

"Balancing the Christian Life", pt**2**



Growing Together in the Basics

From the Pulpit Ministry of Christ E Free Church
February and April 2016

Jesus Christ

Our Highest Calling

Our Greatest Purpose

Our Soul's Source and Joy

And Our All Consuming Passion

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Introduction" pt2

I hope you have read *Balancing the Christian Life*, pt **1**. In part one we covered what it means and why it is important to balance all areas of the Christian life. We focused on acceptance in Christ and assurance of our salvation; we examined the Holy Trinity, which is God in you, the hope of glory. We learned the importance of prayer at all times and personal Bible study for growth in the faith. We also covered obedience.

This series is not intended to imply that a series of dos and don'ts, checked off at the end of the day, guarantees you are a strong and stable Christian life. But these things are certainly important components of our overall Christian faith relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Join with me again, as we consider some additional aspects of faith practice, that, if heart felt and with the proper motivation, should help nurture, strengthen and deepen your faith journey in Christ.

our Christian Life And Witness

"How Will They Know?"

The Christian Life and Holy Scripture!

April 17, 2016

Text: Mat.28; Acts 1:8; 1 Pet.3

Theme: This lesson speaks directly to the heart of intent and expectation of Christ Himself, upon us as believers.

{ "...and there they continued to preach the gospel."
- Acts 14:7 ESV }

Expressions of solemn testimony have long been important
to the children of God upon the earth.

--Joseph B. Wirthlin

INTRODUCTION

Today, our focus is on "Christian Life and our spiritual conversations and life witness". First, a few questions.

- (1) When was the last time you had a spiritual conversation outside of church?
- (2) How frequently do you typically have spiritual conversations, with those who are unbelievers?
- (3) Are these conversations ever with the same person?

I was thinking this morning of places and opportunities where either I or someone in my family have met another person and had opportunity, to engage in conversation, in just this past week.

¹work, ²classroom, ³gym, ⁴theatre -- We were at the Academy Theatre to see Mary Poppins and the man seated next to me kept mentioning people's names in the play and pointing them out to me. I did not know him nor any of the people he was attempting to point out. Then during intermission we were standing up, stretching out legs and he began engaging me in conversation and it was this man who directed the conversation in a spiritual direction. It was interesting and I was reminded how unexpectedly opportunities present themselves to have spiritual conversations, usually when we least expect it.

Then there were opportunities at the ⁵store, ⁶waiting room for my car repair, and ⁷waiting for the repair man to repair our dryer, in our house.

If we think about it, there are many times within a given week when we meet other people and have opportunities to engage in conversation. Too often we do meet people, and do engage in conversation, but are not thinking about *spiritual* conversation.

Our Christian Life and purpose involves...

CHRIST'S COMMAND - REACH THE WORLD (Mat.28:18-20)

These were some of Jesus' last words to his disciples. Last words stick with us! I can remember my Father's *last words* to my sister before he died; "I want you to know I love you and I appreciate all you are doing for me." I will remember those words as long as I live.

Matthew 28 records Jesus' *last words* to his disciples.

Mat 28:18-20 ESV And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. (19) Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (20) teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

What do we typically refer to this passage as? "The Great Commission."

Great Commission (v19)

These were not necessarily more important than other things Jesus said, but they were his *last words* of instruction to His disciples.

Sometimes we take to Great commission to simply refer to the presentation of the gospel and reaching the world with the "gospel" message. But the Great Commission is to make disciples of all peoples of the whole world.

Jesus words were basically instruction to "go" and engage yourself with others in your surrounding culture or community, in order to relationally connect with them and connect them to Christ, to the degree that they become Christ followers, who will help others follow Christ, and so on.

Live Connecting Relationships

The Disciple-Making Great-Commission involves personal, life-connecting relationship. This is Person-to-person, and life-on-life; connecting with others in order to connect them to Christ and to other Christ followers, the church.

“But I don’t have time to disciple everyone!” That is the response of fear and confusion. NO **ONE** person is expected to do that.

But Every **ONE** is expected to be involved at some level, in making disciples of Christ. Making disciples of Christ, involves connecting relationally at some level with other people. And in order to connect with other people, we have to find ways to **engage**, them in conversation. Conversations are the first way we can engage others in order to make relational connections, to begin the faith nurturing or the disciple making process.

Our life connections are intended to affect...

i) Personal Spiritual Life Change

These are potentially eternity affecting opportunities. So here is our 2016 focus, for the second year.

ONE
CHALLENGE

If Every **ONE**, is praying for Some **ONE**, and connects with Any **ONE**, and brings that **ONE**,
--- *imagine the impact we could make?*

Then we will be obediently involved in the Disciple-making, Great-Commission, world-changing Command and ministry of Jesus Christ. But this won’t happen, unless we **engage** people in conversation at some level.

The goal is to be able to eventually participate in...

ii) Nurturing & encouraging the faith of others

These conversations may be long or short and these relational connections may be either long-term or short-term.

THE STRATEGY FOR REACHING THE WORLD

God's plan to use His followers starts right where you are; at work, in your class, at the theatre, in the store, at the shop, in the library or the gym or with your neighbor in the back yard or the repair man in your home. This could take place anywhere or at any time.

Act 1:8-9 ESV But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in ¹Jerusalem and in all ²Judea and ³Samaria, and to ⁴the end of the earth." (9) And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.

Again, Luke's account of Christ's *last words* to His disciples.

And we are given...

God's Strategy for Equipping

(1) God's Holy Spirit will be our power source. Too often we hold onto the excuse, "I can't do that", which is true. But instead of becoming an excuse not to be obedient in the Great Commission, it should bring us to trust in Him, doing His work, through us as we are obediently proclaiming His message and working together with Him to accomplish His discipleship plan.

(2) Therefore our fear of weakness should drive us to trust in His Purpose, His power and His plan to use us. In our weakness, his strength will be evidenced.^[2Cor.12:10]

Our own personal weakness will not hinder or prevent God's plan. Our fear will not necessarily hinder the Great Commission. But our disobedience will. If we are unwilling, or if we choose to remain silent, or if we choose to refrain from engaging with others around us for the purpose of spiritual relationships, then the Great Commission falls short.

God's Strategy for Reaching

Not only are we given the strategy for equipping the task, but God's Plan to reach the whole world. Person to Person and Community to Community, connections are to be made and the message is to go forward. Like a great stone falling into a pond. The gospel is the stone which splashes into our area and from there the ripples go out, from our Jerusalem (home area), to all Judea which would be like the state), then to Samaria (further out and even to the people we'd rather not have to engage), till the utter most part of the world. This is not a mere place on a map, but a goal to accomplish.

“Foreign or world mission is nothing more than the combined, far-reaching effects of our own personal discipleship efforts.”

Through our personal participation in the Great Commission, our obedience can truly affect the rest of the world, through our witnessing, our engaging others in conversation and our relational connections with others, as we nurture the faith of others.

When Jesus said, “go”, it was the idea of “as you are going... bring others along with you.”

