

9 November 2016

EQUIP

Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

(Eph 4:15–16)

This life therefore is not righteousness, but growth in righteousness, not health, but healing, not being but becoming, not rest but exercise. We are not yet what we shall be, but we are growing toward it. The process is not yet finished, but it is going on. This is not the end, but it is the road. All does not yet gleam in glory, but all is being purified.

(Martin Luther)



Introduction

3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, 4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, **having escaped from the corruption that is in the world** because of sinful desire. 5 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, 6 and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, 7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. 8 **For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.** 9 For whoever lacks these qualities is so **nearsighted** that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. 10 Therefore, brothers, **be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election**, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. 11 For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:3-11)

22 As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, **but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.** 23 As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty. (Matt 13:22-23)

1) There are (at least) three cultural idols in our city that are stealing our joy and robbing us of our reward

- Individualism:
- Materialism:
- Consumerism:

“...[T]he marketing model, if followed, empties the truth out of the gospel. First, the needs consumers have are needs they identify for themselves. The needs sinners have are needs God identifies for us, and the way we see our needs is rather different from the way he sees them. We suppress the truth about God, holding it down in “unrighteousness” (Rom. 1:18). We are not subject to his moral law and in our fallenness are incapable of being obedient to it (Rom 8:7), so how likely is it, outside of the intervention of God through the Holy Spirit, that we will identify our needs as



those arising from our rebellion against God? No, the product we will seek naturally will not be the gospel. It will be a therapy of some kind, a technique for life, perhaps a way of connecting more deeply with our own spiritual selves on our own terms, terms that require no repentance and no redemption. It will not be the gospel. The gospel cannot be a product that the church sells because there are no consumers for it. When we find consumers, we will find that what they are interested in buying, on their own terms, is not the gospel.

Furthermore, when we buy a product, we buy it for our use. When we accept Christ, he is not there for our use but we are there for his service. We commit ourselves to him in a way that we do not commit ourselves to any product. There is a world of difference between the Lord of Glory, the incarnate second person of the Godhead, and a Lexus, a vacation home, or a trip to the Bahamas. The marketing analogy blurs all of this, reducing Christ simply to a product we buy to satisfy our needs. What is destroyed along the way are biblical doctrines of sin, of the incarnation, and of redemption. The marketing analogy is the wrong analogy. It is deeply harmful to Christian faith. This harm is immediately apparent when we see that it has produced a kind of spirituality that is indistinguishable from the spirituality in the culture. That spirituality is predominately non-Christian.” (David Wells, *The Courage to Be Protestant: Truth-Lovers, Marketers and Emergents in the Postmodern World*, 52-53)

2) Freedom and joy begin with rejecting the lie that we’re individualistic consumers, and consciously accepting our already-settled slavery to Jesus, in one sense, and then constantly presenting ourselves as slaves to Jesus, in yet another sense

*For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only **do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.** (Gal 5:13)*

*Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? **You are not your own, for you were bought with a price.** So glorify God in your body. (1 Cor 6:18-20)*

15 What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! 16 Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death,



or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God, that **you who were once slaves of sin** have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and, **having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.** 19 I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, **so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.**

20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. 22 **But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God,** the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. (Rom 6:15-22)

3) We cannot have real community without commitment and we cannot have real satisfaction without sacrifice

We need to stop mis-labeling commitment and sacrifice as “legalism” and recognize that God has mandatorily called us to commitment and sacrifice for the sake of our joy and his glory. Here’s what legalism actually is... “Keeping rules not found in Scripture to try and please God and impress other people.” We can only be and make disciples if we despise discomfort and inconvenience for the sake of of deep and lasting joy.

Christ is drawing us with delight rather than driving us to duty—he holds out great promise of reward and demands us to be obsessed with obtaining as much treasure, and pleasure, and reward as we can possibly get this side of the new heavens and the new earth.

Let’s reverse-engineer our lives with the help of the Holy Spirit, fiercely stalking joy, and we’ll land on our feet. Listen to C.S. Lewis describe it this way:

One of the marks of a certain type of bad man is that he cannot give up a thing himself without wanting every one else to give it up.

