


2020.9.24&27



A publication of , the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

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Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- The English language stretches the word "need" to cover everything from "I need a little 'me time' " to "I need air!" to "I need forgiveness for my sins." Which of those three qualify as **genuine** needs?
Why do you think people stretch the word "need" to describe mere "wants", "desires" or "longings"?
- Psalm 84 addresses human longings. How do v. 1-4 describe God's presence like a "distant home"?
Now consider how v. 5-7 portray an "eager journey" to that longed-for home. What do you observe?
Finally, v. 8-12 speaks of experiencing God's "radiant presence". As a group, "unpack" v. 10-11.
What would the psalmist say that he "needs"? Cite the verses which support your answer.
How did Pastor Doug define "empty conceit" (see [1] in the **Sermon Summary**).
According to Psalm 84:11, what does the Lord **give**? How then is God "all that we need"?
- In Philippians 2:1-11, Paul shows that the incarnation is the solution to human pride and conflict. In Philippians 4:11-13 Paul illustrates this personally by speaking autobiographically. Read it aloud.
What does Paul **claim** (v. 11)?
What does Paul **know** (v. 12a)?
What did Paul **learn** (v. 12b)?
In v. 13, how does Paul describe the "secret" that he learned?
Can **you** make that same claim? **Why or why not?**
Which circumstances are **harder to know how to be content in**: [1] "prosperity/abundance" or [2] "humble means/suffering need"? What, then, is the **process** we go through to learn this secret?



Application-Challenge

How can we help each other learn this secret?

To gain a peaceful heart, embrace God's love in Christ and then live as Christ lived—humbly considering others more important than yourself.

Sermon Summary (Key Text: Philippians 2:1-11)

The “incarnation” (literally the “*in-flesh-ation*”) is the conviction that the eternal, infinite God became a human being in Jesus Christ. Paul addresses this foundational belief of the Christian faith, not just to teach it, but because of a problem which arises in the church. Divisions and conflicts had arisen in the church of Philippi. There’s something in our hearts that inclines us towards conflict so, Paul cited the powerful bonds that can and should pull Christians together (v. 1-2). The incarnation is the solution. Paul begins by describing the heart that fights, then the heart that makes peace, and finally, he shows us how to obtain that kind of peaceful heart.

[1] The heart that fights is controlled by selfishness, empty conceit, pride, and self-interest (v. 3-4). Our English translation “empty conceit” comes from the Greek word *kenodoxia*. *Kenos* means “to empty” and *doxa* means “glory”, so the literal meaning is “to be glory-empty”—to be yearning for respect and honor. We desperately want to be honored and respected, and we’ll fight to get it! The pursuit of success is our response to glory-hunger, but it’s like a drug: no matter how much you take, eventually you get diminishing returns. We hunger for respect, for attention, and we lash out at others to get it. As a result, some say: “You have to decide to love yourself. You don’t need the validation of others. You bestow it on yourself. All that matters is what you think of yourself.” That sounds good, but it doesn’t work! The Bible tells us we are glory-starved because we were made for God, but we’ve turned away from Him. If you turn away from God, if he’s not the center of your life and the source of your joy, you have this infinite-size vacuum in your soul, and you will try to fill it with other people’s approval, with awards, money and success.

[2] The heart that makes peace is humble, gentle, and modest (v. 3-4). Paul presents humility as counter to being glory-starved: “Don’t be controlled by empty conceit, but rather be humble.” Humility refers to some kind of inner fullness. Humility and its opposite, pride, are determined by what you habitually look at. If you habitually look at yourself—“Am I getting what I deserve?—you’ll be empty. But when you’re “full” on the inside, you have the emotional and spiritual bandwidth to consider others. Humility is opposed to drivenness, scornfulness, willfulness, and self-consciousness. The Bible commends hard work, but drivenness often results from trying to prove something. To be “scornful” is to disrespect or mock others (think “sarcasm, disdain, and contempt”). Courtesy and gentleness flow from humility—which in turn is opposed to willfulness. The willful person doesn’t listen, doesn’t take advice. He says, “I have to be right, and you have to be wrong.” Finally, humility is also opposed to self-consciousness. The domineering person is always reciting his accomplishments. As C.S. Lewis put it: “Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it’s thinking of yourself less.” No one can validate himself.

[3] The peaceful heart is gained through Christ’s incarnation. The answer doesn’t involve some psychological hocus pocus. Instead, the solution is to have the same mind-set that motivated Jesus to take on human flesh and die for humanity (v. 5-11). Jesus was equal to the Father in wisdom, power and love (v. 6). But Jesus “emptied himself” (v. 7). In the incarnation, Jesus humbled himself by taking on an additional nature—becoming human—and even more: a human who was a servant (v. 8). The divine, preexistent Christ did not regard the advantage and glory of his deity, as grounds to avoid the incarnation. On the contrary, he was willing to regard himself as nothing by taking on human form. Then he further lowered himself in servanthood by obeying God to the point of a humiliating death. Jesus emptied himself **not by subtracting his deity, but by adding humanity**.

Paul tells us to have that same mentality. We look at what happened outside of us (via Christ’s substitutionary death), and we use it inside of us. We were “glory-empty”, but Jesus “emptied himself” (v. 7; it’s the same Greek word, *kenosis*). On the cross, Jesus embraced our worst nightmare—being ignored and rejected by the person whose approval matters most (Mark 15:34). God turned his back on Jesus so that he can welcome us with open arms! No one can validate himself—but through Christ we not only have God’s smile, because it’s not based on anything that we’ve done, we cannot lose it! As C. S. Lewis put it: “To be loved by God...to be delighted in as an artist delights in his work, or as a father delights in his son—it seems impossible, a weight or burden of glory which our thoughts can hardly sustain. But so it is.”