Finally today, we are given ...

DISCIPLE'S CHALLENGE TO SHARE CHRIST.

1Pet. 3:15 ESV but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being *prepared* to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

Jesus must be holy and “lord of All”

That means he has to be Master, Controller, Instructor, Guide and Example.

We Must be “prepared”

We should expect God to use us. We should be ready at any time and at any place, whether at work, in class, at the store or the repair shop. We never know when the opportunity might arise to *engage* some in spiritual conversation.

i) we must be equipped – this means that we understand that we are empowered by the Holy Spirit for this task of obedience, but also that we have been instructed, and purposefully prepared for what to say in order to engage others. We can be trained by others who are more experienced in this area.

Eph 4:10-13 ESV He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) (11) And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, (12) *to equip the saints* for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, (13) until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

ii) we must be Committed – That means we don’t plan to quit or give up if things don’t go as we planned. We should

consider our acts of obedience in this area as fulfilling God's Calling. I should also view this as my own person responsibility.

We can be Courageous for Christ

Keep going, even in times of discouragement, embarrassment and in persecution. The context of this challenge is in the face of Christian persecution.

Act 1:8 ESV But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Acts 1:8 is the promise they would be witnesses. Acts. 8:1 – is the means of scattering the Christians to get them into the world to fulfill that promise.

Act 8:1-4 ESV And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. (2) Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. (3) But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. (4) Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.

The early christians...

i) were scattered while running for their lives (v1,4)

And while they were fleeing for their lives they...

ii) Proclaimed God's word wherever they fled.^[Acts8:4]

We don't have much excuse for our situations or for why we choose not to share Christ, talk about our own faith testimony, or much less urge others to be reconciled to God.(2Cor.5:20)

2Co 5:14-15 For the love of Christ compels us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; (15) and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

“Love of Christ compels us” – either the love Christ has for them, or the love they have for Christ – but that “love” was the compelling force or the deep, inner conviction and the unavoidable and unquenchable motivation which impassioned them to urge others to be reconciled to God. They were witnesses without excuses.

This next chart may help us visualize these steps which we typically consider as being crucial parts of sharing the gospel with others.



ASSIGNMENTS:

ONE CHALLENGE

(1) PRAYER - Every **ONE**, praying for Some **ONE**, and connecting with Any **ONE**, and bringing that **ONE**, - each of us individually, and together-obediently involved in the Disciple-making, Great-Commission, world-changing Command and ministry of Jesus Christ. This is our focus for this year again. Praying and looking for that person and that opportunity God brings into our path.

(2) PREPARE – Prepare your own personal scripture reading or devotions. Start seeing your devotions as not just for yourself, but as preparation for the conversations you will share with others during your day.

(3) ENGAGE - Look for ways to engage others in spiritual conversations. Interact with others and see what kingdom opportunities God brings about for you.

CPR

Evangelism



Helping people step from death to life, by beginning conversations and sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ.



CPR Evangelism is a way to remember how conversations can develop and progress deeper, to the level of spiritual conversation with spiritual receptivity.

C- This level of conversation is focused on Current Events or Items in the news. These are the least intrusive and non-threatening topics for others and opens the doors for further conversation with deeper disclosure. At this level, our attention to things shared in passing may be things to be referred to later when both parties have become more comfortable with the conversation.

P- This level of conversation focuses on a slightly deeper level of conversation with Personal Interests or Life Stories. Many people who are difficult to converse with, will begin to open up and share more, once a question is asked or the opportunity arises for them to share something of personal interest or some experience that was meaningful. Once sharing occurs at this level, a level of trust has been reached where one person feels safe in letting the other person know more of their own personal feelings or perceptions on a given area of life.

R- This is what we might view as the goal of spiritual conversation. This level of conversation focuses on Religious Background or Spiritual beliefs. This level should reveal a person's spiritual state and whether or not he or she is truly a believer in Jesus Christ. Listening at this level will help determine what the person believes, what they have been taught, their upbringing, all of which may be *religious*, but not necessarily *Christian*.

Ev - If the conversation has progressed to a point where you feel the person may be open to hear the actual gospel message, then this is the level of looking for opportunity to share the gospel message and perhaps seek a response of some kind, but only if the Lord has opened his or her heart.

Engage. This is key.

(4) CONNECT - As a church, our mission is: “to connect with others, in order to connect them to Christ and to other Christ followers, the church. This is relational connections. This can happen at the office desk, the work table, the store or any other place where we might meet and speak with others.

This is not just for the “church” as a whole. This has to take place on the individual level. In order to connect with others, we **MUST** *engage* them in some way.

QUESTION: What are you personally doing to Engage others in spiritual conversations? How might I begin to connect better with others in conversation?



our Christian Life And Stewardship

"On Loan From God"

The Christian Life, Balancing the Basics

April 24, 2016

Text: 2Cor.9:7; 2Cor.8:1-6; Prov.19:17; Acts 2:41; 4:31

“.. God loves a cheerful giver...”
- 2 Cor.9:7b

Responsible stewardship is not merely how a person spends their money, but how they view that which has been entrusted to them, for a greater purpose.

-R. Journey

INTRODUCTION

This Lesson today, assumes and necessitates the Lordship of Christ in every area of the believer's life. Serving, Giving, God focused

Living. Your life is a gift from God. How will you be a good steward of that life? Stewardship is not a word we hear very much anymore. Christian Stewardship might be viewed as things we have, as being “on loan from God”.

We can say that Christian stewardship is faithfully using that which God has given us charge over, for His kingdom purposes.

Giving is asking “what does God deserve?” My all. My best. It involves Old Testament tithes, and what God required to be given. Old Testament offerings, which were what you were expected to give.

New Testament giving however, is typically a broader concept. It is more of giving as you feel moved to give, with the motivation that God is worthy of all that we are and have. Giving is part of stewardship.

2Co 9:7 ESV Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

The New Testament idea of giving seems more of our heart being aligned with God’s heart and as a result, using the resources He has given us, in a manner that please Him most.

Giving is the use of that which belongs to you - - finances, resources and possession on behalf of others, for the purposes of God. Giving requires a compassionate heart toward others and a submitted spirit toward God.

Some barriers to giving may be selfishness, faithlessness, fearfulness, or simple sinfulness. So some goals for this lesson from Scripture are:

- (1) To identify whether or not we are good stewards of what God has placed in our possession.
- (2) To consider whether or not there are any barriers in our giving to the Lord and taking steps toward breaking those barriers down.
- (3) To evaluate whether or not I need to grow and change in this area of stewardship. You may be one of those “cheerful givers”, that pleases God. You may be one who is the example of joyfully trusting God, as you give to others. Or you might learn, as I am learning, how I can be more responsible and faithful in my stewardship of what God has entrusted into my care.

Christian Giving Involves ...

GIVING OF OURSELVES FIRST TO GOD

This is where Christian giving has to start, by giving ourselves first, to God. This means we realize that God wants our heart to be aligned with His heart. It is our heart, our motives, attitude and spirit that He uses or impresses, in order to move us to take what He has given us, and use it for someone else’s benefit and His own purpose.

