

Week 5: "Conforming to the Image of God"

Memory Verse: *Paul's Charge To Timothy*

"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." 2 Timothy 3:14-17

Day One

Sunday, November 17, 2002

Conforming to the Image of God

Read: Colossians 1:9-14 (p. 1374) and Commentary (p. 1375)

Reflect: At what time in life is the power of peers strongest? Think of an instance when you conformed to the ideas or actions of others and it cost you something. How are you conforming to God's will these days?

Dig: This passage begins with the words "for this reason." What is the reason that Paul is referring to? Romans 12:1-2 is a parallel passage. What new light does it shed on the Colossians passage?

Study the "Colossians Cycle" on the bottom of page 1374. Determine if it faithfully follows the biblical text. Can you identify any point (of the four) at which you are blocking the process of growth?

Apply: One of the results of the "Colossians Cycle" is that we will have "great endurance" (vs. 11). For what do you need this endurance? Conclude your study with a prayer asking specifically for endurance for the challenge you are facing.

Day Two

Monday, November 18, 2002

"Confession"

Read: 1 John 1 (p. 1467) and Commentary (p.1467)

Reflect: : Remember an experience when a close friend confessed a sin to you. How did it change your relationship?

What are some of the physical symptoms of guilt in a person's life?

Dig: Freedom in Christ is all about living in truth. Read the gospel of John, chapter 1:1-15 (p. 1197) and notice how the theme of light and darkness is prominent. According to John's understanding, what does it mean to "walk in the light" or to "walk in the darkness"?

Verse 9 is a key verse in the Bible. It is a conditional statement (an "if-then" statement). What condition do we need to meet? What promise does God make?

What does the phrase "faithful and just" mean, i.e. what is God being "faithful" to?

What is God being "just" about?

To answer this question, read the commentary (p. 1467) carefully.



Apply: In what area of your life are you walking in denial?

Take out a sheet of paper and list the sins that plague your life. Then set it before the Lord, ask for his forgiveness and thank him for cleansing you. Destroy the paper as a statement of trust that your sins are forgiven.

Day Three
Tuesday, November 19, 2002
"Repentance"

Read: 2 Chronicles 7:14 (p. 477) and Commentary: (p. 478)

Reflect: Can people really change or do genetics, family history and past experiences really doom us to being stuck? Can you remember examples of real life change in yourself or others? Give an example.

Dig: Study the context of this reading and answer these questions:

- what are the people of God doing in chapter 7?
- what is the occasion for God's call to real change? (vs.13)

- what is the response of God to real humility and repentance? (vs. 14b and 15)

Read Romans 2:3-4 and 2 Timothy 2:25-26. Is repentance a gift or a requirement or is it both?

Apply: What is God calling you to repent of, to renounce and to change in your life? Can you ask him for a humble heart and actually renounce that pattern of thought and behavior today?

Try the ancient practice of new Christians and face the west and say "I renounce you, Satan, and this _____ (name the sin) practice in my life." Then face east and say "I announce that I am Christ's child and by God's gift of grace, set free from this sin."

Thank God for his work in your life and celebrate grace!!

Day Four
Wednesday, November 20, 2002
"Reconciliation"

Read: Read: Psalm 32 (p. 612) and Commentary (p. 613)

Reflect: Forgiveness and reconciliation are two different actions or attitudes. Can you tell the difference? Which one occurs first? What do both have to do with trust and re-building a relationship?

Is there anyone in your life whom you have forgiven but with whom you remain unreconciled? Why?

Dig: Studying Psalm 32, List what effect sin had on David when he was not reconciled with God (list both physical and spiritual effects). Now list the positive effects on David when he was reconciled with God.

What does the story of the Lost Son (Luke 15:11-31, p. 1180) tell you about God's desire to both forgive and reconcile?

What does vs. 9 of this Psalm have to do with being reconciled with God? (hint, go back to vss. 3-4)

Apply: Meditate on just one portion of Psalm 32 for the day. Take this phrase "...the Lord's unfailing love surrounds the one who trusts in him..." as God's comfort and protection for you today. Take a few moments now to commit it to

memory and allow God to use this word to surround you.

Day Five
Thursday, November 21, 2002
"The Goal of Instruction"

Read: 1 Timothy 1:1-11 (p. 1396) and Commentary (p. 1396)

Reflect: Who was the teacher or coach who had the most impact on your life? What was it about them that produced such an effect on you?

Dig: Notice the way that Paul begins his letters to his "sons in the faith." Read 1 Timothy 1:2, 2 Timothy 1:1-4, Titus 1:4. What does this tell you about how Paul modeled the love command?

Notice what the "false teaching" consists of in verse 4. Also, from verse 8, what might you understand was also a problem for the "false teachers"?

What similar "false teaching" is a temptation for today's church in North America?

Apply: Where are you taking in instruction but not living it out? Confess that to God and ask him to make you consistent, to walk the talk. What specific truth is God asking you to begin to live out? How will that increase your freedom in Christ?