

**In 2011,  
What If We...?**

**Your Guide  
To Faithful  
Discipleship  
In the New Year**





## **“In 2011, What If We...?”**

**JANUARY 2, 2011:**

**“What if We Pray as Though Everything Depends Upon God?”**

**JANUARY 9, 2011:**

**“What if We Love Like Jesus?”**

**JANUARY 16, 2011:**

**“What if We Live Like There is No Tomorrow?”**

**JANUARY 23, 2011:**

**“What if We Give Until it Hurts?”**

**JANUARY 30, 2011:**

**“What if We Serve Like Servants?”**

**FEBRUARY 6, 2011:**

**“What if We Follow Like Disciples?”**

**January 2, 2011**

**In 2011, What if we....Pray as though it all depends upon God?**

**Scripture Text:** Mark 11:20-26

"In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. Peter remembered and said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!'

'Have faith in God,' Jesus answered. 'I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea', and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours. And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may for give your sins'."

**Main Point:** This message is designed to inspire you to be a person of prayer in 2011. We should not grow weary in praying. If we are to be the church and the disciples that God wants us to be, then prayer will be the leaven in 2011.

**Sermon Outline:**

- I. Covenant is a "Praying Church".
  - A. Prayer ministries.
  - B. 2011 Commitment Renewal Cards.
  - C. Today, we affirm our faith in prayer.
  
- II. The prayer lesson from a withered fig tree.
  - A. If prayer can kill a tree, prayer can grow a church.
  - B. If prayer can kill a tree, prayer can grow a disciple.
  - C. Prayer is our leaven in 2011.
  
- III. Will you join me in praying in 2011?
  - A vision to reach people with the Good News of Jesus.
  - Send us people who will become faithful disciples.
  - Expand the ministries of Covenant.
  - Ask God to provide the resources.
  - Pray for your staff.
  - Pray for one another.
  - Revival for our community, nation, and the world.
  
- IV. Communion: A time of Commitment To Pray

### Great Sayings about Prayer:

- "Work as if everything depended on you and pray as if everything depended on God."  
D.L. Moody
- "To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing."  
Martin Luther
- "He who runs from God in the morning will scarcely find Him the rest of the day."  
John Bunyan
- "When we spend only five minutes a day in prayer and sixteen hours in the world, is it any wonder the world seems two hundred times more real to us." Billy Graham
- "Prayer is an effort of will." Oswald Chambers
- "There is nothing that makes us love a person so much as praying for him." William Law
- "Gentlemen, I have lived a long time and am convinced that God governs in the affairs of men. If a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? I move that prayer imploring the assistance of Heaven be held every morning before we proceed to business." [turning point of success for the 1787 Constitutional Convention] Benjamin Franklin
- "What the Church needs to-day is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more and novel methods, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use -- men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. The Holy Ghost does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not come on machinery, but on men. He does not anoint plans, but men, men of prayer." E. M. Bounds
- "We are too busy to pray, and so we are too busy to have power. We have a great deal of activity, but we accomplish little; many services but few conversions; much machinery but few results." R.A. Torrey
- "The one concern of the devil is to keep Christians from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, and prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray." Samuel Chadwick
- ". Our prayers lay the track down which Gods power can come. Like a mighty locomotive, his power is irresistible, but it cannot reach us without rails." Watchman Nee
- "Jesus Christ carries on intercession for us in heaven; the Holy Ghost carries on intercession in us on earth; and we the saints have to carry on intercession for all men." Oswald Chambers
- "Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire?" Corrie Ten Boom
- "Prayer is not monologue, but dialogue. Gods voice in response to mine is its most essential part." Andrew Murray
- "The men who have done the most for God in this world have been early on their knees. He who fritters away the early morning, its opportunity and freshness, in other pursuits than seeking God will make poor headway seeking Him the rest of the day. If God is not first in our thoughts and efforts in the morning, He will be in the last place the remainder of the day."  
E.M. Bounds

**January 9, 2011**

**In 2011, What if we.... Love like Jesus?**

**Scripture Text:** John 15:9-14

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command.”

**Main Point:** Jesus set the bar high for us: “Love each other as I have loved you”. What if we really loved like Jesus in 2011? Love is our attitude in 2011.