That is not the Christian way. An individual Christian may see fit to give up all sorts of things for special reasons—marriage, or meat, or beer, or the cinema; but the moment he starts saying the things are bad in themselves, or looking down his nose at other people who do use them, he has taken the wrong turning.



Let's reverse-engineer our lives... Working backwards to implications, to counter-cultural decisions regarding our time, money, and attention from Jesus' call to basic Christian obedience...

1. But first we must begin with joyful slavery to Jesus...
2. Then we can begin to ask, "What do you want me to do with my time, money, and attention, Lord?"

4) We won't hear the voice of God guiding us into greater and greater fruitfulness and greater and greater joy unless we fight for margin

In praying for us in this regard a year or two ago, a heading and three sub-headings very quickly came to my mind, and I wrote them down before I could forget them. Margin for the mission of God came to me as one of our greatest needs, and 1) simplified living, 2) sensitivity to the Spirit, and 3) strategic boldness came to me as the subheadings. Some of you are saying, "I want to get better at being a missionary, but I don't feel like I have any margin in my life." You might be helped by thinking about the mission of God in these three ways. You can think of them as *three ways of making room for God to come in*.

As we begin to ruthlessly simplify our lives and weed out hurry, we will find that we have an increasing amount of energy for strategic boldness and we'll find ourselves increasingly sensitive to the Holy Spirit's still, small voice saying, *This is the way, walk in it* (Isa 30:21).
Saying, *Go over and join this chariot* (Acts 8:29).
Saying, *Go to a street called Straight* (Acts 9:11).
What does strategic boldness look like? It looks like Paul saying, *...to the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews...* (1 Cor 9:19-23).

*We must ruthlessly eliminate **hurry** from our lives.*

Joining in the mission of God begins for us here in this time and place with margin. The mission of God begins with margin. Not boldness, or zeal, or a passion for souls, but *margin*. Space. Labor that emerges from a place of rest. Obedience that is sustained by the experience of Jesus' easy yoke. Margin. Rest. Sabbath rest. One day in seven with no have-to's. Do you have that in your life? It doesn't just come. It's something you wrestle to the ground by faith. It's counter-intuitive. It's counter-

cultural. It's a kind of rest that is only entered into through the door marked "grace-fueled effort".

Many people who already are operating with little to no margin in their lives hear the call to be on mission as added homework. But, moving out on the mission of God is often less about doing more, and more about doing what you're already doing *differently*, doing it with *different people*, or doing it in a *different place*.

5) If we don't look noticeably different than the world, we're going to miss out on joy and reward

[I]n the large scheme of things, only the big questions matter, and the answers to those big questions are very, very depressing. What I would recommend—this is the solution that I've come up with—is distraction... That's all you can do! You get up, you can be distracted by your love life, by the baseball game, by the movies, by the nonsense. Can I get my kid into this private school? Will this girl go out with me Saturday night? Can I think of an ending for the third act of my play? Am I going to get the promotion in my office? All this stuff, but in the end the universe burns out. So I think it's completely meaningless, and to be honest, my characters portray this feeling... You're in the world and it's so terrible and all these things are going on, and you go into a dark room, the movie theater, and you're there for an hour and a half, and Fred Astaire is dancing. It's like drinking a cold drink on a hot day, and you're refreshed, and you walk back out into the terrible heat, and you can take it for another few hours, maybe more. The artist can't give you an answer that's satisfying to the dreadful reality that's your own existence, so the best you can do is maybe entertain people and refresh them, and then they can go on and meet the onslaught until they're sunken and crushed and then somebody else comes along and picks them up a little bit. (Woody Allen)

*1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies as a living sacrifice**, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 **Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind**, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Rom 12:1-2)*

6) If we aim for community, we'll miss the mission of God and community, but if we aim for the mission of God—the Great Commission—we'll get community thrown in

7) Let's not make assumptions—about ourselves or anyone else—or be activist in our self-diagnosis or in our diagnosis of others
