

LESSON 10: *Foundation Stones – Evangelism*

Because the Arctic region of North America between Alaska and Greenland is dominated by vast, level plains of tundra there are few natural landmarks. For this reason, over many years the native peoples in these areas have used stone landmarks for navigation, as a point of reference, or as a marker for food caches. They are called Inukshuk, and many are built in the shape of a man to indicate that "someone has passed this way before."

In the book of Joshua, a similar monument was erected when the children of Israel crossed over the Jordan River into their Promised Land, because God wanted them to remember the heritage their forefathers had given them, and know that "someone has passed this way before."

"When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones? Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land" (Joshua 4:21-22).

In the New Testament Church, we also have been given a great heritage, passed on to us by faithful men and women who left us a firm foundation. We can never forget where we have come from, or we will never be able to get where God wants us to go! Twenty-first century Christians need to know without doubt that the things we believe are not just man's idea, but are absolute foundational truth from God's Word.

"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Ephesians 2:20).

There was a church just like ours in the book of Acts that had all the other foundation stones firmly in place. They were well known for their purity of doctrine and the depth of their experience with God, among all the other churches of their day. In fact, they were the

original church in the book of Acts! However, that was not enough! And when the Jerusalem church overlooked the foundation stone of "evangelism," the Lord placed His blessing and favour on a different group of people. No matter what, we can't let the same thing happen to us!

There is absolutely nothing more important to God than a soul. In fact, the Bible tells us that a soul is worth more than the entire world ...

"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26).

That is why the most important role of every Christian is evangelism – sharing the good news of the gospel with everyone around us. Winning souls is the primary purpose of every believer and it is the primary reason for the church to exist. If we are not personally involved in winning souls, we are not doing the will of God – and He is not pleased!

"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise" (Proverbs 11:30).

"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Daniel 12:3).

There is a great reward in Heaven for soul winners, because evangelism is the last and most important command Jesus gave to His disciples ...

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

In fact, the entire reason you were given the Holy Ghost is not just so your life would be blessed, or just so you would be able to live above sin – the Holy Ghost was given to you to make you a powerful witness.

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy

Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Look at this next verse and you will see the problem that happened in the Jerusalem church – they overlooked one of God’s foundation stones!

“And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7).

The church was promised power in Acts 1:8. But the narrative contained between Acts 1:8 and Acts 6:7 covers a period of about ten years. During this time, the Jerusalem church was blessed with divine visitation, miracles of healing and holy boldness – and they grew in spite of persecution, opposition, and even internal disputes.

Their growth rate is impressive by any standard – 3000 people in Acts 2:41, 5000 men in Acts 4:4, multitudes of men and women in Acts 5:14, and even a great company of Jewish priests in Acts 6:7. But it all happened inside Jerusalem!

Jerusalem certainly enjoyed the rich blessings of the Lord during the church’s first decade, and many souls within her walls did come to salvation during that span of time. But what about the 99.9% of people in the world of their day who did not live in that one city? And what about the other cultures that God specifically told them to reach?

In many of our conferences, campmeetings, conventions and church services, the attention is centered on our “Jerusalem” – that it may grow and prosper so that it may continue to minister to us! We have “received power” (the first promise of Acts 1:8) but we have not “become witnesses” (the second promise of Acts 1:8). And the second promise is more significant than the first, because the real test of any visitation of God is whether it results in

evangelism.

The Jerusalem church started out in obedience to Acts 1:8, but stopped too soon. They wanted to reach out in Jerusalem – among their own kind – but they did not really want to go to the ends of the earth, or even to Samaria for that matter! They needed a complete reversal in its thinking. They wanted God to “restore again the kingdom to Israel” (Acts 1:6) so they could sit in Jerusalem and have the nations come to them, but Jesus wanted them to leave their comfort zone!

“And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled” (Luke 14:23).

Statistics show a nearly universal trend for Christians to disconnect from unsaved people the longer they are around the church. But that’s not the way the Jesus or Paul did it! They were not isolationists; they were compelled to impact their culture with the gospel.

“The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children” (Matthew 11:19).

“To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you” (1 Corinthians 9:22-23).

But so what if the church holds these faulty concepts? So what if we are not as evangelistic as we should be? So what if we tend to have “church for the church” because it is more familiar and comfortable?

The troubling answer is found by contrasting Acts 1:8 with Acts 8:1 ...

“And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution

against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles” (Acts 8:1).

The ten-year “honeymoon” was shattered with the martyrdom of Stephen and the intense persecution led by Saul of Tarsus – suddenly, disciples were being scattered everywhere. But while things grew worse in Jerusalem, great things were beginning to happen in Judea and even in Samaria. In one swift act of persecution, God had forced obedience on His church and compelled them to mobilize. Stephen’s death probably resulted in more obedience to the Great Commission than any other single event in the history of the early church, and was even a major factor in the conversion of Paul.

The message here is both awesome and fearful – God loves lost people so much that He will allow anything to happen in order to reach them. God is not primarily committed to successful ministries or even great churches; He is committed to the Great Commission. If we will not “Go” then God only has two alternatives to move us from our “comfort zone” –

- Persecution, to drive us out, or
- Substitution, to find someone else who will go willingly!

When the Jerusalem church continued to resist, God eventually switched from persecution to substitution. Here is the firsthand account:

“Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord” (Acts 11:19-21).

Antioch was a predominantly Gentile city, and it is inconceivable that the Christians who ended up preaching there should ignore all but a miniscule minority of Jews, assuming that they were the only ones God wanted to save. But that is exactly what they did, because their vision was limited only to the religious culture they already identified with. Thank God there was a second group (from Cyprus and Cyrene, not Jerusalem) that followed the will of God and targeted their efforts to reach the Greek majority of Antioch’s population – and the hand of the Lord was with them!

This was a moment of destiny, when the church at Antioch was born. It was not just a few transplants from the Jerusalem Jewish subculture, but some sinfully irreverent, biblically illiterate Gentiles who came to know God. This moment is why the Apostolics would soon be known as those who “turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6) in the first century; this moment is why there is a church at all in the twenty-first century.

Jerusalem never did know how to deal with revolutionary revivalists like the Apostle Paul, who continually jumped fences, ignored protocol, and broke tradition to win the lost. That’s why they sent him back to Tarsus to “cool off” when he first appeared in Jerusalem with wild tales of a life- changing encounter with God and wild ideas about evangelizing those pagan Gentiles. And that’s why Jerusalem never got to send out history’s greatest missionary – instead, that honour fell to the church in Antioch because they had a missionary heart.

Most churches just want to touch their Jerusalem and leave it at that. The Jerusalem church was richly blessed and doctrinally sound, but God still turned His attention to Antioch because Jerusalem overlooked one of God’s foundation stones – they would not embrace His command to witness to the world!

Jerusalem held on to their resources and blessings, but Antioch accepted that God had

the right to demand of them anything or anyone He wanted to use. They accepted that the Great Commission was at the very TOP of the Lord's priority list. Today, Great Commission churches continue to defy the status quo. No matter what they achieve they never feel like they have arrived, because there is always one more soul just beyond their borders that needs to hear about Jesus Christ.

"Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" (Acts 11:25-26).

There are really only two New Testament church models, the Jerusalem Church and the Antioch Church. We have to be one or the other – and the choice is ours. The Antioch church was full of risk-takers, change- agents, and radical revivalists. They reached for everyone and anyone.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16).

Every person is either a missionary or a mission field!

"And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19).

If you are fishing, then you are not following!

What We Believe About Evangelism:

1. Evangelism should be personality- oriented. Christians are to be good news before they share the good news.

There are many different styles of evangelism:

- Confrontational Style – Peter in Acts 2
- Intellectual Style – Paul in Acts 17
- Testimonial Style – Blind Man in John 9
- Interpersonal Style – Matthew in Luke 5

- Invitational Style – Woman at the Well in John 4
- Serving Style – Dorcas in Acts 9

2. Evangelism should be people-oriented.

An evangelistic "event" tends to rush people, but an evangelistic "process" is patient with people.

3. Evangelism should be team-oriented.

A person's coming to God is like a chain with many links; we don't have to be every link, just one link!

4. Evangelism should be eternity-oriented.

If one soul is worth more than the entire world, then any person we meet is incredibly valuable to God.

"Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Colossians 4:5-6).

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:" (1 Peter 3:15).

"Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:37-38).

Do you know what Jesus did immediately after He asked His disciples to "pray for labourers"? He sent THEM out to be labourers! (Matthew 10:5).

"Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me" (Isaiah 6:8).

LESSON 11:

Lost – Part 1

“Lost and Afraid”

“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).

“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:” (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Sometimes we feel stranded and alone, and we desperately hope that someone will come and rescue us. Sometimes we deal with anger, wondering why God lets bad stuff happen in our lives. Sometimes we are ashamed of the things we've done, and we're not sure if forgiveness is even possible. We feel lost ... and being “lost” in any way is our deepest fear.

We use the word “lost” as a verb in a thousand casual ways every day – he lost his keys, she lost her job, he lost his wife, she lost her temper, they lost the game, we lost the contract. But we more commonly use it as an adjective, to describe what it means and how it feels to be lost ...

- Unable to find the way – a lost child.
- No longer under someone's care – a lost pen.
- Wasted – lost youth.
- No longer practiced – a lost art.
- Beyond reach – a lost expedition.
- Squandered – a lost opportunity.
- Not likely to win – a lost battle
- Distracted – lost in thought.
- Bewildered – I'm lost.
- *Beyond redemption – a lost soul.*

Does that last definition haunt you? It should ... because either you are lost, or you know someone who is. Not lost on an island, but for eternity.

Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. That was His mission; he talked about it constantly. In Luke 15, he even told a trilogy of stories about a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son ... just so people could grasp how eternally important this is.

“What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance” (Luke 15:4-7).

Do you know why these stories were told? Because a group of religious people were upset that Jesus was trying to relate to sinners! They were not concerned that others were lost, only that they were no longer the center of Jesus' attention.

“And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them” (Luke 15:2).

There are many verses in the Bible comparing humanity to sheep ...

- 2 Chronicles 18:16 – sheep that have no shepherd
- Psalm 23:1 – the Lord is my shepherd
- Psalm 100:3 – we are the sheep of his pasture
- Isaiah 40:11 – he shall feed his flock like a shepherd
- Isaiah 53:6 – all we like sheep have gone astray
- Jeremiah 23:1 – woe to those who scatter the sheep
- Ezekiel 34:5 – sheep scattered because there is no shepherd
- Ezekiel 34:6 – sheep wandered through all the mountains
- Ezekiel 34:11 – I will search for my sheep and seek them out

“But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd” (Matthew 9:36).

“I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep” (John 10:11).

“For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls” (1 Peter 2:25).

