

## **The ways of righteousness #1**

Hi all,

Last Saturday morning Barb was sleeping in, Chris was up, bathed, and watching a favorite Christian TV show while playing games on his tablet, and I was cleaning up the kitchen after making Chris breakfast. Over the kitchen window we have blinds - they are horizontal, wood about 2" wide (5 cm), slightly off-white in color, with a wand on the left by which we rotate them closed at night and open during daytime, and a pull string on the right by which to lift them out of the way to see unobstructed out the window.

Being kitchen window blinds they collect grease and dust over time, and as I am always the first one up in the morning I am usually the one to rotate them from closed, which reveals the filth on each slat of wood, to open for the day which hides the grime. Out of sight, out of mind.

For the last month when I'd be at the kitchen sink I'd think to myself, "Somebody really needs to clean those. I wonder when Barb will get around to it." (Just being honest lol) Today however, I was 'Somebody'. I couldn't stand them any longer. Chris was happy, Barb sleeping, breakfast over with. I opened the catch on the bracket, pulled them out and lowered them to the counter, sprayed them heavily with a degreasing cleaner allowing it to soak in several seconds before wiping them clean with a paper towel.

Once back in place I gently touched up remaining spots I had overlooked, and thought to myself, "I wonder how long it will take Barb to notice I cleaned the blinds." As soon as that thought arose I heard the Lord ask me, "What are you going to tell her about why you cleaned the blinds?" My response was immediate, "Because they needed to be cleaned..." but that last word faded from my thoughts like a car running out of fuel and slowly coasting to the side of the road to a stop. I had answered before I had fully realized the Lord was asking for a reason, and I knew what that reason was - He was testing my motives for righteousness in my heart, or would He find pride.

Before Him, you can only tell the truth. He is like the world's most perfect lie detector machine, a universal truth serum because He Himself is Truth - when He asks you something the truth of whatever is in your heart comes up. It is gentle, yet thorough, and only painful if you aren't teachable, are proud, stubborn, trying to hide something in your heart, or hate being wrong. In short, if you don't love righteousness you'll shrink away from Truth, but if you love righteousness you race to the light to be corrected.

Before Him truth happens and you are powerless to stop it from coming out of your heart into the light of His scrutiny - your motives just pop to the surface like grandma's dumplings when they are thoroughly cooked. You are 'done' and there isn't a thing you can do about it.

I immediately changed my answer to the truth: "Alright, the truth is I couldn't stand them being that dirty any more." And then He responded, "But you would have told Barb you did it as a favor to her because they needed it and knew it would be difficult for her to take them down." "Yes. Sorry.", I admitted. "It's okay. You've grown a little today." And that was that. He was silent and I was left with a warm feeling of His presence that I love, intensified because I had grown just a bit more.

I have settled in my heart when Barb asks when I did the blinds and why, I will tell her the unvarnished truth - no spin to favor me and make me look like her hero - I did it because the blinds bothered me being so dirty. I couldn't stand it any longer. Purely self-motivated reason for cleaning them. That was the truth. It wasn't for her. Not for the look of the place. Not because it needed to be done. They bothered me being so dirty and I couldn't stand for it any more. That's what I will tell her. (She hasn't yet noticed they are clean)

### **When God judges**

The Judgment Seat of Christ is what I experienced above, but here on earth. This is what happens at 1 John 1:9 - if we confess (admit) our sins He forgives us our sins and cleanses us from all unrighteousness. If you are wise you will live like this, so that when you die your heart's motives and actions will be fully up to speed with very little to cover between you and Him at that moment. For some, their life will have to play out like a long running TV miniseries because they rarely judged

themselves on their motives in this life, nor were sensitive enough to Truth to be honest about the how and why of their actions.

Two women had been best friends for 15 years until one day friend #1 sent an email to about a dozen mutual friends that was in fact a well known 'fake news' item. Friend #2 emailed her back to the fact she had sent fake news, a lie about a person and situation, and thought she would appreciate knowing that so she could correct her mistake to everyone she sent it to. Instead, friend #1 was offended, writing her back that the principle was true even if the story was a lie. Friend #2 apologized, said she was only trying to be helpful, figuring anyone would want to know they were spreading a lie by mistake - but no, friend #1 unfriended her and refused to answer her text messages and calls, even weeks after that exchange. Friend #2 was understandably heart broken and left wondering what she did wrong. That answer: Nothing.

Friend #1 would rather be right than be righteous. Do we want to be right, or be righteous?

