

Honest To God!

The Journey Part 5

The Purpose of This Series- This series is entitled “The Journey” particularly for the purpose of learning to live the affective and fruitful life of a believer. These thirteen messages are shared to give the believer, young or old, new or seasoned, a clearer picture of the life intended for them and what God has for them. I believe this series will help the believer tie up some loose end and help them walk with confidence and abundance.

The Purpose of This Message- The message today draws our attention to seven traits that causes us to lose credibility in our relationships, business and bottom line, in our personal testimony with other people. Paul was passionate toward God. There were many things that he did that would be amazing to see, but he was just as accused for it. It would be nice that miracles, power, truth, giftings, love, even sacrifice would hush the accusers and unite belief on every side. But it doesn't always do that. And because of that we do little in our life because we can't take the heat of being disapproved of. The great challenge to do something right, to do it with accurate and pure motives and to do it in the power of God is not always welcome nor is it understood. What are we to do? How do we respond to that and what can make us go the distance? I believe that I can answer those questions today.

Introduction- Some Things I Know

The Old Testament, (written between 1450 BC and 430 BC) contained **over 360 prophecies foretold about the coming Jewish Messiah, “anointed one” - hundreds of years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Jesus fulfilled all 365 of these prophecies.** About 25% to 30% of the Bible is prophecy and most of that is end time prophecy. The Word of God is not like any other book. It predicts with accuracy the future. When Christ came upon this earth the first time there were

I believe that today, we are not only living in dangerous times but we are also living in exciting times. According to the Bible, there is an end to human history as we know it. It will not just come here to America, but it will come as a world wide event that will rock our world! I don't believe that it will go much longer as it is right now very much longer and the recent world financial challenge that we all have experienced is part of the travailing, (like the birth pains of a woman nearing childbirth), of those last days.

Human government will come to an end and this world's governments will come to an end as we know it today. Why? Because Jesus Christ will rule at the juncture of that transition! Jesus will physically and visibly come in sky just as He left this world. At that moment this world as we know it will not longer be the same. It will be on a process of decline that will not be resolved until God has had His full purpose done on this earth.

Today, you and I have the opportunity to live in the Grace of God. We have this window to ask Christ into our heart and to freely connect with Him and respond to His will. But there is a force to distract us from it. And the motion of the heaven's are attempting to win our attention.

We are literally in a battle. And the problem is, it's not a matter of “who is in charge,” because God will ultimately win. But battle is with who we will follow? This is the real battle for us right now, who is in charge? Who will rule and what is our final authority for life in this world?

Either God is in charge or people are. Either God's Word is the final authority or man's opinions are. You either serve God's kingdom or Satan's Kingdom.

Welcome To The War Room

“War [is] a state of open, armed, often prolonged conflict carried on between nations, states, or parties.” (The American Heritage Dictionary)

Since Genesis 3:15 where the first declaration of war was activated against Adam and Eve, God's kingdom of light, life and righteousness has been at war against Satan's kingdom of darkness, death and wickedness. But we often think that this battle is between God and Satan, that they are in direct combat with each other. This is a huge mistake because God is sovereign. He cannot lose. But what He chooses to do is to use me and you as an agent for the heaven of God to be activated on this earth. He wants to use us to bring His kingdom on this earth. **MAN IS THE FOCAL POINT OF THE CONFLICT!**

Both God and Satan desire man's allegiance; God is looking for obedience that aligns with our faith, and Satan is looking for those who will blindly accept his deception of promised power, pleasure and fulfillment. All of us belong to one or the other of these two kingdoms. There is a huge challenge because you and I are not born “neutral.” We were actually born into a kingdom, and are subject to remaining in that kingdom unless we are liberated.

Satan actually has one plan, to oppose and overthrow the kingdom of God. By blinding minds, deceiving and tempting, Satan opposes God through our refusal to join His plan for the world. It's pretty simple really. To be rescued from Satan's kingdom and have full access to God's kingdom, spiritual birth must be the key action.

