

## **Faith Formation in a Secular World – Brentwood Hills church of Christ, Fall 2018**

Lesson Three: Being Spiritually Mature is More Than Church Attendance – the Challenge of Faith

I need to begin with a slide I hurried over last Wednesday – it is an essential piece to our continuing study:

John 14-16 carefully explains our relationship with the Holy Spirit.

We will not be left alone in our missional calling and purpose

The Spirit of God would come – the paracletos – the One to walk beside us and guide us to peace (shalom).

The “sticky” issue of Aristotelian self-actualization...God is not needed.

Jesus demonstrates to us how to live a life led by the Holy Spirit.

Not possible with ego-centric life – so we each must die...

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20)

Walk not according to the flesh (the ego-centric life) but according to the Spirit. You are living in the realm of the Spirit (Romans 8:1-11)

### **A BRIEF CONSIDERATION OF LAST WEEK’S ASSIGNMENT**

Choose a paradoxical teaching of Jesus and put it to the test: (examples)

Live in such a way that you hold no ill will towards anyone. Resolve...restore...

Rather than retaliating, show acts of generous kindness towards “enemies.”

Help someone in a meaningful way that has nothing to give back...

Put the needs of others ahead of your own.

Purpose? Be more intentional about living out the ways of Jesus.

Over the next few weeks, I want to focus on the foundational biblical concepts of “the way” Jesus initiated.

It is a unique way of life based on this fundamental teaching, “If you would follow me, deny yourself, pick up your cross, and follow me.”

“If you try to save your life, you will lose it. If you will lose your life for my sake and the gospel, you will find it.”

## **REVIEW: WHAT IS FAITH?**

Faith is the belief system by which we organize and live our daily lives.

What thought gets you out of bed in the morning?

What values determine your behavior?

Behavioral psychologists: “Your behavior exposes your beliefs.” You act out your true faith.

Action is initiated from the memory part of your brain, not thinking part.

Educational challenge – how to move knowledge to the deep, memory part of your brain – from which come your habits and impulsive actions.

In common religious terminology we call it moving information from your brain to your heart. This is why “WWJD” doesn’t work – you have to think about it. Training vs. Trying...

## **Faith is a Risk, a Leap. It Is Deeper Than Belief**

“Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.”  
Hebrew 11:1

Conversation with believing Physicist – “faith is that little step from what you know to what you can’t know.”

In our culture, it is a leap across a wide chasm...Give self away for other’s sake? Serve “the nobodies” to find meaningful life? Use your power to empower others? Love and do good to those who seek to hurt you?

Only in a God-bathed world do Jesus’ teachings make sense. We leave to God the work we are not equipped to do (vindicate, judge, punish...).

It is “the faith of leap...” Stepping into a God-saturated world is only possible through “authentic repentance” – turning away from this world’s values.

We choose to step into the adventure of God's kingdom because we know it represents "a surpassing value."

### **Paul's "Faith of Leap"**

Philippians 3

The true "circumcision"

Serve God by God's Spirit – the Spirit-guided life (not self-actuated?)

Who boast in Christ Jesus

Who put no confidence in their own capacities to navigate the world

Do you want to play the "who's best" in the flesh game? I win...

BUT – all that he had gained he gave up for the sake of Christ (?)

NOTE: because of the SURPASSING value of KNOWING Christ Jesus as Lord  
This is the better story!

Kingdom parables of Matthew 13 – sacrifice all? NO – for the greater value!  
This, then, becomes Paul's *telos* (purpose for living) – to be like Jesus

### **New Purpose of Living!**

"I have not yet arrived, I have not yet attained my goal" – what?

"For the reason I was taken hold of my Christ Jesus." Ok, what is this?

"One thing I do – I leave everything behind for this one thing!"

OK PAUL, COME ON. WHAT IS IT THAT YOU ARE STRIVING TO ATTAIN?

"I want to be like Jesus." This is the pattern spoken of in Scripture.

WARNING: There are enemies of the cross. What?

Their destiny is their destruction. Note – their objective for life condemns them.

Their god is their stomach (their ultimate value are their fleshly desires)

Their glory is in their shame (height of irony – wanting more we become less)

Their mind is set on earthly things...

### **New Identity for Life: Citizens of God's Realm!**

This changes everything!

Our identity is "hidden in Christ." We are citizens of God's kingdom.

We eagerly await the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As everything in creation is set right, new heavens, new earth...

FINALLY I WILL BE WHAT I HAVE ASPIRED TO BE! I will be transformed into the image of Christ!  
WHAT A STORY!

But, if we don't want to be like Christ now, why will we want to be like him then? For what do we dream? What is our greatest desire?

C.S. Lewis – our problem is not that we want so much, but that we are satisfied with so little...

### **So, How Do We Claim Our New Identity?**

Next week – the "Master-Narrative." We all live in a "formula of life." The values we hold determine the direction of our lives. There are various "formulas" proposed in our culture – for example – wealth + social status + health = good life.

That which we value most is what gives our life a trajectory. Jesus' formula for the summum bonum is unique.

**Homework:** spend some time taking inventory of your values. Write down what you think they are (should be?). Then consider the economy of your life – where do you spend your energy? What consumes your imagination? What are your deepest anxieties? What do you spend your life pursuing?

If you joined (or have joined) Paul is identifying your highest value being the pursuit of Christ's character in your life, your gifts, your situation – what would be different?