### **Hunger and thirst; believer or disciple?**

There is an expected progression of one's life seen in scripture that starts at someone believing in Jesus, and from there they become a disciple. A disciple by definition is 'a learner'. For years people have been debating the dividing line between those who call themselves Christians, who may or may not be believers, versus those who are true disciples, living their lives in a never ending learning process of how to be more Christ-like as they walk with Him through this process called life.

One of the attributes of a disciple of Jesus is what He said in Matthew 5:6: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." Whether a believer hungers and thirsts for righteousness in their life or not, is revealed over time, and over tiny decisions of the heart. The right decisions move them to ever greater truth and transparency and therefore greater growth as a disciple, whereas decisions which are half-truths or made to make them look better (pride) confirm they are mere believers, at least in those particular areas.

The word and tense used by Jesus in Matthew 5:6 for hunger and thirst are ongoing in nature. He isn't talking about wanting a meal and then once consumed being satisfied. He is speaking of an ongoing hunger and thirst that are satisfied within the process, as in the course of a great meal it is satisfying, but you want more - you live within the realm of ongoing, never ending, satisfaction.

We might say it is the act of eating or dining. Eating would be the consuming food quickly and barely tasting it, or dining which takes time and savors every bite, every nuance of flavor the meal offers. Jesus is talking about living by dining on righteousness. Loving the flavor of it in our lives. Loving the nuances what we consume in Him reveals. Desiring righteousness above desiring to be right.

And that is why when Barb eventually asks about the blinds I'll be righteous in my answer: I couldn't stand them any longer so I cleaned them!

We'll pick it up there next week, until then, blessings,  
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### **The ways of righteousness #2**

Hi all,

An employee came about 15 minutes late to work one day, walking in on a meeting that started promptly at 9am, in which she had a large role to play. After the meeting so as not to embarrass her in front of everyone, her boss pulled her aside and said "You were late today. We really got off to a rocky start because of you." Her response was "Couldn't be helped. There was construction on the way here that had traffic backed up for miles." Was she answering out of righteousness?

The truth is that she knew full and well about the construction because it had been there for weeks, narrowing traffic to 1 lane and causing back ups every morning in every one's commute to work. She knew that yet hadn't adjusted her schedule that morning for this very important meeting. She didn't esteem the meeting properly in her and her boss's eyes, and knowingly put everyone else in a difficult

and embarrassing situation forcing them to make excuses for her. Then she blamed it on the road construction. Her boss said, 'Sorry for the long commute, but don't let it happen again.' She told a white lie as they say, and got away with it, but a lie nonetheless. Not righteousness.

She side-stepped the truth though her boss knew that route and knew there was construction, and didn't appreciate her not taking responsibility for her life. In his eyes she fell a couple of places because she didn't take responsibility. What eventually happened was that she was passed over for a promotion, and at first blamed God because in her estimation she worked harder than the rest and didn't know what God had against her, when others less hard working and dishonest at that, were promoted.

When she eventually asked her boss why she was passed over and what she could do to improve for the next opportunity, he told her about that meeting. He said it was a pattern in her life of not being truthful, and complaining - not taking responsibility for her life. He needed someone in that position who told him the straight truth no matter what - and she didn't. It wasn't God's fault after all, surprise, she had done it to herself by not dealing with the unrighteousness in her heart.

This is the nitty gritty of growth in Christ, people. Owning up to our lives, not blaming the construction for arriving late. Not blaming the friend who responded to the fake news email. Not telling your wife you cleaned them for her. But being meek, lowly of heart, teachable and willing to correct our motives way down inside where only Jesus sees.

### **When King Saul lost the kingdom - he lost it in his heart first, before losing it in the natural**

In I Samuel 13:1-14 the prophet Samuel had told King Saul to wait 7 days for him and then they would make a sacrifice to the Lord before Saul went into battle with the dreaded Philistines. When Samuel was late Saul made the sacrifice himself, usurping the role of Samuel. When Samuel arrived he told King Saul that God had decided to give the kingdom to someone else as a result of his actions. What did Saul have to say for himself when Samuel finally did arrive?

"Because the people were leaving me, and you didn't come when you said you would, and the Philistines were gathered for battle, lest they come to battle before I had sacrificed to the Lord, I forced myself and made the offering myself." v11-12

Notice that all Saul said to Samuel was true. But the instructions were to wait for the prophet, to have enough faith in the Lord's overall guidance and timing to allow things to be done properly. Instead, he forced the situation and then had the nerve to blame everyone but himself. He lost the kingdom because of lack of maturity. He in that position was expected to own up to his mistakes.

Saul did not lose the kingdom because of failure in battle any more than the woman above would lost the promotion because she was late to that meeting. But because she would not take ownership of coming in late for the meeting, she was passed over. She lost the promotion in her heart first, before her actions.