Sheep have the habit of getting lost, but they never seem to be able to find their way back home – just like us. They have to be sought, found and brought back time after time – just like us. They are pitiful when they are lost, because they cannot really defend themselves – just like us. And they are afraid – just like us. We all fear something ... failure, death, embarrassment, the problems of the future, the shame of the past, the opinions of others, whatever. We are lost ... and we are afraid ...

Jesus’ story should haunt you ... because either you are lost, or you know someone who is. Not lost on an island, but lost for eternity.

Quite often, and for a variety of reasons, churches become like a sheepfold ... a place that is comfortable, familiar, and safe. In fact, we come to believe that this is the sum total of the shepherd’s job ... to keep us comfortable, meet our needs, and protect us from any and all harm.

But what we have not taken into account is the heart of a shepherd! The same compassion that drove him to rescue US still drives him to rescue others. His attention is constantly distracted by the shrill cries for help from those that are still lost. The sheep in the fold may be unhappy with this preoccupation, but they will never change it. In fact, if your pastor seems to constantly focus on reaching the lost, to the near exclusion of babysitting the saved, you should thank God – because he has the real heart of a shepherd!

Lost people matter to God, and they must matter to us!

“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves” (Matthew 10:16).

Can you imagine how uncomfortable a sheep would be in the midst of wolves? But that’s exactly where Jesus sends His church – out into the world to reach for those who are lost! It’s not familiar, it’s not comfortable, and it’s definitely not safe ... but it is the Great Commission!

“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

“Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you” (John 20:21).

It was Jesus who told us to leave the ninety-nine and look for the one. It was Jesus who said to keep looking until we find them. It was Jesus who said that one sinner repenting causes more excitement in Heaven than all our great services, conferences and campmeetings put together.

Are you lost? No sense of direction. No familiar landmarks. You don’t know how to get home, because you don’t know where you are. A map serves little help if you do not know the starting point. You can look at a map and see where you think you are and where you want to go, but until you know where you are, you will not be able to get where you need to go. The good news is that the starting point is repentance.

Are you afraid? Jesus’ most common command was “Fear Not!” Why? Because as you begin your journey home you’ll find real peace.

LESSON 12:
Lost – Part 2
“Lost and Alone”

“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).

“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:” (2 Corinthians 4:4).

We use the word “lost” as a verb in a thousand casual ways every day – he lost his keys, she lost her job, he lost his wife, she lost her temper, they lost the game, we lost the contract. But we more commonly use it as an adjective, to describe what it means and how it feels to be lost ...

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Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. That was His mission; he talked about it constantly. In Luke 15, he even told a trilogy of stories about a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son ... just so people could grasp how eternally important this is.

“Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth” (Luke 15:8-10).

We have already talked about the lost sheep ... an animal lost because of its wandering, lost because of its own foolishness. Lost because it followed its appetite and went astray, lost because it nibbled its way further and further from the shepherd. Lost because it thought the grass was greener in another pasture. The sheep had absolutely no idea just how lost it was until it was too late, and then it became afraid. But the one good thing about the sheep is that it began to cry out, and the shepherd was able to leave the ninety and nine and eventually find it.

At least that dumb sheep had the intelligence to know it was lost.

We want to talk about the second of Jesus’ parables – the lost coin. Just like the parable of a sheep wandering from the sheepfold would resonate with the people of Jesus’ day, this story also had great significance and impact. When a Jewish girl married, she was given a headband (“semedi”) of ten silver coins to signify that she was now a wife. It was the ancient version of our modern wedding ring, and it would be considered a calamity for her to lose one of those coins. The windows in ancient homes were small so it was quite dark inside. That’s why she had to light a lamp and search until she found the lost coin, and that’s why there was such great joy when she located it. Let’s look closely ...

The coin was valuable to its owner.

Coins in ancient times bore the image of the ruler (Luke 20:24), much like today. Every sinner was created in the image of God, but that image has been “lost” due to sin. When the coin slipped out of the woman’s possession, it had no value because the owner had no control over it.

“Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity” (2 Timothy 2:19).

The coin was lost because of carelessness.

The woman was obviously not paying enough attention to this treasured heirloom, because she lost it in the dirt floor of the house. It would have been very difficult to find in the dim light. She was simply too careless!

“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip ... How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation ...” (Hebrews 2:1, 3a).

The coin was lost in the house.

The coin was not lost in the wilderness (like the sheep), but lost even though very close at hand. Although it was “in the house” it was buried in the dirt! Although it was “in the house” it lay dormant. Although it was “in the house” *it was not in the owner’s possession*. The bridal dowry was incomplete and lacking without it. The coin had the same appearance as the other nine, but it was not in its proper place so it was *lost*.

“He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:28-31).

The coin was found by diligent searching.

The woman was not content to just have nine coins out of ten. Ten is the number of *responsibility* in Scripture (the Ten Commandments, the ten virgins, the ten pounds, etc.) – she had to have the desire to search for what she had lost! She lit a lamp (Psalm 119:130), *because light is needed to discover that which is lost*. And she swept the

dirt floor with a broom, because she needed to *disturb the dirt* to find the coin!

“Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you” (Hosea 10:12).

“Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands” (2 Timothy 1:6).

“And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13).

As long as the coin was lost, it was alone.

There is no place lonelier than being around the church without being part of the church. To be lost means to be “out of place” – that’s how we feel when our external religion does not match our internal reality. Sheep and coins and sons were not meant to be lost and alone – they were meant to be part of a sheepfold, a dowry, and a family that is much bigger than them. Otherwise, their purpose remains unfulfilled.

Are you lost? No sense of direction. No familiar landmarks. You don’t know how to get home, because you don’t know where you are. A map serves little help if you do not know the starting point. You can look at a map and see where you think you are and where you want to go, but until you know where you are, you will not be able to get where you need to go. The good news is that the starting point is repentance.

“Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD. Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens” (Lamentations 3:40-41).

It’s not enough for you to go through the motions. Lift up your heart with your hands! Seek the Lord diligently, passionately, regularly!

“Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the

wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:6-7).

God ... and God’s family ... are waiting to welcome you back!

LESSON 13:
Lost – Part 3
“Lost and Found”

“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).

“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:” (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. That was His mission; he talked about it constantly. Luke 15 is the Bible’s lost and found department, in which Jesus tells a trilogy of stories about a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son. The final story is the longest, the most eloquent and the most moving ... because this time, it involves a son ... he could be any one of us ... in fact, he is every one of us ...

“Then he said, “There was once a man who had two sons. The younger said to his father, ‘Father, I want right now what’s coming to me.’ “So the father divided the property between them. It wasn’t long before the younger son packed his bags and left for a distant country. There, undisciplined and dissipated, he wasted everything he had. After he had gone through all his money, there was a bad famine all through that country and he began to hurt. He signed on with a citizen there who assigned him to his fields to slop the pigs. He was so hungry he would have eaten the corncobs in the pig slop, but no one would give him any” (Luke 15:11-16 - MSG).

According to Jewish law, an elder son received twice as much as the other sons (Deuteronomy 21:17), and a father could

distribute his wealth during his lifetime if he wished. It was perfectly legal for the younger son to ask for his share of the estate and even to sell it, but it was as though he were saying to his father, “I wish you were already dead.”

For us, the distant country is not necessarily a place to which we travel; it exists first and foremost as a place within our heart. Before sin is ever a deed against God, it is always first a distance from God.

“Listen! The Lord is not too weak to save you, and he is not becoming deaf. He can hear you when you call. But there is a problem—your sins have cut you off from God. Because of your sin, he has turned away and will not listen anymore” (Isaiah 59:1-2 - NLT).

The word “prodigal” means “wasteful.” Once the son left the restraint of his father, he became reckless. But life in the distant country was not at all what he expected. While he had money, he had friends. But when his resources were gone, so were they! He joined (“glued”) himself to a citizen who sent him to feed pigs – the lowest humiliation for a Jewish boy! This is what sin does: it promises freedom, but only brings slavery; it promises success, but only brings failure; it promises life, but “the wages of sin is death!” (Romans 6:23)

“Jesus said, I tell you most solemnly that anyone who chooses a life of sin is trapped in a dead-end life and is, in fact, a slave. A slave is a transient, who can’t come and go at will. The Son, though, has an established position, the run of the house. So if the Son sets you free, you are free through and through” (John 8:34-36 - MSG).

LESSON 14:
Contagious Christianity Part 1

The Anthropic Principle

- Raise or lower the universe’s rate of expansion by even one part in a million,

and it would have ruled out the possibility of life.

- If the average distance between stars were any greater, planets like earth would not have been formed; any smaller, the planetary orbits necessary for life would not have occurred.
- If the ratio of carbon to oxygen had been slightly different than it is, none of us would have been here to breathe the air.
- Change the tilt of the earth's axis slightly in one direction, and we would freeze. Change it the other direction, and we'd burn up.
- If the earth had been a bit closer or further from the sun, or just a little larger or smaller, or rotating at a slightly different speed, the resulting temperature variations would be completely fatal.
- Someone went to a lot of effort to make things just right so we could be here to enjoy life.
- Modern science points to the fact that we must really matter to God.

A Principle From Business

- "A Customer Revolution" – Tom Peters, in his book *Thriving On Chaos*
- "The Upside-Down Pyramid" – Ken Blanchard, in his book *The One-Minute Manager*
- Businesses, if they're going to be successful for the long haul, must pull their attention off of themselves and refocus their energies on their only reason for existence – to serve their customers!
- Traditional Corporate Pyramid vs. the New Corporate Pyramid
- Businesses must develop a "customer obsession."
- Don't rebuke them for stating the obvious – have you ever been in a situation where this advice was sorely needed?
- Modern science teaches us that people matter to God.
- Modern business teaches us that they'd better matter to us, too.

The problems and solutions of the business world have close cousins within the Christian community. We can get so easily entangled and ensnared in the internal issues, questions and personal situations in our church that it's hard to remember that the primary reason we remain on this planet is to reach the people "out there." (We can worship, live holy, etc. in heaven – but we can't witness!)

We quickly forget how much people matter to God, and we fall prey to making "armchair assessments" of who God has use for and who He doesn't. That list almost never includes the people who aren't part of our church!

This is dangerous, for if these people don't matter much, then we don't need to get all worked up about reaching them, right? Wrong!

This is an age-old issue, for the same attitude surfaces in various places throughout the Bible. One day while Jesus was teaching, the religious leaders began complaining about Him hanging out with the "undesirables." It bothered Jesus so much that He told 3 powerful stories ...

A Lesson From Scripture

Three parables in Luke 15:

- A shepherd with a lost sheep
- A woman with a lost coin
- A father with a lost son

This is the only time that Jesus told three parables in a row – this was very important to Him!

Essential elements in Luke 15:

- Something of great value winds up missing
- That which is missing is important enough to warrant an all-out search
- The retrieval of the lost results in a great celebration

"In the same way, there is joy in the presence of God's angels when even one sinner repents" (Luke 15:10, NLT).

You never look eyes with another human being who is not valuable to God!