Question: Is my heart aligned with God’s heart?

It is important to realize that...

You can’t Out give God

There is no promise that if you give \$20 to the Lord’s work that He will replenish your bank account or will give you double that in return. But, if God is moving you to give, then He is preparing to use you in a special way, in His divine plan. God owns everything. Our possessions are His. We are like His dispensing agents.

The church of Corinth was in need and other churches supplied those needs.

2Cor. 8:1-6 We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, (2) for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. (3) For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, (4) begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints-- (5) and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. (6) Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace.

Christians giving to help other Christians is one way God provides for those who are growing or who are doing God's work and yet find themselves in need. In this case, they gave themselves "first to the Lord" and then to those in need. Their hearts were first aligned with God's heart, then their hearts of compassion were open for those in need.

Christian giving involves giving of yourself first to God, as a sort of "consecration of one's self to God, so as to align one's heart and motive with Gods'

(1) Interestingly, they gave out of their own poverty. It was not just, "Oh, I have \$20, so I can only let you have "\$2". But more like, "All I have is \$20 and here it all is." The idea is not that they had a nice savings account to fall back on. These were hard times. Notice the description of the church.

v.2) "severe" test of affliction - "Extreme" poverty.

(2) Note also the attitude and motivation of their giving. They gave out of their “abundant” joy and their “richness” of generosity. These folks may have been poverty stricken lacking in the things of life, but they were wealthy in joy and generosity. It doesn’t say they spent it frivolously. But they were giving to the needs of the Lord’s people and for the Lord’s work.

(3) And in that situation, they were “begging” to help. They knew they couldn’t out give God and it was for a good purpose.

James 1:17 ESV Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

We need to know that when we give to God for God’s purposes, we lose nothing, because all that we give belongs to God. We are stewards of what God has given to us. All we have, we have, we must realize is a gift from God, on loan from God to use, as He leads and directs.

You can’t Hold back from God

Some have a spiritual giftedness of giving. Romans speaks of the Spiritual gift of giving.

Rom 12:6-9 ESV Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; (7) if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; (8) the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. (9) Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.

With this gift, the Holy Spirit leads, impresses, and frees some people to give quite generously, seemingly to know the genuine

and specific needs of some. Just because you don't think you have the gift of giving or contributing, doesn't mean you are free from the ministry of giving.

God gives us things, and then holds us accountable as to how we use those gifts. We can't hold back from God. When our hearts are aligned with His, and when He tells us to give, then we give because we are convinced it is God's will.

2 Cor.8:5 and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.

GIVING OF OUR POSSESSIONS – money, groceries, gifts

Often times giving to the Lord involves giving directly to the needs of others, “In the name of the Lord”. Not only do we give to the “church” but individuals can give to individuals in need, in the name of the Lord.

Pro 19:17 ESV Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his deed.

Pro 3:27 ESV Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it.

Giving and helping others does not gain us salvation, but may be a measure of it. And done in the right spirit and with the right motives, may be rewarded one day when the Lord rewards those who are His own. (cp.2Cor.5:10; Mat.5:12; Lk.6:4)

Mat 25:33-40 ESV And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. (34) Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. (35)

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, (36) I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' (37) Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? (38) And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? (39) And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' (40) And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

As we read above, giving and helping others in need is an important priority in the heart of God. These things do not earn salvation, but they can certainly demonstrate salvation, as it did in the conversion of the heart of Zacchaeus. ^[Lk.19:9]

Christian Giving Must Be...

Giving By Faith

When it comes down to giving to God, for the benefit of others, Christian giving must be giving by faith. The early Christians often gave what they had so that other Christians could be provided for, through the sacrifice of others.

Act 2:41-47 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (42) And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. (43) And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. (44) And all who believed were together and had all things in common. (45) And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. (46) And day by day, attending

the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, (47) praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

They were giving generously and giving by faith, having to trust God for their own needs.

Act 4:31-37 And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness. (32) Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. (33) And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. (34) There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold (35) and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. (36) Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, (37) sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

At the very beginning, the early church was characterized by compassionate hearts and generous, selfless giving. And in this context, God's blessings were magnanimously experienced. The Apostle Paul himself, was supported by the churches giving to him, so that he stated...

Php 4:18-20 ESV I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you

sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. (19) And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. (20) To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

He acknowledges that when we give by faith, we can trust God for our own needs. It does not indicate that He will always give bundles, but that our needs will be met.

Christian Giving Must Be.....

Giving of the First fruits (gross)

Your very first and your very best.

Pro 3:9 ESV Honor the LORD with your ¹wealth and with the ²firstfruits of all your produce;

(1) Wealth here, seems to refer to money in general or to our overall stewardship management. (2) “first fruits” refers to giving to God off the top. It refers to Giving Your very best to the Lord. Not the left overs. I believe it can also apply to our giving today.

Sometimes, we tend to give God the leftovers, if there is any. We take the gross pay, then pay our taxes, then we pay our bills, then our investments, then buy our toys, and then our pleasures and by the end of things, if there is anything left, it might get given to the Lord.

Or people give to others, what they themselves don’t really want. They will give away an old broken couch only when they get a new one for themselves.

Twice I have tried to help people get some better tires for their car. I have asked for help with donation of old, used, but decent car tires. And twice the same person called me as told me to send the

person to a particular tire store and there will be 4 new tires waiting for them, paid in full, mounted and balanced.

What a generous attitude. What a heart of compassion for others. That is giving to the Lord.

God's people have always given their 1/10 tithes, or their free will offerings, their gifts, to the Lord. It is what God's people have always done, those who view their money, and possessions as Gifts from God, on loan from God. And they view themselves as stewards of the things God has given to them, to help others, according to His will.

Christian Giving Involves ...

GIVING OF YOUR TIME AND SKILLS time, abilities, effort

This is still giving to others. This would be time, effort, abilities, and skills, know-how, counsel or advice.

Christian Giving means there may be ...

No money, but still giving

Giving can be by donating time – ability, repair work, helps, behind the scenes. Our ACTION group will be doing this next weekend; serving, helping, giving of time and efforts on behalf of others. It can be by donating time around the church, cleaning the facility, answering phones so when people call they don't just get a machine. Giving can be providing child care for someone who needs it, but cannot afford it. Even visiting others or providing transportation to the doctor or grocery store can be opportunities to "give" in the name of the Lord.

What makes my day is when I visit someone and they tell me, "Oh so-and-so was just here just a couple of days ago. OR "someone

brought me by a plate of cookies”. That thrills me. People giving of their time and skills for others.

ILL) We used to have a single mom in our church who was very poor, and I didn’t know what she did or didn’t give. But she would go around the neighborhood and pick up children for our Kids Klub meetings. She didn’t have to drive far, but she had a big, old Buick that could hold a lot of kids. That was her way of giving of herself, time ability for the Lord. She got a lot of kids to Kids Klub that otherwise would not have been there.