We too lose a little of the kingdom of God, the Kingship of Jesus, in our hearts little by little when we first blame someone else for whatever trouble is before us. We deflect the truth to make ourselves look better, as Saul did with Samuel. As the woman did with her boss. As I would have done with the blinds (last week). Jesus said to take the construction beam out of our eyes first before trying to get the speck of saw dust out of our neighbor's eye. Always go first to self - how can I grow, is what I believe to be true, actually true? Are my motives pure? How do you want me to grow in this Lord? How can I grow in this?

### **Righteous or right?**

A lawyer had some clients who were also friends - a couple in a neighborhood applying for an exception to their HOA's rules. An HOA is a Home Owners Association in the US, in which a neighborhood will set up a legal organization (HOA) to implement a series of rules meant to keep the neighborhood neat, attractive, and well maintained. Some rules might be like 'Cars that are broken down cannot be parked at the curb longer than 30 days', or 'You may plant no more than 2 trees in your front yard', or in this case, 'You may not build any structure in the back yard higher than the privacy fence'. (The privacy fences in that neighborhood were about 6' (1.8m) tall.)

The client couple wanted to build a larger/taller play structure for their 2 children and needed to make an application for exemption to the HOA, which was at first denied. So they hired a lawyer to present an appeal which was an offer to compromise with the HOA, one that would be higher, but smaller and shorter than the original plans.

The lawyer answered his phone that day to yelling and screaming that because of him their application had missed a deadline and all their plans and expense were for nothing. They had said they sent him an email that answered his final question and he never responded in time to complete the form they needed so the appeal was denied. He was fired, he lost his friends.

When he checked his computer, the last place he checked was his spam folder. Sure enough, their email was in his spam folder, but why did his internet service provider (ISP) read it as spam? When he opened it he found they had not started their email with any greeting. No 'Dear \_\_\_\_\_', no mention of his name at the start or his law firm, nothing at all at the start. Then the answer they gave was not a proper sentence. And they didn't close with a 'sincerely' nor or close, nor did they even write their names.

All that explained why his ISP read it as spam - it wasn't properly formatted, which wasn't his fault at all, nor should he have been expected to look for their improperly formatted email in his spam file. When he apologized to them and explained what happened, the couple still were furious with him and his attitude and took no responsibility for their lack of formatting the email which caused the whole thing. No apology for their part in it. Just anger at the lawyer and the end of their relationship.

In each case the person who was wronged was the one doing the apologizing. The people in the wrong either side-stepped their responsibility or masked their sudden realization they were in the wrong and had a part to play by wrath and anger so they wouldn't be caught, wouldn't have to apologize. They wanted to be right more than they wanted righteousness. These same people, all of them, are charismatic, hand raising, tongue talking, how I love Jesus Christians - but they are mere babes as people and Christians. Sad. They may have known the Lord 30 years, but they are still in spiritual diapers. That's not my assessment - it is Paul's and Peter's. That's next week.

It is always a thing of amazement to me how quickly Christians fall in with the accuser of the brethren (the devil from Revelation 12:10), masking the refusal to take responsibility with anger and the ending of relationships - because like the accuser, if he admitted he was wrong he would have to submit to the Lordship of Jesus. Church people are infamous for the behavior outlined in these few examples. But these same people who are so quick to end or severely limit their relationships with brothers and sister in Christ, which relationships they will have for all eternity, willingly put up with co-workers who do things like this because they need the paycheck, neighbors because their kids play with the neighbor's kids, relatives because they see them at all the family functions - but let another Christian do that which is wrong in their eyes, giving them an excuse not to put on big boy pants and own up to their own attitude and actions - and they have lost sight of the fact they are acting as the Accuser of our brethren, hand in hand with him.

More nitty gritty next week....the human heart is so....complicated...but there is a solution - and we'll see that next week. Until then, blessings,  
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### **The ways of righteousness #3**

Hi all,

I was attending one of our affiliated house churches and asked for prayer as I was very tired and needed some wisdom in some areas. So everyone gathered round me as I stood, laying hands on me, and I felt refreshing in my spirit and soul as they prayed. There were a couple of encouraging prophecies and I was blessed and felt much better. As everyone took their hands off me and returned to their seats, I felt a tug on my lower left pant leg.

Looking down I saw a little boy named Adam tugging my pant leg. He was so cute, at 4 years old already wearing thick glasses due to an eye condition, and he was dressed up a bit for house church. He was being taught respect for elders, so when I asked what he wanted he replied: "Pastor John.

The Lord said something to me for you." (Though we don't use titles I appreciated the thought) Everyone in the room smiled as he was so sweet, and so sincere, and I gently responded, "Thank you Adam. I'd love to hear what the Lord has for me. What did He say?"

