

The Voice of Charlotte Awake

## AWAKE PRAYER

- Pray for the clear proclamation of the gospel throughout the city.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit will raise up small prayer groups throughout Charlotte.
- Pray as we continue to develop a citywide Men's Ministry.
- Pray for current efforts to organize prayer in preparation for the 2020 RNC in Charlotte.
- Pray for our Multipliers in Charlotte and in Pennsylvania as they are starting new Bible Clusters.
- Pray for us as we develop training materials for our Multipliers.
- Pray for the Lord to release "our daily bread" provisions for this season.

## Bible Clusters

READ • TALK • PRAY

Want to help others encounter God through His word? Keep it simple and start a Bible Cluster!

Go to [BibleClusters.org](http://BibleClusters.org) for video training and information.

# OFFICE LABORERS

by Rocky Norkum

Once upon a time, there were two men, Roland and Kris, who loved Jesus and wanted to share the love of Jesus with people who did not know Jesus. So they prayed and asked God for some people to share Jesus with.

They both worked in the same office building and thought that it would be a good place to start, so they prayed for someone who was in need of peace. A few weeks went by and they continued to pray. One day, Kris was in a passing, office conversation with a co-worker, Mike, who briefly mentioned some trouble his son got into at school. Kris quickly responded, "I'm sorry to hear about that. I know that it can be a nightmare for you and your wife as you try to navigate this with your son. If you don't mind, I would like to pray for God to bring peace to your family." Mike said, "Thanks, I don't mind."

Before they parted, Kris asked politely, "Roland and I like to get together from time to time for lunch to read a small portion of the Bible, see what it says, and then talk about it. We're not scholars, just curious. Would you like to join us sometime?" Mike replied, "That would be fine." "Well, this Friday actually. Join us if you can," said Kris.

The two men prayed continuously for their coworker. On Friday morning while Mike passed his office, Kris sprang from his desk, "Hey Mike. We're meeting for lunch today if you can join us. By the way, how are things going with your son?" Mike answered, "Amazingly, it's working out. And yes, I think I can join you. Where will you be?"

At midday, after they ordered their lunch from an eatery close by their office, Roland and Kris pulled out their Bibles. Roland gave his Bible to Mike already opened to Luke 15 and used



his phone app instead. "What are we going to read?" Mike asked. "Since sons have been on our mind this week, why don't we read a story of a son," Kris said. "I'll read the text aloud, but let us all follow together, and then we'll talk about what it says."

Even though Roland and Kris knew the story well, it was not obvious to Mike. To him, they seemed just as oblivious to the text as he was. The first question, "What do you see?" didn't elicit any responses of theological insight from the men, but basic observations of the scene the text was describing. "Well, I see a father who didn't act like I probably would have," Roland said. "That's right, it's a bit odd, isn't it? I mean at least hold back the party," replied Kris.

Both men could see Mike's brain running as his eyes darted over the Scripture, engaging each word. As he worked for a nugget to contribute, both men rejoiced in their heart that Mike was encountering their Father, and he can no longer be the same. Then Roland and Kris prayed silently.

*Charlotte Awake offers Bible Clusters as an easy way for believers to offer encounters with God through Scripture in their workplace, neighborhood, and anywhere.*



# A LOVING CHURCH

By Dr. David Ingrassia

It is mission critical for the church to possess and display the love of Jesus. Though we may frequently struggle and fight, stumble and fall, we must nonetheless get one thing right — we must be a model showroom for our Lord's love in our relationships with one another in the church.

Jesus said that the defining characteristic of our relationship with Him is that we have love for one another. *“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another”* (John 13:35/ESV).

## WHY LOVE?

Of all the possible success metrics for the church — effective programs, youth events, vibrant worship services, Sunday School attendance, social justice endeavors, or missionary support (to name a few) — our Lord focused on one, and only one, defining element — our love for one another. Love is a deep-seated need that our Creator has put into every heart. We cannot live without it. Every person possesses both a need and desire to know and to be known intimately by another.