Christian Giving means a heart of...

Love, compassion, mercy, joy, and honor towards others.

It means that all things are Given :

- 1) for compassion to the needy,
- 2) for the glory of the Almighty,
- 3) For the sake of ministry.

Luk 6:34-38 ESV And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. (35) But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. (36) Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. (37) "Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; (38) give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."

Notice, this is not referring to giving only money, but giving of mercy, justice, fairness, forgiveness, compassion and love.

I don't believe in the prosperity gospel teachings. But does seem to me that the Lord is saying, you give in My name, you sacrifice the things I have given you for the sake of God's kingdom work, and for the needs of others, and God is going to reward you for that. It does not specifically say how, but He will.

Give and it will be given to you. Use what God has given you, for the purpose which He has given it, and when you do, He will reward, and replenish. He will not give for your own personal gain, but because of your obedience and the motives of your kingdom service.

Some people say, "I can't afford to give". Well I think, we can't afford *not* to give to the Lord.

Listen to what Malachi 3:8 says.

Mal 3:8-12 **ESV** Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, 'How have we robbed you?' In your tithes and contributions. (9) You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. (10) Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. (11) I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the LORD of hosts.

This is specifically given to Gods' people the Jews. But I can't help but see God's general character, and good pleasure in this passage.

1) Forsake your giving to the Lord, and you may find yourself under a curse.

2) But Give (v.10) – Put God first and put God to the test. See what God will do. Don't forsake your giving; your tithes; your offerings; your giving to those in need. And God will open the windows of heaven and pour out blessings, - this is God's personal Provision

v.11) And I will rebuke the devourer for your sake, so that the fruit from the soil and from the vine will not fail to produce – this is God's Protection. One side is God giving you what you need. The other side is God preventing you from being in need. That car keeps on running. That dryer keeps on drying. Sacrificial giving, firmly trusting in the Lord and we will experience Him a we never have.

“But Jeff, didn't you just have to have to get a new dryer?” We sure did. But quite honestly, we are not broke; We have not given our last \$50 to help another person. Those are the situations I believe He is referring to. God is not promising that you'll never have to spend any more money. But that He will provide more and protect more and will make that little bowl of oil, and the little container of flour last longer and go further than you had imagined.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Your life is a gift from God. How will you be a good steward of that life?

ONE
CHALLENGE

There are 168 hours in a week. How will we be stewards of those hours? You make \$_____.00 each week. How will you be a good steward of God's funds?

Responsibly caring for and using what God has given to us on loan is important. Jesus even told a parable to teach just such a lesson.

Mat 25:14-31 ESV "For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. (15) To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. (16) He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. (17) So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. (18) But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. (19) Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. (20) And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.' (21) His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' (22) And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.' (23) His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' (24) He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, (25) so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' (26) But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? (27) Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with

interest. (28) So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. (29) For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. (30) And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

All that God gives, belongs to Him.

168 hours in a week. If we tithed 1/10 of our time, that would be 16.8 hours a week, set aside and completely dedicated, specifically to the Lord. Prayer and Devotional time; time serving him in some area of ministry; connecting with others in the name of Christ, for evangelism, humanitarian or community needs.

\$ _____.00 a week. How will you be stewards of those funds?

What kind of steward are you with your home? Your time?
Your possessions?

Oh, Lord, help us be good stewards of all your gifts! For your honor, and glory and name sake, Amen!

Php 4:18-20 ESV I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. (19) **And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.** (20) To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.



Our Christian Life and Fellowship

"How Sweet It Is"

Theme: The Christian Life and
the treasure of Fellowship

June 19, 2016

Text: A Variety

{ "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin." --1 John 1:7 (ESV) }

Good fellowship and friendship are lasting,
rational andd manly pleasures.

--William Wycherley

INTRODUCTION

As Evangelical Christians, there are some parts of our faith and

practice which are non-negotiables and rightly so. Evangelism is a non-negotiable. Authority of Scripture is a non-negotiable. Prayer is a non-negotiable. Worship is a non-negotiable. But when it comes to Christian *fellowship*, our commitment seems to shift to *negotiable*.

This old hymn reflects a healthy view of fellowship.

“Blest Be the Tie that Binds”

John Fawcett, the Psalter Hymnal

Blest be the tie that binds
our hearts in Christian love;
the fellowship of kindred minds
is like to that above.

Before our Father's throne
we pour our ardent prayers;
our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,
our comforts and our cares.

We share our mutual woes,
our mutual burdens bear,
and often for each other flows
the sympathizing tear.

Christian fellowship is intended to be, ‘oh so sweet’ and meaningful experience, based on our Christian faith and relationships.

Psa 133:1-3 (ESV) . Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity! (2) It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes! (3) It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion! For there the LORD has commanded the blessing, life forevermore.

Some say, “I don’t have to go to church to be a Christian.” “I would like to be a Christian, but I don’t care to be around other Christians.” These are excuses some people use to stay away from Church gatherings. To be honest I see that attitude as being one that is “self-focused” and is “self-deluded”. Those seem to think that it is everyone else that messes up the church, but not themselves. They seem to think that it is everyone else that causes problems, while they view themselves as the model for everyone else to follow.

The church is nothing less than a group of redeemed people, with lots of problems. Yet in the process of being resolved; even with sinful practices. We are in the process of being sanctified or purified. Yes we are imperfect and yet on the journey of being perfected by the grace of God. And it is these imperfect people who are called to live together, in Christian fellowship.

I thought I knew more about Christian fellowship than I really did. As I was studying and preparing for this lesson, I realized that “Christian fellowship” is better described, than defined.

This morning we will consider the definition of Fellowship, but will spend more time considering the various descriptions of how fellowship took place and how it was experienced in the early

church. We will also be looking at various categories of how the term “*Christian fellowship*” is used.

So what is ***Fellowship***? Fellowship is not drinking coffee and eating cookies. However, food and refreshments are often opportunities where fellowship can begin to take place. Jesus and His disciples often attended gatherings, ate at banquets and developed fellowship, as did the early church.

Acts 2:42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship , to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Biblical Definition: Fellowship relates to *partnership*; that is, joint participation, intimate social *interaction*; to communion; a sharer;

Christian faith: Fellowship refers to the deep things of the faith that are shared, felt and experienced – (when things are working well). This fellowship is based on location, togetherness and/or experience.

SCRIPTURE ABOUNDS with references, both direct and indirect, which pertains to Christians, gathering as a church as a congregation or assembly; to meet, pray, live, love, serve, worship, encourage and admonish the overall church. This kind of relational connection and interaction necessitates human beings, gathering together to accomplish these things.

Social media is not bad or wrong, but must not be allowed to become a replacement for or the norm for *fellowship*. On Facebook, you just *unfriend* someone. On TV church, you just change channels and hop to another preacher that tells you what you'd rather hear. There is no threat of intrusion with that and

there is little if any, accountability.

Today we will consider 3 aspects of Christian fellowships.