This war that I talk of today may seem like a powerful, aggressive plan of Satan against God, but it actually isn't. The war is simply cold-heartedness, indifference, dishonesty, immorality, unbelief, lack of love, and failure to discipline and renew our minds. Each one of these actually advance the kingdom of Satan.

Three Kinds of People

1. Try Hard, Get Frustrated

You are doing all you know to do, maybe not perfectly, but you are trying with all you know to do. But something inside you keeps letting you know something is not alright.

- You feel more pressure than joy
- God seems to be working in slow motion
- You often questioned if God can even hear you
- There are frustrations over children
- Hurts from relationships
- Fears of facing more, concerned you cannot take on any more
- **The Answer- There is HOPE!**
 - More effort is not the answer
 - Jumping through more loops will not improve your place with God

2. Hardly Try, Get Fruit

- You feel more pleasure than pressure
- God is working all around you, and your time with Him is strong and rich.
- You like God, your family, church and even work
- You sense a real strength of the Lord in your life to help you beyond your hard times.
- **The Answer- There is MORE!**

3. **Hard and Far**

- Nothing really gives you reason to follow more passionately toward God.
- You feel like you have heard it all before and you there is nothing new to learn.
- You feel different, out from the bunch, out of touch and notice you are on the outside looking in.
- You feel discouraged, distant and perhaps angry.
- You question, “Why “try God” again, it never worked before?”
- **The Answer- There is LIFE!**

In the book, **The Sacred Romance, Brent Curtis & John Eldredge** co-author some incredible teaching. One of the statements early in the book said this,

“The inner life, the story of our heart, is the life of the deep places within us, our passions and dreams, our fears and our deepest wounds. It is the unseen life, the mystery within- what Buechner calls our “shimmering self.” It cannot be managed like a corporation. The heart does not respond to principles and programs; it seeks not efficiency, but passion. Art, poetry, beauty, mystery, ecstasy: These are what rouse the heart. Indeed, they are the language that must be spoken if one wishes to communicate with the heart. It is why Jesus so often taught and related to people by telling stories and asking questions. His desire was not just to engage their intellects but to capture their hearts.”

We live in a world that, not only are we attacked from a kingdom of darkness but there is an attempt to entice us to a kingdom of light. But that light so often gets fogged over with distractions in an attempt to make little of the God we serve.

- St. Francis becomes a birdbath
- Malcolm X is put on a stamp
- Martin Luther King gets a holiday
- Jesus gets a T-shirt that says, “Jesus is my homeboy.” Or there is a bobbing-head “Buddy Jesus” for your car dash.

Nothing is sacred and everything is capable of being mocked or slammed without ever thinking twice. We get distracted, and then God's Word gets evicted from our mind without us ever knowing anything about it.

When our life becomes perplexed, strained or even fearful our life tends to become shallow and we become less than valiant. The truth is, we cannot convey an adequate spiritual reality to others if we are not pursuing Christ with our own hearts. If you wanting to break established behavior patterns that keep you from less dazed living, you want a heart that is authentically pursuing the truth of God Word for my own heart.

Paul's Past Defines His Future

Last week we read over I Thessalonians 2:1-2 and discussed Paul's statements,

“You know, brothers, that our visit to you was not a failure. We had previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in spite of strong opposition.”

I Thessalonians 2:1-2

We had discussed Acts 16 where Paul and Silas dealt with immediate success bringing Lydia and several others to the Lord. Then there was the challenge of a girl who proclaimed Paul's ministry as true and of God, but Paul rebukes her, casting out a demon which got him into all kinds of trouble. And his experience in Philippi ended in pulling an all-nighter, celebrating God about midnight after getting beat and placed in the inner prison. There God creates an earthquake, all the prison doors were opened and their chains fell off. And the jailer and his family all gave their hearts to God that night. Keeping that in mind now Paul turns from that experience and turns to the Thessalonian's in validating his ministry,

Jolt!

Jolt Cola is a carbonated soft drink produced by Wet Planet Beverages. It was created in 1985 by C. J. Rapp as a **highly caffeinated cola**. It is targeted towards students and young professionals, stressing its use as a stimulant in a similar manner as **energy drinks**.



