

**Port City Community Church**  
**Small Group Material**  
**You Are Here Series**  
**Week #3 – “From Here To There”**

Many are still trying to process what took place on Tuesday, November 4th. The range of emotions that people are feeling depend on where they fall on the political spectrum. In the same city where there was dancing in the streets you can find others wondering what the world has come to. Anticipation and transformation nestled together with confusion and anger.

Over the past year or so, we've heard time and time again about how the candidates would respond when it came to every issue facing our country. Their answers to these issues directed each person's decision when they headed to the polls. The sad thing is that no matter if our candidate won or lost on Tuesday there is a good chance that we'll allow the issues to remain some abstract thing that we can hold off at arm's distance. This way we can pass off the responsibility of making a difference to someone else. There is no movement or action required on our part or so we think.

As a member of the body of Christ, you are entrusted with a sacred honor to lead. You must be diligent above all else to steward your influence with great care and purpose. The decisions you will make will impact generations to come. All of these issues require tremendous wisdom and discernment. We have tried to solve these issues from afar and it will no longer work. They will require us to get our hands dirty and get involved in the lives of those struggling with the very challenges we are seeking to solve. It's less about politics and more about our personal investment in our community that will change the landscape of this country and world.

We are aware that there is much work to be done in the culture we have created and the Country we have been given. We must take seriously the rights, as defined by God, to life and freedom. Those are protected by the Constitution; they are possible by the authority of our God.

As we come to the conclusion of the You Are Here series, we want to encourage your small group to reflect on part of the letter Pastor Mike Ashcraft read this past Sunday that dealt with reframing our perspective on 7 issues that shape how we respond to the world around us. In order to uphold life and freedom corporately, you must respond first to the issue personally. Our pray for you is that God's wisdom will grow in your life so you may act with discernment and discretion regarding these important issues.

## **1. LIFE**

The right to life provided in the Constitution is based on the authority of the One who created that life. Life must be valued because it is an expression of and gift from the Creator. Life is an expression of the purity and grace of God, from the miraculous conception to the mystery of death. Life is given as an act of trust full of promise and potential to bear the image of God with flesh and blood in time and space.

It is sacred and should be protected and valued in every way. The authority given to protect the most innocent and wield the sword to defend from the vilest are rooted in the same place. The power to protect and defend rest firmly on the foundation of God's Justice and Truth. As long as God gives breath, every effort must be made to insure this most precious gift is preserved until life on earth turns a page into the promise of the eternity that resides deep in the human heart.

You must do everything you can to uphold the sanctity of life. This means valuing the trusted promise over convenience and justice over perception in every situation. This requires

extraordinary discernment and discretion.

- **Have someone read Psalm 139: 13-18. Why is it challenging to think of all life as a gift from God? How does this lead us to attempt to define our life by our own standards?**

## **2. FREEDOM**

Freedom is truly one of the great treasures we've been given. It is also one of the great dangers--for cherished freedom can slip into carnal entitlement with little noticed. Freedom, however, is not the unbridled ability to do what you want when you want. It is rooted in the human heart being set free. And this is found only through the righteousness and grace of God Himself.

To uphold the gift of freedom, we must recognize that it is only found where forgiveness is given. Justice and mercy provide the foundation, but only receiving forgiveness empowers us to give it. This is essential if we are to love our neighbor and in doing so, give the life of Christ to those around us through our love.

- **Have someone read 1 Peter 2:15-17. How have we twisted this idea of personal freedom? Why is true freedom only found where forgiveness is given?**

## **3. AUTHORITY**

Authority can never rest, simply upon the position, no matter how powerful or prominent. Authority must be coupled with humility and integrity. As a leader, I implore you to submit to the Authority of God and His trust in you with humility of mind and heart. And to live with conviction, carefully stewarding the fragile trust you've been given.

This requires upholding and defending the systems designed by God to preserve the generational health and well being of humanity. God gave this authority to the family. A Husband and a Wife come together, not to form a Utopian society, but to experience and express the Oneness of God within the sacred gift of marriage.

To uphold the sanctity of marriage not only requires submission to God's design and definition, but also fighting for marriages to stay together. Fatherless children seem to be the greatest crisis we face for this is the root of nearly every other issue. This is caused by the erosion of the family. The covenant of marriage provides the foundational authority structure from which every other earthly structure draws its authority. If there is no respect for authority in the home--you should not expect it in society.

- **How well are you stewarding the authority you've been given by God? Do humility and integrity define your use of this authority?**

## **4. JUSTICE**

To do justly is one of the things that God requires of us as His people. This involves upholding the values that provide opportunities and protections. Opportunities are not guarantees and protections require participation.

