

## Realign Part 9: An Overview of Practices and Learnings from Our Sermon Series

**Thesis:** Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

**Text:** Philippians 1:27-30; 4:4-9

I want to remind you that the Lord gave us a word for 2021 as a people. **Realign: whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.**

Remember that Pastor Steve began our sermon series with a look at the prophetic landscape for the days in which we live and the days which we are facing. That prophetic context is essential for us. We need the big picture of what God is doing and where God is going. I want to remind you about those messages back in January (Realign [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#)) and to encourage you to remember this prophetic context so that we can live expectant, excited, and prayerful. And, Pastor Steve reminded us of some dangers we face in this journey.

*Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ (Philippians 1:27).*

We need to put on and to develop new capacities for what is coming in our culture. This sermon series is about developing new capacities.

**Today, my goal is to give an overview of our sermon series and highlight some practices that help us to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.**

Let's read Philippians 1:27-30.

*Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel 28 without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. 29 For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, 30 since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have (Philippians 1:27-30 NIV).*

*Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer*

*and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you (Philippians 4:4-9).*

**Our King wants us to align with what he says, with what he does, and with how he feels.**

*Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ (Philippians 1:27).*

To conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ-- no matter what happens, no matter what we face, no matter what we go through, no matter what comes our way-- **calls for steadfastness, unity, courage, and joy, even in the face of opposition and suffering.**

In this sermon series, we are exploring what it means to live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. We are considering what it means to align with the ways of Jesus in this hour of history.

**We want to grow in four capacities of alignment:**

1. **Steadfastness:** *stand firm in one spirit (Philippians 1:27).* (Feb. 7). In that message, we said that if you don't quit, you win. He who endures to the end shall be saved, and God is able to help us to endure and persevere. We are invited to the extreme center with God's ministry and message of reconciliation.
2. **Unity:** *contending as one for the faith of the gospel (Philippians 1:27).* (Feb. 14 and Feb. 21). In those two messages, we talked about how to [show up in a way that promotes unity and expresses humility](#). We also talked about [the skill of differentiation of self](#), where we grow in our capacity to be defined and to stay connected.
3. **Courage:** *without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you (Philippians 1:28).* (Feb. 28). Fear is not supposed to rule our lives. In the face of brokenness, trials, tragedies, trauma, lies, opposition, attack, and evil, we have the capacity to choose courage and faith rather than fear and doubt... with God helping us. One practical way to grow in our capacity for choosing courage is through having frequent transformation conversations. It takes courage to walk in the light with others (1 John 1:7).

4. **Joy:** *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! (Philippians 4:4).* (Mar. 7 and Mar. 14)
  - a. Whatever we go through and whatever we experience, we are a people who choose to respond in joy, to express joy, and to live from the place of joy in Christ.
  - b. We can even choose joy in the face of big emotions that want to knock us off our center in Christ.
  - c. We can practice [ways to increase our joy](#).

**Group identity:** who we are as a people.

1. **Steadfastness:**
  - a. **We are a people who don't give up and who don't give in. We believe that if we don't quit, that we win** (Matthew 24:9-14). (Example: Philippians 4:1.)
  - b. **We are a people who are invited to the extreme center** with God's ministry and message of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 14-21).
2. **Unity:**
  - a. **We are a people who work to show up in a way that promotes unity and expresses humility.**
  - b. **We are a people who work on being defined and staying connected.**
    - i. The skill of differentiation of self is a way to live into unity with one another and to stay connected, even in the midst of diversity.
    - ii. Individuals who have the healthiest relationships embrace and hold in tension two competing realities. They have a clear sense of their own identity. And, our sense of identity does not lead us to isolate ourselves from the world.
    - iii. Well differentiated people define themselves and they stay connected to those who see things differently.
    - iv. **It is fascinating to see how connected Jesus remained to his enemies, the Pharisees.** He continued to engage them in his public ministry, and he even went to their homes to share meals. In other words, he was able to remain both defined and connected.
  - c. **Calvary Community Church wants each of us to be involved as good citizens and in politics as God gives us grace.**
    - i. We want our members praying for our leaders (1 Timothy 2:1-4).
    - ii. We want our members voting values informed by Scripture and directed by Jesus.