**Sermon Outline:**

- I. Covenant is a “loving Church family”.
  - A. We love each other.
  - B. But, do we love like Jesus?
  
- II. The Upper Room discourse.
  - A. John, chapters 14-17.
  - B. Important teaching before his death.
  
- III. How did Jesus Love?
  
- IV. If we are to love like Jesus in 2011:
  - No sacrifice is too great.
  - Every person is worth saving.
  - Hearts filled with compassion.
  - Risks worth taking.
  
- V. If we love like Jesus, our joy will be complete.

## GREAT SAYINGS ABOUT LOVE:

- "If you quit loving the moment it becomes difficult, you never discover compassion."  
David Augsburger
- "Love means loving the unlovable----or it is no virtue at all." G. K. Chesterton
- "There is no surprise more magical than the surprise of being loved. It is the finger of God on a man's shoulder." Charles Morgan
- "The chains of love are stronger than the chains of fear." William Gurnall
- "To love God is the greatest of virtues; to be loved by God is the greatest of blessings." Author Unknown
- "Beware you are not swallowed up in books! An ounce of love is worth a pound of knowledge."  
John Wesley
- "To love is to be vulnerable." C.S. Lewis
- "Whatever a person may be like, we must still love them because we love God." John Calvin
- "Love is a fruit in season at all times, and within the reach of every hand." Mother Teresa
- "The Bible tells us to love our neighbors, and also to love our enemies: probably because they are generally the same people." G.K. Chesterton
- "There is a famine in America. Not a famine of food, but of love, of truth, of life." Mother Teresa
- "Our love to God is measured by our everyday fellowship with others and the love it displays."  
Andrew Murray
- "Love is kindled in a flame, and ardency is its life. Flame is the air which true Christian experience breathes. It feeds on fire; it can withstand anything rather than a feeble flame; but when the surrounding atmosphere is frigid or lukewarm, it dies, chilled and starved to its vitals. True prayer must be aflame." E.M. Bounds
- "Love does not dominate; it cultivates." Goethe
- "Nature teaches us to love our friends, but religion our enemies." Thomas Fuller
- "You learn to love by loving." Francis de Sales
- "Our only business is to love and delight ourselves in God." Brother Lawrence
- Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup> It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup> Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. (I Corinthians 13:4-8)

**January 16, 2011**

**In 2011, What if we.... Live like there is no tomorrow?**

**Scripture Text: James 4:13-17**

“Now listen, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.’ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, ‘If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.’ As it is, you boast and brag. All such boasting is evil. Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins.”

**Main Point:** Tomorrow is not a guarantee for anyone. How would you live if you knew there was not going to be a tomorrow? What would you change today? The challenge for us in 2011 is to live like there is no tomorrow.

**Sermon Outline:**

- I. This is not a scripture opposed to planning.
  - A. Those who fail to plan; plan to fail.
  - B. Long-range planning team at Covenant.
  
- II. It is a scripture that raises some serious questions:
  - A. What is your life?
  - B. Is it all about making money?
  - C. What matters most?
  
- III. If we live like there is no tomorrow in 2011, we will:
  - Make time for family and friends.
  - Do good today. Make a difference.
  - Enjoy each moment. Treasure the small things.
  - Walk with Jesus.
  
- IV. In 2011, we seek:
  - A. God’s forgiveness for the past.
  - B. God’s peace for the present.
  - C. God’s will for the future.