He looked up at me through those thick glasses, and in his most sincere 4 year old voice said, "The Lord says to you that He loves you, and you're doing a good job." My heart melted in genuine appreciation, for that one simple word meant more to me than the others that preceded it. I immediately told him "Thank you Adam, that is right on from the Lord, thank you so much for sharing it, it means so much to me." To which he responded as he put his palm out, "You're welcome. Can I have 20 dollars?"

Everyone burst out laughing and a couple people commented he must have been watching Christian TV, LOL - but that word remains dear to my heart to this day.

### **As a child**

That Adam was transparent enough to ask me in front of a room full of people for \$20, demonstrated his total sincerity in all areas. No side stepping his desire, no lie saying he needed the money for a sick classmate at school - he just wanted to know if I would give him \$20 and he was bold enough and transparent enough to ask it. His prayer was sincere. His prophecy was sincere. His request for money was sincere. Completely transparent.

### **Contrast his childhood simplicity with this**

When we were pastors in Colorado we had a middle aged woman in our congregation who was known for being a bit of a user. She would as part of her daily routine walk by the local coffee shop, and if she saw a friend she would just sit down opposite them and start talking until that person offered to buy her coffee and a snack, She 'cruised' the coffee shop, diners, and I heard a couple stories about seeing someone she knew in a store and hanging around commenting about how she wanted thus and so but didn't have the money, hoping that person would pay for what she wanted.

One day we noticed she started wearing a wrap around neck brace. She announced she had hurt her neck and was probably going to have to go on disability. She was near retirement age but her pension wouldn't have been a lot. She wore it all over town and repeated the story to all who inquired. One evening she came to the women's prayer meeting which Barb led. Barb said the Holy Spirit was so thick that night many were 'slain in the spirit' where they sat, and she had prophetic words for everyone there.

The woman with the neck brace had been sitting in her chair, and when Barb laid hands on her she fell over sideways, 'knocked out' so to speak by the Spirit for several minutes. When she woke up she asked Barb in hushed tones what she should do now. Barb sensed by the Spirit it had to do with her neck, so she responded with something like "Just do what the Lord would have you do." The woman quietly removed her neck brace and we never saw her wear it again. Her fraud had been exposed and dealt with in her heart not by the hand of man, but by the hand of God.

She had layered her greed for free money with a lie in order to justify herself. But the Lord gently exposed her lie and asked her to deal with it, and she did.

### **Layers**

As we grow up we learn to add layers to our heart to protect us and to make us look better in the eyes of others. Little Adam had no layers so his prayer, his prophecy, his request for \$20 were as clear as if looking at his heart through a newly washed window. The woman above had learned to cover the truth in her heart with layers of lies.

The trick for the disciple of Jesus is the process of peeling back those layers that we may look at our own hearts honestly. That we might honestly deal with our true motives, just between us and Jesus, in private, and make the adjustments He asks. That is why He asked me (in part 1 of this series) what I was going to tell Barb about why I cleaned the window blinds. He was trying to keep me transparent with myself and her - and Him.

In I Corinthians 3:1-15 Paul deals with some of the people at Corinth who he said were living like they weren't even born again. He also said they were babies, only able to receive the milk of the Word

though by this time they should be eating the meat of the Word. He said they were spiritual babies because they had envy, strife, and divisions in their hearts. He told them if they died in that condition those things would be like wood, hay, and stubble that would be burned up before Christ, though they would be saved. He advised them to grow up and be doers of the Word as they walk with the Lord.

#### **The word 'division' here is of particular interest...**

It is the Greek word 'dichostasia'. It means 'to mark someone and stand apart'. The word 'diche' means 'asunder, apart' and 'stasia' means 'to stand'. Specifically, the people of Corinth had marked those (Christians) they disagreed with and decided to 'stand apart' from them, tearing asunder their relationship, to separate themselves from them.

Paul had told the Galatians in 4:19 that he 'travailed (was in labor) again for them that Christ might be formed in them', using the gestation period and birth to illustrate spiritual growth. He explained the forces at work: Christ in us growing and pushing us from within to clean up our motives and allow ourselves transparency at the risk of being hurt, while dealing with forces working against Christ growing in us - The temptation is to add another layer of dishonesty over the top of our heart because we don't want to deal with the sin we are hiding.

Pride is the sin, no matter the other names we call it to justify ourselves when we know we are even partially in the wrong - it is all pride, and the Bible indicates no one but the proud person can humble themselves to be honest with themselves and God - no prayer can do it, only the guilty person can do it. You can't get prayer for it. No one can lay hands on you to be delivered of it. The person hiding behind their pride is the only one who can remove it, by humbling themselves...

