

## Evangelism and Witnessing Lesson 10 2Q 2012

### A Love Response

Read memory text: “If you love me keep My commandments.”  
(John 14:15)

When you hear the memory text what comes to mind? What thoughts, feelings and attitudes does it stimulate? How do you hear it?

- A nice suggestion?
- A dictator’s order?
- A manipulation “If you love me....”
- A doctor’s prescription?

What does it mean? Why would we keep his commands if we love him? How is Christ saying this different from a spouse saying, “If you love me you will obey me and do what I say?” Or is it the same? If we love our spouses should we speak to them this way? Then why does Christ speak to us this way?

If your spouse was dying of a terminal condition, and you actually had a treatment protocol that would save them. And perhaps your spouse didn’t understand anything about the seriousness of their condition or the necessity of the treatment, might you say “If you love me you will follow my directions”?

And what is the difference in saying, “If you love me you will following my directions” and “If you love me you’ll wash my car”?

Is it that the directions for cancer treatment are selfless directions, whereas wash the car is selfish commands?

What are Christ’s commands?

Read first paragraph, “Although our memory...” thoughts?

Can you name Christ's commands?

- Love God
- Love others
- Make disciples, spread Gospel, help the needy
- Ten Commandments
- Aren't all of these expressions of love?

So, what is the basis for Christ's commands? Are they not all selfless commands, instructions on how to cooperate with God to live in harmony with God's law of love?

Does it make a difference if we follow Christ's command or not? What difference does it make?

- Does it make a difference in God's attitude toward us?
- Does it make a difference in us?
- This is what science says about altruism, volunteerism or loving others:
  - Dozens of studies over several decades have examined relationships between volunteer work and health-related outcomes. Most studies have shown positive volunteering-health associations. Among, youth, evidence suggests that volunteer work is associated with a plethora of positive developmental outcomes, such as academic achievement, civic responsibility, and life skills that include leadership and interpersonal self-confidence (Astin & Sax 1998).<sup>i</sup>
- Four studies between 1996 and 2003 evaluated the effect of volunteerism and longevity in the elderly. Controlling for confounding variables, such as health when entering the study, all four studies "reported that volunteers tended to live statistically longer than those who did not volunteer."<sup>ii</sup>

- Not only do volunteers live longer but they live better:
  - Several studies have examined the relationship between volunteering and physical functioning. Moen, Dempster-McClain, and Williams (1989) studied 427 women who resided in upstate New York and were both wives and mothers in 1956. Over the next 30 years, compared to nonvolunteers, women who did any volunteering had better physical functioning in 1986, after adjusting for baseline health status, level of education, and number of life roles. Similarly, Luoh and Herzog (2002) found that, compared to nonvolunteers or those volunteering less than 100 hours, those who were volunteering 100 hours or more in 1998 were approximately 30% less likely to experience physical functioning limitations, even after adjusting for demographics, socioeconomic status, baseline functioning limitations, health status, paid employment, exercise, smoking and social connections. Moorow-Howell and colleagues (2003) examined data collected between 1986 and 1994 from more than 1,500 U.S. adults, finding that volunteering predicted significantly less functional disability 3 to 5 years later, after adjusting for demographics, socioeconomic status, marital status, and informal social integration.”<sup>iii</sup>

When we give of ourselves we operate in harmony with God’s design for life and are healthier. Does it go beyond just physical benefits?

I have many patients who tell me they want to be happy. As I have looked at this, it appears to me that happiness is a by-product, a result of being healthy – Healthy physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, relationally. When we are healthy in every aspect of our lives happiness is a result, but sickness in any area undermines happiness.

What does this have to do with obeying God's commands?

God's commands are the manufacturer's maintenance instructions. Just as your automobile comes with maintenance instructions and if you follow them the car stays in better shape with less problems, so too, God has given us such instructions. When we follow them, we are healthier, and subsequently generally happier.

Does it matter if we do these things out of obligation or out of love? Does it matter what we believe when we do them?