## GREAT SAYINGS ABOUT LIVING FOR TODAY:

- "If we discovered that we had only five minutes left to say all we wanted to say, every telephone booth would be occupied by people calling other people to stammer that they loved them." Christopher Morley
- "The two most important days of your life are: 1) The day you were born; 2) The day you discover why you were born." Josh McDowell
- "I find that doing the will of God leaves me no time for disputing about his plans." George MacDonald
- "I was going to waste until Jesus recycled me." Richelle Cross
- "If we make it our first goal to always please God, it solves many problems at once." Philip Howard, Jr.
- "Small deeds done are better than great deeds planned." Peter Marshall
- "If you teach your people to smile in church, your congregation will grow by 10%". John Maxwell
- "Aim at heaven and you will get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you will get neither." C.S. Lewis
- "God sends no one away empty except for those who are full of themselves." D.L. Moody
- When E. Stanley Jones was asked to name the best years of his life, he responded, "the next 10."
- "Great opportunities come to all, but many do not know they have met them. The only preparation to take advantage of them is simple fidelity to what each day brings." Albert Elijah Dunning
- "Life can only be understood backwards: it must be lived forward." Soren Kierkegaard
- When William Menninger of the Menninger Clinic was asked how to achieve mental health he replied, "Find a mission in life and take it seriously."
- "We can never become truly spiritual by sitting down and wishing to become so. You must undertake something so great that you cannot accomplish it unaided." Philip Brooks
- "Attempt great things for God. Expect great things from God." William Carey
- "We must be willing to get rid of the life we've planned, so as to have the life that is waiting for us." Joseph Campbell.
- "Here is Christian identity. I know my past, where I came from. I came from God. I know where I went wrong. I tried to play God instead of being satisfied to be a real man. I know my future. My destiny is Christ. And I know my present. I can face myself now: my problems, my hang-ups, my assets, my faults- because I have turned myself over to God." Leighton Ford

**January 23, 2011**

**In 2011, What if we.... Give until it hurts?**

**Scripture Text: Deuteronomy 15:7-11**

<sup>7</sup> If anyone is poor among your fellow Israelites in any of the towns of the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward them. <sup>8</sup> Rather, be openhanded and freely lend them whatever they need. <sup>9</sup> Be careful not to harbor this wicked thought: "The seventh year, the year for canceling debts, is near," so that you do not show ill will toward the needy among your fellow Israelites and give them nothing. They may then appeal to the LORD against you, and you will be found guilty of sin. <sup>10</sup> Give generously to them and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. <sup>11</sup> There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in your land.

**Main Point:** God is a generous God. We, as disciples, tap into the very nature of God when we are generous. God has a heart for the poor and less fortunate. In 2011, what if we give until it hurts?

**Sermon Outline:**

- I. *Covenant is a "giving congregation".*
  - A. *We are a generous people.*
  - B. *But, can we give more?*
  
- II. *Our scripture sets the tone for godly giving.*
  - A. Do not be hardhearted or tightfisted.
  - B. Do not harbor a poor attitude towards the poor.
  - C. Give generously.
  
- III. If we give until it hurts in 2011:
  - People's needs will be met.
  - Your trust in God will be strengthened.
  - Your church will get a reputation.
  - God will smile.
  
- IV. If we give until it hurts, the Lord our God will bless us.

## **GREAT SAYINGS ABOUT GIVING:**

- "Get all you can, save all you can and give all you can." John Wesley
- "You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving." Amy Carmichael
- "Give according to your income, lest God make your income according to your giving." Author Unknown
- "The most obvious lesson in Christ's teaching is that there is no happiness in having or getting anything, but only in giving." Henry Drummond
- "Generosity always wins favor, particularly when accompanied by modesty." Goethe
- "The cistern contains: The fountain overflows." William Blake
- "Do not give, as many rich men do, like a hen that lays an egg, and then cackles." Henry Ward Beecher
- "Spend and God will send." Author Unknown
- "If every person in the world had adequate food, housing, income; if all people were equal; if every possible social evil and injustice were done away with, men would still need one thing: Christ. J.W. Hyde.
- "Our faith becomes practical when it is expressed in two books: the date book and the checkbook,"  
Elton Trueblood
- A group of sociologists interviewed a group of elderly people at a retirement home. Each was asked to complete an open ended sentence- "If I had to do it over again I would...." Three answers emerged.
  1. I would reflect more.
  2. I would risk more.
  3. I would do more things that would live on after I'm dead.
- "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give." Winston Churchill
- "God has given us two hands- one for receiving and one for giving." Billy Graham
- "The man who gives little with a smile gives more than the man who gives much with a frown." Proverb

**January 30, 2011**

**In 2011, What if we.... Serve like servants?**

**Scripture Text: Matthew 20:20-28**

<sup>20</sup> Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him.

<sup>21</sup> "What is it you want?" he asked.

She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom."

<sup>22</sup> "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?"

"We can," they answered.

<sup>23</sup> Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father."