Next week - how to deal with hurt and return to child-like transparency

Until then, blessings,

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#### **The ways of righteousness #4**

Hi all,

A man on staff at a megachurch gave what seemed to be an amazing testimony at a Wednesday night service. He told how his teenage son wanted a car, and not just any car, but a Jeep. A new Jeep. And he admitted he wanted it for his son as he would soon graduate high school and need transportation. But they had no money to buy him one, so they prayed and prayed.

He said they kept "praying and believing", and one day as they were walking around a car lot looking at Jeep's and talking to the sales staff, they settled on one but having no money, began to head home. But then miracle of miracles, the salesman told the owner of the dealership, and after hearing the need the owner of the dealership decided to give the young man a brand new Jeep. What a testimony of God's faithfulness if you keep praying he told the congregation. The shouts and applause were deafening at the Wednesday night service.

#### **The truth**

The truth is that this man was the head of a department for the church, and the owner of that local car dealership was a member of the congregation. The dealership owner also spoke at some of the conferences the church held, which often involved the dad's department, so they knew each other well. So well in fact, he felt no guilt calling the car dealer several times daily for about 2 weeks pressuring him to give a new Jeep to his son...and finally after 2 weeks of brow beating and phone calls the dealer gave it. All that was behind the scenes, only a few of us knew what he was doing...so we were greatly grieved and saddened at the lies he told on that Wednesday night.

The battle for righteousness in his heart was the battle of a proud father wanting the best for his son versus the Lord's right-ness growing (trying to) within him. The ways of righteousness are subtle within the heart and the Lord is a gentleman. Therefore opportunities to make righteous decisions are subtle, almost suggestion-like coming from within, thoughts of the Spirit that float up into our mind, so subtle most people are deaf to His voice.

**Paul told the Galatians in 4:19: "My little children, I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you."**

There is the intercessory prayer we all pray for loved ones to come to Christ, but once they come to the Lord there is ongoing prayer similar to the pregnancy and labor process involved in growing them up in Christ. God won't violate man's free will, but our prayers help the Spirit's efforts\* to grow a person from the spirit man inside, outward to their life, by strengthening them from within so they can make righteous decisions. This is done by the Lord allowing us to be put in situations requiring us to make decisions for righteousness or decisions of sticking to our old ways. \*Ephesians 1:17-18, 3:14-20, Colossians 1:9

Peter said in I Peter 2:2: "Like new born babies, crave the pure spiritual milk of the Word that by it you may grow up in your salvation."

Growing up in our salvation. The Word He was talking about isn't our chapter and verse that we have in print today, for they had no New Testament in print back then - that was centuries away. The milk of the Word was that of the Living Word, the person of Christ in them and knowing Him - walking with Him as a toddler does a parent, hand in hand, heart in heart, depending on Him to lead and guide and teach them the basics which enable them to grow up in Him.

**Here is an example: The chocolate cake on the buffet line opportunity**

Barb and I were eating at our town's one and only sit down restaurant, which features a salad bar. It has a good selection of greens, vegetable toppings, and dressings. At the far end of the salad bar is the dessert of the day, which is included when you buy the salad bar. That day the dessert was chocolate cake.

I ordered the special of the day which was smoked meat loaf which came with a trip to the salad bar, I'll translate 'smoked meat loaf' for non-Americans - smoked meats are slow cooked over low heat and lots of wood smoke, and is the single most important flavoring ingredient on what we call barbecue, or BBQ for short. Meat loaf is ground beef formed into a loaf and then baked - and this meat loaf had been baked in a smoker which is a unique and delicious twist. Smoked meatloaf and I are old friends. Old friends. By ordering the special I got a trip to the salad bar as part of the deal, and as I said, the salad bar included the cake.

Barb ordered something else from the menu, which didn't include the salad bar. My diet is heavy on protein and salad, and cakes are something I don't really care for. Barb on the other hand is a carbohydrate-based life form. She loves cakes, breads, all that. As we neared the end of the meal we were discussing this subject that I'm writing on and how the Lord allows us to be in situations to either walk in righteousness or fail the work of righteousness in us.

As we talked it came up the cake on the salad bar was a perfect example. I didn't want any cake, but Barb would eat it. The unrighteous thing would be for me to go to the salad bar and get a slice of cake, then bring it to the table to give it to Barb.

Of course neither of us would do that no matter how much she might want the cake because that would be stealing - but we discussed how opportunities for righteousness to grow in a person goes by unseen because Christians don't have righteousness - that is to say right-ness in their hearts as a way of life.

