



The
FLOW
Adult CURRICULUM

#46

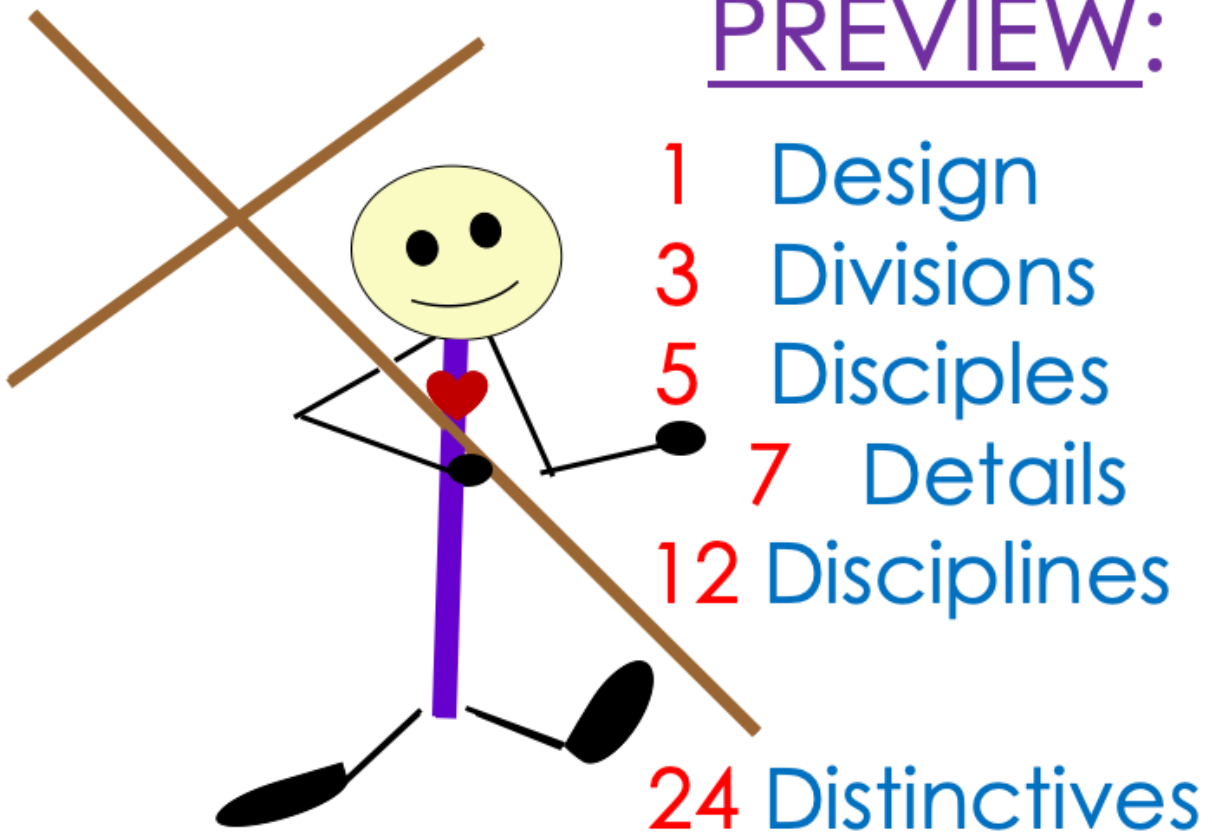
Experiencing God Horizontally

Acts 1:8

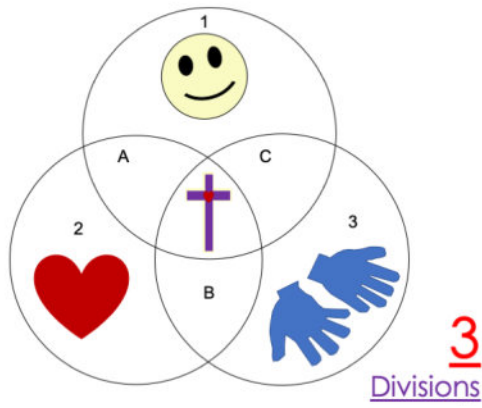
(Come And See Christianity book pages 109)

The FLOW

PREVIEW:

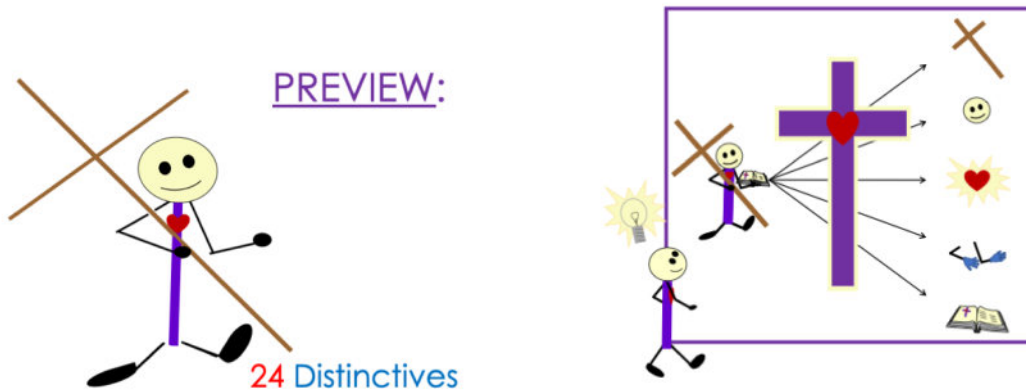


SECTION SIX: 12 Disciplines



The Disciple's "Hands" put into **action** the **truth** & **love** of God's Word, God's will, & God's ways. In short, when **each Christian's Head, Heart, & Hands** are united in purpose & power, the family of God is **living** as the **Body of Christ!**

