**What is the Essence of Our Walk with Christ?**

**What should we be giving ourselves to?**

Three areas of focus in the Christian life:

1. What are the things we should be giving ourselves to in **our personal walk**?
2. What are the things we should be giving ourselves to with regard **to our brothers and sisters in the body?**
3. What are the things we should be giving ourselves to in the area of **ministry and giving to others?**

Why do we need to know this?

\*Plenty of false paths, distractions, and hybrid philosophies in all areas of the Christian walk

- Our hearts get off track, we must recognize error in ourselves, our family, groups we are with, the fleshly agendas of men, men building their own kingdoms, and the keeping of man made traditions and dead forms out of our practice.

-We need to know the pure and the unadulterated life of the Spirit in all situations.

-We must know by experience - “knowing about ” versus “knowing experientially”.

- Concepts and head knowledge alone without experience and without Christ does not produce life or change.

-Christ and the inner workings of the heart.

- To truly encounter Him.

**Area #1 - Your Personal Walk**

What is the essence of Christianity in our personal walk? What should we be giving ourselves to?

-We get off track, discouraged, apathetic, and distracted mainly because our foundations are not always sound. Our heart is not fixed on the right foundations.

- Healthy foundations will buy us a lot of room and pays good wages.

Healthy Foundation # 1 - **The Fear of God**

-keeps us on-line with God daily and with short accounts.

- 2 Cor. 5:10, 11 “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ…therefore knowing the fear of the Lord…”

- “Gal. 6:7 “whatever a man sows, that he shall also reap. “

-ignoring this, or pretending that it is not true is not God fearing. The God fearing face this.

- A revelation of His awesome power. Who Christ is. Being in the presence of POWER and in TOTAL AWE.

-There is no partiality with God. He will destroy and completely annihilate.

-Matt. 21:44 “those on whom the rock will fall, will be ground to powder.”

- He is God, the Almighty. We are His creation.

(Prayer break)

(discussion)

Healthy Foundation #2 – **Understanding the Full Depth of the Gospel**

**-** What is it?

- Often complete message of the gospel is not communicated.

- “Our sins are forgiven, but…”

-“God is putting up with you or tolerating you to some degree.”

-“You are still flawed in some way and you need to get it together”.

-“Jesus paid for your sins, but you’d better or else”.

- The truth is we are completely clean because of the blood of Christ.

-**Who we are** has been changed. Our nature is now the nature of Christ.

-We have all of the righteousness of God in Christ. (2 Cor. 5:21, Heb. 7:27)

- The Lord’s emotional response to us is His tender, Father heart.

-We have His smile towards us.

-Without believing the import of the gospel:

- we are plagued by guilt

- always feeling the need to “do more or be more”

- without a full understanding of the good news, we distance ourselves from God and the church.

-without fully understanding the gospel, we are still under the law to some degree. “The power of sin is in the law” (1 Cor. 15:56). Yo-Yo Christianity.

- Not a one time belief, **but a daily believing** and walking in the gospel. In fact, we need the gospel moment by moment to keep us, to guard us, to empower us.

**(prayer break)**

**(discussion)**

Foundation #3 - **Walking after the Spirit or After the Flesh**

-Christ in you – Gal. 2:20

-learn to **separate** the emotions and mind from what is spirit.

- we must daily and moment by moment acknowledge the life of another (Christ)

in us. We live from the impulses of the Spirit, and not from the impulses

of the mind or emotions. This is “life and peace”.

-the goal of the flesh is always independence

- therefore, the flesh is on a constant mission to

* collect itself
* get it together
* avoid feeling needy
* (antithesis – gain more knowledge, strength, power, position, esteem)
* the flesh always has to be right.

After the Spirit or After the flesh

Trust

Dependency

Humility

Yielding our members

Presenting our bodies

\*”the flesh” cannot trust or depend on God. As soon as the vessel (the body) humbles itself and begins to trust and depend on the Spirit, it ceases to be “the flesh”. When yielded, the body, mind, emotions become available for the Spirit to use (instruments of righteousness).

-dependency is a way of life (living weak and undone).

**Therefore, how do we grow?**

* Growth is abiding and walking after the Spirit in more and more areas of life, thus in more and more moments throughout our day.

**What is the process of growth?**

**Walking after the Spirit hinges on dependence, we learn dependence through:**

-brokenness, pain, and the stripping away of all ambition and self confidence

- self reliance is hidden from us and is only purged through suffering.

- don’t run from pain, but rather embrace it. This is the Lord’s primary tool to grow you.

- those who develop flesh patterns of running from pain wind up shallow or cranial.

-going from the head and into the heart

- daily, we must forsake our own thoughts, feelings, opinions, strong positions, capabilities, and desires to find the Lord in a real way and live off of His life moment by moment.

- **both experiencing the Spirit and knowledge of scripture** is absolutely vital.

-trains our senses, discernment, and provides a baseline of reality

- to experience of His life (walking after the Spirit) is an experience of indescribable joy.

-walking after the Spirit is the only truly satisfying thing in all of life.

(prayer break – giving our hearts to humility, trust, and childlike dependency)

(discussion)

**Area #2 - In Community**

What is the essence of Christianity in relationships and the corporate setting and what should we be giving ourselves to?

**-** We are designed to live in community

-**the essence of body life is the intimate sharing of the life of Christ together on a “heart level” and on a consistent basis.**

-this requires vulnerability (vulnerability is different from transparency)

-prerequisites are love, truth, and safety. Without safety and love, we cannot be truly

vulnerable.

**-**people are completely starved for love and affirmation.

-encouraging words and gestures are vital, they sustain us, and go a very long way.

-build each other up in love. (Eph 4:16)

-Our personal love needs must be met from the Lord. Our focus is to love others, not expect them or look for others to love us. If we expect others to love us, we will live hurt and disappointed. Yet, our business is to live continually loving others (while getting our own cup filled directly from the Lord).

- true love of the brethren will produce true unity. Love is the perfect bond of unity. (Col. 3:14)

- We must love one another more than we love our own doctrines or opinions.

-Church meeting times are a time to love the Lord corporately and allow Him to edify His body.

-maintain quality in your meeting times by “being caught up” with the person of Christ first through worship and corporate prayer early in the meeting time. The gifts, teachings, prophecy, and edification to the body should **flow out of this**. Beware of problem solving, doctrinal discussion, and shallowness early in the meeting time.

- do not allow for legalism; yet do not allow for fleshly freedoms. Only the Spirit gives life.

**(prayer break)**

**(discussion)**

**Area #3 - In Ministry, Service and Giving**

What is the essence of Christianity in the area of ministry and giving to others? What should we be giving ourselves to?

* A result of the first two. This is only as strong as the first two.

Above soil line

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\*Your life that can be seen (above the soil line, i.e. walk, talk, ministry) is an expression or result of what is below the soil line (what is unseen).

\*Your life or root system below the soil line is what others cannot see, your inner life. Your personal life with God, degree of brokenness and contrition.

Secondly, your care, love, affection, and prayers **for others** “under the soil”, intertwines your roots together, creating a stronger outward expression of corporate body life and ministry. We are made to be planted in a garden with our “inner lives” entwined.

* **The essence of ministry, service and giving is loving others organically and naturally.**
* Beware of trying to “find your ministry”
  + Your identity is in Christ, not in serving or giving. Your foundation for life is His love – not in giving and ministry - Fast track to being shipwrecked and burned out.
* Be careful of focusing too much on trying to “identify your gifts”.

**-**“Whoyou are” is actually your gift and ministry. Never forced or fit into men’s molds.

Questions or topics to revisit?