<sup>24</sup> When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. <sup>25</sup> Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. <sup>26</sup> Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>27</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— <sup>28</sup> just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

**Main Point:** Being a servant goes against our human nature. We want to be first. Yet, Jesus came to serve and we, too, are called to serve. What if we served like servants in 2011?

**Sermon Outline:**

- I. Covenant is filled with people who have servants' hearts.
- II. Our scripture provides Jesus' teaching about serving.
  - A. The mother wanted only the best for her sons.
  - B. The Kingdom of God is not about greatness.
  - C. Serving is the way of life in the Kingdom.
- III. If we serve as servants in 2011:
  - Egos must be set aside; others come first.
  - Humility is required for service.
  - We look for ways to serve.
- IV. Jesus gave His life as a ransom for many.

## GREAT SAYINGS ABOUT SERVICE:

- "In the Kingdom of God, service is not a stepping-stone to nobility: it is nobility, the only kind of nobility that is recognized." T. W. Manson
- 'God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supply.' J. Hudson Taylor
- "To stay youthful, stay useful." Unknown
- "Here is a test to see if your mission on earth is finished. If you're still alive, it isn't." Francis Bacon
- "Serving Christ is not overwork but overflow." Curtis Akenson
- "In Jesus the service of God and the service of the least of the brethren were one." Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- "The service we render for others is really the rent we pay for our room on earth." Wilfred Grenfell
- "The service that counts is the service that costs." Howard Hendricks
- "From now on, any definition of a successful life must include **servicing** others." George Bush
- We shall serve for the joy of **servicing**; prosperity shall flow to us and through us in unending streams of plenty."

**February 6, 2011**

## **In 2011, What if we.... Follow like Disciples?**

### **Scripture Text: John 6:60-71**

<sup>60</sup> On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?"

<sup>61</sup> Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, "Does this offend you? <sup>62</sup> Then what if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! <sup>63</sup> The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit<sup>le</sup> and life. <sup>64</sup> Yet there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. <sup>65</sup> He went on to say, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled them."

<sup>66</sup> From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

<sup>67</sup> "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve.

<sup>68</sup> Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. <sup>69</sup> We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God."

<sup>70</sup> Then Jesus replied, "Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!" <sup>71</sup> (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.)

**Main Point:** Following Jesus is not always easy. Dietrich Bonhoeffer referred to "the cost of discipleship". There is a cost to following Jesus. What if we followed like disciples in 2011?

### **Sermon Outline:**

- I. Covenant exists to make disciples.
  - A. We have many faithful disciples.
  - B. But, can we follow better in 2011?
  
- II. Examining the cost of discipleship.
  - A. Being a disciple is not always a "rose garden".
  - B. Persecution still exists.
  - C. Taking a stand for Jesus is not easy.
  
- III. If we follow like disciples in 2011:
  - We forsake "self".
  - We carry the cross.
  - We go where led.
  - We journey with Jesus.
  
- IV. As Peter said, "to whom shall we go?"

## GREAT SAYINGS ABOUT DISCIPLESHIP:

- "Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. <sup>38</sup> Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. <sup>39</sup> Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it." Matthew 10:37-39
- "Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession.... Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, and grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate." — Dietrich Bonhoeffer (The Cost of Discipleship)
- "Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of our church. We are fighting today for costly grace." — Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- "When all is said and done, the life of faith is nothing if not an unending struggle of the spirit with every available weapon against the flesh." — Dietrich Bonhoeffer (The Cost of Discipleship)
- "I discovered later, and I'm still discovering right up to this moment that it is only by living completely in this world that one learns to have faith. By this-worldliness I mean living unreservedly in life's duties, problems, successes and failures. In so doing we throw ourselves completely into the arms of God, taking seriously, not our own sufferings, but those of God in the world. That, I think, is faith." — Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- "Discipleship is not an offer that man makes to Christ." — Dietrich Bonhoeffer (The Cost of Discipleship)
- "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die." — Dietrich Bonhoeffer (The Cost of Discipleship)
- "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? <sup>29</sup> For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, <sup>30</sup> saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.' <sup>31</sup> "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? <sup>32</sup> If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. <sup>33</sup> In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples." (Luke 14:28-33)