I have a patient 38-year-old lady who has struggled with esteem issues and depression her entire life. She also has struggled with weight issues. Recently she has made some marked improvements in her life. The appointment before last we reviewed, that despite her belief that she is failure, and can't succeed, and is not any good, that she has a master's degree, works for a fortune 500 company as an executive, gets outstanding reviews, has been in a stable relationship for 7 years, and is financially stable. We reviewed that the facts of her life contradict the story she tells herself about herself.

When she came in to her most recent appointment she told me that it was really hard to change years of negative thinking but she forced herself to start telling herself that she was a good person, a responsible person, a reliable, honest, decent human being and stopped recycling the negative thoughts.

She told me that she had joined weight watchers and the first 5 weeks, before she changed her thinking she lost 5.5 pounds, but over the next 4 weeks after she started thinking positively she lost 11 pounds, double the weight loss in 1 less week.

She didn't make any more changes in her diet, in fact she said that weight watchers gives some extra points you can use if you want and during those four weeks she actually ate a little

more than the 5 weeks before, and did no more exercise, so why the greater weight loss?

First, she wasn't just telling herself positive thoughts, she was telling herself positive thoughts that were *true*. If she had been telling herself positive thoughts that were not true it would not produce benefit because she would know it was a lie.

One possible reason is this outcome: Negative thinking activates the stress circuitry of the brain, which increases stress hormones and inflammation. This causes insulin resistance, with subsequent increase release of insulin, so higher insulin levels. Insulin causes the body to store energy. And the body stores energy as fat. When she had more positive thinking she had less stress and reduced the stress hormones, and inflammatory factors reducing insulin thus reducing the pressure to store fat allowing for greater weight loss.

Truly, God's methods of truth and love are healing.

## SUNDAY

Read third paragraph, "Our love for God..." thoughts? How do we experience God's love?

Anyone like to share how you have experienced God's love in your life?

- From others? I have experienced love from you, from your kindness, affection, acceptance knowing my shortcomings, yet still being my friend.
- I have experienced God's love in situations in which he has provided answers, insights, and interventions, deliverance.
- I have experienced God's love in the quiet moments, the heartache, the comfort in painful times.

Do you find it hard to experience God's love? Is it harder than experiencing love from people?

What barriers have you found to experiencing God's love?

The fact we can't see and touch God? Does the fact Jesus left the earth make it easier or harder to experience God's love?

What might the situation be like if Jesus were physically on earth today? Would most of us get a chance to know him personally? Do we have a greater opportunity for personal fellowship in the current situation than most people had 2000 years ago?

Read next paragraph, "Our love for God..." very well said, thoughts about this?

What gets in the way of knowing God? What helps in knowing God?

MONDAY

Read first paragraph, "Over the centuries..." thoughts?

Have you ever heard appeals that stimulated guilt? Have you ever lived under a church-induced burden of guilt?

Do such approaches generally work to help people find a saving relationship with God?

The next dark section states, "Read Romans 3:19,20. What did the apostle Paul mean when he said the whole world is guilty before God?"

Read Romans 3:19,20:

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

<sup>20</sup> Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. (NKJV)

Thoughts? What does it mean? What do you hear by this idea of being guilty before God?

Here is my paraphrase of these two verses:

<sup>3:19</sup> Now we know that the 10 Commandments are like a medical diagnostic instrument, identifying infection and diagnosing disease. It diagnoses accurately everyone who is infected with distrust of God, filled with selfishness and is dying of sin, so that everyone who claims to be sin-free or free of selfishness will be silenced and the entire world will recognize its need of God's healing solution. <sup>20</sup> Therefore, no one will be recognized as having a healthy relationship with God and being like Christ in character by adhering to a set of rules; rather, it is through the 10 Commandments that we become aware of our sickly state of mind. (my paraphrase)

Thoughts? Does "guilty" give us the right sense of the meaning Paul is trying to convey?

Read the next paragraph: "The way Paul..."

Thoughts?

Does the law communicate a sense of accountability, or a sense of reality, what our situation actually is?

Read the next two paragraphs, "The law's function..." thoughts?

Yes the law is like a mirror which reveals our situation, or condition, but cannot cure. But what does this mean, "After we come to Christ we are no longer motivated by guilt,

because the guilt has been washed away, covered by the righteousness of Jesus.”?