There are so many caffeinated drinks out there today that I'm not sure anyone knows how to live without the buzz. It would be real easy for me to look like an old grumpy older person when I talk about this, but the direction I want to go is that there should be a buzz with God. Something that I read in God's Word should get in my heart and create a passion in my Spirit. When we read Paul's writing, we must look at the simplicity of his words,

“For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts.”

I Thessalonians 2:3-4

“You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness. We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else.”

I Thessalonians 2:5-6

Come Over Here!

- **Appeal/Exhortation** (3874) (*paraklesis* from *pará* = side of, beside + *kaléo* = call) literally means a **calling to one's side for admonition**, encouragement, exhortation, consolation or comfort.

Have you ever been burned in a relationship? Thessalonica was a hurting community. They were suffering financially and lacked leadership in their city in a great way. It didn't take much for the traveling philosophers to persuade the people of that city because they were so hungry for solution. They would blindly respond to their speeches in the local lecture halls by giving what they had and later find out that they had been taken.

This ability to persuade others could make these men wealthy. After a persuasive speech

they would catch them in the moment and appeal to them, "Please give us some money! This is our life! We can't do it unless we get paid!" You know what it's like to be taken, robbed and manipulated, and some of the people felt the same about Paul, "He's no different from any of the other people who come to our city! All he's after is the money! He doesn't care about the people! He's out to get a buck!"

In all honesty, he power of persuasion was like many of the others who had passed through their city. His passing through, (three weeks), only reflected the uncaring and quick buck attitude that so many of them had experienced. He was driven out of town, if you remember back in Acts 17, Paul had to leave Thessalonica in a hurry at night because a mob was looking to kill him. Some would question why didn't he stay? Some thought, "You know why he left in such a hurry? You know why you haven't seen hide nor hair of him since he left? Because he's a phony, a charlatan, a religious con-man!" There were a lot of things that that the bad guys did that Paul did, but it did not make him bad and Paul knew it. He had to explain it to the Thessalonians because they didn't know why they felt the way they did.

The word Paul uses, *paraklesis*, **a calling to one's side through a persuasive discourse, stirring address for admonition, encouragement, exhortation, consolation or comfort.** His intent was not manipulative, and he goes to some extent to label the seven ways you could do so. This observation gives us seven ways that trust can be destroyed and people are used.

And Paul is saying, "Don't you know me by now? I'm not trying to trick you. I'm not trying to take advantage of you. And I'm not asking for donations. The only thing I'm interested in is seeing you accept Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. That's why I do what I do! Not to get rich. Not to get famous. This isn't about me! I don't want to be famous! I want Him to be famous!"

Seven Destructive Behaviors Of A Relationship

The Thessalonian's had become weary and suspicious of people, to the point that when someone actually offered them true freedom and real love they could not help but mock them and attempt to run them off. They had good reason too. They were in great suffering, they were truly hurting, they were a target city for abuse.

There was such a variety of religious cults and philosophic persuasions, 'Holy men' of all creeds and countries, popular philosophers, magicians, astrologers, crack-pots who all jostled for the attention to have one convert.

These teachers and philosophers were seeking to gain popularity, politicians desiring political advancement, charlatans wanting a simple following that would give them credibility in Thessalonica. They were perfect to approach, everyone was hungry for good news and was looking for someone to give them good news that might offer relief and possibly freedom.

"For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you... We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts."

I Thessalonians 2:3-4b

"You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed... We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else."

I Thessalonians 2:5a-6

The First Destructive Behavior Of A Relationship

1. **Error**

Error (4106) *plane*, A word which describes a going astray, a straying about, a roaming or wandering, a forsaking of the right path. The opposite of *plane* (error) is *aletheia* (truth). By straying about one is led away from the right way and thus roams here and there, which is not good in spiritual matters.

Relationships- Are you able to stay on the subject? Or, does your conversation get back to the same point it always does? What is the subject always about? Is it about you? Is it about your ailments? Is it about God? Is there conversation about now, where you are at and what is presently happening?