Relational Evangelism

- Negative: Obnoxious, Pushy, Insensitive
- Positive: Outgoing, Bold, Extroverted
- We need to get past our negative stereotypes of evangelism, which prevent us from becoming contagious Christians.
- But we also need to get past our positive stereotypes of evangelism, because there are many people who would not relate to this kind of person, but they would relate to us!
- We do not have to become something odd that we do not want to be.
- Nor do we have to become something great that we may never be.
- Rather, we can be ourselves!

Relational Evangelism is ...

1. Authentic

- “Christians are to be good news before they share the good news.” - Joe Aldrich, in his book *Lifestyle Evangelism*

2. Natural

- Relational Evangelism reflects our own personality, putting others at ease and letting them know that what we have is real.

3. Personal

- People today have grown immune to most of the “impersonal methods” of communication, but they are still open to talking with a personal friend.

4. Verbal

- “And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?” (Romans 10:14)
- Just as words without actions are empty, so are actions without words.
- We have to live and explain the gospel.

5. Process-oriented

- Event-oriented evangelism often has to rush and push people.
- Process-oriented evangelism patiently brings people along step-by-step.

6. Team-oriented

- A person’s coming to Christ is like a chain with many links.
- We do not have to feel that we individually carry the full burden of evangelism. God has not called us to only be the last link, just to be a link.
- We need to intentionally become partners with other Christians, linking our strengths and abilities in order to lead people to Christ.

7. Putting others first

- Deferring to their interests, hobbies, schedules and openness.
- Listening to their opinions before giving ours.
- Taking an interest in their backgrounds, stories, questions, doubts and frustrations.
- Asking them about themselves, what they like or dislike, believe or disbelieve, value or do not value.
- Really listening to them and being interested in what makes them who they are.
- Putting them first earns us the right to talk about our own interests, which eventually would include our spiritual interests.
- People are hungry to be in a relationship with someone who really cares about them.

LESSON 15:

Contagious Christianity Part 2

Review

- A person’s coming to Christ is like a chain with many links.
- We do not have to feel that we individually carry the full burden of evangelism. God has not called us to only be the last link, just to be a link.
- We need to intentionally become partners with other Christians, linking our strengths and abilities in order to lead people to Christ.

An Equation For Evangelism

- $HP + CP + CC = MI$
- HP = High Potency

- CP = Close Proximity
- CC = Clear Communication
- MI = Maximum Impact

“You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it useful again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless. You are the light of the world—like a city on a mountain, glowing in the night for all to see. Don’t hide your light under a basket! Instead, put it on a stand and let it shine for all. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father” (Matthew 5:13-16).

What Does Salt Do?

- It makes us thirsty
- It enhances food by adding flavor
- It can be used to preserve food
- Which meaning did Jesus have in mind? We don’t know!
- Most of all, salt must have high potency and be in close proximity to have an effect
- Both components are necessary if we want to be the “salt of the earth” and have a spiritual impact on our friends!

High Potency Christians

High potency Christians have three essential traits:

- Authenticity
- Compassion
- Sacrifice

Authenticity

- What qualities in other people bother you the most? Top answer in most groups is dishonesty (two-faced).
- What qualities in other people do you find most attractive? Top answer is usually honesty (authentic).

Authentic Identity

- Don’t repress your God-given uniqueness in order to appear more spiritual!

Authentic Emotional Life

- Don’t try to deny or “Christianize” your feelings in order to appear more spiritual! (Remember Jesus wept over Lazarus)

Authentic Confession

- Deal honestly with your failures (this is in stark contrast to our culture, with its “blame shifting” tendency)
- Sinners are too smart to expect perfection from Christians, but they are looking for honesty!

Authentic Conviction

- Sinners are not impressed by spinelessness! Stand up for your beliefs! (Remember Centurion at crucifixion)

Compassion

- Good Samaritan, 1 Corinthians 13
- Compassion Scale (can’t use # 5) – grade yourself NOW, not based on the past or what you hope to be
- Common “Compassion Busters” ...
 - Where you live (compassion breeds compassion)
 - How you live (time pressures, emotional fatigue)
 - How you give (imbalanced caring brings resentment)
 - What you’ve received (fresh appreciation for grace)

Sacrifice (impacts “hard cases”)

- The sacrifice of time (slow down!)
- The sacrifice of resources
- The sacrifice of lifestyle
 - Live a consistent life that backs up your words to prove to cynics that Christianity isn’t just your latest fad!
 - Are you a sprinter or a marathon runner?

Think of the people on your impact list. Are you living a “high potency” life before them? If so, great! If not, what changes are you going to make? Let’s move on to the next part of our evangelism equation, which is “close proximity.”

Close Proximity Relationships

- The most potent salt in the world has no effect unless it comes in contact with something!
- Jesus spent most of His time with those outside the religious establishment – with sinners!
- Barriers to Building Relationships

Biblical issues

- Friendship with the world means the “system” not the “people”!

Spiritual danger

- Know yourself! You be the influencer!
- Negative effects are unlikely when you enter the relationship with a motive!

Risking your reputation

- Jesus ruined His reputation! (accused of being a glutton and drunkard – Luke 7:34)

Personal discomfort

- We don’t go back to our old environment to stay, but we must go back to visit!
- Barrier-Breaking Solutions
 - Throw a Matthew party! (barbeque first!)
 - Involve others in your everyday activities
 - Use “strategic consumerism”
- Most Important: Be Yourself!

Six Styles Of Evangelism:

Confrontational Style

- Peter in Acts 2

Intellectual Style

- Paul in Acts 17

Testimonial Style

- The Blind Man in John 9

Interpersonal Style

- Matthew in Luke 5

Invitational Style

- The Woman at the Well in John 4

Serving Style

- Dorcas in Acts 9

HP + CP this is the salt part of the equation

CC this is the light part of the equation

What Does Light Do?

- It makes things visible and helps us see them for what they really are

- In the Biblical sense, “light” means “illuminating” God’s truth to others (both attractively and clearly)
- This is the “clear communication” part of our equation!
- Our light can’t be covered up or people will be left guessing what it is that sets us apart
- To achieve “maximum impact” we need all three parts of the evangelism equation!

LESSON 16:
Contagious Christianity Part 3

An Equation For Evangelism:

$$HP + CP + CC = MI$$

- Salt of the Earth (High Potency + Close Proximity)
- Clear Communication (YOUR story)

“You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it useful again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless. You are the light of the world—like a city on a mountain, glowing in the night for all to see. Don’t hide your light under a basket! Instead, put it on a stand and let it shine for all. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father” (Matthew 5:13-16).

Starting Spiritual Conversations

- Direct Method
- Indirect Method
- Invitational Method

Direct Method

- Don’t wait for an opportunity; create one!
- Raise a spiritual topic to see if they are interested.
- You don’t force them, but you open the door.
- If they don’t take the hint, return to a safe topic.

Sample Questions

- Do you ever think about spiritual things?

- If you ever want to know the difference between Christianity and religion, let me know.
- How's it really going?
- Who, in your opinion, was Jesus Christ?
- Do you ever wonder what happens to us when we die?
- What do you think a real Christian is?
- What's your spiritual background? Were you taught a particular religion growing up?

Indirect Method

- Builds on the direction the conversation is headed by using the topic being discussed as a BRIDGE to a related spiritual topic.

Sample Questions

- (How's it going?) Well, financially, okay; family-wise, pretty well; and spiritually, things are great. Which one do you want to talk about?
- (What are you doing on the weekend?) I enjoy working with sound equipment / kids / music / other ministry. (Where do you do that?)
- Do you think the Easter celebration is based on fact or fiction?
- Do you buy into the idea that the baby in the manger was God's Son?
- I've had similar frustrations in my life. Can I tell you about something I learned at church that really helped me?

Invitational Method

- Transition the conversation by inviting them to an event that relates to the topic you are discussing.
 - Give a visual reminder
 - Offer to pick them up
 - Do something together before or after the event
 - Introduce them to other Christians at the event

Starting Spiritual Conversations

- Pray about it!

- Take an interest in the other person's world
- Talk to people one-on-one
- Pique their curiosity
- Use "reciprocal reflexes"
- Be willing to take risks
- Make the most of split-second opportunities
- Don't underestimate their degree of interest!

Sharing My Testimony

"You are the ones chosen by God ... God's instruments to do His work and speak out for Him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference He made for you" (1 Peter 2:9).

A personal testimony is still the most persuasive form of communication.

David: "Come and listen, and I will tell you what God has done for me" (Psalm 66:11).

Woman At The Well: "Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in [Jesus] because of the woman's testimony" (John 4:39).

Man Born Blind: "I don't know whether he is good or bad, but I know this: I was blind, and now I see!" (John 9:25).

Peter And John: "We cannot stop telling about the wonderful things we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).

Paul: On six different occasions, Paul used his personal testimony to share the Good News with unbelievers (Acts 22-26).

Jesus: "I speak only of what I know by experience; I give witness only to what I have seen with my own eyes" (John 3:11).

"Let the whole world know what He has done for you" (Psalm 105:1).

"Every day tell how He saves us. Tell the nations of His glory; tell all peoples the miracles He does" (Psalm 96:2-3).

The Value of Your Testimony

- It is unique – there are no others just like it.
- It is personal and easy to understand.
- I am the authority on it, so it is difficult to argue with.

- People love a personal story – and remember it.
- People can relate to it, so it builds a relational bridge.
- In a postmodern world, it is the most effective witness.

“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Peter 3:15).

Your Testimony

1. What my life was like before I met Christ. (Least time)
2. How I realized I needed Christ. (More time)
3. How I committed my life to Christ. (Even more time)
4. The difference Christ has made in my life. (Most time)

If you became a Christian as an adult, use the four basic steps to compose your testimony.

If you became a Christian at an early age but walked away, use the same four steps but start with the time just prior to your recommitment.

If you became a Christian at an early age and never strayed, use the same four steps but point out some deep need or common problem that others struggle with, and explain why you never had to experience it.

Suggestions For Preparing

- The Bible doesn't tell us to share our faith, but to share our hope. What is the difference? Faith is what you believe, hope is the benefit of what you believe! Share the hope!

Possible Testimony Themes

- Remember that you have more than one testimony!
- God allows us to have many experiences in our lives so we can relate to others in similar situations who need the Lord!
- Different situations will require different testimonies!

- Choose the testimony that best matches your listener.
- Realize you can tell about how others' lives have been changed, too.
- Don't use religious terms, clichés or broad generalities.
- Ask, “If I were an unbeliever, would this make sense to me?”

How To Lead Into Your Testimony

- Listen for problems or needs that Jesus has helped you with.
- Refer to a news item dealing with a common need or problem.
- Start with a statement they'd agree with or a situation they relate to.
- Apologize to people you've known a long time but not witnessed to.

My Fishing Pond

“Jesus called out, ‘Come follow me and I will show you how to fish for the souls of men’” (Matthew 4:19).