24 Family Distinctives:



24 DISTINCTIVES:

The “distinctives” are a family portrait... When you add God’s Word, God’s Spirit, God’s Truth, God’s love, and God’s people all together, the distinctives are what we look, love, & live like :-)

We are...

Experiencing God horizontally



INTRO:

As we begin to **see the beautiful, biblical portrait of Christ's faith-filled family** defined and described by God's Word, will, and ways, it is critical to remember that the Holy Bible is to ALWAYS BE our ultimate source, authority, and interpreter in ALL things pertaining to one's understanding of reality and application of truth in love.

**Remember,
The biblical Church is Christ's missional family...
Moreover, God's Word reveals our Father's will and His family's ways.**

[2 Timothy 3:16-17](#)

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17so that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Here are ***24 defining & describing HANDS-on DISTINCTIVES of Christianity:***

True Christians are biblically, miraculously, intentionally, missionally, and imperfectly...

1. ***Responding to grace***
2. ***Repenting of sin***
3. ***Trusting the Bible***
4. ***Obeying God's Word***
5. ***Growing in Christ***
6. ***Living Spirit-led***
7. ***Praying for guidance***
8. ***Following by faith***
9. ***Dying to self***
10. ***Carrying our cross***
11. ***BE-ing The Church***
12. ***Loving one another (truly loving one another)***
13. ***Equipping the saints***
14. ***Exemplifying supernatural unity***
15. ***Ministering as ambassadors***
16. ***Discerning matters shrewdly***
17. ***Worshipping God vertically***
18. ***Experiencing Him horizontally***
19. ***Proclaiming the Gospel (no matter what)***
20. ***Fishing for men***
21. ***Making disciplined warriors***
22. ***Winning spiritual warfare***
23. ***Loving our King***
24. ***Serving His kingdom***

PRAYER:

LORD, we seek to bless You with all that is within us. Help us here, we pray, to be that blessing as we come to better understand You and Your eternal truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Help us to see with Your eyes and love with Your love, all that You would reveal to us through Your Word, Your will, and Your ways. May we grow in our grasp of Your realities, Your means of restoration, and Your mission of reproduction. In the holy name of Jesus, we pray. Amen and Amen

CONTEXT:

Macro

This lesson marks another major transition point in our curriculum's eye-opening explanation of Christianity. By way of review, we began in Section One with the reality of Almighty God having 1 Divine DESIGN (also known as a biblical worldview and the eternal application of Jesus Christ's Gospel). In Section Two, we addressed the 3 DIVISIONS (Head, Heart, and Hands) that make up the "being" in every human being. Next, in Section Three, we demonstrated how Christianity accounts for, defines, and describes all of humanity, every person, past, present, and future. We noted that all people can be identified as one of the 5 DISCIPLES – Lost, Lover, Learner, Leader, or Lifer. Moving forward, Section Four revealed, engaged, and explained the 7 fundamental DETAILS of God's Divine DESIGN... because **we all need to know what we need to know**. To be more specific, those seven truths are: The Foundations, The Framework, The Facts, The Fight, The Faith, The Family, and the truth about Forever.

Then, in Section Five, which we just completed, our focus shifted from HEAD based truths to 12 HEART shaping exercises or disciplines - each having the potential to strengthen one's personal relationship with Christ, His Church, and their collective mission: bringing God glory by finding & growing more glorifiers.

We used the acronym **J.E.S.U.S.'S. P. S.W.O.R.D.** to outline and harmonize a biblical, missional, and intentional methodology for growing in God's love - & His loving witness. The 12 HEART DISCIPLINES are: **J**ournaling... **E**ating-nothing (fasting)... **S**cripture-intake... **U**nderstudy of Scripture... **S**tewardship... **S**olitude... **P**rayer... **S**erving... **W**orshipping... **O**utreach... **R**elationships... and **D**evelopment.

Now, our curriculum and study will transition to The HANDS. This is where **Christians demonstrate to the world that Christ is in their worship & witness**. Whereas our time spent in the HEAD sections (1-4) focused on the truths that Christians need and seek to LEARN, and our concentration on the 12 HEART DISCIPLINES of section 5 helped us to grow in God's LOVE, our sixth and final section will **walk through the 24 DISTINCTIVES, which explain & exemplify how Christians are to faithfully LIVE... and fully BE The Church... together** – all by God's grace & ALL for His glory!

