourselves to the “outward practices”—such as giving away our time, money, faith, etc.—and God does his work in and through us. All the while, God is growing us in the fruit of the Spirit or, shall we say the character of Christ—“virtues.”

One word of caution...I’m not talking about a robotic mimicking of Jesus’ earthly life as if through superficial imitation we can be changed to appear like Christ. Heaven forbid! I’m not talking about parroting the activities of Jesus as if through them we might earn God’s favor or do penance for our shortcomings. Nothing but the heresy of dead works! No, I’m talking about “the heart of first” ...the heart that makes Jesus Christ pre-imminent...that puts him above all things out of love...presenting its body



through a sacrifice of time, focus, and energy to activities that bring the whole being—spirit, soul, and body—into the presence of God Almighty so that he might accomplish his will in our lives...to make us more like Jesus.

So, practice, practice, practice...spirit, soul, and body! It's the act of first! In what ways will you commit to presenting your body as a living sacrifice? (Rom. 12:1-2) See the "spiritual formation" section of the blog for materials to support your pursuit of these "holy habits"—Bible reading/study, meditation, prayer, "Daily Office", etc.—including a new "Daily Office" on the 10 Core Practices.

Time for some practice...by reading the following scriptures and quotes "with your heart" in the "spirit of the practices." Take some time to be in God's presence and to let him work his presence and power in you to make you more like Jesus Christ.

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. Romans 13:8 (NIV)

If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother. 1 John 4:20-21 (NIV)

Francis de Sales: "Someone given to fasting thinks himself very devout if he fasts although his heart is filled with hatred. Much concerned with sobriety, he doesn't care to wet his tongue with wine or even water but won't hesitate to drink deep of his neighbor's blood by detraction and gossip. Another person thinks himself devout because he daily recites a vast number of prayers, but after saying them he utters the most disagreeable, arrogant, and harmful words at home and among the neighbors. Another gladly takes a coin out of his purse and gives it to the poor, but he cannot extract kindness from his heart to forgive his enemies."

Francis de Sales: "Anyone who does not observe all God's commandments cannot be held to be either good or devout. To be good a person must have charity, and to be devout, in addition to charity, he must have great zeal and readiness in performing charitable actions."

May God grow us in love for him and one another,

Scott Corwin, Pastor

[Note: The link takes you to our www.ibcberlin.org website where you can read, comment, ask questions, and interact with this and other "blog thoughts" by Pastor Scott.]

Special note: I am taking a vacation beginning Saturday and will be gone for 8 days—two Sundays—enjoying a holiday with some of my "biking buddies." I have been blessed by an invitation from a friend to join him and others on a bicycle trekking adventure. I'm looking forward to reconnecting with friends, enjoying some time in the saddle, and spending some time outdoors. Pray for traveling mercies, safety, fellowship, influence, and opportunities to share my faith with the non-Christians in the group. This next week...I get to be a person doing ministry...instead of being a pastor equipping others to do the work of the ministry.

A Concert of Prayer, Sundays @ 11:30-12:00 h Fellowship Room



A ***Concert of Prayer*** is a block of time set aside to seek the Lord in a guided time of prayer with other believers. Think of it this way: The orchestra gathers with each participant offering the unique contribution of their own instrument as the conductor guides and directs the group in their performance of a particular piece of music. That's what a concert of prayer is about! Each participant offers their own prayer contributing to the prayers of others as together the whole group is guided and directed by the Spirit and by Scripture.

Join us on Sundays during January for a time of seeking the Lord together in this time of guided corporate prayer! Be a part of what God is doing in and through our church as we fan into flame a spiritual passion in our lives for him. For more information contact Scott (scott@ibcberlin.org).

Christian Life Profile Workshop, Our Core Commitments: Beliefs, Practices, and Virtues--Thinking, Acting, and Being Like Jesus

"We will assess regularly our growth as apprentices of Jesus Christ and encourage each other to set and achieve personal growth goals."

RECOMMENDED FOR INDIVIDUALS, COUPLES, SERVICE GROUPS...

Missed this past Saturday's workshop? Not to worry! We're offering the workshop again on Saturday 20. March from 9:00 – 12:00 h. See details @ "Upcoming Events" on our website. Can't wait until then? Talk your SERVICE group leader into having the workshop come to your group for two consecutive weeks! That would be the perfect place to accelerate the process for your group. SERVICE group leaders...you are now challenged to make it happen! Contact scott@ibcberlin.org.

Coming to IBCB...



Parents Night Out, Saturday 13. February, 17:00 – 21:00 h

As a special gift to our parents, a group of IBCBers is providing a ministry of care to your children while you have a chance to go on a Valentine's date! Please, register your children by Wednesday 10. February. If you want to volunteer to help out on this evening—individual, SERVICE group, etc.—let us know. Contact info:

scott@ibcberlin.org

Youth Urban Retreat Weekend, 19-21 February

Want to do something fun and different with your friends? Then invite ALL your friends 14-18 to join us for an evening of fun in the city—midnight bowling, "lock in," helping people in need, photo scavenger hunt, games and music. The weekend is designed to GENTLY introduce non-Christians to good Christian fun. No hard sell just fun in a Christian context. Plan on attending...invite your friends!



Ghana Mission Project 2010: We are in the final stages of scheduling a date for us to take a team of at least five people to work alongside Harold Holdbrook for 10 days this Spring. We will be serving in the church, the school, the institute, and in church-planting. If you want to learn more about becoming a "world Christian" by preparing, training, and going on this mission trip, please, watch the eNotes for more information and contact Scott (scott@ibcberlin.org).

Berliner Stadtmission World Conference 2010: We will be supporting this year's "City Mission World Association" (September) both here in Berlin and in Wittenberg. In the meantime, we're looking for young bi-lingual volunteers (16 yrs. +) to help host the world when they arrive in Berlin. You can assist with information, logistics, technical, etc., but you will need to participate in an orientation to get to know the Stadtmission and to learn about your responsibilities. Are you...or your group...interested in making this an "extending care" project? If so, contact Scott (scott@ibcberlin.org) or talk to Konstanze Agbor, she knows something about this, too! ☺

Laib und Seele—Bring Food Goods to Distribute @ Berliner Tafel e. V. Steglitz



In partnership with our host church, Baptisten Gemeinde Steglitz, and our neighbor church, Ev. Matthäus Kirchen Gemeinde, you are invited to bring donated food goods for people in need ANY time. Each Thursday at 9:00 h volunteers assist with preparing food and distributing it beginning at 12:00 noon. Place food goods in the "Berliner Tafel" basket in the foyer. If you are interested in volunteering your time, please, contact Scott (scott@ibcberlin.org) or contact Angelika Albert @ 791 90 44.

IBCB Calendar

January

- 31 Children's Worship Sunday
- 31 Guest Preacher: Ingo Tophoven

February

- 7 Ministry Council Meeting
- 7 Guest Preacher: Ingo Tophoven
- 14 Leaders and Deacons Meeting
- 14 Be-Attitudes: God is Blessed
- 19 Youth Urban Retreat Weekend

21 Be-Attitudes: Blessed are the Poor in Spirit
28 Be-Attitudes: Blessed are the Mourners

This Week @ IBCB

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