Justice means that we must uphold a firm standard as to what is expected of those who participate and cooperate within the systems we have been trusted with. Justice requires equity that only comes from seeing justice and experiencing mercy. Justice refuses to hide behind empty rationalizations and irrelevant comparisons, but it earnestly desires the truth. In doing justice, I challenge you to confront the prejudices and pride that allows our sin to be nothing more than a

vice or worse, our sin is simply justified or excused.

To do justice is to uphold the sanctity of life and authority. To act on behalf of those who cannot act and be accountable for the actions we take and the ones we do not. This is done in humble submission to the grace we've received in the face of perfect justice.

- **Have someone read Micah 6:8. What injustices are happening in your world that you have ignored or allowed to go unnoticed?**

## 5. COMPASSION

Compassion is simply stopping to look at life from someone else's perspective. It is not about handout or easing a guilty conscience. It about expressing the freedom and love we have been given on behalf of another. It requires action. The Scriptures (and Jesus Himself) speaks often of the plight of the poor. The early law had requirements that would build into each person, a means to share. The accumulation of wealth is for the purpose of God's purposes and extending compassion to those near and far.

We are blessed to live in a country where we are free to do business and achieve economic success, but may that be tempered with humble submission that this is what we've been given--not what we deserve.

Again, this is about upholding the sanctity of life. We must look at humanity in a new way--as people who are made in the image of God, not merely a means to an end. Whether we are talking about poor people who are marginalized and oppressed or the powerful that are demonized and dismissed. These are equally sinful and lack the compassion required from those who walk with Christ.

- **Have someone read Ephesians 4:31-32 and Philippians 2:1-3. Think back to the situations described in response to the previous question. How can you speak up for those people who are affected? In what ways can you invest in someone who struggles with the issues you are trying to solve?**

## 6. EDUCATION

Education is one of the most profound ways we value life. We have the opportunity to awaken the next generation to the wonder of our world and most importantly the wonder of God. It is imperative that we work together to provide a great place for our children to grow and learn--that their curiosity is piques and their thirst for knowledge grows.

The responsibility to educate the next generation is given to the family. The Educational system should seek to partner with and empower parents, not replace them. Education must pay as much attention to the character as the intellect, for one is of little use without the other.

But we must not forget that education has a source. The Scriptures teach us that wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord. We must reclaim this foundational beginning point for the instruction of our children. This is a stewardship issue. This is an authority issue. We are warned not to be wise according to our own estimation.

Seeing God as God positions us to gain knowledge and understanding. Our beginning point is asking Him. He has promised He will give without reproach. And His wisdom empowers the answers to some of society's greatest challenges. His wisdom is pure, peaceable, merciful, impartial, and sincere.

- **Have someone read Psalm 111:9-10. What does it mean that the beginning of all wisdom lies in the fear of the Lord? How should this reshape our view on wisdom?**

## **7. STEWARDSHIP**

This brings me to my last issue, and this may rank as my most important, for without a firm grasp of this, the others have no foundation. We step into a world and a life that we had no input or say. We did not choose or design the place and time we would be born into. I believe it was designed and defined by the same Creator from whom our right to life and liberty are protected. And if we did not choose it, then we were given this time and this place. How you respond to a gift says a lot about who you are.

Stewardship is doing the best you can with what you have according to the purposes established by the One who trusted you. Our culture has been built on a shaky foundation of money and greed at the expense of character and integrity. This is not sustainable and promises to prove that we have been poor stewards of what we have been given. However, we have been trusted with some hefty challenges. And how we respond says a lot about who we are.

I believe deeply in freedom and opportunity and risk and return. Our economic structure has allowed for creativity, freedom, and cooperation, which have contributed great advances in our world. But we must never forget to ask the Giver, "what do you want me to do with what you have trusted me with?" Jesus was very clear: "To whom much is given, much will be required."

Stewardship is about the value of giving and receiving, not give and take. One is negotiation while the other is trust. It is time we learn to trust and take seriously our responsibility to be trustworthy.

Stewardship goes beyond just economics and governmental resources, but extends to our natural resources as well. We have been trusted with God's creation and one the first acts of stewardship we received was to manage that creation. We must take that call seriously and pay attention so as to be great stewards of what we have been trusted with.

You have been trusted with great responsibility and authority. Steward it well. Seek God's guidance and His favor. Do not lean on the wisdom of humanity.

- **Have someone read Matthew 25:14-30. In what area of your life can you begin to invoke change where you are? What can you do with what you have?**

**Close your time together by reading the following prayer:**

*I pray that God will soften your heart every moment to be molded and shaped by His tender hand and that your mind will be open to the mind of Christ, your ear to the whisper of God, and your life to the way of God. That together, we will see a Kingdom that is not of this world but demands the attention of this world. Until God sits on His throne and His feet on His stool, may we strive together for the image of God and the sake of His purposes.*