I could have asked the waitress to bring a slice of cake for Barb, meaning we would have paid for the piece because it wasn't part of Barb's meal. That would have been the righteous thing to do. IF we were dishonest I could have gotten the slice of cake I didn't want, and give it to Barb, and I would have failed the Lord and righteousness within. The reward of doing right is peace and just that much closer to the Lord and to where He can trust me with more of Him.

One of the character issues the Lord tries to grow in us is found in II Peter 1:3-4: "Giving all diligence, add to your faith moral excellence...that's the first one mentioned, and many believers would have had lunch, stolen a piece of cake from the salad bar and given it to their spouse, and think God blessed their meal. But He would have been watching. He would have known, and it's just that much less He

would know they could be trusted with...and He would have given them another opportunity to not steal on down the road a while...

Food for thought. Until next week, blessings,  
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## **The ways of righteousness #5 (dealing with emotional hurts)**

Hi all,

Jesus never changes: The way He handled people in the gospels is the way He handles you and I today. So if we look at the gospels we'll know how He deals with us.

He doesn't change how He deals with us based on our rough childhood, or our easy childhood, nor whether we are rich or poor, male or female: Truth is truth, and no matter where we've been or who we are, He is always going to be asking us from the inside out to align our emotions and thoughts with Truth. He brings us to the opportunity to make right decisions, to feel right feelings, to see His truth in any situation.

So when we are talking about emotional hurts we first need to ask if these hurts are righteous emotional hurts, or unrighteous hurts. All hurt is not the same. Some hurts are the result of events they brought on themselves. That hurt is not justified and they need to be left to the Lord and their heart to face the consequences, and that is what He will do if they won't come to the Truth of the matter. But then again, some hurt is justified, as when a person becomes the victim of another through word or deed, and that needs to be healed by the Lord, which often involves walking out healing over time. But first to unjustified hurt.

### **Hurt and disappointment in people**

In John 6:26 Jesus told people seeking Him "You seek me not because of the miracles, but because you ate the loaves (of bread He had multiplied) and were filled." Ouch, that had to hurt. When He then launched into a couple of difficult to understand parables about eating His flesh and drinking His blood, many of them left - confused, hurt, and disillusioned. (John 6: 66-67)

Was their hurt justified? Their feelings of betrayal were real. Their feelings of deep disappointment in Jesus were real. Their life plans were suddenly rearranged and they went back home to pick up the pieces after following this man they thought would be the new king, but He had SO hurt them. Was their hurt justified? No. Were their feelings of hurt, disappointment, betrayal, real? Yes. Real feelings, but unjust feelings, so He expected them to adjust their feelings to Truth - He is the same today with us.

What about Mark 1:30-38 where Jesus was staying at Peter's mother in law's house, healing any who came to the door until sundown. The next morning He went outside to be alone and pray, and when they found Him Peter said; "Everyone's looking for you!" expecting Him to start healing again as He had done the previous night. But Jesus said He was going to other towns instead. HOW disappointed all the people must have been - how hurt - they had need of healing and just on a whim Jesus cancels and moves on. What if you had not made that sundown deadline the night before and you were left sick or injured? Their hurt and disappointment were real. But was their hurt justified? No. Were their feelings of disappointment, hurt, anger, real? Yes.

### **Here is where the rubber meets the road of growing up in Christ**

Separate your feelings from the moment and ask yourself if your hurt is justified. If it is, then the Lord is with you and you can ask Him to deal with them, and He will help you work through your feelings and sense of injustice you suffered.

If you find that your feelings are not justified, if your feelings are the result of wanting something unrighteous, then He is not with you (resisting right is pride, and God resists the proud) and unless you correct yourself, you will be left to deal with your feelings until you do. If you continue to resist (as pride does) you may find yourself a spiritual island, blaming all those around you who hurt you and let you



down and abandoned you (even though your feelings are unjust as you caused them to do so) - until you are ready to admit your own failings. Coming to grips with the ugliness of our own heart and remedying that condition through Christ, is called growing up in Christ.

There are dozens of examples in the gospels of Jesus disappointing people, hurting people, making them disillusioned and angry. Those feelings in others He caused are in part what sent Him to the cross. He made people angry and brought up emotions in them they didn't want to deal with. He never changes!! He is still doing that in us today!

He will still provoke us from the inside out with the choice of right decisions and emotions, or wrong decisions and emotions. He brings us to face Truth. THAT is the point of decision, the point of heightened awareness and emotions concerning our situation and Truth. Once He has made us aware of the truth, He silences Himself to observe the workings of our hearts and minds and emotions to see what we will do.