FIRST, FELLOWSHIP IS RELATIONAL

There is no escaping this fact.

koinōnia is *fellowship* = referring to the relationship

This is the act or environment of fellowship. True Biblical fellowship is experienced in Spiritual relationships.

If we are unsure as to what constitutes a “relationship” here is what the dictionary says.

RELATIONSHIP is the way in which two or more people, countries or organizations, regard, behave or communicate toward each other. Relationships can be good or bad; functional or dysfunctional; meaningful and pleasant; unfriendly and hostile; stressfully one sided or pleasantly reciprocal.

1Jn.1:3 that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have **fellowship** with us; and indeed our **fellowship** is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

Christian *fellowship* refers to meaningful, relational, spiritual connections; a sharing of the deep things of the Christian faith.

Christian Fellowship has Jesus at its core

This is not fellowship shared by soldiers who fought in the same war or women who bowl in the same league. Christian fellowship has Jesus at its core and central focus.

1Cor.1:9 God is faithful, by whom you were called into the **fellowship** of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Our fellowship is based on Jesus Christ. It is experienced through our relationships, because of Jesus.

Christian fellowship has others at our side

Fellowship is not experienced alone. For good or for bad, it takes place with others at our side.

Acts 2:42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the **fellowship**, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

And you'd better believe the devil hates this one. God's people loving and enjoying, deep, meaningful, fulfilling peaceful relationships. Satan's going to do whatever he can and whatever it takes, to thwart this kind of fellowship.

Conflict, frustration, misunderstandings, self-focused ideas, attitudes and lifestyles – these are all things Satan uses to keep Christians a bit at odds with one another – just slightly distanced - minutely irritated and mildly confused about the relationship. As a result, fellowship is thwarted. He knows the power of fellowship, so he also knows the power of unresolved offenses and has many great ideas for how to plant subtle seeds of discord and disunity.

Fellowship is not something we experience alone, but happens when we connect with other Christians in relational development.

FELLOWSHIP IS RELATIONAL.

Other words connecting with fellowship:" IN COMMON "

Acts 2:44 And all who believed were together and had all things **in common**.

Acts 4:32 Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything **in common**.

Titus 1:4 To Titus, my true child **in a common** faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

Because Fellowship is relational, that means....

SECONDLY, FELLOWSHIP IS INVOLVEMENT WITH OTHER HUMANS

True fellowship is people oriented.

Koinonos = a partner or participant— *referring to the person (human), who is experiencing Koinonia (fellowship).*

Other words connecting with fellowship: “TOGETHERNESS”

Acts 16:13 And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come **together**.

Acts 20:7 On the first day of the week, when we were gathered **together** to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight.

In our spiritual relationships...

God joins us together In Christ,

Through faith in Christ, we are joined together as a *body*.

Eph.2:21 in whom the whole structure, being joined **together**, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. (22) In him you also are being built **together** into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

The church of Jesus Christ, together, is referred to as a *temple*. This indicates that together, we are a dwelling place of God.

Eph.4:16 [Christ] from whom the whole body, joined and held **together** by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part

is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Here the church of Jesus Christ, together, is referred to as a *body*. Many Christians together form the body of Christ.

The church cannot exist or serve as we were intended to, if we isolate ourselves from one another. Yes it is easier to stay at home and surf the religious channels and go to TV church. But you will not mature that way. You will not grow that way. Growth occurs when what we know is tested by how we love and get along with others.

The Early church met and gathered together

Christians chose to meet together as a congregation and experienced deep and meaningful *sweet* fellowship.

They gathered and prayed together

Before there was any written indication that they were encouraged or instructed to pray together, that became their practice.

Acts 1:14 All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, **together** with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

Acts 4:31 And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered **together** was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

Acts 12:12 When he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered **together** and were praying.

They socialized and ate together

Acts 2:46 And day by day, attending the temple **together** and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,

Yes, The church had challenges.

As a congregation, where there are personalities, there are always challenges. In the early church, there were differences and divisions among brothers and sisters in Christ.

1Cor.11:18 For, in the first place, when you come **together** as a church, I hear that there are **divisions** among you

Differences need not become divisions. But loving, forgiving, being patient with one another and remaining unified, is a growing process. This in part, is how we mature as Christians.

There were relational challenges

Gal.5:26 Let us not become conceited, provoking **one another**, envying **one another**.

Gal.5:15 But if you bite and devour **one another**, watch out that you are not consumed by **one another**.

There was also growing fellowship forming

1Cor.12:26 If one member suffers, all suffer **together**; if one member is honored, all rejoice **together**.

Gal.6:2 Bear **one another's** burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

So the early church was not any more perfect than we are today. They needed help and instruction to work out their differences. There were many relational challenges.

THIRDLY, FELLOWSHIP REFERS TO THAT WHICH IS SHARED

Scripture refers to experiencing Christian fellowship as they gave of their tithes and offerings, in order to contribute to the needs of others.

2Cor. 9:13 ESV By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the [**generosity of your contribution**] for them and for all others,

Paul commends the Christians in Corinth for their good faith and promised offering, for which Paul was sending other brothers and servants to collect from the Corinthians. The “generosity or your contribution” can be translated, “liberal distribution (KJV), or more literally, your “sincere fellowship”.

Koinos = shared or common; not common as in ordinary, but common as referring to belonging to the same thing or sharing the same thing.

Fellowship in our Relationship with Christ

Christian fellowship is experienced when gathering together in our shared relationship with Christ.

i. The Gathering of believers on earth -

Heb.10:25 not neglecting to meet **together**, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

This refers to the Christian fellowship we experience while on earth. But it points to a greater fellowship we will have in another gathering.

ii. The gathering of the Church in the air

This is referred to as the believer's blessed Hope.

Tit 2:13 ESV waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

1Th 4:17-18 ESV Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. (18) Therefore encourage **one another** with these words.

Fellowship in our ministry with one another

One thing that can build and establish fellowship among otherwise disconnected Christians is in the ministry of the gospel.

Serving and caring for the saints

Php.4:3 Yes, I ask you also, *true companion*, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel **together** with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

They experienced Sharing in the sufferings of Christ.

Php 3:10 ESV that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may ***share his sufferings***, becoming like him in his death,

The knitting together of one Christian's spirit with another

2Cor.13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the **fellowship of the Holy Spirit** be with you all.

They experienced deep, meaningful fellowship as together, they reached the lost for Christ.

Php 1:3-5 ESV I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, (4) always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, (5) because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

Some other “**ONE ANOTHER**” references, indicating the need and value of God’s people to meet together, as human to human, at same place and same time, face to face, person to person, eye to eye.

Lev.25:17 You shall not wrong **one another**, but you shall fear your God, for I am the LORD your God.

Pro.27:17 Iron sharpens iron, and **one** man sharpens **another**.

Zec.7:9 "Thus says the LORD of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to **one another**,

Zec.8:16 These are the things that you shall do: Speak the truth to **one another**; render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace;

Mal.3:16 Then those who feared the LORD spoke with **one another**. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name.