God's Word puts it this way:

"Let us not love with word and tongue but in action and truth." – 1st John 3:18

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, [47](#)praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. – Acts 2:46-47

I. **DISTINCTIVES are FRUIT:**

It is important to realize that God’s miraculous and authentic **Christian DISTINCTIVES are the FRUIT of saving grace and faith** (Ephesians 2:1-10). As Jesus described in John 15, people can do nothing outside of their abiding in Him and obeying His Word, will and ways. In short, there will be no fruit unless one remains attached to and provided for by the true Vine and divine Root. With that said, a cautionary note is worth sharing here, beware the counterfeits that abound around the world. ***Plastic fruit is deceptive vs. DISTINCTIVE!***

Galatians 5:22-25

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

II. **DISTINCTIVES are FAMILY:**



DISTINCTIVES, by definition, are those “distinguishing characteristics that are notable for having a special quality, style, and/or attractiveness” (Dictionary.com).

When it comes to God’s family, the true Church, each Christian and their individualistic DISTINCTIVES are as unique as their potential. At the same time, in the same way that a billion unique snowflakes can be combined to make a single snowstorm, or countless swatches of scrap fabric can be sewn together to make a single quilt, so it is with God’s family. The LORD creates His Christian family with a both/and combination of DISTINCTIVE uniqueness, as well as DISTINCTIVE love and defining unity.

Christianity’s DISTINCT family (ecclesia) has a DISTINCTIVE unity (koinonia).

“By this all people will know that you are My disciple, if you have love for one another.”
– John 13:35

“The more genuine and the deeper our community becomes, the more will everything else between us recede, the more clearly and purely will Jesus Christ and his work become the one and only thing that is vital between us.”

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

III. **DISTINCTIVES are WITNESS:**

The most biblical and healthy understandings of Christianity will include an embrace of two overarching and DISTINCTIVE purposes. Namely, per God’s Word, will, and ways, every Christian has received miraculous, saving grace, as well as the indwelling presence and power of the Holy Spirit, to:

1. Bring glory to God.

1 Corinthians 10:31

*So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do,
do all to the glory of God.*

2. BE Christ’s witness.

Acts 1:8

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, **and you will be My witnesses** in Jerusalem (locally), and in all Judea and Samaria (regionally), and to the end of the earth (globally).”*

God’s DISTINCTIVE people have been filled with His Holy Spirit for the express purpose of living DISTINCTIVE lives. When the world sees the LORD’s loving family living out their divinely empowered and God-honoring worship, work, and warfare, the resulting fruit will serve as a faithful witness, built with supernatural, grace-based, and missional DISTINCTIVES.

“God created me—and you—to live with a single, all-embracing, all-transforming passion—namely, a passion to glorify God by enjoying and displaying his supreme excellence in all the spheres of life.”

- John Piper

The Christian Distinctive

What distinguishes Christianity from all other religions is that it is a *revealed* religion. Christianity is not about our search for God or our means of finding him. Christianity is not a religion that works its way upward. It is all about God coming to us — God in grace making himself known to us and making a way for us to enjoy fellowship with him.

And so, at the very heart of Christianity is, simply, a message — a message from God to us about what he has done to bring us to himself.

If Christianity is distinctively revealed religion, then it is also uniquely *authoritative*. It does not offer itself as the best and highest of human thinking about God or even the best or most successful of human efforts to know God. It professes to be nothing less than the unique word from God, his very own self-disclosure and the record of the actions he has taken in Jesus Christ to bring us into fellowship with himself.

One of Rudyard Kipling's characters declares, "The heathen in his blindness bows down to wood and stone; He don't obey no orders unless they is his own." That is to say, human religions lack authority — they form their own ideas and "discover" their own beliefs.

By contrast the Christian is "under orders," because unlike human religions, Christianity is a revealed religion — divinely revealed. We Christians are not our own touchstone of truth, and we do not confuse our ideas about God with His own self-revelation. We learn truth about God not from "inner lights" within ourselves but from God's own objective Word.

And apart from this external authority, there is no Christianity. This, at bottom, is Christianity's leading distinctive.

And so, we **Christians prize Scripture as God's Word. We joyfully submit to it. And we enthusiastically proclaim its message of grace in Jesus Christ to the world.**

- Dr. Fred Zaspel

Micro

EXPERIENCING GOD HORIZONTALLY is the miraculous & missional fruit that comes with/from biblically WORSHIPPING HIM VERTICALLY.

Let that truth in love set in... and do its witness-building work.

Many Christians estimate difficulty in the light of their own resources, and thus they attempt very little and they always fail. All Christian giants have been weak men who did great things for God because they reckoned on His power and presence to be with them.

– Hudson Taylor

Message

The Christian religion begins in a New Birth in the power of the Spirit.

It is developed under His guidance and sustained by His presence.... The Church is the Body of Christ begotten, unified, and indwelt by the Spirit, but forgetting the Spirit, men wrangle over limbs, functions, and orders.

The Christian religion is hopeless without the Holy Ghost.