### **Being hurt is a fact of life; staying hurt is a choice**

The feelings are real, but living in hurt is a choice. Labeling yourself as damage, hurt, is a choice. Yes, your feelings of rejection, betrayal, hurt, anger, are all really felt, but hurt is a choice. Upon receiving the sting of a rejection, if a person switches their emotions and thoughts immediately to love the one hurting and accusing you, the sting of hurt can then be viewed from a distance which allows a determination of whether the hurt we feel is righteous hurt or not.

Jesus was disappointed his closest friends couldn't stay awake to pray with Him in the Garden. That was justified hurt. (Mark 14:37) But it didn't slow Him down a bit from what was right to do (go to the cross). That is the difference. People get hurt so they justify themselves slipping into neutral in life, stopping to celebrate and repeatedly rehearse their hurt, justify their hurt, blame others for where they are in life. They blame others, going church to church, meeting to meeting, person to person, never able to settle down and forge real and long term relationships, a spiritual island surrounded by people as they nurse their hurts.

We can't let hurt stop us from doing what is right. Choosing to do what the Word says when it is against all you feel and all your hurt, is part of growing up in Christ. When you don't seek your own, when you don't provoke or respond to provocation, when you apply love to the unlovely. You are in charge of your feelings. Don't justify them by hormones, being tired, being sick, being under a lot of stress - just be in charge of what you feel. Learn to control feelings. We are led by logic, reasoning, the Holy Spirit, but rarely are we led by human emotion alone - they are so fickle. We are to be in charge of our feelings, it is that simple. Choose to do right no matter what you feel. Always.

### **Jesus always brings us to the point of decision - He is always asking us questions to prove what is in our heart**

He asked the 12 who they thought He was: Who had the revelation from the Father who Jesus was. He is still asking people today, 'Who do you say I am?'

When confronted with a massive crowd and no way to feed them, He turned to Philip and asked how they would feed that many people, probing to see if Philip or any of the others would think 'outside the box', in faith, expecting something extraordinary of the Lord since they had seen Him do so many miracles already. He is still asking us what we will do when faced with impossibilities before us; will we think 'outside the box' expecting Him to do the extraordinary as, or will we like Philip, shrink back to the natural realm and look for natural solutions only?

In Matthew 17:25, 21:28, 22:42, Jesus asked "What do you think?" to His hearers, and He is still asking us "What do you think?" about our situations in life. Will we answer in righteousness, or from a deep but unrighteous need to be right in all things?

In Mark 3:4 Jesus asked a question recorded also in Matthew and Luke: "Is it right to do good (on the Sabbath)?" And He is still asking us to judge if the need before us is right and proper to do, or if we should do something else. I'll close the series next week, until then, blessings,

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## **Ways of righteousness, #6, Car alarm, final**

Hi all,

Before I take Chris back to his group home after his weekly home visit, we always eat at a restaurant. It can be a simple hamburger eaten in the car as we sit by railroad tracks waiting for a train to pass, or going in to a restaurant to have a 'sit down' meal. This particular day he wanted to eat inside at Braum's, a regional chain of hamburger and ice cream stores, as he was in the mood for (fried, boneless) 'chicken strips' and a chocolate milk shake.

He likes a corner table which is easy for his wheelchair to roll under and has a nice view of people in their cars in the drive-thru area. Chris is 37 physically but due to brain damage at birth, the cord wrapped around his neck in a slip knot, he is about 4 years old mentally. As a result he is the most friendly 4 year old in a 37 year old's body you'd ever hope to meet, has never met a stranger, and keeps a running commentary going about cars, trains, people, dogs, and anything or anyone else who crosses our path.

As we sat in the corner and speculated what the people in their cars in the drive-thru window were ordering and where they were going, I noticed in the background noise of all the commotion inside the place, someone's car alarm going off in the parking lot. I figured it would turn off after 30 seconds or so as they tend to do, but this one kept going - it was one of those alarms that honks the horn every second and a half or so, but it being outside as I said, was just background noise.

As the horn continued I thought to myself, "Must be some older couple hard of hearing or something, not realizing their car alarm is going off. I should try to find who owns it." as I scanned the seating area and noticed I was the youngest of the customers other than Chris. But then Chris asked something about another car in the drive-thru, and we speculated about what they were ordering, where they were going, what kind of car they were driving - and still, that noise was in the background. I thought I really needed to find that old person and tell them their alarm is going off.

That was when I craned my neck enough to study the parking lot in detail to see where the car was located that was making all the racket, only to discover it was my car! I was the old geezer who was clueless his car alarm was going off! My hand quickly dove to my left pocket where even on the outside, I could feel the key fob and some coins I had gotten from paying for the meal, and when I sat down and the pockets tightened a coin had been pressed over the alarm button - it was me that whole time!