They were encouraging one another in the faith and in their relationship with God.

Another word connected with Fellowship is **“EACH OTHER”**

Luk 24:17 And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with **each other** as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad.

Rom.1:12 that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by **each other's** faith, both yours and mine.

* One thing that can build and establish fellowship among otherwise disconnected Christians is ministry. Yes, there are an abundance of opportunities to clash and become frustrated as you minister with others. But the opportunity of true, meaningful fellowship that can be experience while serving the Lord together, is worth it!

Drawing hearts together. Building meaningful, Christ-focused relationships - that is the fellowship that is available for the body of Christ. **“HOW SWEET IT IS”**

Leaning On the Everlasting Arms

Elisha A. Hoffman

What a fellowship, what a joy divine,
Leaning on the everlasting arms;
What a blessedness, what a peace is mine,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

ONE
CHALLENGE

ASSIGNMENTS:

What is your view of the church? What is your present level of “fellowship” or participation in the church family? Are you satisfied with that?

For deeper, more meaning fellowship....

(I) Begin to note of the needs or interests of other Christians around you.

Php 2:3-4 ESV Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. (4) Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

A great fellowship quencher is to always be talking about yourself; quick to share your own experiences or to make your opinions known.

2 illustrations about fellowship.

(1) Christian Fellowship is a little like a *house of cards*: it doesn't happen by accident and it takes effort. If you long to share your own thoughts and feelings - others feel the same way. You want someone to listen to your story, - others are also hoping for someone to listen to their story as well.

(2) We might say Christian fellowship is a *two way street*. In order for fellowship to take place and be meaningful to all parties, it must be others focused and purposefully reciprocal in nature. I'd say the more you are interested in the lives of others, the more meaningful your Christian fellowship will become.

(II) Begin to connect more with people in your church family. Begin to take part in more opportunities for church family life.

Again, fellowship doesn't happen by accident or automatically. It takes effort. And lots of it.

If you are looking for deeper, more meaningful relationships within the church family, then (1) consider getting connected to a ministry team and begin serving the Lord together with a few others. This will both, encourage you, as well as challenge you. Working together, in service for Christ, for the sake of the lost world has a way of building a team spirit, while tearing down a self-focused perspective and petty attitude.

Or (2) consider meeting together and praying with a few others in the church family. Consider devoting yourself to your local church prayer meeting. It will build you up and you will be used to build others up as well.

Building Christian fellowship is risky. You risk disappointment; you risk frustration. But sweetness and blessing in Christian fellowship is worth taking relational risks. And once you experience that sweetness in deep, trusting, meaningful, reciprocal Christian relationships you will never be satisfied with anything less. Christian fellowship is God's desire for the church.

"How SWEET It Is"

Other, "**TOGETHER**" passages:

Rom.15:30 I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive **together** with me in your prayers to God on my behalf,

1Cor.1:2 To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints **together** with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:

Eph.2:5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive **together** with Christ—by grace you have been saved—

Col.2:13 And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive **together** with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses,

Additional “**EACH OTHER**” passages

Gen.13:11 So Lot chose for himself all the Jordan Valley, and Lot journeyed east. Thus they separated from **each other**.

Exo.18:7 Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and bowed down and kissed him. And they asked **each other** of their welfare and went into the tent.

Luk.24:32 They said to **each other**, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?"

Acts 7:26 And on the following day he appeared to them as they were quarreling and tried to reconcile them, saying, 'Men, you are brothers. Why do you wrong **each other**?'

Acts 15:39 And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from **each other**. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus,

Col.3:13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving **each other**; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

Some other “**ONE ANOTHER**” references, indicating the need and value of God’s people to meet together, as human to human, at

same place and same time, face to face, person to person, eye to eye.

Joh.13:34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love **one another**: just as I have loved you, you also are to love **one another**. Joh_13:35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for **one another**."

Rom.12:10 Love **one another** with brotherly affection. Outdo **one another** in showing honor.

Rom.12:16 Live in harmony with **one another**. Do not be haughty [toward one another], but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.

1Cor.12:25 that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for **one another**.

2Cor.13:11 Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort **one another**, agree with **one another**, live in peace [with one another]; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

1Th.5:11 Therefore encourage **one another** and build **one another** up, just as you are doing.

1Th.5:15 See that you not repay one another evil for evil, but always seek to do good to **one another** and to everyone.

Heb.3:13 But exhort **one another** every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Heb.10:24 And let us consider how to stir up **one another** to love and good works,

Heb.10:25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging **one another**, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Jas.5:16 Therefore, confess your sins to **one another** and pray for **one another**, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

1Pe.4:8 Above all, keep loving **one another** earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

1Pe.4:9 Show hospitality to **one another** without grumbling.

1Jn.1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with **one another**, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.



Our Christian Life and Worship

"Lifestyle or Scheduled Obligation"

Communion

June 26, 2016

Theme: The Christian Life and the value of Worship

Text: A Variety

{ "God is spirit, and those who worship him
must worship in spirit and truth "
-- John 4:24 ESV }

"Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and
power, for you created all things, and by your will
they existed and were created."
--unnamed heavenly creatures (Rev 4:11)

INTRODUCTION

What is God worth to you? If freedom of religion was removed, would you continue to worship? What does it take for you to worship God meaningfully?

Today, our focus is on worship. The title of today's message is "Worship: Lifestyle or Obligation". And our main idea today, is "Worship is giving to God all that He alone, is worthy to receive."

If we lost our building; would we still worship? If we lost our sound system would we still be able to worship? If we lost our air conditioning, would we still gather to worship? (*getting tougher*)

"The history of mankind will probably show that no people has ever risen above its religion, and man's spiritual history will positively demonstrate that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God." A.W. Tozer, The Knowledge of the Holy

If we entertain low ideas about God, it will result in low faith, low value of God, and low worship or praise to God.

Where do we get the proper ideas, knowledge and understanding about God? From His own revelation of Himself to His creation – *the Bible*. Likewise, a low value of the Bible as absolute Truth, will result in a low understanding of who God is and what He is like, which in turn will result in lower worship.

<p>Psa 29:1-2 ESV (1) Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. (2) Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.</p>

Our statement to remember this morning is: “TRUE WORSHIP IS A LIFESTYLE, NOT AN OBLIGATION”.

WHAT IS WORSHIP?

Worship is giving to God all that He alone is worthy to receive. And please follow along as we attempt to grasp this all important concept more clearly.

Worship is an act of the will.

Scripture teaches us that worship is not merely a feeling or state of mind or good intentions. It is action. Worship without expression is incomplete worship. Like ‘*faith without works is dead*’, so worship without expression is incomplete.

Worship Defined: In the Old Testament worship focuses around words meaning; to bow down, or crouch, or to fall down flat. It can mean – to revere, give supreme honor, deepest admiration, and/or sincere adoration; to place highest value on a person or object.