- Following and fishing go together!
- We are to be matchmakers, not salesmen.
- We are to be fishermen, not hunters.

Hunting/Fishing Comparison

Three Keys to Spiritual Fishing

1. Identify your fishing pond.
 - My Fishing Pond
 - “You will be my witnesses – in Jerusalem, in all of Judea, in Samaria, and in every part of the world” (Acts 1:8).
 - “Go home to your family and friends. Tell them how much the Lord has done for you” (Mark 5:19).
 - Family–Relatives–Friends–Acquaintances
2. Learn about the kind of fish in your pond.
3. Remember fish get hungry at different times.

Build A Friendship Bridge

1. Become aware
2. Commit to prayer
3. Show you care
4. Be ready to share.

LESSON 17:***Contagious Christianity Part 4*****An Equation For Evangelism**

$$HP + CP + CC = MI$$

High Potency:	What you ARE
Close Proximity:	What you DO
Clear Communication:	What you SAY
Maximum Impact:	What you WANT

How To Build A Bridge Of Friendship

Good friendships are usually intentional, rather than accidental. Developing friendships with unbelievers often requires going the second mile, taking some risks, and moving outside your own comfort zone. And with our busy lifestyles, these kinds of relationships take planning. If you don't plan to cultivate friendships with unbelievers, you'll find that you never have the time to do so. "We should make our plans – counting on God to direct us" (Proverbs 16:9).

Step #1: Become Aware

- Make a list of them by name
- Realize that they are your responsibility
- Assess each person's level of spiritual receptivity
- Discover what their interests and needs are
- Look for areas of common ground that you can build on
- Figure out what kind of testimony each would respond to

Step #2: Commit To Prayer

- Use your Impact List to pray daily for your unsaved friends
- Pray that God will draw them to Himself (John 6:44)
- Pray that God will remove their spiritual blindness (2 Cor. 4:3-4)
- Pray that God will make their heart receptive (John 16:8-13)
- Pray that you'll get the opportunity to share a clear witness (Colossians 4:3-5)

- Pray that God will give you wisdom in what to say (James 1:5)
- Pray that God will use the words you say (1 Thessalonians 1:5)

Step #3: Show You Care

- Treat everyone with respect as people, not as prospects
- Be a genuine friend; help them in practical ways
- Be a good listener; it is a great way to show love
- Make service your aim, not recruitment
- Invite them into your home
- Consciously focus your concern on meeting their needs
- Go out of your way to love them until they ask you why!
- Accept people as they are without being judgmental

Step #4: Be Ready To Share

- Identify yourself as a positive, joyful follower of Christ
- Share a testimony when the occasion naturally arises (it will!)
- Never force the Good News; be patient, for God is working!
- Use crisis situations to show why we all need God
- Ask questions that lead to spiritual discussions
- Give them appropriate message tapes or books to read
- Concentrate on the essential; don't get sidetracked by hang-ups
- Invite them to a service at church that is designed to reach them
- Offer to pray with them after sharing the Good News

Explanation #1: The Four Spiritual Laws**1. The Law of God**

- God is loving (1 John 4:16) – God is love
- God is Holy (1 Peter 1:16) – Be ye holy as I am holy
- God is just (Revelation 15:3) – Just and true are thy ways

2. The Law of Man

- Man is sinful (Romans 3:23) – All have sinned
- Man deserves death (Romans 6:23) – The wages of sin is death
- Man is helpless (Isaiah 64:6) – Our righteousness is as filthy rags

3. The Law of Christ

- Christ is God (John 1:14) – The Word became flesh
- Christ became our substitute (Romans 5:8) – Christ died for us
- This is the Gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-4) – Note three parts!

4. The Law of Salvation

- We respond to Christ’s death through repentance (Luke 13:3) – Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish
- We respond to Christ’s burial through baptism (Mark 16:16) – He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved
- We receive our new life through the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38) – Note three parts!

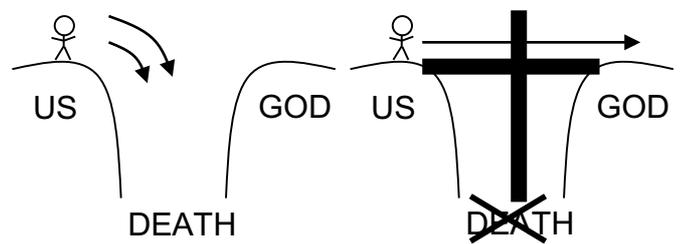
Explanation #2: The Roman Road

- Romans 3:23 How many people have sinned? ALL – “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”
- Romans 6:23 What is the eternal penalty for sin? DEATH – “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”
- Romans 5:8 What is the only remedy for sin? CHRIST’S DEATH – “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”
- Romans 2:4 What is the right response to God’s love? REPENT – “Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?”
- Romans 6:4 How do I put an end to my old sinful life? BAPTISM - “Therefore

we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

- Romans 8:11 Where do I get power to live a new life? HOLY GHOST – “But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”

Explanation #3: The Bridge



“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18).

“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (John 1:12).

“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38).

So I Stay Near The Door

I stay near the door.
 I neither go too far in, nor stay too far out,
 The door is the most important door in the world
 It is the door through which people walk when they find God.
 There’s no use my going way inside, and staying there,
 When so many are still outside and they, as much as I,
 Crave to know where the door is.
 And all that so many ever find
 Is only the wall where a door ought to be.
 They creep along the wall like blind people,
 With outstretched, groping hands,
 Feeling for a door, knowing there must be a door,

Yet they never find it ...
So I stay near the door.

The most tremendous thing in the world
Is for people to find that door – the door to God.
The most important thing anyone can do
Is to take hold of one of those blind, groping hands,
And to put it on the latch – the latch that only clicks
And opens to the person's own touch.
People die outside that door, as starving beggars
die
On cold nights in cruel cities in the dead of winter –
Die for want of what is within their grasp.
They live, on the other side of it – live because they
have found it.
Nothing else matters compared to helping them
find it,
And open it, and walk in, and find Him ...
So I stay near the door.

- by Sam Shoemaker

LESSON 18: *Counter Culture Part 1*

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

We live in a culture that is headed the wrong way. Paul was describing our day when he wrote to Timothy, and it's not a pretty picture. If you really want to live for God, you can only do it by living counter culture.

Counter culture is a sociological term used to describe the values of a group that run counter to those of the social mainstream. Counter culture describes a group whose behavior deviates from societal norms.

Our problem in the first part of the 21st Century

is that we don't only have to oppose secular culture, but much of what is called Christian culture!

A Gallup poll declares that 94% of North Americans believe in God. But obviously they don't believe in God in the Biblical sense of the word! And most North American Christians don't believe Biblically either!

“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” (James 2:19-20).

The demons believe in God enough to tremble. Many so-called “Christians” believe in God but don't fear Him. They want just enough God to keep them out of Hell, just enough God to get them into Heaven, but certainly not enough God to have any effect on their lives.

They have “Cafeteria Christianity” – they just pick the verses they like! They are merely cultural Christians. But wait! We have them around the Apostolic church as well. They say they believe in God, but they live as though He doesn't exist. They can quote the right doctrine all day long, but it doesn't affect their everyday lives. They are Apostolic Atheists.

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding” (Proverbs 9:10).

“The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes. For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful” (Psalm 36:1-2 - KJV).

“Sin whispers to the wicked, deep within their hearts. They have no fear of God at all. In their blind conceit, they cannot see how wicked they really are” (Psalm 36:1-2 - NLT).

Who are these wicked people? Surely not us!
But wait a minute ...

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9).

The only thing that restrains wickedness in our lives is the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord is not “terror,” but “reverent awe.” In other words, the better you know the Lord, the more you will “fear” Him.

If you fear the Lord, you will serve Him without conditions.

“And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me” (Genesis 22:12).

Many people say, “God, if you’ll fix my life, I’ll serve you.” But quite often, God wrecks your life in order to make you more like Him!

“In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me” (Isaiah 6:1-8).

The greatest proof of the fear of the Lord is obedience.

“If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

“For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh. And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:44-46).

Are you becoming more obedient, or more disobedient? Are you living “counter culture” or are you living “conformed to culture”? Do you live the truth, or do you just believe the truth?

How Do You know If You’re An Apostolic Atheist? ~ Money

Many so-called Christians set their priorities as though they were saying, “I believe in God, but I trust in money.” They trust their money for happiness and for security. Money is their “functional savior.”

“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Luke 12:34).

“No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Luke 16:13).

Money is the #1 competitor against God your heart!

Are you serving God and using money? Or serving money and using God?

If you really trust God, you become irrationally content.

“But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of

all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Timothy 6:6-10).

If you really trust God, you become irrationally generous.

“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life” (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

We have the reputation of being a generous church, but what about you? Among consistent churchgoers in North America, 21% give nothing to their church, and 71% give less than 2% of their income to their church. Imagine what we could accomplish with 100% participation!

“Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts” (Malachi 3:8-11).

“And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver” (2 Samuel 24:24).

How Do You Know If You're An Apostolic

Atheist? ~ Time

The statistics on churchgoers giving their time to their church are even more pathetic than the statistics on money.

“Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:” (Isaiah 29:13).

“And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:” (Revelation 3:14-17).

God says, “I’m not impressed by your words. I’m looking at your deeds.”

Imagine God looking down on the lifestyle of many so-called Apostolic Christians today. The way they live makes God sick. They say they believe in God, but they live as though He doesn’t exist. They are just cultural Christians – quite literally, Apostolic Atheists.

“Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number” (Jeremiah 2:32).

What Does A Lukewarm Christian Act Like?

- They crave acceptance from people rather than from God.
- They do just enough in church to alleviate their guilt.
- They gauge their spirituality by comparing themselves to others.
- They rarely witness about the Lord to others.
- They only give when it doesn’t hurt their

standard of living.

- They want the benefits of serving God but no responsibilities.
- They think more about life on earth than about eternity.
- They only turn to God when they are in trouble.
- They ignore any Scriptures that affect their personal lifestyle.
- They are not very much different than the rest of the world.
- “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is” (Ephesians 5:15-17).
- “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33).
- “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:19-20).

LESSON 19: *Counter Culture Part 2*

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

We live in a culture that is headed the wrong way. Paul was describing our day when he wrote to Timothy, and it's not a pretty picture. If you really want to live for God, you can only do it by living counter culture.

Our problem in the first part of the 21st Century is that we don't only have to oppose secular culture, but much of what is called Christian culture!

Imagine God looking down on the lifestyle of many so-called Apostolic Christians today. They say they believe in God, but they live as though He doesn't exist. They are, quite literally, Apostolic Atheists.

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding” (Proverbs 9:10).

You will either fear God (respect, honor, have a sense of awe) or you will fear man – there is no other option!

“The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe” (Proverbs 29:25).

A person who fears man will offend the One he cannot see in order not to offend the one he can see.