If you are cleaning your house is there a difference between washing something and covering something?

Which is it? Does God wash us or simple cover our defects?

Now, what about washing of guilt? Is this legal guilt or emotional guilt? Which of us are legally guilty of being born sinners?

But, do we struggle with emotional guilt? Where does this guilt come from? From the condition of sinfulness? From bad theology? From both?

Do we need to feel guilty for being sinners? Did anyone in this room have a choice not to be born a sinner? If you were born this way without a choice is it your fault?

Then why does the lesson suggest we should experience guilt?

Maybe they are suggesting we should experience guilt for the “sins” we have committed?

Imagine an HIV infected man and woman get together and have a baby born HIV infected, did the baby do anything wrong? Should the baby feel guilty about being HIV infected?

Will the baby have symptoms of this infections? Can the child do anything, by him/herself to avoid having symptoms? Should this HIV infected child feel guilty for having symptoms? Is there anything the baby can do to cure itself, by itself? Will it need something outside itself to cure it?

We are born sinful, not by our choice, will there be symptoms of this condition? What do we call those symptoms? Sins, can anyone of us, unaided, avoid sinning? Can any of us cure ourselves? Should we feel guilty for these symptoms?

If there is a remedy that will cure the HIV child, but the child refuses to take the remedy, and instead prefers to be sick, should the child feel guilt for that?

If there is a remedy for sinfulness, and we refuse that remedy should we feel guilt for that?

So, what guilt is rightly ours? Is it not the guilt for rejecting the remedy, and choosing instead to persist in a life of sin? Can we, because of Christ's victory, because of God's interventions, experience a change in our hearts, minds, characters so that sin becomes repulsive? Can we actually long to be free of it, and when we slip up and fall short are grieved in our hearts?

He has made it possible for us to choose to say no to destructive impulses. We don't have to lie, steal, pillage, rumor monger etc. If we persistently, habitually, repeatedly, engage in those activities it is not simply because we were born sinful, but because we go about rejecting God's grace, his remedy in our lives, we are responsible for those sins, and the guilt is ours!

The real question we need to ask is, not have I sinned, but have I rejected God and his remedy for my sin condition?

Read James 2:10:

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

Then read last paragraph, "The fact that an offense..."

Thoughts?

What is the focus? What do you hear the lesson suggesting is the problem? Notice how it makes one guilty of defying "the God who commanded it." What are they saying is the problem?

Do they make it sound like this is an offense to God? Have you ever heard it suggested that it offends God when we sin?

In their book *Rediscovering the Scandal of the Cross* by Green and Baker they state:

Whatever meaning atonement might have, it would be a grave error to imagine that it focused on assuaging God's anger or winning God's merciful attention...The Scripture as a whole provides no ground for a portrait of an angry God needing to be appeased in atoning sacrifice." (p. 51)

What do you think it means to offend in one point is guilty of breaking all?

Here is my paraphrase: "For who ever loves in one area, but lives selfishly in another area is still out of harmony with God's design." James 2:10

Thoughts?

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph, "What would you think..." thoughts?

Did any politicians come to mind?

Read last paragraph, "We are not just talking..." thoughts?

Would you have expressed it as "In any loving relationship our motivation is to please the one who is the object of our love."?

That might work if the one on the other side of the relationship is perfect and healthy and always does and wants what is right, but could that be a dangerous principle, if the one on the other side of the relationship is unhealthy?

If we have a person, spouse, or child, or friend, who is immature and into self-gratification, not self-improvement, then if we love them do we do what will please them?

Why or why not? What might be a problem with this idea?

Can you think of another principle? What about doing what is right, healthy and reasonable, what is in their best interest not necessarily what will please them?

Or, we will do what would please them only if they are operating upon God's principles?

What about the idea that whatever we do for God that doesn't come from a desire to please him means we don't understand what it is to have a love relationship? Because God is perfect, and he is always interested in our eternal good, it is safe to always seek to please him. Right?

Read bottom pink section – thoughts?

Can we bless others if our actions are not motivated strictly by love?