- iii. We want to raise up godly men and women to serve as salt and light in the political sphere and to run for political office at the local, state, and federal levels.
- iv. We want to see our government pass laws that promote the common good and which ensure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.
- v. We want to stand up for laws that are a blessing and not a curse; laws that are just, righteous, and true.
- vi. And, we do not believe that we are to spend our emotional and relational capital to get people to vote Republican or Democrat.
  - 1. Yes, vote. Yes, share what you think, feel, and believe. Yes, align with the party platform and with the character of the politicians that best fits your values.
  - 2. But, we do not choose who is our friend or not based on their political party affiliation.
  - 3. We are here to work together to advance the gospel of Christ through both parties.
- vii. And, we want both political parties to be influenced by men and women who are salt and light.
- viii. And, we want to celebrate when both or either political party does well.
- ix. And, we want to speak correction when both or either political party needs to be held accountable.
- x. We want to encourage each member of Calvary to treat others with gentleness and respect when that member shares their views or when other people share their views with us (1 Peter 3:15).
- xi. We want to encourage each member of Calvary to treat others with respect and dignity, whether they agree with you or not.
- xii. We want to encourage each member of Calvary to seek first to listen and to understand, before seeking to be heard and to be understood.
- xiii. We want each member of Calvary to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ when talking about politics, government, business, sports, entertainment, medicine, etc.

3. **Courage:**

- a. **We are a people who live full of courage, faith, and action as followers of Jesus.**
  - i. To walk in a manner of worthy of the gospel of the King, whatever happens, means that we have practiced responding out of courage rather than letting fear control our lives.

- b. **We are a people who practice choosing courage through having frequent transformation conversations.**
    - i. It takes courage to walk in the light with others (1 John 1:7).
  - c. **We are a people who choose courage and faith rather than fear and doubt... with God helping us.**
    - i. Here is good news. We can learn to live and respond to fear like those in the **military**. Soldiers are trained to run toward the noise, confusion, and mayhem of battle, not away from it. They practice responding to threats in courage and action, rather than giving into the instinct of fear.
4. **Joy:**
- a. **We are a people who find joy in being the sparkle in God's eye and in the eyes of others** (2 Corinthians 4:6; Numbers 6:22-26).
    - i. **God designed our brains for joy, and He wants us to live in the glow of His delight. This blessing expresses a joy that can be paraphrased, "May you feel the joy of God's face shining on you because He is happy to be with you!"** (Wilder, Jim; Hendricks, Michel. *The Other Half of Church* (p. 55). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.)
  - b. **Whatever we go through and whatever we experience, we are a people who choose to respond in joy, who choose to express joy, and who choose to live from the place of joy in Christ.**
    - i. We believe that it is possible to experience all that life throws at us, and that we can still access the joy of the Lord in our lives, or that we can quickly return to a place of joy, even in the midst of opposition and suffering.
    - ii. Joy helps us regulate our emotions and endure suffering. Jesus refused to relinquish joy in the midst of His suffering on the cross. When we are able to stay relationally connected to others and God, we experience joy while we suffer. Joy does not remove our pain, but it gives us the strength to endure. Remember that joy is relational, so "joy in suffering" means that God and our community are glad to be with us in our distress. They do not allow us to suffer alone. We are able to bear our suffering like Jesus, "who for the joy set before Him endured the cross" (Hebrews 12:2 NASB). (Wilder, Jim; Hendricks, Michel. *The Other Half of Church* (p. 59). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.)
    - iii. It is important to remember that joy is not strictly an emotion. We might refer to it as a supra-emotion because it can go on top of and connect with other emotions. For example, if I lose my job, this is usually not considered a joyful occasion. Instead, I am probably feeling some combination of sadness, fear, and anger. However, when I experience these unpleasant emotions

- and can simultaneously feel that God is with me, I have added joy into the mix. If I have close friends who are also happy to be with me in my loss, my joy magnifies even more. Now I'm feeling sad and joyful. Fearful and joyful. Angry and joyful. Joy does not replace the unpleasant emotions; instead it combines with my emotions to keep me relationally connected in distress.
- iv. The importance of joy to our brain highlights the fact that we must suffer in community. We were not meant to suffer alone. We need to lean on God and on our people in times of distress. (Wilder, Jim; Hendricks, Michel. [\*The Other Half of Church\*](#) (pp. 60-61). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.)