Leadership- Are you able to bring others around you by listening to them too? Relationship is a two way street. It doesn't hurt to remember someone's birthday, their kids names or what their background is. Meaningful relationships can create the greatest opportunity for leadership.

Ministry- There is a reason for people being skeptical today and I will not apologize too much about the subject because I believe too many people are. But people want to know you care more than they care what you know. Of course you have heard this before, but it's true. Do you really care? Bring God into the matter, invite those around to gather in on the subject. Kindly persuade and guide the conversation, but give room to be a growing individual toward Christ.

Bottom Line- Needs To Be Free

The Second Destructive Behavior Of A Relationship

2. **Impure Motives**

Impurity (167) (*akatharsia* from a = without + kathaíro = cleanse) is literally **worthless material, waste; of graves decayed flesh**. It is a broad term referring to **moral uncleanness in thought, word, and deed** and thus describes a state of moral impurity and especially sexual sin or immorality ("the impurity of lustful, luxurious, profligate living"). It is not surprising that ***akatharsia* was used to describe filth or refuse**.

Relationships- Have you ever experienced someone who had impure suggestions? Their conversation has sexual overtones? Their words somehow turned around to be a punch, blindsiding you because of their offense? Do you know someone you can never be sure of, if they are going to be your friend or their greatest disappointment?

A huge destructive behavior in a relationship is when you start out one way with intentions to do something else. Do you remember what that feels like? To be used, manipulated and shocked? You thought you were being friends but behind the relationship was a hidden agenda? Ladies, have you ever experienced it with a guy? Men have you ever felt it with a woman?

Leadership- I had been jolted one day by the Holy Spirit. He basically told me that I was being prejudice. The reason, I was looking for leaders. I would come to know people to basically find out if they had leadership qualities. If they didn't I would drop

them like a rock. I had no idea that I was doing that. As a leader, I have not only the obligation to love people equally, but I have lost many great relationships because I was shallow in my expectations of relationships.

Ministry- I believe that many people are turned off by the high sale of the gospel. But I know that Paul was accused of the same thing. But look where he went, to those who were religious, it was not among the lost. You would find that he spend days persuading those who did not know God, not pressuring them. I have to be careful that my relationships with others is a natural unfolding of who I am as well as an unfolding of who they are. Do I want everyone to know Jesus Christ like I have come to know Him? Absolutely! But they will do it because they trust me, not because I have strong armed them.

Bottom Line- Needs To Win

The Third Destructive Behavior Of A Relationship

3. Trickery/Deceit

When Paul came to the Thessalonians, he did not come to trick them and to use methods that were questionable. He did not try to get a superficial decision for Christ, but he laid down plainly before them the truth of the gospel and the issues of heaven and hell that were concerned.

Deceit (1388) (*dolos* derived from *dello* meaning to bait) literally refers to a fishhook, trap, or trick all of which are various forms of deception. The word translated trickery, "guile" (deceit) carries the idea of "**baiting a hook.**" In other words, Paul did not trap people into being saved, the way a clever salesman traps people into buying his product.

Relationships- If you are constantly finding yourself obligated to a person because of something you said or they said but you never responded to it, and you feel frustrated, you just my be in a tricky relationship. The relationship is based upon many well layed out traps that makes you obligated.

A person who does this can operate like this for years without knowing that they are constantly stringing one statement or event to the next one that ties the relationship to these obligated points. Careful! Be very careful. This springs from fear of losing control and power.

Leadership- A leader can hold people to the fine print when the fine print doesn't really contribute to the success of the business or product. Remember, to get people obligated for a purchase or persuading people to come around to your thinking so you can obligate them to purchase whatever it is you are selling, you are deceived because you believe they are using you when they say no! Don't deceive yourself.

Ministry- In ministry, we can't manipulate people with our expectations. We can talk to them but not down to them. We can confront but not control. We can question but not interrogate them. We can lose respect because we don't understand the obligation that one makes to "make us happy," not just accepts the Lord.