In the original New Testament Greek language: – the word for worship refers to paying homage; outside the Bible, the same word is used to refer to a dog licking his master’s hand; the idea of adoration. Worship involves emotional feelings, mental recognition, and active expression.

<p>Rom 12:1 ESV I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to [present] your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and <i>acceptable</i> to God, which is your spiritual <i>worship</i>.</p>

To “*present*” can be a mindset. The fact that the body is referred to, indicates the expectation of some kind of action, to be expressed.

Heb 12:28 ESV Therefore let us be [grateful] for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God *acceptable worship*, with reverence and awe,

Being *grateful* may be a motive for true worship. Reverence and Awe are the manner in which worship is to be offered. While worship itself, seems to be more of an active demonstration of supreme admiration.

Worship is a deserved Attitude

As we read Scripture, we see that worship is an attitude which should result in an appropriate action.

Referring to idols God said...

Exo 20:5 ESV You shall not *bow down* (*action*) to them or serve them(*action*), for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, [worship; prostrate; homage]

If we view God in a lowly manner; or if we view him only as a higher form of what we will one day become; then we view passages like the first 3 commandments as rather selfish, egotistical, or demanding. But if we view God by what we know from Scripture; and if we believe that Scripture to be holy, inspired, inerrant Truth, and authoritative from its Source, then we may see things a bit differently – we may even view God differently.

God's revelation of Himself in Scripture indicates that He is to be first, because He *is* First. He is creator. He is the beginning and the end of all things. He creates life. He limits life. He gives life. He takes away life. He is the source of all that has been created.

Everything lives, because God gives it life. Everything functions, because God causes it to function.

HE is Creator. He is sustainer. Planets spin, because God causes them to spin. Hearts beat because God causes them to beat. He is Savior. He is Ruler of Heaven and Earth and Lord of all.

Therefore, He has the right to do what He pleases with what He has created. He alone is the Source of all things, so He alone has the right and authority to expect His creation to be used for what He created it for.

And if God has made all that is, to honor, glorify and worship Him, then so be it. That is our purpose and lot in this life. So the first 3 commandments are not merely what God *desires* and *demand*s for Himself – they are what He alone *deserves*, because of who He is and what He has done.

Worship can occur when praying and praising the Lord

Neh 8:6 And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and **worshiped** the LORD with their faces to the ground.

Worship can occur when reading or hearing the Word of God

Neh 9:3 And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the LORD their God for a quarter of the day; for another quarter of it they made confession and **worshiped** the LORD their God.

Sometimes we refer to the prayer at the beginning of the “worship service” as the “Invocation”. Traditionally this was viewed as a time when one who opened in prayer, called on the name of the Lord both in praises as well as in prayer for help. It was a way in

which the name of the Lord was invoked or the presence of the Lord was so sought, that the invocation was seen as a time when God was invited to move as He saw fit.

We worship God, because...

GOD IS CREATOR & CAUSE OF ALL THAT EXISTS

Holy Scripture reveals that God is the Creator of all.

<p>Gen 1:1 ESV In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.</p>
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As Creator, God is...

The Uncaused Cause

Aristotle 384-322BC: Aristotle was known as “*the man who knew everything*”, because of his rigorous attempt to apply systematic, scientific examination to every area of human thought and knowledge. He wrote of the **unmoved mover** or “that which moves without being moved”. This was a monotheistic concept advanced by Aristotle, who was a polytheist. Therefore he did not identify this “unmoved mover” as God, but as an undefined source and the primary cause or “mover” of all the motion in the universe. As is implicit in the name, the “unmoved mover” moves other things, but is not itself moved by any prior action. (In Book 12 (Greek “*Λα*”) of his *Metaphysics*,)

Between 1225-1274, Thomas Aquinas formulated Aristotle’s argument of the “unmoved mover”, in claiming that there must be something to explain why the Universe exists. Since the Universe could, under different circumstances, conceivably *not* exist, then its existence must have a cause.

Aquinas took Aristotle's argument referring to the "unmoved mover", which focused on the **HOW**, and carried it beyond the how and asked "**WHY**?" "How" inferring there was a way in which it all took place. But "**WHY**" now infers that more than a way, there must also be a motive, a reason, and purpose for its existence. Now we are talking about Mind, intellect, intent and even preference in it all.

In other words, even if the Universe has always existed, it still owes its existence to an Uncaused Cause, Aquinas further said: "...and this Cause, we understand to be God."

Col 1:15-17 ESV (15) He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. (16) For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things were created through him and for him. (17) And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

God as Creator and Cause is...

The Motive for Worship

Not only is there a "HOW?" associated with creation, indicating a power and force beyond that which was created. But with the realization that there is also a "WHY?", we are faced with living in a manner so as to seek to fulfill the reason and purpose for which we were created. Answering HOW, satisfies our curiosity. While answering the question, "Why", seeks to identify and please the WHO of creation.

If all of creation can be answered by How, then creation itself is to be worshipped. But if creation can also be answered by Why, then the creative act can be admired, but ultimately it must be attributed to a "Cause" or **Creator**, even more, the Creator will be worshiped

and forever praised for the purpose and intent and meaning for which it created. Now the creation has reason to worship the Creator.

Rom 1:25 ESV because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creation, rather than the Creator, who is forever blessed! Amen.

They had the **HOW**, but not the **WHY**. God is the Source and Cause of all that exists. That includes each and every one of us.

The planets display the glory of God and speak out His handiwork. They display the work of the Creator. They have purpose and they attest to a Creator. But planets cannot worship the Creator. That is our opportunity.

Worship is a **feeling experienced** by the heart and an **action expressed** by the will. We have purpose, and our purpose is just that, to Worship the Creator who is forever blessed. Revelation 4:11 addresses the question of “Why”.

Rev 4:11a ESV "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power..."

WHY?

Rev 4:11b ESV " ... for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."

Have you worshipped God today, through the feelings in your heart and by an act of your will? Without both the experience and the expression, our worship is incomplete.

* *God as Creator and Cause is motive for worship.*

i) God is worthy to be worshipped in any place,

Job 1:20 Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and **worshiped**.

Col 1:10 ESV so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

ii) God is worthy to be worshipped even in the worst of situations

Heb 11:21 MKJV By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph and **worshiped**, leaning upon the top of his staff.

This may be convenient, but it doesn't sound very comfortable. Unfortunately, our worship is often limited by our circumstances. If our circumstances are pleasant, or if our environment is comfortable our worship comes easily. But when circumstances are troublesome and unpleasant and filled with trials and challenges, true worship is often lacking.

WORSHIP IS BASED ON WORTH - "worth-ship"

Our worship must be based on the Creator's worth and expectation for His creatures.

Rev 5:12 ESV saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"

Knowing what we know about God...

Our Worship must not be false, *but genuine*

I believe it is important to prepare one's own heart prior to entering the worship service. If sins are unconfessed, then we flippantly

enter into the LORD's presence. If attitudes of frustration, anger or criticisms are not confessed and resolved, then that spirit of heaviness is brought right into the congregation of saints, and God's worship suffers and each believer is affected.