Can a doctor, or nurse, or PT, or dentist, or auto mechanic, or hair stylist, or repairman etc. do something that is a blessing to another, simply because they want to make money or promote their reputation?

Can a brother or sister babysit a younger sibling, rather than go out with friends, because they are ordered by their parents to do it, not out of love, yet still be a blessing to their younger sibling?

Can a person do something out of love that injures another and is not a blessing? Can a doctor, maybe a missionary doctor, not even getting paid, but motivated by love to help others, prescribe the wrong medication that causes a bad outcome?

How do we break these things down?

Regarding the character development of the person doing the action the motivation is what matters, not the specific action or outcome. If the motivation is right, and one is doing their best, then the character still develops along healthy lines, regardless of outcome.

However, if the motivation is selfish, the character is marred regardless of outcome.

Regarding others, often the outcome is more important than motive. Could a person motivated by love, affection, desire to help, be misunderstood and be accused of interfering or causing problems, or even betrayal?

This is why we are not to judge, man looks on the outward appearance but the Lord looks upon the heart.

WEDNESDAY

Read second paragraph, “Legalism in the Christian...” thoughts?

Is this the only type of legalism or can you think of another?

What about the legalism of God executing Christ in our place so our legal penalty can be paid? Isn't this another form of legalism?

Read last paragraph, “A legalistic religion...”

Notice the legalism described in the lesson doesn't result in actual character transformation, but instead in a certain arrogance, Pharisaism, selfishness.

But what about the idea that our problem is legal and we need legal solution, does that result in character transformation, or instead a false security of legal pardon?

If our diagnosis is wrong our solution is wrong. If we move the problem out of our heart, mind and condition, and into a heavenly court, or heavenly record, then rather than getting healed, we build a false confidence on getting a legal declaration of innocence, which leaves us just as sick and terminal.

And in the Great Controversy, our witness for God is in being healed. If we failed to experience God's healing, but go about claiming legal pardon, or declared innocence, we will misrepresent God.

#### THURSDAY

Read first paragraph, "The Bible..." thoughts?

What do these terms mean to be adopted, or born again? How do you understand them?

Are these literal or metaphorical? What are they trying to teach or convey? That a change happens in us, and in our relationship to God, what change?

Is it a legal change or an actual change in us? Why are we "adopted"? If we are God's by creation, why the need for "Adoption"? What does this metaphor teach? Was it for all humans or was Paul using it to help Gentiles overcome Jewish bigotry?

Born again, means? A renewed heart and mind, and when this happens we are again united with God, loyal to him again. Who gets changed in this process? Does God's attitude toward us change or our attitude toward him change?

Consider the prodigal son, though born a son, when did he cease to function as a son? When did he again get his sonship back, the ring of family authority on his finger? Did the father change or the son?

Read second paragraph, “The effective...” thoughts?

This is well said, giving up the past, what does it mean to give up the past?

History cannot be changed, our records in heaven do not get erased, what gets changed is our hearts, we give up the past, give up:

- Trying to undo past mistakes and instead live by new principles
- Trying to have a different childhood
- Trying to change our parents
- Trying to re-parent our children
- Reliving the past over and over again in our minds

Instead we surrender ourselves, including our histories, and accept a change in inner motivation, drive, desire, principles, longings, a change of heart. We get changed, not our history, and with this change we begin choosing differently, orienting our goals, actions in Godly directions.

We give up:

- Unhealthy friends and associates
- Destructive habits and practices
- Immoral material and media

Not because we are afraid of what God will do, but because we no longer want those things infecting, dominating, controlling and destroying us!

And we establish and engage in:

- New and healthy relationships
- Church fellowship
- Fellowship and communion with God
- Bible study prayer
- Helping others
- Truth based thinking
- Evidenced based decision making
- Grace and tolerance for others
- Hope for the future
- Trusting God with outcomes
- And more...

## FRIDAY

How do we keep ourselves and our ministry moving forward in God's cause?

Thoughts?

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<sup>i</sup> Post, S. *Altruism and Health Perspectives from Empirical Research*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2007: p. 20, 21.

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid p. 22.

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid p. 26.