Bottom Line- Need To Control

The Fourth Destructive Behavior Of A Relationship

4. Pleasing Men

“As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel - contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed. For am I now seeking the favor of men or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.”

Galatians 1:9-10

Pleasing (700) (*aresko*) means to be **satisfying or behaving properly toward one with whom one is related**. *Aresko* is found in ancient inscriptions praising those who have served their fellow citizens and thus conveys the sense of service and obedience.

Can you do the right thing and still be wrong? According to Paul you can. He says that if you are doing things to please men, more than likely you will compromise the truth in your life.

Relationships- We can be so accommodating to others and wonder why that they don't ever commit to us. It is a painful process to realize that you have spent many of your years attempting to please others only to obtain some worth and meaningful relationship. Don't get me wrong, you had better learn to serve someone if you are going to be committed to them in a relationship, but if you are not secure in who you are you will constantly attempt to win their attention and affection with your service. Many wonderful people have been left wondering what they did wrong, doing everything right!

Leadership- Many people who are wanting to lead others actually become a loving mother to them. They spoon feed those around them, propping them up emotionally and spiritually, never really confronting their stance and forcing maturity. After a while people want to move on. They don't want to be mothered. You mean well and loving, but it is over obligating your ability to lead, their feelings, crisis or confusion dictate the agenda, not vision and purpose.

Ministry- Pretty much the same as above, but you need to “make disciples” not sheepish converts. Too often we find ourselves overcommitting and underdeveloping. God demands that you learn to serve while at the same time to make disciples, the balancing act is difficult alone, but pretty much impossible if you are out to please men.

Bottom Line- Needs To Be Accepted

The Fifth Destructive Behavior Of A Relationship

5. Flattery

Flattering (2850) (*kolakeia* from *kolax* = a fawner) to persuade by use of **insincere speech or exaggerated praise**. *Kolakeia* was a well-known secular Greek term for a practice despised as much as **“boldness” was valued**. Flattery was a well-known, much despised practice in Paul's day. I have heard some people say, “Well you have to make people feel good so they will listen to you.” I hear what you are saying, but I have a great problem with that. I hate it!

“Whoever flatters his neighbor is spreading a net for his feet.”

Proverbs 29:5

I have enough smoke blown in my face to realize that I'm not at all impressed with your impression of me. I can smell it and I don't like it! *Kolakeia* contains the idea of **positive deception for selfish ends**.

Relationships- It's using words to use people. You say, "I love you," at just the right time so you can move the conversation. You talk about how a person looks so you can sell them more clothes. You brag on people's giving so they will give more. It's endless. And you can say all the same things and be right and not manipulative.

Many people don't realize that they have become an artist at using words to get what they want. People may not realize it at first, but after there is a wake of people in the past who had become victims of this deception, hopefully you might get the picture.

Leadership- Many churches are ran this way. Everyone is so important, so great, so good and it keeps them hanging on to a dead end process. Everyone owns something and they are commended for it, even if it is not effective.

Ministry- This cannot be the underlining way of getting people to Christ. I know that there are wonderful people out there, talented, gifted, servants, but until Christ redeems that person, you can't! To persuade people to be a part of a church without first allowing the Holy Spirit to convict them to become part of God's family is destructive and confusing!

Bottom Line- Needs To Be In Charge

6. Masks

A "false front" or "put on a mask to cover up greed". There are men who covet honor and fame and position. We need to search our hearts in order to uncover any covetousness there.

Pretext (4392) (*prophasis* from *prophaíno* = **to cause to shine before**, to appear before, be apparent <> pró = before, + phaíno = to appear, **to shine before**. Vincent gives the origin as pro = before, in front of + phemi = to say, affirm) is that which is alleged as the cause, an allegation, plea. In other words it denotes **something put forward for appearance to conceal what lies behind it**.

Greed (4124) (*pleonexia* from *pleíon* = more + écho = have related to *pleonektes* = one who wants more, person covetous of something that others have) literally means **to have more!** It describes **the insatiable and excessive desire to have more and thinks nothing of using another person or another's property to gain its own ends**. It is thus a strong desire to acquire more and more material possessions, especially that which is forbidden or to possess more things than other people have all irrespective of need. It is insatiable selfishness, greed, avarice, covetousness.