One of the places we put man's opinion above God's opinion is in our relationships. God created us for relationships, but we mess them up because (1) we don't put our relationship with Him first, and (2) we conduct our relationships according to man's rules instead of God's commandments.

There is no good time to preach a message like this ... because we are constantly counseling people about their relationships, and constantly thinking, “How do you not know this?!”

What you do now matters! Your present will eventually become your past, and your past will eventually show up in your future.

Most “marriage problems” are really “two single problems that got married.” People bring their individual issues (i.e. loneliness, sex problems, family issues, self-esteem issues) into the marriage and then blame their spouse!

The Right Person Myth: If I could just be

married to the right person, everything would be all right.

The truth? If you build your relationship on this foundation, someday when you're having problems you'll once again think you've met the "right person" elsewhere because you'll feel like you're married to the "wrong person."

The Right Feeling Myth: "No one else has ever felt like this before."

The truth? Your relationship is a well-worn, predictable path. It is NOT unique. That's why it feels sometimes like the preacher is talking directly to YOU, when he's really just talking about humanity in general.

Our culture isn't against happy marriages, it just doesn't celebrate them. Why? Because successful relationships are boring! Relationships don't work the way the media portrays them!

Culture teaches people who are dating to put their relationship with God on the back burner in order to focus on their new relationship. Bad idea!

Dating is not about marrying the right person, but about becoming the right person. Are you who the person you are looking for is looking for?

Scripture gives little help on finding the right person, but is full of help on becoming the right person!

You need more than chemistry, you need relationship skills. These don't appear suddenly or automatically when you get married! They must be worked on over time, in every relationship you have.

"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

Patient – never pressures the other person

Kind – is considerate of how the other person feels

Not Envious – envy won't let you feel good if I don't feel good about me

Not Proudful – competition and pride destroy intimacy

Not Unseemly – never creates regret by behaving indecently

Not Selfish – puts the happiness of the other person first

Not one of these traits comes naturally to human beings!

"When I get married, I'll ..." // That never happens!

Because our culture bases relationships on "chemistry," it tells us it is impossible to love one person for a lifetime. This is totally untrue, and totally against the way God created us. Chemistry comes and goes in all relationships, but forgiveness keeps us together for a lifetime.

"When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things" (1 Corinthians 13:11).

Children believe that relationships work like this: "And they lived happily ever after." But that is not reality. Relationships take work if you want them to work. So leave behind your childish ways, and grow up!

Single People: You need to practice these relationship skills on every date! They will not suddenly appear when you get married.

Our culture treats sexuality (and especially women) like a commodity ... take me, use me, then trade me in. And this is exactly how it was in the first century when Christianity was born.

Our culture says "No one lives like you are preaching any more – this is the 21st century!" No one lived like this in the 1st century either, and that's why Christianity made such a huge

impact on the world and on history.

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34-35).

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;” (Ephesians 5:25).

“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered” (1 Peter 3:7).

You can't give honor to your spouse if you are hooked on erotic imagery. Looking at it actually changes your brain chemically and creates an addiction. Looking at the fake always deadens your desire for the real. And no one has ever “turned this off” when they got married! Pornography says to your spouse: a real body isn't good enough for me; one body isn't good enough for me; your body isn't good enough for me. To be fair, you should tell your spouse (or potential spouse) that you feel this way, if you're going to continue to use pornography.

Our culture has created such an “ideal” that women (or men) spend their entire marriage competing against something that isn't even real!

Sex is not only physical – it is connected to your soul. When you treat it casually, you hurt yourself at the deepest possible level. This is why ...

- Sexual abuse is so hard to shake
- Rape is do devastating
- Men with deepest sexual issues have distant fathers
- Deepest personal regrets are sexual

Intimacy is to know fully and to be fully known. The sexual part of you is both powerful and fragile, and that's why God says to protect it and save it until marriage. Then there will be

no fear of comparison or criticism, and you can have real intimacy.

Sexual sin kills intimacy, and creates an empty hole that you may spend a lifetime trying to fill. Young singles, you can skip all this hurt if you will just live your life according to God's commandments!

“Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's” (1 Corinthians 6:15-20).

Sexual sin is like no other sin – it is a sin against your own body, because it opens up appetites that will create a lifelong struggle against you in your own flesh! And it hurts you on the deepest possible level. Nothing else has such long-range consequences in your life.

Paul reaches back to Genesis to tell us that when you have sex with someone, part of you is permanently bonded with them. You will always have to deal with it – it will affect your marriage, even if you marry them! But if it's with someone else it is especially problematic for your future, because you can't “un-one” one!

You are not your own, so honor God with your sexuality. Sexual activity has predictable outcomes (consequences) by design. (Like the consequences of bad nutrition, for example.)

Romance is fueled by exclusivity – I'm able to give all of me to all of you. Look for the one,

don't look for just anyone.

Marriage wasn't designed to solve your problems! Good things in a relationship are made better by marriage, and bad things in a relationship are made worse by marriage.

The best marriages are created when one whole person joins their life with another whole person (not a "hole" person!).

Marriage is a covenant, not a contract. Contracts say, "I will if you will." Covenants say, "I will even if you won't." Covenants are not made to be broken, so proceed cautiously!

Principles For Singles:

1. You have to pre-decide when it comes to sexuality.
2. Focus on becoming the right person, not finding the right person.
3. Postpone anything physical as long as possible.
4. If you have had problems with your sexuality, take a year off from any dating, and spend it renewing your mind.
5. Giving up something now for something better later is not a sacrifice, it is an investment.
6. Decide to live your life counter culture.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1-2).

LESSON 20: *Counter Culture Part 3*

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent,

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Most "marriage problems" are really "two single problems that got married." People bring their individual issues (i.e. loneliness, sex problems, family issues, self-esteem issues) into the marriage and then blame their spouse!

How many of you are married?

How many of you are single but would like to be married someday?

Married or not, how many of you plan on committing adultery?!

"Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14).

The Journal of Psychology and Christianity says that up to 65% of husbands and 55% of wives will commit adultery by age 40. And sadly, this trend has begun to creep into the lives of Apostolic Christians over the last few years. We are letting our culture change us instead of us having an impact on our culture! No one plans on committing adultery, and yet, according to the statistics a lot of you will! Why? Because you have a spiritual enemy who hates you and wants to destroy your life, your testimony, and your legacy.

“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

The devil doesn't care about your happiness or your marriage! And while you might think by looking at our culture that he is fixated on sex, he really doesn't care about that either – he's not even a physical being!

All the devil cares about is getting you to break God's commandments! That's why he attacks your marriage, both before and after you get married. Have you ever thought how ironic it is? When you are single, the devil is always tempting you to have sex outside of marriage. Then when you get married, he attacks your intimate relationship so you WON'T have sex! So obviously, it's not “sex” that he cares about – it's getting you to break God's commandments, and getting you to break God's most beautiful covenant.

The English word “adultery” comes from the same root as the word “adulterate,” which means “to contaminate or make impure.” The Hebrew phrase is “Lo Na'aph,” which also means “no apostatizing.” To apostatize means to abandon one's principles or promises.

“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” (Colossians 3:5).

The sexual sins of fornication, homosexuality, masturbation and lust also cause us to abandon the principles of holiness taught by God's Word.

“Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (Hebrews 13:4).

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of

the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband” (Ephesians 5:15-33).

Marriage is a covenant, not a contract. Contracts say, “I will if you will.” Covenants say, “I will even if you won't.” Covenants are unselfish.

- God loved us even when we didn't respond to Him in love.
- Will you love God even when he doesn't do what you expect?
- Will you choose to love your spouse even when they seem unlovable?

“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for

us” (Romans 5:8).

So how does adultery happen? Definitely not all at once! It happens when we rationalize our sinful, selfish actions ... step by step ... until we cross the line. But the steps are so small, and so indignantly defended, that we don’t even realize when we crossed that critical line in our life.

Here are some of the steps that lead invariably to adultery ...

1. Neglect your marriage. Never give your best at home; instead find something outside of your marriage to give your best energies to. Avoid all relational intimacy – no talking, listening, sharing life together, or real sexual intimacy. Just become roommates.

2. Form an emotional bond with someone else. Enjoy common interests and activities without your spouse being in the loop. Let your defenses down with them, but keep them raised with your spouse. Once there’s an emotional attachment, begin to share with them your spouse’s negative traits and the difficulties you have in your marriage.

3. Make excuses to be together. Anticipate that time more than you anticipate time with your spouse. Lose some weight, buy some new clothes, join a gym, fix yourself up, flaunt your sexuality if necessary – not for your spouse, but for your “friend.” Invent reasons to get together if you have to, and keep all of this from your spouse.

4. Flirt whenever possible. Be subtle so no one else will notice. Use inappropriate jokes and touching. Be sensitive toward their feelings and moods while you ignore your spouse. Leave notes, cards and little gifts that say, “I’m thinking of you.” Use email, texting and private Facebook messages – just keep your passwords secret from your spouse so they can’t figure out why you are gradually growing distant toward them.

5. Rationalize your actions. Use the excuse, “If my spouse was meeting my needs, I wouldn’t

have to do this.” If my spouse was more sensitive. If my spouse made me happy. We’re not compatible. I don’t have any feelings for them. I was never really in love with them. Any lie will do – you just have to repeat it to yourself long enough and loud enough to drown out your conscience and God’s conviction. Ignore any voices that disagree with what you are doing – cut them out of your life.

People keep lying to themselves right up to the point of physical sin ... “Adultery will never happen to me. I’ve got this totally under control.”

So if you really value your marriage, your integrity, and your eternity, you need to determine to walk in the other direction by following these steps ...

1. Radically reduce the risks.

“Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house: Lest thou give thine honour unto others, and thy years unto the cruel: Lest strangers be filled with thy wealth; and thy labours be in the house of a stranger;” (Proverbs 5:8-10).

“But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matthew 5:28).

The point where you cross the line into sin is not physical adultery, but spiritual adultery. Sin always happens in your heart first!

Some singles actually commit pre-marital adultery. Their present actions sin against their future spouse.

What if your spouse (or your future spouse) could watch a video of all your interactions with other people? (real people or media) What if your pastor could watch that video? Would you be ashamed?

- Never be alone with the wrong people.
- Never talk negatively about your marriage.
- Surround yourself with strong

marriages.

- Avoid all inappropriate situations and communication.

“But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:14-15).

“For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil” (Romans 16:19).

“But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;” (Ephesians 5:3).

2. Invest passionately in your marriage.

Whenever the grass starts to look greener somewhere else, it's time to water your own yard!

“Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well. Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets. Let them be only thine own, and not strangers' with thee. Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love. And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger?” (Proverbs 5:15-20).

Ravished (“shagah”) = captivated, enraptured, intoxicated, consumed

“Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife” (1 Corinthians 7:2-4).

Get transparent. Get alone. Get spiritual. Get

help. Get intimate.

3. Visualize the potential destruction.

“For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil: But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell” (Proverbs 5:3-5).

