



Well, there has been some real good things coming out of the last couple of weeks. We are really seeing a shift. I think it's because when all the rhetoric dies down and the simplicity of the Gospel takes center stage, and we give into the power of it...well, we are transformed. Sometimes theology and philosophies get in the way of the real stuff...the life-changing stuff. I've been amazed at the joy I'm personally experiencing in just knowing what to do and doing it, a.k.a. obedience.

Yesterday, I was alone in my car, and I got to think! I started to think about the implication of a statement Jesus made concerning Himself. He said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." He came on a mission to do the Father's will. And the way He did it, is the way. What a profound thought. A few months ago, I made a statement that God is not moved by our need, but rather our faith. And when I said it, I meant it. But yesterday, the more I wondered about it, the more I began to think how He is moved by our need. He sent His Son to us and for us because of our need.

I want you to think God thoughts. The highest prayer I can think to pray for you is that you would consider God and be fascinated by Him. A.W. Tozer said, "What you think about God is the most important thing about you." And I know it's true. Today, I think my faith moves Him. But I also believe my overwhelming need must move Him. He loved me and gave Himself up for me before faith ever sprang alive in my heart. He was moved by my utter and complete need. And I think He still is!

Jesus is THE way. The WAY. I've been listening to all of these business podcasts lately, and considering Jesus from a different perspective than ever before. Thousands of years later, Jesus is just as relevant as ever. I've wondered what it is about this proclamation of His, "I am the Way," that resonates so deeply. What did He target? And I think I figured something out. There is a universal sense of being lost. And when we hear Jesus announce that He is the way, it's as if something inside us cries out with relief. Finally, we have been rescued.

**And Jesus was a sailor
When he walked upon the water
And he spent a long time watching
From his lonely wooden tower
And when he knew for certain
Only drowning men could see him
He said "All men will be sailors then
Until the sea shall free them
*(Lyrics by Leonard Cohen)***

It's the most brilliant marketing strategy ever recorded! The truth is that we are all lost and without hope without Jesus. It's only in our lost-ness that we can be truly found. He is the way. But we can't see Him until we're lost. Going through His 50 New Testament commands with you has been life changing for me. Jesus really hasn't abandoned or forsaken us. He is the way. And we never have to be lost again.

I. BEGINNING WITH THE END

Matthew 28



[18] 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."

- A. We have been commanded to go and make disciples. This is our mandate. Rather than just going and assuming we know what we we're supposed to teach, we're going through all 50 commands one at a time. The world has a motto, "Fake it till you make it." I'm sure you've heard it, and probably even tried it. But eh Kingdom of Heaven operates from a higher reality, and it's called, "Be fruitful and multiply." There's nothing fake about it!

1 Corinthians 9

[24] Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. [25] Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. [26] So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. [27] But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

- B. Say goodbye to shadow boxing once and for all! There are 50 things you can know and do. Rather than sweating it out with the unknown, let's give ourselves over to doing what we've been commanded. I think we'll have more fun!

II. #10- GO THE SECOND MILE

Matthew 5

[38] "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' [39] But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. [40] And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. [41] And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.

- A. During the Roman Empire, soldiers could force bystanders to carry the burden of their equipment (generally for a set distance). Simon of Cyrene, for example, was forced to carry Jesus' cross. According to author Walter Wink, Jesus was promoting another case of non-violence resistance at the sermon on the Mount. By offering to keep the burden for another mile, the choice of action (albeit a burdensome one) was thrown back ironically at the soldier.
- B. A case could also be made that God exposes us to the wrongdoings of others (and ourselves) for as long as it takes for us to respond as Christians.

I never feel more given to than when you take from me — when you understand the joy I feel giving to you. And you know my giving isn't done to put you in my debt, but because I want to live the love I feel for you.

To receive with grace may be the greatest giving. There's no way I can separate the two. When you give to me, I give you my receiving. When you take from me, I feel so given to.



Song "Given To" (1978) by Ruth Bebermeyer from the album, "Given To."

- C. There is a place we can live from where nothing can be taken. Isn't Jesus our example in this? His life wasn't taken, but he laid it down willingly for us. Isn't He the perfect picture of this? Live from this place.

III. #11- LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

Matthew 5

[43] "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' [44] But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, [45] so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

- A. It's interesting to me that Jesus didn't command us not to have enemies. He's no philosopher. He's not sitting in a rock garden practicing transcendental meditation, pretending the world away. No! He's a friend of sinners. He's not locked away in an ivory tower. No, He's God among us. And in the real world, we have enemies from time to time. The command is to love them. He points us to the faithful, steady, long-suffering-ness of God. If you have an enemy, pray for them. Begin to speak blessing over them. Grace will be right there.

IV. #12- BE PERFECT

Matthew 5

[46] For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? [47] And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? [48] You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

- A. We've come up with plenty of theories trying to alleviate our pain, and the tension of this verse. It's utterly impossible, and so we try and explain it away, or put it in another dispensation. It helps to attend more carefully to the word "perfect." The word does not mean morally flawless but rather mature, complete, full grown, not partial. Luke uses the word to speak of fruit *maturing* (8:14) and a course being *finished* (13:32). John uses it to describe the *fully realized* unity of Jesus' followers (17:23) and James employs the same word to characterize works as the *completion* of faith (2:22). Paul's favorite use of the word is to portray the quality of *maturity* among Christians (I Cor. 2:6; Eph. 4:13; Phil. 3:12, 15).
- B. However, this command to be perfect comes most clearly into focus and into the realm of reasonable expectation when viewed within its context. First, the call to perfection comes within a discussion of relationships. Second, Jesus rejects for his followers relationships that are based on the double standard of love for the neighbor and hatred for the enemy. The flaw in such relationships is that they are entirely determined by the other person: the one who is friendly is treated as a friend; the one who behaves as an enemy is an object of hatred; the one who speaks is spoken to; the one who spurns is spurned.



- C. Third, Jesus says that one's life is not to be determined by friend or foe but by God, who relates to all not on the basis of their behavior or attitude toward God but according to God's own nature, which is love. God does not react, but acts out of love toward the just and unjust, the good and the evil. God is thus portrayed as perfect in relationships, that is, complete: not partial but impartial. God's perfection in this context is, therefore, love offered without partiality.
- D. Jesus calls on his followers to be children of God in this same quality. "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." In other words, you must love without partiality, as God does. Thus understood, perfection is not only possible but actually realized whenever and wherever our relationships come under the reign of God. *(By Fred Craddock, <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=712>)*

V. #13-PRACTICE SECRET DISCIPLINES (GIVING, PRAYING, FASTING)

Matthew 6

GIVING

[6:1] "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. [2] "Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. [3] But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, [4] so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

PRAYER

[5] "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. [6] But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

FASTING

[16] "And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. [17] But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, [18] that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

- A. We publically take up tithes and offering, and we have corporate prayer meetings and even corporate fasting days, but in Matthew 6, Jesus calls us into these practices in a hidden way before God alone. It's not just about doing them, it's about learning how to live before God and for God.
- B. Last week we talked about leaving our gift at the altar to be reconciled with our brother, and this week, we talk about learning how to live before God in the secret place. We want to pit these realities against each other. Some live for heaven and some for earth. Wherever we hide, Jesus comes to pull us into the tension of the other. Some hide in religion, so He pulls us into relationship. And some hide in relationship, and He pulls us into religion and pure devotion. He's coming after you. He won't be satisfied until all things in your life are reconciled!