Confusion and impotence are the inevitable results when the wisdom and resources of the world are substituted for the presence and power of the Spirit. The root-trouble of the present distress is that the Church has more faith in the world and the flesh than in the Holy Ghost, and things will get no better till we get back to His realized presence and power.

Spirit filled souls are ablaze for God. They love with a love that glows.

They serve with a faith that kindles. They serve with a devotion that consumes. They hate sin with fierceness that burns. They rejoice with a joy that radiates.

Love is perfected in the fire of God.

*Let no man join us who is afraid, & we want none but those who are saved, sanctified and aflame with the fire of the Holy Spirit... The Holy Spirit will not conquer the world with unbelief, nor will He save the world with a worldly church. He calls for a crusade, a campaign, and an adventure of saving passion. For this enterprise **He wants a separated, sanctified, and sacrificial people.***

*The Church is the Body of Christ, and the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. **He fills the Body, directs its movements, controls its members, inspires its wisdom, supplies it's strength. He guides into truth, sanctifies its agents, and empowers for witnessing.** The Spirit has never abdicated His authority nor relegated His power.*

– Samuel Chadwick

BIG IDEA: **EXPERIENCING GOD HORIZONTALLY is a gift... a miraculous & missional, blood-bought, commanded & commissioned, definitive & descriptive, worshipping & witnessing, Christ-centered, God-glorifying, gift of Gospel grace... a gift meant to be exemplified & multiplied.**

PREVIEW:

1. EXPERIENCING
2. GOD
3. HORIZONTALLY

TEXT:

Acts 1:8

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses... (locally, regionally, & globally)."

1. EXPERIENCING

Illustration:

We have long said, with a distressing sense of inadequacy disguised in our tone, as we search for words that never seem to measure up, never seeming to righteously reflect and represent the fullest context and contours of reality, especially when we try to offer our commentary and/or insights from life's polar extremes, (our highest & happiest mountain peaks, and/or our deepest and most troubling of valleys & trenches):

"Words just cannot do it justice... You HAD TO BE THERE!"

Those two phrases appear to have been made for this lesson! When it comes to EXPERIENCING GOD (either VERTICALLY or HORIZONTALLY), words just cannot do it justice... To truly understand and grasp the grace & glory of EXPERIENCING GOD, by definition, YOU HAVE TO BE THERE.

*Since the days of Pentecost, has the whole church ever put aside every other work and waited upon Him for ten days, that the Spirit's power might be manifested? **We give too much attention to method and machinery and resources, and too little to the source of power.***

- Hudson Taylor

Explanation:

“EXPERIENCING” is a loaded word...

Have you ever noticed the great potential (for good and/or for evil) that is embedded in every EXPERIENCE? Think about it... If we allow our imaginations to either drift or dream, we can all attach our worst nightmares and/or our greatest blessings to different expressions of “EXPERIENCE.”

The point is... ***an EXPERIENCE is best defined, described, and should be either valued or vanquished, based on that EXPERIENCE's truth, love, motive, intent, content, context, object, application, and impact.***

Again, please, slow down and methodically take that truth into prayer. ***EXPERIENCES require macro definitions to assess their micro distinctives.***

Remember, anyone can check off tasks on a to-do list, repeat religious slogans, recite the words of eloquent prayers, remain relatively and comparatively moral, consistently attend (vs. BE) church, participate in nice service projects, give to good causes, even preach biblical sermons... yet NEVER miraculously & biblically, EXPERIENCE GOD. While they may be “around” Christ and His true Christian family, they are not IN Him faithfully.

As an aside, take note, all of the above references are assuming an honest sense of still damnable sincerity... and does not address the intensely intentional wolves in sheep's clothing, those who are actively deceiving, dividing, and seeking to destroy God's family. ***KNOW that they too, the wolves, will EXPERIENCE GOD when He brings to them either His converting grace OR His wrath-filled judgement.***

Only with this truth embraced and understood will the reader be ready to EXPERIENCE the mission and message of this lesson. More to the point, Christianity is ALL about God being glorified as His faithful followers EXPERIENCE HIM, both VERTICALLY and HORIZONTALLY. To be clear, ***only VERTICALLY converted Christians can BE The Church and EXPERIENCE GOD HORIZONTALLY – as evidenced by their loving UP, IN, & OUT. Amen!***

This desire for heart purity is a creation of the Holy Spirit at work in the heart... The average man is not going to be impressed by our publicity, our posters, or our programs, but let there be a demonstration of the supernatural in the realm of religion, and at once man is arrested...

It is the signature of the Holy Ghost upon our work and witness that makes all the difference

– Duncan Campbell

In these two things the greatness of man consists, to have God so dwelling in us as to impart his character to us, and to have him so dwelling in us that we recognize his presence, and know that we are his, and he is ours. The one is salvation: the other the assurance of it.

- Frederick W. Robertson

Application:

We need, men so possessed by the Spirit of God that God can think His thoughts through our minds, that He can plan His will through our actions, that He can direct His strategy of world evangelization through His Church...

If you look up into His face and say, "Yes, Lord, whatever it costs," at that moment He'll flood your Life with His presence and power.