It is a front. You know that there is something not true or trustworthy. **It is an outward show or appearance, pretense or pretext to cover one's real intent or to hide the true state of things**. Here it is an outward show or pretext used to conceal the reality "of greed".

Relationships- Of course we all want to make a good impression but it is being able to

become the real you! Sometimes people grow up living with masks because of horrible or painful pasts. It might take some counseling to deal with some of these issues. Whatever they are, they are unhealthy and need God's healing.

Leadership- There are many people who cannot identify the sham of a masked leader. I would say about 60% of people cannot really detect the mask of an individual attempting to be a leader. So, this individual continues to go around and get the next person to buy in to them without being found out for a long time. Don't be this leader, get help, get healed!

Ministry- I don't believe that there has been anything more damaging to the gospel than a person who has a mask that he wears around one person and is different around another. It is confusing and frustrating to the Kingdom of God. Be who you are in your weakness and you will be far more admired and influential than in your mask!

Bottom Line- Needs To Be Admired

7. Praise From Men

Seek (2212) (*zeteo*) describes a **desire to have or experience something**, of man's effort to obtain something (pursue, endeavor to obtain, strive for).

Glory/Praise (1391) (*doxa* from *dokeo* = **to thing or have an opinion, especially a favorable one**) is the condition of being bright or shining can refer to the greatness or splendor of man (as in this verse) which is based on human opinion which is shifty, uncertain and often based on error. On the other hand, there is a glory of God which is absolutely true and changeless.

This takes it one step further, not only do we want to be admired, but we want people talking about us. It is a fatal step. It destroys relationships, kills the power to lead and hurts the ministry of God's Word!

Relationships- Praise is a very real need in a relationship. But when we get obsessive about it we will look for it through another means. You may not need much praise. You may be unable to receive praise, but I warn you, the person that you are in relationship with will need it and they will be tempted to get it through another means.

Leadership- A leader who constantly needs praise will soon find his team demotivated because of the need to constantly support this great need. As a leader, it is your obligation to give praise, knowing that all that has been accumulated to your success has been on the backs of those who have labored around you.

Ministry- Praise is a horrible distraction for those who should be sharing the gospel. Though there is a great need to be assured you do a good job, it is a destructive force to be needy for verbal approval when in ministry. It can drive you to do more than you were called to do and set yourself up for failure!

Bottom Line- Needs To Be Talked About

Two Balancing Factors

"On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel."
I Thessalonians 2:4a

1. Know Who You Are

We have been approved by God - The Bible says that someday, **you and I will have to stand before God. And he will examine the motives behind our ministries.** He's going to ask you, "How did you treat those around you and did it get in the way of My Glory being seen?"

How you live your life and connect with other people is in direct relationship to your view of God. Why was Paul's ministry so dynamic in Thessalonica? Because he had a right view of God and the right view of himself. He was confident in God's power and committed to follow where God lead him.

Paul's confidence was not in his personality, cleverness or good looks but in the eternal God maker of Heaven and earth. He didn't respond to these charges because he cared about his own reputation, rather he wanted to defend the truth of the gospel and bring confidence to the Word of God among those who had come to know God.

2. God Knows The Truth

***"God is our witness."
I Thessalonians 2:5b***

"For God, Whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you (Romans 1:9)

For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. (Php 1:8-note)

But I call God as witness to my soul, that to spare you I came no more to Corinth. (2Cor 1:23)

Witness (3144) (martus) **refers to one Who has information or knowledge of something and hence can bring to light or confirm something.** Three things are essential: (1) have seen with his own eyes what he attests; (2) be competent to relate it for others; (3) willing to testify truthfully. The present tense indicates believing is their lifestyle.

Men can judge the external conduct and can hear the flattering words but only God can know the real motive of their actions—He alone can discern a covetous heart seeing through the external cover or pretext.