Worship involves both emotion, as well as intellect.

Mar 7:5-7 ESV And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?" (6) And he said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, "'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; (7) in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'

This was an issue between God and His people, the Israelites. God condemns the Israelites...

Mal 1:13 ESV But you say, 'What a weariness this is,' and you snort at it, says the LORD of hosts. You bring what has been taken by violence or is lame or sick, and this you bring as your offering! Shall I accept that from your hand? says the LORD.

Mal 3:14 ESV You have said, 'It is vain to serve God. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the LORD of hosts?

They were going through the motions, but their hearts were not in it. Experiencing worship in the heart, but not expressing it in action is incomplete worship. But if God's people were expressing worship in their actions, but not experiencing worship in their hearts, which was equally incomplete.

Worship must not be confined to a church building

Joh 4:20-24 ESV Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." (21) Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.

We can express action in worship at church with other believers. We can experience worship at home alone, with God. We can worship at work as you do all that you do for the glory of God.(Col.3:23; 1Cor.10:31).

Worship is a Lifestyle, rather than an obligation

Worship of God should permeate our lives and every aspect of life. God is worthy of our worship – all the time. And all the time, God is worthy of worship. What if God only dealt with us when and if he felt like it? What if God only loved us on Sunday mornings between 9:15 and 12noon?

What if God's office hours did not coincide with our time of need? Why is our worship often, so structured, and relegated and scheduled, rather than a part of every area of life, at any time of the day?

*Worship is meant to be a lifestyle,
not a scheduled obligation.*

WORSHIP IS AN ATTITUDE OF THE HEART

Worship is an attitude of the heart toward God as we know Him. The Christian life is one of beginning and continued growth. As we

grow in our knowledge and experience with God, so our worship should also grow, develop, mature and deepen.

Faith Grows and Worship grows.

Worship of new Christian is as pleasing and acceptable to God as worship of a seasoned Christian missionary or theologian. We worship God as we know Him. Worship is based on right understanding, yet different levels of maturity.

joh 4:23-24 ESV (23) But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the *true worshipers* will worship the Father in *spirit* and *truth*, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. (24) God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

Worship is person and individual. WE may feel different experiences of worship in our hearts. And we may demonstrate different expressions of worship in our actions.

Worship as an expression

Worship is an expression of all that we are to the ONE True Creator for all that He is and has done. With that in mind, the Psalmist wrote: "Bless the Lord, Oh my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name" –Psalm 103:1

Luk 10:27 ESV And [Jesus] answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your ¹heart and with all your ²soul and with all your ³strength and with all your ⁴mind, and your neighbor as yourself."

(1) – heart – the seat of emotions and passion. Whoever says worship should not be emotional, is advocating an inadequate worship, and is discounting the worship experience in the heart.

(2) Soul – the invisible portion of the eternal person.

(3) Mind – the thoughts, intellect, information, reason, reflection

Good doctrine and theology should be taught, understood and allowed to affect our worship to God. Doctrinal understanding will help us to worship God in Spirit AND in TRUTH. Thoughts of the mind, affect the feelings in the heart.

(4) Strength – because worship is not always a ceremony or experienced in a service like this. It is often part of our Christian service, making disciples and helping others outside the church, or teaching and leading inside the church body. Strength even physical strength is needed to love and worship God acceptably and completely.

Worship is what we give to God. Blessings are that which God gives to us. Often times blessings are received, even felt as we participate in a worship service, but not necessarily.

Blessing means being an undeserving recipient of God's unmerited favor, however He chooses to dispense it. We may be encouraged, comforted, empowered, convicted, but those are side benefits or blessings that we often receive while Giving God, all He alone is worthy to receive.

Being obedient to God even when you are dead tired and missing out or something else that you'd rather be doing – that is a different kind of worship. Its continuing to Give to God what he is worthy to receive, even when we don't feel like it, or when it is no longer pleasant or convenient. But we give to Him the worship He deserves, simply because He is worthy and no other reason.

*Worship is a feeling experienced in the heart,
and an action expressed by our will.*

Our understanding of who God is, and what He has done, will affect our view of His worth to us. His worth to us, will then affect the experience of emotions in our hearts and the expression of action by our will.

All are part of true and complete worship.

ONE
CHALLENGE

ASSIGNMENTS:

CONSIDER EVALUATING YOUR WORSHIP

What affects your worship the most?

What tends to hinder your worship experience?

What can you do to enhance your worship, even when problems and troubles are mounting?

Where do you typically worship best? Place? Time?
Environment?

Do I give God My best and the worship that He deserves?

I think our assignment is learning to make worship a part of our everyday experience. Remembering that TRUE WORSHIP IS A LIFESTYLE NOT A SCHEDULED OBLIGATION.



Don't close this booklet yet

without considering this all important question.

Is Jesus Christ the Savior or *your* soul and the Lord of *your* life?

Every person is born guilty of sin and in need of forgiveness.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;
--Romans 3:23

Our sin is against God, therefore our forgiveness can only come
from God.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only
begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should
not perish, but have everlasting life. --John 3:16

God has appointed His Son as the payment for sins and sent Him
to die in our place.

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is
eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
-- Romans 6:23

God's love is demonstrated through the sacrificial payment of
Jesus Christ in our place for our sins.

...but God shows his love for us in that while we were
still sinners, Christ died for us. ---Romans 5:8

For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord
will be saved." -- Rom 10:13

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his
name, he gave the right to become children of God, -
John 1:12

Before you close this book, why not be absolutely certain that you
are truly a citizen of God's eternal kingdom and loving family?

*Trust in Jesus Christ today and receive forgiveness for your sins
and citizenship into God's family and His Kingdom.*

The ABCs

A - Admit you have sinned and are in need of a Savior.

B - Believe Jesus died in your place, and you can no way help yourself.

C - Confess your sins to God. He already knows. Also Confess Jesus as you LORD. He desires and deserves to be your Lord.

Prayer: Take time to talk to God right now and open your heart and life to His instruction and leadership.

Connect with a local Bible believing, Christ centered church.

Commit yourself to meeting regularly with other Christians who are growing in their faith.

Heb 10:24-25 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, (25) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Act 2:41-42 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (42) And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

For more information or for spiritual help, please contact us at:
Christ E. Free Church, PO Box 619, 19682 Hill Rd,
Saegertown, Pa, 16433, Ph: 814-763-2934, www.christefca.org

*It is our prayer that you find **Jesus Christ** to be...
your highest calling,
your greatest purpose,
your soul's source and joy,
and your all-consuming passion.*

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May each lesson bring a growing submission, a deeper obedience and an increase of the righteous reign of the Lordship of Jesus Christ in the fullness of His Spirit, in His Church and throughout our mission field.

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Christ E Free Church, 19682 Hill Rd., PO Box 619 Saegertown, Pa 16433
814-763-2934 ChristEFree@gmail.com