- Alan Redpath

Trying to do the Lord's work in your own strength is the most confusing, exhausting, and tedious of all work. But when you are filled with the Holy Spirit, then the ministry of Jesus just flows out of you.

- Corrie Ten Boom

2. GOD

Illustration:

Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit in us, whereby our inner being is progressively changed, freeing us more and more from sinful traits, while developing within us over time, the virtues of Christlike character.

- Jerry Bridges

In truth, I have done nothing alone. God has called me and has been my pilot. The Holy Spirit has been my Comforter, my Guide, and my power Source.

- Reinhard Bonnke

Explanation:

Only God can do what only God can do.

*There is not a better evangelist in the world than the Holy Spirit.
- D.L. Moody*

*When the New Testament speaks about the fullness of grace which we find in Christ, it does not mean only forgiveness, pardon and justification. Christ has done much more for us. He died for us, but he also lived for us. Now he has sent his own Spirit to us so that we might draw on his strength. He grew in grace, and when we draw on his power we shall likewise grow in grace.
- Sinclair B. Ferguson*

*The particularity of each New Testament author was in no way smothered by the unique process of inspiration. On the contrary, the Holy Spirit first prepared, and then used, their individuality of upbringing, experience, temperament and personality, in order to convey through each some distinctive and appropriate truth.
- John Stott*

*God speaks through a variety of means. In the present God primarily speaks by the Holy Spirit, through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church... When God spoke to Moses and others in the Old Testament, those events were encounters with God. An encounter with Jesus was an encounter with God for the disciples. In the same way an encounter with the Holy Spirit is an encounter with God for you.
- Henry Blackaby*

*The moment you are redeemed through the atoning death of Christ upon the cross, you receive the Holy Spirit within your human spirit... Man was so engineered by God that the presence of the Creator within the creature is indispensable to His humanity.
- Major Ian Thomas*

*When we are born again, a new life - the life of God - is put into us by the Holy Spirit. But the old self-life, which is called in Scripture the flesh, is not taken away. The two may coexist in the same heart. "The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh."
- F.B. Meyer*

*In general, He guides and directs His people, affording them, in answer to prayer, the light of His Holy Spirit, which enables them to understand and to love the Scriptures.
- John Newton*

Wise leaders should have known that the human heart cannot exist in a vacuum. If Christians are forbidden to enjoy the wine of the Spirit they will turn to the wine of the flesh....Christ died for our hearts and the Holy Spirit wants to come and satisfy them.

- A.W. Tozer

Let us thank God heartily as often as we pray that we have His Spirit in us to teach us to pray. Thanksgiving will draw our hearts out to God and keep us engaged with Him; it will take our attention from ourselves and give the Spirit room in our hearts.

- Andrew Murray

God knows what each one of us is dealing with. He knows our pressures. He knows our conflicts. And He has made a provision for each and every one of them. That provision is Himself in the person of the Holy Spirit, indwelling us and empowering us to respond rightly.

- Kay Arthur

Application:

Cry out in prayer. Ask the Lord to allow you to exemplify EXPERIENCING HIM both VERTICALLY and HORIZONTALLY... all day, every day!

O Holy Spirit, descend plentifully into my heart. Enlighten the dark corners of this neglected dwelling and scatter there Thy cheerful beams.

- Saint Augustine

The church that is man-managed instead of God-governed is doomed to failure. A ministry that is college-trained but not Spirit-filled works no miracles.

- Samuel Chadwick

Take this as the secret of Christ's life in you: His Spirit dwells in your innermost spirit. Meditate on it, believe in it, and remember it until this glorious truth produces within you a holy fear and wonderment that the Holy Spirit indeed abides in you!

- Watchman Nee

I believe that the Holy Spirit is indispensable for an interpreter's reaching a correct interpretation of the text. The Spirit must work in the interpreter's heart so that he or she welcomes the biblical message that one's egotistic, sinful heart otherwise hates with a vengeance.

- Daniel Fuller

3. HORIZONTALLY

Illustration:

How little chance the Holy Ghost has nowadays. The churches and missionary societies have so bound Him in red tape that they practically ask Him to sit in a corner while they do the work themselves.
- C.T. Studd

A church in the land without the Spirit is rather a curse than a blessing.
If you have not the Spirit of God, Christian worker, remember that you stand in somebody else's way; you are a fruitless tree standing where a fruitful tree might grow.
- Charles Spurgeon

Everyone recognizes that Stephen was Spirit-filled when he was performing wonders. Yet, he was just as Spirit-filled when he was being stoned to death.
- Leonard Ravenhill

Explanation:

The Meaning & Implications of the Gospel

By John Stott on June 3, 2007

When we meet some people, we know immediately and instinctively that they are different. We are anxious to learn their secret. It is not the way they dress or talk or behave, although it influences these things. It is not that they have affixed a name tag to themselves and proclaimed themselves the adherent of a particular religion or ideology. It's not even that they have a strict moral code which they faithfully follow. It is that they know Jesus Christ, and that he is a living reality to them. They dwell in him and he dwells in them. He is the source of their life and it shows in everything they do.