**We believe that we can grow in our capacity for steadfastness, unity, courage, and joy.**

**Steadfastness:**

1. **Action: Reflect on whether or not your life aligns with steadfastness.**
  - a. Examen:
    - i. Where do you respond to whatever is happening with giving up, giving in, or quitting, instead of remaining steadfast?
    - ii. Where are you resisting being called to the extreme center, if that is where God is calling you to live?
    - iii. Where are you being tempted to stop short and to say, "What's the use?"
    - iv. In what relationships or responsibilities do you need a new dose of resolve and determination?
2. **Look again at Philippians 1:12-26.** Here we can see Paul living into and out of the Lord's vision for his life. Paul's life and testimony are a practical example and model of conducting oneself in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, whatever happens.
  - a. *Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. 13 As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. 14 Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly. 15 It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. 16 The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. 17 The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. 18 But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and*

*I will continue to rejoice, 19 for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. 20 I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. 21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22 If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! 23 I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; 24 but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. 25 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, 26 so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me (Philippians 1:12–26 NIV).*

- b. Think about what NT Wright wrote on Philippians 1:12-26 (NT Wright. Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon).
  - i. There are some people going around talking about King Jesus who, Paul knows, don't really mean it. They don't believe the message; they merely want to make more trouble for him in his imprisonment. Some people have thought that these people were a rival Christian group, opposed to Paul's specific view of the gospel. But I think it's more likely that they are ordinary pagans who have heard what all the fuss is about and are talking about it on the street.
  - ii. 'Have you heard?' they'll be saying to each other. 'They've caught that strange fellow who's been going around saying there's a new king—a new emperor! And you won't believe it—this new king turns out to be a Jew whom they crucified a few years ago, and this jailbird is saying he's alive again and he's the real Lord of the world!'
  - iii. Talk like that would be guaranteed to make people feel that Paul was a dangerous lunatic who should be kept locked up. But Paul's reaction is to celebrate. That's fine by me, he says. As long as people are going around saying that Jesus is the world's true Lord, I shall be happy.
  - iv. Paul is saying all this, obviously, to encourage the church in Philippi. But it ought also to be a great encouragement to us. How often are we tempted to feel discouraged because the plans we had were badly thwarted, or because malicious people were trying to make life difficult. We need to learn from Paul (and, long before, from Joseph) the art of seeing God's purposes working out through problems and difficulties. 'God meant it for

good.' 'The king is being announced, and I'm going to celebrate!'

### Unity:

1. **Action: Reflect on whether or not your life aligns with unity.**
  - a. Examen:
    - i. Where are you seeking to promote unity with other believers even in the face of opposition and suffering?
      1. *As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:1-3).*
    - ii. Where do you respond to whatever is happening with divisiveness, attacking or trying to convince others they are wrong, trying to debate others into your way of understanding the truth, biting and devouring one another, judging others, etc.?
    - iii. In what relationships or responsibilities do you need to express a new dose of humility (teachability; curiosity; be a learner)?
      1. Remember: God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble (1 Peter 5:5).
      2. ... *All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5).*
  2. How are you doing in practicing the skill of differentiation, of individuating and staying connected, even in the midst of anxiety or differing opinions and beliefs?

### Courage:

1. **Action: Grow your awareness and capacity for courage.**
  - a. Examen: **Consider a recent time when you were in a situation that triggered an emotional response.** Write a journal entry in which you describe the experience, and then answer these questions.
    - i. **Pause:** Looking back, how could you have taken a time-out and done what was necessary to calm down (journal, vent, meditate, talk with someone, etc.)?
    - ii. **Identify:** What emotion were you experiencing, and what name would you give it?