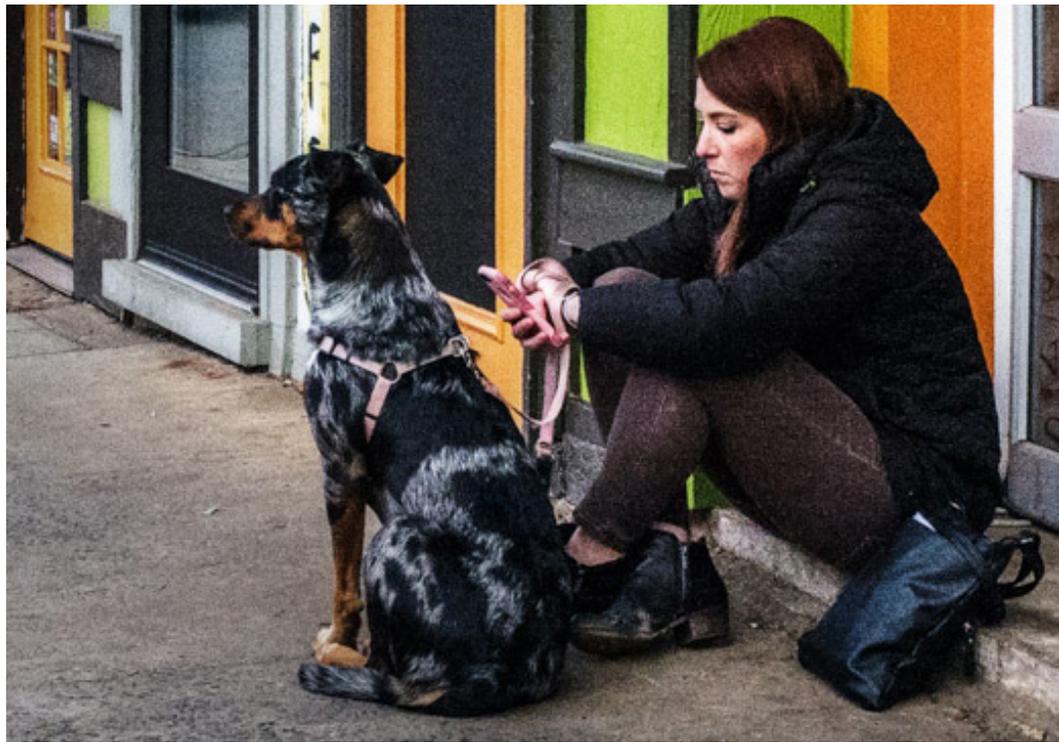
We yearn for intimacy with God, and He has placed that longing within our hearts so deeply that if we do not satisfy it, we will look for love in other places, sometimes to our own destruction. We may cling to inappropriate relationships, surrender to destructive habits and addictions, work day and night, or even take that which is normally good (such as exercise) to an unhealthy endorphin high. We can find ourselves *“looking for love in all the wrong places”* (in the words of a fitting country western song).

We all desire and need God's love and the intimacy that we once had with God

before Adam's sin. As believers, we now once again possess that intimate love because of Jesus. We have what the entire world needs. No wonder that love marks us as His people. The love of God within us becomes such a powerful attraction to the world that the church functions as a kingdom outpost in this world to point the

just once, but daily in the face of rejection, injury, or pain.

Our world offers no equivalent, but many imitations for such love. It is His love in us through Christ that differentiates the church from the world. The stamp of authenticity as followers of Christ is not



way to eternal life.

## NO ORDINARY LOVE

This is an extraordinary love. It is not the love that the world experiences because this love originates in God. The Apostle John writes, *“We love because He first loved us”* (1 John 4:19). God's love binds us eternally to His heart, and so we desire to love Him and to share that love with others. His love is of the highest quality, and there exist no generic substitutions, even though the world offers many imitations. His love makes us willing even to die for others (John 15:13), not

our good deeds, no matter how sincere they might be, but His love.