What percentage of people actually marry their forbidden lover? 3%

What percentage of those marriages end in divorce? 75%

What are the odds of your affair ending up in a lasting marriage? .075%

Why? Because what you have is based on lies and deception! You need to go home and honor the covenant you made with your mate and God!

A. Adultery does incredible damage to your spouse.

- “And don't you know that if a man joins himself to a prostitute, he becomes one body with her? For the Scriptures say, “The two are united into one.” (1 Corinthians 6:16 - NLT)

B. Adultery does incredible damage to you.

- “But the man who commits adultery is an utter fool, for he destroys his own soul” (Proverbs 6:32 - NLT).

C. Adultery does incredible damage to your children.

- “Even so I do not leave sin unpunished, but I punish the children for the sins of their parents to the third and fourth generations” (Exodus 34:7b - NLT).

D. Adultery does incredible damage to the church.

- “Don't you realize that if even one person is allowed to go on sinning, soon all will be affected?” (1 Corinthians 5:6b - NLT).

E. Adultery does incredible damage to your testimony.

“But you have given the enemies of the LORD

great opportunity to despise and blaspheme him” (2 Samuel 12:14 - NLT).

F. Adultery does incredible damage to your relationship with God.

“How could I ever do such a wicked thing? It would be a great sin against God” (Genesis 39:9b - NLT).

4. Walk away, and start today.

If you’ve been unfaithful to your mate, there is still hope. You can come to Jesus for a cleansing, and He will say, “Neither do I condemn thee,” as He did to the woman caught in adultery in John 8:11. However, He will also say, “Go, and sin no more!” I can’t guarantee that your spouse will be as forgiving as God, but marriages can be rebuilt. Here are four things you must do if you really want forgiveness:

- **Acknowledge the sin.** Stop rationalizing it and call it what it is – sin! Make a commitment to be morally pure, starting now.
- **End the relationship immediately.** Don’t delay – it is impossible to “wean yourself” from adultery. Quit “cold turkey!”
- **Avoid all contact with that person from now on.** You can’t be friends after you’ve been lovers. Do whatever it takes to end it!
- **Get your spiritual life back on track.** Get into the Word of God!

“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word” (Psalm 119:9).

“Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame” (1 Corinthians 15:33-34).

“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to

escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:12-13).

The good news is that, even when we are unfaithful, God is always faithful!

LESSON 21: *Counter Culture Part 4*

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

We live in a culture that is headed the wrong way. Paul was describing our day when he wrote to Timothy, and it’s not a pretty picture. If you really want to live for God, you can only do it by living counter culture.

Notice that one of the common signs of a generation in trouble with God is their attitude toward their parents! Disobedient means “obstinate rejection of the will of God, spurning belief, unwilling to be persuaded.”

“Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:” (Romans 1:29-31).

Our problem in the first part of the 21st Century is that we don’t only have to oppose secular culture, but much of what is called Christian culture!

Imagine God looking down on the lifestyle of many so-called Apostolic Christians today. They say they believe in God, but they live as though He doesn't exist. They are, quite literally, Apostolic Atheists.

It is impossible to be a Christian and dishonor your parents at the same time! The Bible tells us to honor our parents in spite of the fact that becoming a Christian can actually divide families! This is definitely the way it was in the first century.

“Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting” (Luke 18:28-30).

“And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake” (Luke 21:16-17).

Why does Satan attack the family so viciously? Because in God's plan the family plays an enormously important role. It is to offer unconditional love and lifelong companionship to its members. It is to be the first church, the first school, the first hospital, and the first government! It is where children learn about their male and female roles, how to communicate their ideas and feelings, how to enjoy life and endure pain. Family life provides the safest parameters in which to discover acceptable and unacceptable behavior. In short, the home is the principal place for spiritual, emotional and moral training. Our parents are our first teachers – and they deserve honor!

It is possible for all of us to honor our parents, no matter what their condition, behavior, or our relationship to them. Wherever there is God's will, there is always a way to obey it!

“Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee” (Exodus 20:12).

The Bible says to love God, the stranger and our neighbor, but nowhere does it specifically command us to love our parents. Instead, the command is to honor our parents. God, strangers and neighbors do not put the same ego demands on us that parents do. We are commanded to honor our parents because it is the best way to compensate for the tension-filled parent-child relation, in which “love” may take a beating.

The word honor is “kaw-bad” in Hebrew, which means “to add weight,” taken from the ancient concept that something heavy was thought to have greater value. We are to value our parents. The rabbis taught that parents are to be honored because they are partners with God; He is the author of life, but they cooperate with Him by bringing a child into the world.

In the New Testament passage where this commandment is repeated, the concepts of obedience and honor are tied together. If your parents are “in the Lord” you are commanded to obey them! Obedience means submission!

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:1-4).

Notice that there is also an obligation commanded for parents!

“Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged” (Colossians 3:20-21).

“Not provoking” doesn't mean “not disciplining!” Discipline is an obligation of loving parents. It requires instruction,

reinforcement and punishment. Even when children don't like discipline, they are to obey!

"He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes" (Proverbs 13:24).

"Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying" (Proverbs 19:18).

"Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him" (Proverbs 22:15).

Principles For Discipline:

1. Get connected early (discipline depends on relationship).
2. Know your child (age appropriate behavior and discipline).
3. Help your child to respect authority (warm and wise).
4. Set limits and provide structure (children test limits).
5. Expect obedience (parents are supposed to be controlling).
6. Model discipline (you are the example children will imitate).
7. Nurture your child's self-confidence (right feelings = right action).
8. Shape your child's behavior (show them the consequences).
9. Raise kids who care (you are planting your passions in them).
10. Talk and listen (you will want them to do this later).

In the New Testament, this "chastening" from parents is compared to the discipline the Lord brings into our lives from time to time. It is not pleasant at the moment, but it yields long-term results that bless our lives! Parents, when you consistently discipline your children, you are preparing them to understand and submit to God's lifelong dealing with them!

"Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?"

For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Hebrews 12:9-11).

There are no perfect parents – and no perfect children! Only God is a perfect parent! The rest of us have weaknesses, faults, and inconsistencies. What if my parents were abusive, manipulative, neglectful, and unworthy of honor? Am I supposed to ignore the pain and pretend everything is great? No, but God does say that we must honor the position of parenthood, regardless of the personality behind it. Why? Because how I relate to my parents will affect every other relationship!

How you relate to your parents is the major forming factor in your life. Your style of relating to others is set while you live at home. Even today as an adult, when you act in ways you don't understand and you can't figure out your behavior, many times it's because you are still reacting to your parents. Many marriages have been ruined because a spouse has never resolved a relationship with a parent, and they're taking it out on a spouse or their kids.

Regardless of who your parents are, and what they did or didn't do, you can at least appreciate their effort and sacrifice. Parenting is a difficult, time-demanding, energy-draining job. Have you ever considered how much easier your parents' life would have been if they hadn't had you?

Parenting is also expensive. When a couple chooses to have kids, they are choosing to do without some other things. Today, it has been estimated that it will cost the average parents nearly \$250,000 to raise one child from infancy to eighteen years of age.

"Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought

not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved” (2 Corinthians 12:14-15).

Parents, spend and be spent for your children!

As life moves on, the parents eventually become the children, and the children become the parents. And this is God’s design for the family!

“Honour widows that are widows indeed. But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God” (1 Timothy 5:3-4).

“But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel” (1 Timothy 5:8).

As a Christian parent, your number one goal should be to ensure that your kids come to know the Lord as soon as they are old enough to understand. Don’t rest until all of your family is serving God!

For some of you, this may be a very painful message. It is easy to honor your parents if they have been good, godly people. But some of you had parents that hurt you deeply and devastated your life.

Many of you are still carrying unfinished business with your parents. You’re venting your anger on your family or friends because you’ve never resolved it. The ironic thing is that, if you’re still angry with your parents years later, you’re still letting them control your life.

If your parents abandoned you in some way, you are a special person to God – the Bible says God assumes responsibility for abandoned children!

“When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up” (Psalm 27:10).

The church is a family that will last longer than your physical family. In terms of eternity, it’s far more important. If you have hurts in your life because of your upbringing, get involved in the family of God through the church!

“God setteth the solitary in families: he bringeth out those which are bound with chains: but the rebellious dwell in a dry land” (Psalm 68:6).

God knows the pain you feel and He can help you overcome it – He can even bring some good out of it if you will let Him!

“And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him” (John 9:2-3).

God’s Design

You are who you are for a reason
You’re part of an intricate plan
You’re precious, a perfect unique design
Called God’s special woman or man.

You look like you look for a reason
Our God made no mistake
He knit you together within the womb
You’re just what He wanted to make.

The parents you had are the ones He chose
No matter how you may feel
You are custom designed with that plan in mind
Your life bears the Master’s seal.

The trauma you faced wasn’t easy
God wept that it hurt you so
But it was allowed to shape your heart
So that into His likeness you’d grow.
You are who you are for a reason
You’ve been formed by the Master’s rod
You are who you are, beloved
Because there is a God.

LESSON 22:
Dead Man Living
(Philippians) – Part 1

Paul's history with the church at Philippi is recounted in Acts 16 ...

- v. 1-12 – Timothy went with Paul on this journey, and the Holy Ghost led them directly to Philippi (vision of Macedonian man – “come help us”)
- v. 13-15 – women’s prayer group, including Lydia who was baptized
- v. 16-24 – cast a demon out of a woman soothsayer who was following them, and cast in prison when her masters took them to the magistrates
- v. 25-34 – Paul and Silas worship in jail and an earthquake sets them free, then the Philippian jailer and his whole household are converted
- v. 35-40 – the magistrates discover they have jailed a Roman citizen

Paul made repeat visits to the Christians at Philippi during his later missionary journeys, and a relationship was forged. Years later, when he was taken to Rome as a prisoner awaiting trial before Caesar (at the end of Acts), the Philippian church sent Epaphroditus to do what he could to help the Apostle. Unfortunately, Epaphroditus suffered a near-fatal illness during the time he was in Rome; after he recovered and brought news of the church to Paul, he returned to Philippi to deliver the Apostle’s letter.

You’ve heard the death row expression “Dead Man Walking”? Well, Paul is on the first century equivalent of Death Row at the end of the book of Acts, under house arrest in Rome and knowing that his only hope of freedom lies in the hands of the despotic Emperor Nero. Not a likely prospect! But you would never know it by the tone of his “prison epistles” (Philippians is the last of these letters to the churches – he writes some personal letters later.) In the middle of the worst circumstances, Paul is unmistakably happy. Why? Because he has learned that the worst circumstances are often the best opportunities for God and the gospel to work! That is a biblical principle we talk about, but often our actions and attitudes show that we don’t really

believe it! Paul has something we need to have, so over the next few weeks we are going to get inside the mind of this Dead Man Living.