- iii. **Wonder:** What caused the emotion, and what was it trying to tell you about yourself and the situation?
  - iv. **Reflect:** Based upon your guiding principles, how would you like to “be” in future situations? What would you like to do differently in the future?
    1. Where else do you see this pattern in your life?
    2. Where else are you showing up in a way that is destructive to yourself or others?
    3. Spend some time wondering about this and asking God to show you the root of it and to give you a vision for a different way.
  - v. **Act:** If you made a mess, describe how you plan to go to those affected and clean it up.
    1. **Acknowledge that you made a mess.**
    2. Ask about the **impact** on the other person(s).
    3. After you have heard the impact and felt the impact, **apologize sincerely.**
    4. **Re-promise:** seek to give your word to show up in the way that you want to and according to your guiding principles. Re-promise to what you gave your word to do, in the manner in which it was meant to be done, and in the time in which it was meant to be done.
- b. **Practice choosing courage through frequent transformation conversations.**
- i. One way to grow our capacity for courage is to engage in **frequent** transformation conversations (1 John 1:7).
  - ii. It takes courage to walk in the light with God and others.
  - iii. Seek to have frequent (2 – 3 times a week) transformation conversations with people who are safe.
  - iv. In some ways, growing in courage is like developing a muscle or skill. It takes intentional effort and consistent practice.
  - v. The process of change: We move from unconscious incompetence (unaware), to conscious incompetence (aware but choosing not to change), to conscious competence (aware and practicing), to unconscious competence (second nature) (The Johari Window).
  - vi. **Transformation conversations** (1 John 1:7).
    1. In a transformation conversation, we are sharing the picture of our **current reality** and **casting vision** for our preferred future.
    2. When we share, we want to be **clear, authentic, and passionate.**

3. When we share regularly, (1) we keep transformation alive in us and (2) we give room to the Holy Spirit to speak to other people. If a person sees that God is at work in you, it gives them hope that God can work in them, too.

**Joy:**

1. **Action: practice growing your capacity for joy and your experience of joy.**
  - a. **Express gratitude to God and others.** (Wilder, Jim; Hendricks, Michel. [\*The Other Half of Church\*](#) (p. 217-218). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.)
    - i. Make journal entries of gratitude moments and reflect on those golden memories.
      1. Write down a memory for which are grateful to the Lord.
      2. Write down what you felt and experienced of the Lord in that moment.
      3. In a quiet place, go back to that memory and relive it.
        - a. What did you feel in your body? Peace? Lightness? Other?
        - b. What might God be communicating to you through the memory and the peace you feel?
    - ii. In addition to practicing gratitude each day, take the time to practice sharing your experiences in our gatherings. When we share our experiences of gratitude with others, we are ramping up joy together.
  - b. **Connect with others eye-to-eye and face-to-face, and practice letting our faces light up with each other.**
    - i. In church.
    - ii. In Bible Study groups.
    - iii. In small groups.
    - iv. In your missional community.
    - v. In your family.
    - vi. With your friends.
    - vii. In other places.
  - c. **Celebrate.**
    - i. **Take the time to celebrate.** It is necessary, right, and good to be aware of progress, to recognize progress in our lives or in the lives of others, and to take time to acknowledge and celebrate progress. Learn to celebrate progress in my life and progress in the lives of others.

1. Where are you making progress? Where are others around you making progress?
  2. Write it down and share with others what you are celebrating in your life and in the lives of others.
- ii. **Grow in your capacity to celebrate.** No matter where you are on your journey, you have something to celebrate. The fact that you are having a Transformation Conversation at all probably represents some amount of progress in your life. Where have you grown in awareness? In what ways has God changed your desires? Where do you feel hopeful instead of resigned and cynical? Where have you experienced breakthrough? Those are reasons to celebrate ([Faithwalking 201.](#))

This message today is an invitation from the Lord. If you feel condemned or shamed, then you are not hearing the voice of the Lord. If you feel challenged and stirred up, that is good.

We need to practice intentionally in order to live into this word for the year-- **Realign:** *whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.*

If we are to embody and express outwardly the good news of King Jesus, it will take awareness (intimacy with God), authenticity (openness and honesty with God and others), and alignment (radical obedience; full partnership with Jesus and others on his mission).

Where we find that we are out of alignment, we walk in the light. We cast vision with clarity, authenticity, and passion. We identify our current reality and declare our preferred future in Christ. We get in action to learn skills and to develop new capacities so that we come into realignment.

**Summary:**

The word for the year for us in 2021 is this: **Realign.** *Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.*

There will be many opportunities and challenges in this year to see where we are in or out of alignment morally or missionally. The Lord wants to help us to realign, we might respond in ways that line up with the good news of our King.