



## Chi and the Rhythm of Life with God

This column is brought to you by the Greek letter *chi*.

Chi is the easiest letter in the Greek alphabet to recognize because it looks just like an X. It is also the first letter in the Greek spelling for Christ. As such, X is used as an abbreviation for Christ. Who knew all of those Xmas tree lots were operated by Greek scholars?

Chi is also the image I use to remind myself of the essential rhythm of life with God.

Look at its construction: X. It is comprised of a top half, which narrows to a single point, and a bottom half, which broadens out from that single point. That tapering and expanding models the flow of God's love to us and from us.

The narrowing top half is a reminder that all of the love and grace that exist in the heart of the God of the entire universe focus right down to each one of us. In loving the whole world, God loves each of us in particular.

The incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus tells us that God is not distant, unknowable, impersonal. As Will Willimon says, "God is not vague and indistinct, aloof and indiscernible. God has a face, a name, a certain way of talking and living, and dying, and rising."

I visited a mobile medical and dental clinic the Covenant sponsors in Detroit, providing care for the poor. Several volunteers were wearing "two-word story" t-shirts. The first word appeared with a question mark. The second was the same word but presented as the answer. Accepted? Accepted. Peace? Peace. Purpose? Purpose. Hope? Hope. (Go to [2wordstory.com](http://2wordstory.com) for more examples.) Two usages of the same word communicate yearning before faith in God (the question) and the affirmation that God meets the deep longing.

What is your two-word story? Jesus hears the longings of our heart, and walks with us as a companion all the moments of our life.

The top half of the chi reminds us that *in* all the world, God finds us. The bottom half reminds us that *to* all the world we are sent. God's heart finds us. From that nexus, we follow God's heart to others.

Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

God already has in mind the difference we are to make in the world. We just need to live into it.

How? As others have noted, our best contribution, our calling so to speak, is at the intersection of our gifts and the world's needs. We look at what we are good at and passionate about, then find where that intersects with needs around us.

The needs can seem so vast that we conclude, what's the use? Just because we can't do everything doesn't mean we don't do something. We contribute to making a difference in the world when we make a world of difference right where we are.

Let me prove it with a simple test. Think back just one year to answer these three questions: In 2010, who won the Nobel Peace Prize? Academy Award for best actor? Major Soccer League championship?\*

These are not second-rate accomplishments. These are the best in their field. Yet virtually everyone misses these questions. The applause dies down and the awards tarnish.

Now answer these three questions: Who has helped you through a tough circumstance? Who has taught you an important life lesson? Who makes you feel special and appreciated?

Virtually everyone passes this part of the test with a perfect score. Why? Those contributions make a world of difference to us. We in turn make a world of difference when we have the eyes to see how our gifts intersect with the needs around us.

What is true about the letter chi for our personal faith is true for our collective life as well. The irreducible identity of the Evangelical Covenant Church is that of missional Pietists. Pietism is the historic movement out of which we were born, emphasizing cultivating a deeply personal faith. But far from a privatism, we underscore the importance of following the heart of God into the world. We covenant together to live with God and for God. Together, we commit to going deeper in Christ and further in mission. It is the essential life-giving rhythm for our own lives, and for this movement.

Yes, I know it is only October. But Merry Xmas anyway. ■

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\*Liu Xiaobo of China, Jeff Bridges, Colorado Rapids.

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