## THE LOVE OF THE CROSS

The Cross stands as the supreme demonstration of God's love for the world (John 3:16) because there is no greater love than to give up one's life for someone else (John 15:13). It follows necessarily that our words and demonstrations of love to our city can only come through the Cross, not simply through united efforts as the church, but through the finished work of Christ. Our love drives us to address and alleviate the many ills of our city, but without dealing

with the root issue of sin, we fail. “*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*”(Romans 3:23).

The Lord’s love moves us to compassion for our city and brings a desire to address racism, sexism, poverty, homelessness, and all manner of injustices. In love, the church springs into action. The demonstration of God’s love through our united efforts will attract some to Christ, but nonetheless, the cure comes only at the Cross. We must not separate our works of love from the words of the Cross. To do so would be less than loving.



The problem is, the message of the Cross is foolishness and offensive for many (1 Corinthians 1:23; Galatians 5:11). Still, it takes the true love of God on display in the church both to speak and to demonstrate the truth of salvation. No amount of effort will bring lasting transformation to our city, or a single individual life, apart from faith in Jesus Christ alone.

### **WHAT DOES SUCCESSFUL TRANSFORMATION LOOK LIKE?**

Our intent is not to discourage united and loving efforts, but to remind the church that the source of transformation comes only through the Cross. Our actions and

our words are inseparable. We cannot display the true love of Christ if we seek to address the problems of our city apart from the clear proclamation of the gospel. No doctor would send the patient home with a Band-Aid and aspirin when the true diagnosis is cancer. Our efforts apart from our message would be spiritual malpractice.

The importance of this loving approach to the city becomes clear if we ask ourselves what successful city transformation would look like. Imagine if the united efforts of the church brought city transformation

in a single day. If tomorrow we were to awaken in a city that no longer experiences racism, poverty, inequality, or crime, would that be enough? Would our transformation efforts be deemed successful?

Would the alleviation of the effects of sin without treating the root be enough? Would mopping up the waters be enough if we never plugged the hole in the dam? If all those blessings came to our city absent of reconciliation to God through the Cross, would we not have made this life more peaceful and prosperous at the expense of making the next life even

more perilous?

The message of the Cross requires surrendered repentance that comes by faith in Jesus Christ alone. Can citywide prosperity and justice come without addressing the core problem of our moral rebellion against a God whose boundaries and moral standards are often different from our own?

Would citywide transformation necessarily lead to repentance? Will our city be so overwhelmed by goodness that we would be willing to change our moral standards and policies to be in line with God’s righteous standard, or would we attempt to sue for peace with the Almighty on our own moral terms?

God’s love within us causes us to address the manifold and weighty problems in our city. Our motivation to act with united effort is love. Similarly, our motivation to speak the difficult truth of the gospel that concerns sin and salvation in Christ alone is also love.

### **THE BIGGER PROBLEM**

Perhaps more importantly, before addressing the problems of the city, do we need to address the problems in the church? Who has the bigger proverbial log in the eye, the city or the church? We assume our city needs transformation, but has the church first examined itself? Unless the church is healthy, righteous, and loving, we cannot labor without hypocrisy, and love knows no hypocrisy.

It is our nature to assume that we are healthy and that we have spiritual sight. But the most alarming characteristic of spiritual blindness is that we do not know that we are blind, and even more, we believe that we can see. The church at Laodicea believed itself to be prosperous and healthy, when in reality, few if any could hear the Lord standing outside the church knocking on the door (Revelation 3:14-22). So, how can we tell if the church is healthy? How can we tell if we are a proper showroom for His love to the city?