*Not merely in the words you say,
Not only in your deeds confessed,
But in the most unconscious way,
Is Christ expressed.
Is it a beatific smile?
A holy light upon your brow?
Oh no! I felt his presence when you laughed just now.
To me, 'twas not the truth you taught,
To you so clear, to me still dim,
But when you came you brought... A sense of him.
And from your eyes he beckons me
And from your heart his love is shed,
Till I lose sight of you and see
The Christ instead.*

These people have an inner serenity which adversity cannot disturb; it is the peace of Christ. They have a spiritual power that physical weakness cannot destroy; it is the power of Christ. They have a hidden vitality that even the process of dying and death cannot quench; it is the life of Christ.

To use Biblical expressions, "The peace of Christ rules in their hearts," "the power of Christ is made perfect in their weakness," and "the life of Christ is made manifest in their mortal flesh."

The commonest description in the Scriptures of a follower of Jesus is that he or she is a person "in Christ." The expressions "in Christ," "in the Lord," and "in him" occur 164 times in the letters of Paul alone, and are indispensable to an understanding of the New Testament. ***To be "in Christ" does not mean to be inside Christ, as tools are in a box or our clothes in a closet, but to be organically united to Christ, as a limb is in the body or a branch is in the tree. It is this personal relationship with Christ that is the distinctive mark of his authentic followers.***

The word "Christian" occurs only three times in the Bible. Because of its common misuse we could profitably dispense with it. Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul never used the word, or at least not in their recorded teaching. ***What distinguishes the true followers of Jesus is neither their creed, nor their code of ethics, nor their ceremonies, nor their culture, but Christ.***

What is often mistakenly called "Christianity" is, in essence, neither a religion nor a system, but a person, Jesus of Nazareth.

Now let us explore some of the implications of being "in Christ." First, **to be in Christ brings personal fulfillment as a human being.** *All around us are men and women who are unfulfilled and alienated, who are asking what it means to be a human being.* They are seeking the secret of satisfaction, of happiness, and are searching for their own identity. Where is it to be found?

Jesus said, "I am the Bread of Life. He who comes to me will never hunger, and he that believes in me will never thirst." There is a hunger in the human heart which none but Christ can satisfy. **There is a thirst which none but he can quench. There is an inner emptiness which only he can fill.** I don't know any more striking expression of this in contemporary literature than in the writing of Malcolm Muggeridge, who said,

"I may, I suppose, regard myself as being a relatively successful man. People occasionally stare at me in the street. That's fame. I can fairly easily earn enough to qualify for admission to the highest slopes of inland revenue. That's success. Furnished with money and a little fame, even the elderly, if they care to, can partake of trendy diversions. That's pleasure. It might happen once in a while that something I said or wrote was sufficiently heeded to persuade myself that it represented a serious impact on our time. That's fulfillment. Yet I say to you, and I beg of you to believe me, multiply these tiny triumphs by a million, add them all together, and they are nothing, less than nothing, a positive impediment, measured against one draught of that living water that Christ offers to the spiritually thirsty."

Secondly, **to be in Christ brings brotherly unity.**

The expression “in Christ” has a collective as well as an individual implication. It means to be related not only to the Messiah personally, the Christ, but also to the Messianic community he came to build. Indeed, it is not possible to belong to him without simultaneously belonging to it. In this new community Jesus has abolished the barriers of race, nationality, class and sex, which normally divide mankind. In its place he has created what the Apostle Paul calls a “single New Humanity.” He writes again that “there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Now this unity was a sensational fact in the early days of the Church. For in those days women were despised, slaves had no rights, and Jews and Gentiles were not on speaking terms. Today, however, to claim brotherly unity between the followers of Christ sounds like a rather sick joke, when so-called Christians are fighting one another in Northern Ireland and are segregated from one another in Southern Africa and elsewhere. Moreover, the Church of Jesus Christ is split into Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant, and Protestantism is further splintered into five main ecumenical families, not to mention the thousands of smaller denominations and house churches. Dr. David Barrett has documented 6,000 African Independent Churches. How can we possibly claim “brotherly unity?”

Only in this way: Although every follower of Jesus should blush with shame over the fightings and factions that have disgraced the history of the Church, yet those who are truly “in Christ” enjoy a unity with one another which transcends nation and denomination, race and rank, class and culture.

I quote Bishop Stephen Neil:

“In the fellowship of those who are bound together by personal loyalty to Jesus Christ, the relationship of love reaches an intimacy and intensity unknown elsewhere. Friendship between the friends of Jesus of Nazareth is unlike any other friendship, and this ought to be the normal experience within the Church. Where it is experienced, especially across the barriers of race, nationality and language, it is one of the most convincing evidences of the continuing activity of Jesus among men.”

Thirdly, **to be “in Christ” brings radical transformation.**

We are always in danger of trivializing what it means to be converted, or to be a follower of Jesus. To be “in Christ” is to be radically transformed, to the roots of our very being. As Paul says, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.” And again, he speaks of our having died to the old life and risen again with Christ to a life that is new.