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

"Five Question Bible Study" (see page below) is a simple way to study any passage. We can use it to learn how to gain God's peace through Christ's humility...

Monday—Study Hebrews 1:1-3

Tuesday—Study Matthew 17:1-9

Wednesday—Study John 13:5-17

Thursday—Study Mark 9:33-37

Friday—Study Hebrews 13:20-21

Saturday—***In preparation for worshipping your risen Lord with your church family,*** study **Ephesians 1:3-10.**

Need blank copies for doing more
"Five Question Bible Study"?

e-mail: Dan.Clement.TCC@gmail.com

Bible Text: _____

Date: _____



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?




What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]

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- 3 • Psalm 84 addresses human longings. How do v. 1-4 describe God's presence like a "distant home"?
Now consider how v. 5-7 portray an "eager journey" to that longed-for home. 4 What do you observe?
- 5 Finally, v. 8-12 speaks of experiencing God's "radiant presence." 5 As a group, "unpack" v. 10-11.
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- 8 • In Philippians 2:1-11, Paul shows that the incarnation is the solution to human pride and conflict. In Philippians 4:11-13 Paul illustrates this personally by speaking autobiographically. Read it aloud.
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- 13 In v. 13, how does Paul describe the "secret" that he learned?
- 14 Can **you** make that same claim? **Why or why not?**
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Having trouble gaining a peaceful heart?

Write to:

BiblicalHopeAndHelp@gmail.com

Application-Challenge

How can we help each other learn this secret?

To gain a peaceful heart, embrace God's love in Christ and then live as Christ lived—humbly considering others more important than yourself.

- 1 The answer to this question **appears** straightforward, since “need” means “a state of **necessity**”—but many a young will insist that she “need” some “me time”. What she means, of course, is “I **really, really want** some.” Distinguishing literal needs from figurative ones is critical to developing a peaceful heart—the topic for this week.
- 2 Possible reasons: [1] They’ve never really thought about the significant difference between “needs” and “wants”. [2] They haven’t realized the danger of labeling “wants” as “needs” (doing so makes us discontent and demanding).
- 3 Longing is written all over this psalm. The psalmist is eager and homesick. Note that he uses the word “blessed” three times: wistfully in v. 4, resolutely in v. 5, and deeply contentedly in v. 12. These three occurrences guide us in tracing the movement of the psalm. Help group members observe the warm longing in v. 1-4 (“lovely”, “longs”, “yearns”, “sing for joy”, birds find sanctuary there, “altar” points to sacrifices that restore relationship with God).
- 4 Help group members observe the eagerness of v. 5-7 (strength for travelling, “highways” where you can “make good time”—not twisty back roads!, Valley of “Weeping” [Baca] transformed into a refreshing spring, blessed rains, keep getting stronger, everyone makes it to the end of the journey—not one is stuck in a ditch!).
- 5 Help group members observe that a short life (one day!) standing on the threshold of the place where God’s presence dwells is better than a long life (a thousand days) lounging inside the tents of the wicked. Note in particular v. 11b, “God does not withhold **any good thing** from the godly.” If God hasn’t given us something, it would not have been good for us to have it at this time! This speaks directly to “needs”, “desires” & contentment.
- 6 He needs to experience God, and the blessings that accompany his presence (v. 1-2, 4-5, 10-11).
- 7 The state of being “glory-empty”—yearning for respect and honor.
- 8 The Lord gives “grace and glory”. If one of our biggest problems is that we’re devoid of glory (respect, honor) then it’s clear how God is our greatest need—**he gives** “grace and glory”! 9
- 10 Paul **claims** to have **no unmet desires!** He claims to be **content regardless of circumstances.** On its own this is a shocking statement. Now factor in that Paul was in prison, facing death! (1:13, 21)
- 11 Paul **knows how to live** on next to nothing (2 Corinthians 11:27) or in great wealth. This topic of “wants”, “needs” and “contentment” was **not** an abstract philosophical musing for Paul.
- 12 Paul **learned the secret** of being content (v. 11) with next to nothing or with great wealth. Paul literally was **just as happy** either way. **Not just:** “I’ve learned to grit my teeth and not grumble.” Here’s the critical observation: contentment **has to be learned.** Nobody comes into the world already knowing how to be content. Also, **simply experiencing** (“knowing what it’s like”) poverty **doesn’t make you content** to be poor. Learning contentment takes submission, faith, and grace.
- 13 The secret—once one has yielded in submission to God, allowing him to decide if I’ll be poor or rich—the secret is to draw upon God’s strength to live with peaceful contentment regardless of one’s poverty. Point out that people routinely rip this verse out of context, using it to say, “I can be anything I want to be!” That’s **not** what Paul is saying. He’s saying “I can be happy and content with whatever **God** wants me to be.”
- 14 It’s time for a “reality check”. Til now, the questions and observations have been about Paul. Now it’s time for group members to “bring it home”. Encourage honest with this question. Remember, growth is not “all or nothing”. Even “willing to be willing” is a step in the right direction.
- 15 On the surface, this question looks stupid: “Obviously, it’s harder to be content in poverty than in wealth.” So here’s the point: Since it’s easy to be “content” in good times, the process for being content in **either** situation is for **God to place you in** lean times, and for you to **learn to trust and thank him.** We learn to live for his glory, not our comfort. Also see 2 Corinthians 8:9.