If we possess the Lord's self-sacrificial love, would it not be evident in the prayers within every congregation that seek to address the problems and pains of our city? Given the magnitude of our city's problems, wouldn't such love within us drive us to our knees to plead with God over the souls of hundreds of thousands of people in peril of eternal darkness? Surely, in the name of love we would fight the hounds of hell in travailing prayer that must undergird any and all of our united action on behalf of our city. Would that not be God's love? A healthy church that walks in the Lord's love will

be characterized by deep, pervasive, and lasting congregational prayer. Absent that, our healthy self-diagnosis is mistaken. We are no readier than Israel was to enter the Promised Land on its own terms.

### NEXT STEPS OR FIRST STEP?

Are we planning for next steps after our citywide efforts before we have adequately addressed our first step? As we check for the proverbial log in our own eyes, we must ask the difficult question, "*Are we united in prayer, or just in plans?*"

If not, our first step together is to call the church, not the city, to repentance and to prayer. We must begin at home. And we cannot proceed with any effectiveness until we do.

Our time is perilously short and the drumbeats of spiritual battle are already upon us. Lives hang in the balance for eternity. Our love must be demonstrated in actions, but also in the message of the Cross. Scripture tells us there is no other way than through Jesus and His Cross, which is an offense to many. But, what would love do?

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## CHARLOTTE AWAKE HAPPENINGS

As you might imagine, there are many moving pieces in the Charlotte Awake ministry. Each month we can only give you a snapshot of time, but we will highlight some of the most important happenings, or some of the things that might normally not make it into our communication.

For example, we are excited about our partnership with *GoTandem* and *Back to the Bible* with their latest revision powering the Charlotte Awake APP for your smart phones. To date, we have not publicized our APP because we are currently building content and waiting for a new and more powerful release of the APP engine. Lord willing, we will be able to tell you all about it in next month's Revival Dispatch. When you sign up for our APP, you will receive a powerful tool to help you in your spiritual growth. Not only will you receive Scripture tailored to your spiritual profile, but you will also receive extras from Charlotte Awake. Sometimes it will be a video clip, sometimes an audio recording or teaching, and sometimes a quick summary of an important blog post. For the men's ministry, we will also release Spotify music playlists. We are excited, so please keep this project in prayer. We hope to launch in March, or April at the latest.

In the background, we are building content as explained in this month's Revival Dispatch. The Lord is directing us to develop this content and Bible teaching that will be helpful to you and will speak into the life of our city and beyond. Our goal is to release this content in writing, audio podcasts, and videos. It takes a lot of behind the scenes work and resources to do what the Lord is now directing us to do. Please pray.

We are relaunching the men's ministry that is a citywide outreach to men and young men. Pastor Justin Roper oversees this multigenerational, multicultural ministry. We are praying for specific help to build this ministry and to connect it to area church congregations. We are looking for someone who can coordinate events and activities as well as others who can help with our content development. That will include everything from taking pictures and videos to scouring available online articles and resources that we can, in turn, link through our APP.

Last year, under Alexandra Fisher, we began a ministry among young women. We desire not just to continue this ministry, but to expand it. We're asking the Lord to provide workers for this field.

And then finally, but certainly not the

end, we are working on training materials for our Multipliers. We now have two trainings called, "Multiplier Labs 1 & 2." We are rewriting and improving Multiplier Lab 1, as we are writing the soon-coming Multiplier Lab 2. Part of the challenge is that we desire to produce some of this training material on video, so that face-to-face training can now happen on a single Saturday morning, as opposed to eight weeks of classes.

We will continue to keep you posted. All of these efforts are to help fulfill our goal to help the church reach the next generations through relationally-rich, healthy congregations where disciples make new disciples, leaders train new leaders, and congregations continually plant new congregations.

### *Thank you for your investment in revival*

Every dollar given, every prayer prayed, every sharing of our newsletter and podcast has been an investment in the coming revival in Charlotte. We cannot thank you enough for your faithful support of Charlotte Awake!

To make a donation, please go to  
[CharlotteAwake.com/donate](http://CharlotteAwake.com/donate)