Philippians Chapter One

v. 1 – “servants” – “willing slave” or “bondservant” as in Exodus 21:5-6

“And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever” (Exodus 21:5-6).

v. 2 – God our Father, even the Lord Jesus Christ – doesn’t dispute Oneness but actually proves it, as in Colossians 1:3

“We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,” (Colossians 1:3).

v. 3 – can this be said by others of you?!

v. 5 – “fellowship” can also be accurately translated “partnership”

v. 6 – “begun” only used here and in Galatians 3:3 – you can’t begin in the Spirit and finish in the flesh – God will “perform” (“complete”) the work!

“Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” (Galatians 3:3).

v. 8 – “bowels” – synonymous with “emotions” (the word “heart” in the Bible is not synonymous with emotions, but means “rational nature” or “will”) – that is why love is a decision (and we serve God with our heart!)

v. 10 – “sincere” – “sine cera” was a Greek term meaning “without wax” and indicated pottery that had no hidden cracks filled with wax before painting

v. 12 – Paul knew that the worst circumstances are often the best opportunities for God and the gospel to work! He rejoiced at what God

was going to do instead of complaining about what He had not done.

v. 13 – “palace” means “praetorium” as in the soldiers who guarded Paul

v. 14 – Paul’s example of faith in persecution encouraged the church!

“And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him” (Acts 28:30-31 - KJV).

Akolutos: In the Greek language, Acts ends with this single word. Biblical scholar I. Howard Marshall writes that “all the emphasis lies on that last phrase.” The word means “unhindered,” “unpreventable” and even “unstoppable.” It suggests a wide-open field of opportunity.

Let’s get this straight – Paul is chained to a Roman soldier, forcibly confined to his lodgings, and has been awaiting trial for over four years – and Luke writes that he is “unstoppable”? Is this God’s idea of irony? Paul immobilized by Roman chains doesn’t exactly seem like a promising strategy for accomplishing the mission of the church!

Unstoppable?! He can’t even leave his house! And meanwhile, Christians are being martyred wholesale in the city by the Emperor Nero who is on one of his rampages. Paul will soon be included in the killings, beheaded for the name of Jesus. **Unstoppable?!** Many of the newer Bible translations pick up on this term by saying something like “no one tried to stop him.” But that is not exactly the point – no one could stop Paul, because God was with him even though he was in chains! The ESV is probably the most clear:

“He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance” (Acts 28:30-31 - ESV).

The writer Luke understands something that you need to understand. All of the judicial foot-dragging that has Paul mired in prison, the religious blindness that has caused the Jews to reject their own Messiah, even the massacres that are filling Rome’s coliseums with Christian corpses ... none of these qualify as hindrances against the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Because the church in Acts was unstoppable. You could fight those Christians, persecute them, throw them to the lions, burn them at the stake, fill the catacombs with their bones – but you could not stop them! They were determined to turn the world upside down, and they did. They absolutely changed the world – and we are called to follow in their steps. We believe the same gospel, we preach the same message, we have the same commission and the same Holy Spirit as Peter, Paul, James, John, Barabbas, Silas, Timothy and the rest. We can do what they did! And so, “unstoppable” stands as the last word on the subject! Paul understood something that you need to understand. We are willing participants not only in what God does, but in the way He does it. His ways are higher than our ways! Unstoppable tells us that all the obstacles that now loom large are simply of no account in the agenda of God’s Kingdom.

“For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak” (Ephesians 6:20).

“Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound” (2 Timothy 2:9).

v. 16 – “contention” – “to canvas for office, looking for people to support you”

v. 18 – Paul didn’t care that the motives of other preachers were wrong – he simply rejoiced that Christ was being preached regardless!

v. 21 – to live is Christ, to die is gain ... as in Galatians 2:20

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live;

yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

v. 24 – Paul yielded his personal desires for the good of the church

v. 25 – “furtherance” – “blazing a new trail so that an army can advance”

v. 27 – “conversation” – “lifestyle” – indicates walk, not talk

v. 28 – when Christians suffer without being “terrified” (losing faith), it is a sign (“token”) to God’s enemies that His church will ultimately be victorious

v. 29 – “given” – suffering is a gift that brings power and reward

v. 30 – “same conflict” – we are in this together! / “saw in me” – Acts 16

LESSON 23:
Dead Man Living
(Philippians) – Part 2

Paul’s history with the church at Philippi is recounted in Acts 16. He made repeat visits to the Christians there during his later missionary journeys, and a relationship was forged. Years later, when he was taken to Rome as a prisoner awaiting trial before Caesar (at the end of Acts), the Philippian church sent Epaphroditus to do what he could to help the Apostle. Unfortunately, Epaphroditus suffered a near-fatal illness during the time he was in Rome; after he recovered and brought news of the church to Paul, he returned to Philippi to deliver the Apostle’s letter.

You’ve heard the death row expression “Dead Man Walking”? Well, Paul is a dead man living. He is on the first century equivalent of Death Row at the end of the book of Acts, under house arrest in Rome, and knowing that his only hope of freedom lies in the hands of

the despotic Emperor Nero. But you would never know it by the tone of his “prison epistles” (Philippians is the last of these letters to the churches – he writes some personal letters later.) In the middle of the worst circumstances, Paul is unmistakably happy. Why? Because he has learned that the worst circumstances are often the best opportunities for God and the gospel to work!

Have you ever thought about this? People can rob us of our joy!

Paul is facing problems with people in Rome (political preachers – 1:15-18) and problems with people in Philippi. The unity of the church there is being threatened from without (false teachers – 3:1-3) and threatened from within (fighting saints – 4:1-3). But he still has joy!

There is a difference between unity and uniformity. Unity comes from respect within; uniformity comes from pressure without. That’s why Paul opens chapter two by appealing to the highest possible spiritual motives. Disagreements are not solved by rules or threats; they are solved when our hearts are right with the Lord and right with each other. The basic cause of disagreement is selfishness, and the root of that is pride.

There can be no joy in the life of any Christian who puts himself above others!

Chapter 1 – The secret of joy in spite of circumstances is having a single mind (“Christ first”).

Chapter 2 – The secret of joy in spite of people is having a submissive mind (“others next”).

Humility is not someone who thinks too little of himself; humility is someone who simply does not think of himself at all! His heart is focused on God and the needs of others.

To illustrate this concept, Paul used four examples ...

- Jesus Christ, the ultimate example (2:1-11)
- Paul himself (2:12-18)
- Timothy (2:19-24)

➤ Epaphroditus (2:25-30)

v. 1 – “consolation” – same Greek root word as “Comforter” – basically, Paul is saying, “If you have the Holy Ghost ... act like this!”

v. 2 – “fulfill my joy” – “make my joy complete” v. 3 – “strife” – “push for personal preference” / “vainglory” – “pursuit for personal glory” / “better” – “held above”

v. 4 – don’t be obsessed with your own advantage (forget yourself!)

Jesus Christ

v. 5 – “mind” – “attitude”

v. 6 – “form” – “possessing the fullness of the attributes which make God God” (AMP) – that’s why several of the modern Bible translations simply say ... “though he was God” (NLT), “Christ was truly God” (CEV), etc.

v. 6 – “robbery” – “something seized” – literally, anything embraced or prized

v. 6 – “equal” – “exactly the same in size, quantity, quality, character and number” – Jesus is God, and always claimed to be during His ministry!

v. 7 – “no reputation” – “emptied himself” – Jesus set aside all of His divine privileges for a season – imagine God coming to earth as a human being!

v. 8 – “humbled himself” – the incarnation was humbling enough, but then Jesus further humbled himself in that He did not even demand normal human rights, but subjected Himself to unjust persecution and even death

v. 9 – “wherefore” – precisely because of His unimaginable humility, Christ is worthy to be exalted above everything and everyone else

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

”And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all

in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Colossians 3:17).

v. 10 – “under the earth” – the devil and his demons, and the lost

A few Scriptures about Jehovah that Jesus fulfills ...

“Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert” (Isaiah 35:4-6).

“Which along spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea” (Job 9:8).

“And ye shall know I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves” (Ezekiel 37:13).

“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear” (Isaiah 45:22-23).

v. 11 – “Lord” – “authority over or ownership of people and property”

Let this attitude be in you! The mind of Christ is an attitude that says “I cannot keep my privileges for myself, I must use them for others even if it costs me a lot!” If you want to find out what someone is really like, don’t give them responsibilities, give them privileges. Do they use them for others?!

Paul

v. 12 – Paul asks them to be even more careful to obey when he is not there

Too many Christians obey God only because

of pressure on the outside, not power on the inside (i.e. only when others are watching).

v. 12 – “work out” – not “work for” – a word picture of “working a field or a mine” – not salvation but sanctification – “to bring to completion”

v. 12 – “fear and trembling” – a healthy fear of offending God

v. 13 – we are responsible to work with Him, but it is the Lord’s power that produces good works in our lives (1:6)

v. 13 – “to will and to do” – God energizes our desires and our actions – God must work in us before He can work through us; He is more interested in the workman than in the work

v. 14 – “murmurings” – “complaining” / “disputing” – “questioning”

v. 15 – “blameless and harmless” – blameless describes a life that cannot be criticized from without, harmless describes a life that is pure within

“Abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

v. 15 – “crooked and perverse” – crooked is the word from which the English word “scoliosis” (curvature of the spine) comes from, and perverse intensifies this – “one who has strayed so far off the path they are deviant”

v. 16 – Paul didn’t want his efforts in Philippi to all be for nothing

v. 17 – Paul says “even if my lifeblood is poured out like a sacrificial offering on the altar of your faith” (i.e. I give my life to bring you the gospel), I will rejoice and I want you to rejoice too (v. 18)

Timothy

v. 20 – “likeminded” – literally “one souled” (we would say “kindred spirit”)

v. 21 – sadly, all the other Christians in Rome were too preoccupied with their own concerns

to help the Apostle Paul by making a trip to Philippi

v. 22 – “proof” – the Philippian church had “experience” with Timothy

“And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves” (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).

v. 24 – Paul knew that his plans were subject to God’s approval

Epaphroditus

Epaphroditus had been sent to Rome from the Philippian church to minister to Paul’s needs, but he himself had become extremely ill and almost died. Paul is now sending him back to Philippi with this letter.

v. 26 – “heaviness” – he was more concerned about their worry for him than he was about his own difficult situation (“don’t worry about me!”)

v. 28 – “carefully” – “sooner” / “sorrowful” – “concerned” v. 29 – “reputation” – “high value”

v. 30 – “to supply your lack of service” – the Philippian church could not all be with Paul in Rome, so Epaphroditus went to the Apostle in their stead

v. 30 – “not regarding his life” – risk – he was not content simply to contribute to an offering for Paul, he gave himself to take the offering

Joy comes from submission! Let this mind be in you!

