



“The One Necessary Thing”

“For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”—1 Corinthians 3:11

Jesus is the *sine qua non* of our faith, that “one thing that is necessary” for faith without which it is meaningless. Therefore, any discussion of Evana Network’s identity must begin with Jesus and our faith in him as Lord and Savior. This is consistent with Anabaptist understandings. Author Palmer Becker identified the first core value of Anabaptist Christians as “Jesus the center of our faith” in his *What Is an Anabaptist Christian?* and 1 Corinthians 3:11 was a favorite verse of Menno Simons, an early Anabaptist leader.

On a surface level, one would be hard pressed to find many Christians who would disagree with this assertion. But what exactly do we mean by saying that Jesus is the center of our faith?

Above all else, to say that Jesus is the center of our faith is to say membership in Evana is inseparable from a saving relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. No one automatically becomes a member because of their last name or because they were born into a particular church but only through being born again. While each person’s own experience of encountering Jesus may differ due to personality type, culture, etc., there are at least three aspects we hold in common.

1. Repentance of sin. Every one of us has sinned and fallen short of who God intended us to be (Rom. 3:23). When the Holy Spirit convicts of evil we have done

and are capable of doing, the appropriate response is to confess our sins because God “is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Repentance opens us to the Holy Spirit’s work to bring about a transformation of our hearts and lives and forgiveness of our sins through Jesus’ blood shed on the cross (Eph. 1:7). Repentance also differs from mere acceptance as the standard for being included in the body of Christ because the latter does not challenge us to become more Christ-like or acknowledge how our own fleshly desires are often at war with the desires of the Spirit (Gal. 5:17).



2. Affirmation from God. If our first impulse in the presence of God involves a heightened awareness of our own unworthiness like Moses or Isaiah (Ex. 3:6; Isa. 6:5), the fact that Jesus gave up everything to die for our sake (John 3:16; Rom. 5:6-11) provides an affirmation of each person’s worth and value. To believe Jesus died for our sins is a more

powerful validation than human acceptance can ever provide. Jesus laid down his life for us, teaches us what love is, and calls us to in turn lay down our rights and our lives for others (1 John 3:16). Much more than just an abstract concept or an intellectual belief, we enter into a real relationship with Jesus, abiding in him as he abides in us (John 15:1-11).

3. Fruitful obedience. As we abide in Jesus, our hearts and desires increasingly become more like his. When we abide in Jesus, the Holy Spirit empowers us (*cont.*)

The Book Pile: What We’re Reading

There is a growing sense the American church has not seen the deep transformation among Christ-followers as previously thought. The shift brought by political division, a global pandemic and economic upheaval has revealed whether we live by the fruit of the Spirit. While transformation cannot come purely from reading books and “thinking our way” into spiritual and relational health, such resources can point to Spirit-led change.

Just as spiritual ancestors read stories of martyrs and early church fathers for inspiration and encouragement, the testimonies of a consistent Gospel witness are a valued resource. Philip Yancey’s memoir *Where the Light Fell* is a difficult read but provides a crucial backdrop

to his constant emphasis on grace. His fundamentalist Baptist upbringing, church-blessed racism, family mental health trials and more creates high relief to the surprising ways God has moved in his life. Whether your journey of following Jesus just began or has been a long arc of faithfulness, Yancey’s memoir helps grow a deeper appreciation for God’s unfailing love.

Winn Collier’s authorized biography of The Message author Eugene Peterson, *A Burning In My Bones* gives a vivid retelling of how place and experience shaped him into the pastor scholar of lay people. Peterson’s text *Under the Unpredictable Plant* transformed my own experience of pastoring, and this memoir (*cont.*)



"And I will make them and the places around my hill a blessing, and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing." Ezekiel 34:26

Dear friends of Evana,

As Evana board members, we believe the Network is entering into an exciting season. Over the past seven years, Evana Network has grown to our current size while offering support and resources to pastors and congregations. Now, we are entering a new season of increased growth and kingdom impact as we respond to an increasing number of pastors and congregations expressing interest in joining us.

While we respond to the additional conversations and the resulting travel demands, we will continue to equip members with Huddles, our annual Flourish leadership retreat, and other direct support. We remain committed to connecting congregations and inviting people to follow Jesus at our biennial ReGen gatherings. Evana has a wonderful support team in our executive director, staff and regional pastors, all with a passion for discipleship and evangelism through Kingdom work that transforms communities.

Evana Network is ready for this new season, and we invite you to partner with us through gifts and resources. God has given a clear mission, answered prayers, and continues to move in surprising and powerful ways. For this future work, we are raising \$200,000 by the end of 2022 to help cover the additional expenses and bridge the gap in the current budget as we cultivate more partners. We invite you to pray and contribute towards this goal so we can continue our important work.

Financial gifts of any size are appreciated. You may mail your gift to Evana Network, PO Box 33, Millersburg, IN 46543 or click on the "Donate" button at the top right of our website (www.evananetwork.org). If you don't have extra funds to give, you may consider a unique avenue, such as making Amazon purchases through <http://smile.amazon.com> and designating Evana Network as your charitable organization. This does not incur additional costs and Amazon donates a percentage of your purchase. Other ideas include hosting a fundraiser or skipping a meal to fast and pray for the network and donating the money you would have spent.

This is an exciting new season for us and we can't wait to see what God is going to do. Thank you for investing in Evana Network's future and in God's Kingdom work!

Evana Board Members:

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| <i>Terry Diener (chair)</i> | <i>Steve Nelson (vice chair)</i> |
| <i>Caleb Kaye</i> | <i>Sarah Schlegel</i> |
| <i>Marketo Michel</i> | <i>Rex Broad</i> |

The Book Pile (cont.)

helped me understand how he could speak so clearly about the daily miracles and mundaneness of ministry. A butcher's son, Montana native Peterson returns over and over to the sacredness of everyday, retelling how God made Himself known to him through colorful characters, rugged landscapes and everyday situations.

John Mark Comer's 2019's *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry: How to Stay Emotionally Healthy and Spiritually Alive in the Chaos of the Modern World* placed him on the radar of those desiring a different pace of living. Founder of Bridgetown Church in Portland, OR, Comer has wrestled with living out an authentic and orthodox Christianity in a primarily secular pagan society. His more recent work, *Live No Lies: Recognize and Resist the Three Enemies That Sabotage Your Peace*, explores how our conflict with the Devil, Flesh and World is at the center of faithful discipleship. While exploring early church writings, Comer discovered the lies we believe are primary roadblocks to living a faithful Christ-honoring life. This book makes for a great small group or Sunday School study material and can be purchased with a video and small group discussion add-on.

- Tyler Hartford, Director of Church Leadership

The One Necessary Thing (cont.)

to keep the Father's commandments and be obedient to Jesus' teachings. "And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments" (1 John 2:3). If we have truly experienced God's love, we will also see God's love in our love of neighbors, even enemies (1 John 4:20-21).

Jesus' claim to be the only way to the Father scandalizes many with its exclusivity. However, we believe Jesus is the center of our Faith, and that a saving relationship in Jesus Christ is a prerequisite to be part of the body of Christ (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). And while this common experience of being born again might not automatically bring us into agreement on all issues, it remains the common foundation which makes meaningful mutual discernment in the church a possibility.

To abide in Jesus is a deeper knowing than just knowing about Jesus. Jesus was a great moral and ethical teacher, but he was also so much more—servant, king, shepherd, friend, lord, savior, and the foundation of our faith. That is what we mean when we say that Jesus is the center of our faith.

- Matt Hamsher, Executive Director