Notice that creation and resurrection language are the only vocabulary that can do justice to the experience of new life in Christ. And new life in Christ leads inevitably to a new lifestyle, with a new value system and new moral standards, as becomes plain to those who read the Sermon on the Mount. In that Sermon, Jesus sets before us a choice between two value systems—his own and the world’s.

The world admires the powerful, the successful, the tough and the brash, the achievers and the go-getters. But Jesus says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” who are humble before God. “Blessed are the meek,” who are humble towards one another.

The world’s model, like that of the 19th century German philosopher, Nietzsche, is the super-man, tough and overbearing. But the model of Jesus is still the little child.

The world is concerned with appearances, external conformity to conventions, rules and regulations. But ***Jesus again and again talks about the heart***, “The pure in heart,” or “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

The world says, “Sex is for fun, enjoyment without commitment.” But Jesus says, “Sex is for love, enjoyment within commitment.” The world’s philosophy is, “Give as good as you get. Love those who love you and repay evil for evil.” But Jesus still says, “Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you, do good to those who hate you, overcome evil with good.”

The mind-set of the world is extremely materialistic, covetous for consumer goods. But Jesus says, “Don’t be anxious about what to eat and drink and wear. Instead, seek first God’s rule and God’s righteousness.”

We have no liberty to dismiss the teachings of Jesus as unpractical and unrealistic, or to convert it into a prudential little middle-class respectability. No, no, Jesus still says to us, “You’ve got to choose. Nobody can serve two masters.” We have to choose between him and the world—between the broad road that leads to the destruction and the narrow way that leads to life.

But are the followers of Jesus interested only in themselves and one another, and let the rest of the world go hang? No. Jesus told us to be the salt and light of the world. That is, he means us to permeate secular society, seeking to arrest its social decay, as the salt hinders decay in fish and meat. He means us to be the light of the world, shining into the darkness of its tragedy and evil.

You know the name, perhaps, of Robert Bellah, who is a sociologist at the University of California at Berkeley, and also head of the Center of Japanese and Korean Studies there. In an interview with him some years ago, I read to my astonishment that he said this: “We should not underestimate the significance of the small group of people who have a new vision of a just and gentle world. In Japan a very small minority of Protestant Christians introduced ethics into politics and had an impact beyond all proportion to their numbers. They were central in the beginnings of the women’s movement, labor unions, and virtually every reform movement.” Then he added: “The quality of a culture may be changed when two percent of its people have a new vision.” Now we are many more than two percent. ***We could have a far greater impact on society if we were truly the salt and the light of the world.***

Sharing the good news of Jesus is not to be the hobby of a few eccentric enthusiasts. Mission is the concern of every follower of Jesus. But there is a precaution that I need to add. To proclaim the uniqueness of Jesus is one thing; to proclaim the superiority of Western Civilization or ecclesiastical culture is something quite, quite different.

The 19th Century missionaries were great in their self-sacrifice and their courage, and we honor them for their devotion. Would that we had half their zeal for Christ! But with the benefit of hindsight, we have to say that they made a grave mistake in confusing the gospel with culture. The most striking example I have found is in West Africa, where I have seen with my own eyes Gothic spires rising above the coconut palms and Anglican bishops sweating copiously in Medieval European dress. And I’ve heard African tongues trying to speak Jacobean English. It’s ludicrous.

Stanley Jones, who was himself an American Methodist missionary to India, put it strikingly. At the end of his book, *The Christ of the Indian Road*, he writes, ***“There is a beautiful Indian marriage custom,***

that dimly illustrates our task in India and where it ends. At the wedding ceremony in India, the women friends of the bride accompany her with music to the home of the bridegroom. They usher her into the presence of the bridegroom, but that is as far as they can go. They then retire and leave her with him. "And that," he says, "is our joyous task in India. To know Him, to introduce Him, and then to retire. Not necessarily geographically, but to trust India with Christ, and trust Christ with India. We can only go so far. He and India must go the rest of the way."

Our concern as followers of Jesus is neither with a religion called "Christianity," nor with a culture called "Western Civilization," but with a person, Jesus of Nazareth, the one and only God-man who lived a perfect life of love, died on the cross for our sins, bearing in his own person the condemnation that we deserve, was raised in triumph from the grave and is now alive, accessible and available to us through the Holy Spirit. He is also coming again one day in sheer magnificence, that every knee should bow to him. That is the Person with whom we are concerned.

To be "in Christ" is to find personal fulfillment, to enjoy brotherly unity, and to experience a radical transformation. Only then can we become the world's salt and light, sharing the good news with others, making an impact on society, and above everything else seeking to bring honor and glory to his wonderful Name.

Application:

It is not enough to wear an ornamental cross as a pretty decoration. The cross that Paul speaks about was burned into his very flesh, was branded into his being, and only the Holy Spirit can burn the true cross into our innermost life.

– A.B. Simpson

Christians ought to eliminate their folly. They ought to adopt God's view of the absolute impossibility for their natural walk to please Him. They must dare to allow the Holy Spirit to point out to them every corruption of the soul life. They must exercise faith in believing God's estimation of their natural life and must wait patiently for the Holy Spirit to reveal in them what the Bible says of them.

