Week 2 ~ Life is Jesus

Dear Church Family,

No one enjoys an old fashioned guilt trip. Who cherishes the wonderful emotions of fear, shame, and guilt? Nobody; especially when these feelings come from someone pressuring you to do something for them. It’s so easy when you are disappointed, or really need help, to slip into shaming others or stirring up guilt.

We should always aim to lift each other up and encourage one another. We should never feel manipulated or use manipulation to get what we want; even if it’s for a good cause. The ends do not always justify the means my friends. That is why in our church family, we never intend to guilt trip you into tithing, giving, or serving. We consider all these things an open invitation that will ultimately benefit you and your walk with Jesus. You should not live in guilt or shame.

Not Manipulated

The church of old did not believe in manipulation or guilt tripping either. Just check out the church in Acts 4:32-35. These people were so full of the love and Spirit of Jesus that they could not resist but share and give to each other. They did not give out of obligation, manipulation, or guilt; these early Christians tithed, gave, and served because they were motivated to! Just read the passage before this. We read of the church celebrating the power and work of Jesus. They are of one mind, and the Holy Spirit is overflowing in their lives.

An Overflow of Life

Jesus is life. He is the author of life and ultimate giver of true life. When we follow Jesus, we become truly alive. Paul, one of the early leaders of the church, writes in the book of Galatians:

***“My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20 NLT).***

The church in Acts lived by these words. Life was not about shame, guilt, or manipulation. Life is in Jesus. And His life fills us, drives us, and sends us forward with purpose. The church shared everything with each other because they wanted to. The life of Jesus had filled every aspect of these people’s lives. Finances were irrelevant and caring for one another became a far greater priority.

Unity was rampant, and love for one another was genuine. Why? Because their lives were rooted in Christ. Jesus had become the church’s source of life.

Where is Your Source?

Your source of life determines your actions. In fact, your source of life will determine your sense of purpose, your goals, your daily activities, your perspectives, and just about everything else. So question: what is your source of life? This sounds like a deep philosophical question, but it’s actually easy to find the answer. Just look at your life.

Pause, and take a moment in today’s study. Whether it be now or in the discussion time, and consider: what does my life say about me? What do my friendships say? What does my attitude at work say? What do my interactions with my kids say? How about my goals? My dreams? My highs? My lows? Where do they point to? Does my life point to Jesus?

This exercise can be demoralizing and discouraging. But that is not the point or goal of our talk today. But I believe it’s important we stop church and assess where we are. We are all too easily swept up in the gushing rapids of this world and lose connection with our source of life.

The Source of Life

We need Jesus to be our source of life. He is our genuine generosity, our brazen boldness, and our life-giving love. When we are caught up in the life-giving power of Jesus, we are ultimately tied to His plan and purpose. Without even a second thought, our lives begin to mimic the perfect life of Jesus. No longer are we overwhelmed by the world and its troubles.

Instead, we increase in celebration, our hearts become open, boldness replaces fear, and authentic intentional love drives us forward. Church, if we allow our lives to be rooted in Jesus, we will become givers. In Jesus, friends, we will flourish in serving one another. Greater things lie ahead for anyone whose life is sourced and fed by the overwhelming love and power found in Jesus Christ.

So let’s believe and be convicted church family! Like the church in Acts, let’s pray for boldness, seek the will of God, and allow the amazing good news of Jesus overwhelm our hearts. Let’s invite the story of Jesus into our workplaces, homes, friendships, and circumstances. It is in this place of open invitation to Jesus where you will find your life’s purpose.

With Love,

Pastor Vern Pastor Ty

Group Discussion

*Take a few minutes to discuss the following questions with your group.*

1. Take a moment and reflect. Does your life point to Jesus?
2. Besides reading the Word, prayer, attending church, and other practices, give examples of whether your life points to Jesus or not. If you believe yes, why? If you believe no, why?
3. No matter where you are, this question applies to you. How can you better root your life in Jesus? What practical changes can you make in your day-to-day?
4. Read John 15:1-17. What happens when we stay rooted in Jesus?
5. Discuss and consider: how can I stay rooted in Jesus? What does this mean practically?

Closing Prayer

*Close your time together in prayer. Here are a few ideas of what you could pray about based on the topic of today’s discussion:*

* Pray for Jesus to open your eyes to your own need for Him.
* Ask forgiveness for seeking out life in things apart from Jesus.
* Acknowledge Jesus is life and invite Him to be your source of life.
* Ask for the Holy Spirit to give you strength to remain in Jesus.
* Pray for fruit to show in your life.

Weekly Challenge

This week, choose an area of your life that is lacking in Jesus and make a change! Whether it be your workplace, your household, your school, or even amongst friends invite Jesus into that environment. Find a way to include Jesus in that time. Pray while you work, read the Word with your family, read the Bible with your classmates, etc. Find what works for you and make a change! Let’s not put this off church. Get creative and find ways to better root yourself in Jesus!