LESSON 24: *Dead Man Living* *(Philippians) – Part 3*

Paul’s history with the church at Philippi is recounted in Acts 16. He made repeat visits to the Christians there during his later missionary journeys, and a relationship was forged. Years later, when he was taken to Rome as a prisoner awaiting trial before Caesar (at the end of Acts), the Philippian church sent

Epaphroditus to do what he could to help the Apostle. Unfortunately, Epaphroditus suffered a near-fatal illness during the time he was in Rome; after he recovered and brought news of the church to Paul, he returned to Philippi to deliver the Apostle's letter.

You've heard the death row expression "Dead Man Walking"? Well, Paul is a dead man living. He is on the first century equivalent of Death Row at the end of the book of Acts, under house arrest in Rome, and knowing that his only hope of freedom lies in the hands of the despotic Emperor Nero. But you would never know it by the tone of his "prison epistles" (Philippians is the last of these letters to the churches – he writes some personal letters later.) In the middle of the worst circumstances, Paul is unmistakably happy. Why? Because he has learned that the worst circumstances are often the best opportunities for God and the gospel to work!

Chapter 1 – The secret of joy in spite of circumstances is having a single mind ("Christ first").

Chapter 2 – The secret of joy in spite of people is having a submissive mind ("others next").

Chapter 3 – The secret of joy in spite of opposition is having a spiritual mind.

Background: Due mainly to the ministry of Paul, the Gentiles were now coming into the church without becoming Jews first. This was not a problem Biblically because the Old Covenant was no longer in effect. It was not a problem with the leadership of the church because they had met together in Acts 15 and given guidelines to be followed. It was not a problem with God's Spirit because it was the Holy Ghost that was leading Paul. (The Bible, Spiritual Leadership, and the Holy Ghost are the "teachers" that speak into our lives, and they should always agree.)

However, this situation was a major problem with the Judaizers, who were the dissenting voice (the minority!) at the Jerusalem Council. As a result, they actually followed Paul wherever he went and tried to steal his

converts and the churches he had planted. They mixed Law and Grace.

v. 1 – Paul doesn't mind reminding them of these things, because getting grounded in doctrine keeps us "safe"

v. 2 – Paul calls these false teachers dogs, evil workers and the concision ("mutilation") – the last term is a play on the word circumcision (i.e. they are only mutilating their bodies, not meriting salvation)

v. 3 – We are the circumcision – we don't just have a symbol of the covenant, we have the reality – and as a result we (1) worship God in spirit, (2) rejoice in Christ, and (3) have no confidence in the flesh (i.e. our flesh is sinful, without any capacity to merit salvation or please God). The Bible has absolutely nothing good to say about the flesh, and yet many people depend entirely on what they can do to please God!

v. 4 – Paul describes his own lofty achievements in Judaism, which were greater than those of the Judaizers, but still did not merit salvation.

v. 6 – "zeal" – the Jews considered zeal to be the highest virtue of religion – Zeal combines love and hate!

v. 7 – Paul uses terms from "accounting" here (i.e. profit and loss statement) – he becomes an "auditor" and discovers that his old life was bankrupt. Everything that he thought was in his "profit" column was actually in his "loss" column! How could a sincere man like Paul be so wrong? Because he was using the wrong measuring stick to evaluate his life! When he looked at others or at himself, Paul felt righteous – but not when he looked at Christ!

v. 9 – Paul lost his own "(self-) righteousness" but he gained Christ's imparted righteousness!

v. 10 – "made conformable unto his death" – Christ died to save sinners, and Paul had that purpose in a lesser sense – he would willingly die!

v. 11 – “if by any means” – “I will do whatever it takes!”

v. 12 – “not as though I had already attained” – the “race” toward Christlikeness begins with a sense of spiritual dissatisfaction!

v. 12 – “follow after” – “press on” – a Greek word used of a sprinter, referring to aggressive, energetic action (i.e. straining every muscle to win)

v. 12 – “apprehend” – “lay hold of” (i.e. capture)

v. 13 – to be distracted by the past debilitates our present efforts / an unsaved person is controlled by the past, but a Christian looks to the future

v. 13 – in Bible terminology, to forget does not mean “to fail to remember” – it means “to no longer be influenced or affected by” (that’s why God can forget our sins!)

Break the power of the past by living for the future. You cannot change your past, but you can change the meaning of your past.

v. 14 – “the mark” – Christlikeness here and now / “the prize” – Christlikeness in Heaven / “high calling” – “upward call”

v. 15 – “perfect” – “mature” / Paul left in God’s hands those who were not pursuing spiritual maturity, because he knew that God would reveal the truth to them eventually even if it meant chastening them

v. 16 – “whereto” – “to the degree that” / “walk by the same rule” – “walk in line” (i.e. stay in line spiritually by progressing in the same principles)

v. 17 – “followers” – “imitators” (Paul was modeling the process to them!) v. 18 – “enemies of the cross” – these people were within the church!

v. 19 – “whose God is their belly” – they followed their fleshly appetites / “whose glory is in their shame” – they boasted about their

sin and abused Christian liberty to defend their behavior

v. 20 – “conversation” – citizenship (we are a “colony of foreigners”) / “look” – “eagerly wait” (waiting patiently, but with great expectation)

v. 21 – “subdue” – the Greek word refers to arranging things in order of rank – Christ has the power both to providentially create natural laws and miraculously overrule them – that’s what He will do at the Rapture!

There is tremendous energy in the present power of a future hope!

- Because Abraham looked for a city, he was content to live in a tent (Heb. 11:13-16).
- Because Moses looked for the rewards of heaven, he was willing to forsake the treasures of earth (Heb. 11:24-26).
- Because of the “joy that was set before Him” (Heb. 12:2), Jesus was willing to endure the cross.
- The fact that Jesus Christ is returning is a powerful motive for dedicated living and devoted service today (“And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure” – 1 John 3:3).

LESSON 25:
Dead Man Living
(Philippians) – Part 4

Paul’s history with the church at Philippi is recounted in Acts 16. He made repeat visits to the Christians there during his later missionary journeys, and a relationship was forged. Years later, when he was taken to Rome as a prisoner awaiting trial before Caesar (at the end of Acts), the Philippian church sent Epaphroditus to do what he could to help the

Apostle. Unfortunately, Epaphroditus suffered a near-fatal illness during the time he was in Rome; after he recovered and brought news of the church to Paul, he returned to Philippi to deliver the Apostle’s letter.

You’ve heard the death row expression “Dead Man Walking”? Well, Paul is a dead man living. He is on the first century equivalent of Death Row at the end of the book of Acts, under house arrest in Rome, and knowing that his only hope of freedom lies in the hands of the despotic Emperor Nero. But you would never know it by the tone of his “prison epistles” (Philippians is the last of these letters to the churches – he writes some personal letters later.) In the middle of the worst circumstances, Paul is unmistakably happy. Why? Because he has learned that the worst circumstances are often the best opportunities for God and the gospel to work!

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Chapter 3 – The secret of joy in spite of opposition is having a spiritual mind

Chapter 4 – The secret of joy in spite of worries is having a secure mind

Paul learned through his trials that joy is much different than happiness. Most people think, “If only I could ...” or “If only someone else would ...” then I could be happy! They have destination disease.

So after people make drastic changes, walk away from marriages, quit decent jobs, switch careers, move across the country, build a new house, buy a new car, or get a great promotion, They still have to live with themselves, so they are still unhappy!

Nowhere in the Bible does God advise us to pursue happiness – because happiness is not a Biblical concept! The word “happiness” is only used 22 times in the Bible (NT – 6X, OT – 16X), and it never means what we have been conditioned to think! In the Bible, “happy”

doesn’t mean, “having everything go my way.” It means, “blessed or favored by God.”

Happiness is extremely vulnerable!

- Happiness wrapped up in people is insecure because people let us down.
- Happiness centered in possessions is unsure because material goods deteriorate and depreciate.
- Happiness based on health is unreliable because time takes its toll on all of us.
- Happiness grounded in social achievement is unpredictable because a new star eventually eclipses you!

Everything we build our happiness on eventually double-crosses us! That is why the world is full of cynical and discouraged people; this is why we live in an age of despair. People have tried everything to attain happiness, and it never lasts! Sinners are basically bored! But in contrast to happiness, the Bible uses the words joy, joyful or rejoice over 160 times. And it teaches us that joy only comes from the Spirit of God living within us!

Happiness is external	Joy is internal
Happiness is temporary	Joy is permanent
Happiness is based on chance	Joy is based on choice
Happiness is based on circumstances	Joy is based on Christ

v. 1 – “Therefore” – what’s it there for? – stand fast because of the future hope mentioned in chapter 3

v. 1 – “stand fast” – Greek term describing a soldier standing at his post

v. 2 – two women, contending for their own opinions and bringing disunity

v. 3 – “yokefellow” – two oxen in a yoke, pulling the same load

v. 4 – Rejoice in the Lord! (“I’ll keep saying it until you get it!”)

v. 5 – “moderation” – “gentleness” (i.e. – mercy or leniency toward the faults and failures of

others; also, refusing to retaliate when mistreated)

v. 6 – “be careful for nothing” – “Don’t worry!” / “careful” – “to be pulled in different directions” (i.e. our hopes pull us one way, our fears pull us the other way, and we are pulled apart!) / old English word means “to strangle”

Don’t worry about anything, but pray about everything! From the spiritual point of view, worry is wrong thinking (the mind) and wrong feeling (the heart) about circumstances, people or things – and it eventually even affects your body! Worry is the greatest thief of joy! And worry is a sin! But the antidote to worry is the secure mind.

v. 7 – “keep” – “garrison, guard like a soldier” – when you have a secure mind, the peace of God guards you (v. 7) and the God of peace guides you (v. 9) – with that kind of protection, why worry?!

v. 8 – we need to think about the right things to have a secure mind

One study indicated that only 8% of the things people worried about were even legitimate matters of concern! The other 92% were either imaginary, never happened, or involved matters over which they had no control.

Whenever we believe a lie, Satan gains a foothold!

“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44).

“Neither give place (“a foothold”) to the devil” (Ephesians 4:27).

v. 10 – the Philippian church wanted to help Paul, but had no opportunity

Paul was not a victim of circumstances, he was a victor in them!

- v. 11 – “I can accept all things”
- v. 13 – “I can do all things”
- v. 18 – “I have all things”

v. 11 – “content” actually means “contained” – we would say “self-sufficient,” having resources within so we do not have to depend on things without

Contentment is not complacency, it is confidence in God!

v. 12 – abased / abound – we need to know how to handle adversity, but we also need to know how to handle prosperity

v. 13 – “I can have strength through Christ who puts power in me!”

v. 14-16 – Paul thanks them again for their help throughout his ministry

v. 17 – “fruit” – “profit” – they were storing up treasure in Heaven!

v. 18-19 – “You met my need, and God is going to meet your need. You met one need that I have, but my God will meet all of your needs. You gave out of your poverty, but God will supply your needs out of His riches in glory!”

v. 22 – If there could be a church in Caesar’s palace what can happen here?