### **The annoying Holy Spirit 'car alarm'**

The Lord tries to grow us from the inside out, for Christ is in us, the hope of glory. His voice is like that car alarm going off, background noise, floating up from our spirit man to the back of our mind like a suggestion - soft, gentle, as an idea from 'out of the blue' - yet He is always there until we either shove that voice so far into the background by sheer determination to hear other voices we barely hear His, or we deal with the issue He brings up.

Haven't you ever noticed when let's say, you have an urgent bill to pay over here, He is instead dealing with your heart about sister or brother so and so over there? If you're like me you've thought, "Yes Lord, I know I need to love them, but could we talk about this bill instead?" LOL

We've each experienced that just before we made the decision to believe on Jesus - do you remember? After you heard of Jesus you couldn't get Him out of your mind; the question of what you're going to do 'about Him' was always in the background. No matter how life distracted you, when your mind shifted to neutral or 'quiet mode', there was the question about Jesus floating into your consciousness. That is how He works. That is His 'car alarm' inside each of us until we either shut Him up by layering our time and attention with the distractions or numbing things of life, or we decide to listen to Him and decide for Him thereby entering into what He has for us.

There is a song in Margaret Becker's 'Falling Forward' album (1998) titled 'Clay and Water' that include these lyrics: "I am clay and I am water, falling forward in this order, while the world spins round so fast, slowly I'm becoming who I am. Nothing ever stays the same, the wheel will always turn. I feel the fire in the change, but somehow it doesn't burn. Like a beggar blessed, I stumble in the grace,

reaching out my hand for what awaits..." We may stumble, but if the heart sets itself, you are becoming who you are in a life-long process. His judgement, His righteousness doesn't burn if we deal with our heart quickly.

### **Coming to the core**

Some of us are seasoned citizens who have lived long enough to have experienced the various charismatic and evangelical ups and downs, from favorite ministers falling from grace to following the current fad doctrine to church hopping. Some of us have experienced people who think they are the Holy Spirit, needing to point out everyone's error and sin though they never turn the finger of accusation on themselves. We've seen it all, or most of it. Seasoned citizens have enough time and mileage under their feet to have at least tasted some imbalance, or maybe even were part of some of that imbalance for a time before the Lord brought them back to balance.

At some point most realize all of that is just 'fluff', distraction, immaturity, and has nothing to do with Christ in them, it's just spiritual busy-ness masquerading as spiritual growth and maturity. At first they are confused by their lack of interest in the latest 'outpouring' or debates ranging from flat earth to pre-tribulation rapture and everything in between, and wonder what is wrong with them. In the past they would have jumped on the loudest and most spectacular spiritual band wagon that was tooting its horn. But now all they want is something real. To really know God. Nothing else satisfies. They want the effect of righteousness in them, they want to know the ways of righteousness.

They 'wise up' and realize the core of what they are really looking for - they want to know the Father and the Lord Jesus. They want to fellowship with the Holy Spirit. They want to grow in love, joy, peace, gentleness, long-suffering, meekness, godliness, consistency, moral excellence, brotherly love, agape' love. They want to be complete and lack nothing in Christ. They want relevant spiritual life. They want genuine friends who won't dump them if they change churches or happen to offend them once or twice.

### **You are moving in one of these directions - which one?**

"This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light and won't come into the light for fear their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light so that they may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God." John 3:19-21 To stay the same means staying in darkness. Move forward, race to the judgement, run to the light.

### **Becoming who you are - I close with this**

From my formative years my heart was confirmed in seeking righteousness first and foremost in part by things like Nancy Honeytree's 'Evergreen' album (1975), which I have on my phone and computer play list, and still listen to frequently. The song 'Searchlight' contains these lyrics: "Searchlight, turn your beam on me when I'm not what I seem to be. When darkness creeps in, turn your light on my sin, Oh searchlight, turn your beam on me. Jesus, when my life is done, and you call me to your throne. How I long to hear you say, on that resurrection day, Oh well done my child, welcome home! Welcome home child."

The ways of righteousness are a process, and is best aided by looking at it long term. The Father and Lord invested in us for eternity. Ephesians 2:7 says He will continued to show His grace and kindness to us in Christ 'in the ages to come'. Deal with issues He brings up on the inside, and correct, learn from the mistake, and move on. Don't stop your progress by wallowing in the dirt. Allow the work of righteousness in you to have its way. Set growing in Him is your #1 goal, so conform your emotions, decisions, and actions to what He would have you think, feel, and do. The reward of righteousness is peace. Ahhhh.

New subject next week. Blessings,

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