Only in this manner will they be led in the way of deliverance.

– Watchman Nee

God the Holy Ghost calls for crusaders. How many ministers would be in church if it were not their job? The answer will be found in the number who never go to the job that is outside.

– Samuel Chadwick

May God so fill us today with the heart of Christ that we may glow with the divine fire of holy desire.

– A.B. Simpson

CLOSE:

**EXPERIENCING GOD HORIZONTALLY is the fruit & VICTORY
that flows out of one's faithful WORSHIPPING of GOD VERTICALLY!**

*True Christianity is to manifest genuinely Christ-like behavior by dependence
on the working of the Spirit of God within, motivated by a love
for the glory and honor of God.*

- Ray C. Stedman

*A holy minister is an awesome weapon in the hand of God. A word spoken by
you when your conscience is clear, and your heart full of God's Spirit,
is worth ten thousand words spoken in unbelief and sin.*

- Robert Murray McCheyne

*The man who gazes upon and contemplates day by day the face of the Lord
Jesus Christ, and who has caught the glow of the reality that the Lord is
not a theory but an indwelling power and force in his life,
is as a mirror reflecting the glory of the Lord.*

- Alan Redpath

Self-emptiness prepares us for spiritual fullness.

- Richard Sibbes

**EXPERIENCING GOD HORIZONTALLY means BE-ing HIS Church...
per God's Word, will, and ways - no matter what!**

For What?

*It is the consciousness of the threefold joy of the Lord, His joy in ransoming us,
His joy in dwelling within us as our Saviour and Power for fruit-bearing and His
joy in possessing us, as His Bride and His delight; it is the consciousness of this
joy which is our real strength. Our joy in Him may be a fluctuating thing:*

His joy in us knows no change.

- Hudson Taylor

*As soon as we see the Lord Jesus on the Cross, we know our sins are forgiven ;
and as soon as we see the Lord Jesus on the Throne, we know
the Holy Spirit has been poured out upon us.*

- Watchman Nee

But have we Holy Spirit power - power that restricts the devil's power, pulls down strongholds and obtains promises? Daring delinquents will be damned if they are not delivered from the devil's dominion. What has hell to fear other than a God-anointed, prayer-powered church?

- Leonard Ravenhill

There was good reason for the silence of the Holy Spirit as to how, when, in what form Christ ordained the apostles, the reason being to show the indifference of all forms of words.

- John Wycliffe

So What?

There is no worse screen to block out the Spirit than confidence in our own intelligence.

- John Calvin

The Spirit does not lead you to pray for useless goals.

- Wesley L. Duewel

*As the sun can be seen only by its own light,
so Christ can be known only by His own Spirit.*

- Robert Leighton

Yes, thou art ever present, power divine; not circumscribed by time, nor fixed by space, confined to altars, nor to temples bound. In wealth, in want, in freedom, or in chains, in dungeons or on thrones, the faithful find thee.

- Hannah More

A man may read the figures on the dial, but he cannot tell how the day goes unless the sun is shining on it; so we may read the Bible over, but we cannot learn its purpose till the Spirit of God shine upon it and into our hearts.

- Thomas Watson

Put very simply, Satan's power in the world is everywhere. Yet wherever men and women walk in the Spirit, sensitive to the anointing they have from God, that power of his just evaporates. There is a line drawn by God, a boundary whereby virtue of His own very presence Satan's power runs out...

- Watchman Nee

It is impossible to overestimate the importance of being filled with the Spirit... Enter into the promises of God. It is your Christian inheritance. You will do more in one year if you are really filled with the Holy Ghost than you could do in fifty years apart from Him.

- Smith Wigglesworth

Now What?

The story of Christian reformation, revival, and renaissance underscores that the darkest hour is often just before the dawn, so we should always be people of hope and prayer, not gloom and defeatism. God the Holy Spirit can turn the situation around in five minutes.

- Os Guinness

Our heart oft times wakes when we sleep, and God can speak to that, either by words, by proverbs, by signs and similitudes, as well as if one was awake.

- Paul Bunyan

All outward means of grace, if separate from the Spirit of God, cannot profit, or conduce, in any degree, either to the knowledge or love of God. All outward things, unless He work in them and by them, are in vain.

- John Wesley

When it is a question of God's almighty Spirit, never say, "I can't."

- Oswald Chambers

A characteristic of the flesh is its fickleness... But the will of God is: "Walk not according to the flesh (not even for a moment) but according to the Spirit." ... Do not grow overconfident following a few victories. Should you not rely upon the Holy Spirit you will soon be thrown once more into a distressing experience.

With holy diligence you must cultivate an attitude of dependency.

- Watchman Nee

PRAYER

Dear heavenly Father, thank You so much for the Truth and Love of Your Word, will, and ways. Please help us to absorb and apply ALL that You have shared and commanded in the Bible. May our heads be infilled with Your defining Scriptures, for the express purpose of informing, inspecting, and inspiring our sanctified hearts and serving hands.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen and Amen

Support Sermon:

"BE-ing Acts 1:8 Family"

Acts 1:8

March 24, 2024 (from Nebbe, Uganda)

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