

January 17, 2006

Knowing Christ is where faith begins. From there we grow through the essentials of discipleship: Bible study, prayer, Christian community and much more. We learn to set godly priorities, grow in Christian character and witness to others. We persevere through doubts and grow in wisdom.

Making Your Heart Christ's Home COMMITMENT

Without question, one of the most remarkable Christian doctrines is that Jesus Christ himself through the Holy Spirit will actually enter a heart, settle down and be at home there.

He said to his disciples, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." (John 14:23)

This began at Pentecost. The Spirit of the Living Christ was given to the church, and they experienced what he had foretold. The body of the believer had become the temple of the living God and the human heart the home of Jesus Christ.

This bible study series is based on a text entitled "My Heart—Christ's Home by Robert Boyd Munger. Munger describes in the essay, his journey of inviting Christ into his heart, and the process he went through in making the necessary adjustments for Christ to live and dwell in his heart.

Part 2 – The Dining Room 1John 2:15-17

"From the study we went into the dining room, the room of appetites and desires. Jesus seated himself at the table and inquired, "What is on the menu for dinner tonight"

"Well," I said, "my favorite dishes: money, academic degrees, stocks, with newspaper articles of fame and fortune as side dishes."

These were the things I like, thoroughly secular fare. There was nothing so very bad in any of them, but it was not really the kind of food which would feed the soul and satisfy true spiritual hunger. However, I observed that he did not eat. I asked, somewhat disturbed, "Savior, don't you like this food?"

He answered, "If you want food that really satisfies you, do the will of your heavenly Father. Stop striving for your own desires, your own ambitions, your own satisfactions. Seek to please Him. That food will really satisfy you. Try a bit of it!"

And there about the table he gave me a taste of doing God's will. What flavor! There is no food like it in all the world. At the end everything else leaves you hungry."

Robert Boyd Munger

Opening spiritual direction question:

What is the menu in the dining room of your desires? The following are some possibilities:

- money
- sex
- career advancement
- academic degrees
- awards and recognitions
- possessions
- admiration of others
- physical attractiveness

Why do you think these things are important to you?

- emotional security
- attention
- pride
- financial security
- need to achieve
- acceptance

Read the text: 1John 2:15-17

Background on 1John

To whom written: The letter is untitled and was written to no particular church. It was sent as a pastoral letter to several Gentile congregations. It was also written to all believers everywhere.

The elder statesman in the church, John wrote this letter to his “dear children” (believers). In this letter he presents God as light, as love, and as life. He explains in simple and practical terms what it means to have fellowship with God. In other words, what it means to be in relationship with God.

Setting: John was an older man and perhaps the only surviving apostle at this time. He had not yet been banished to the island of Patmos, where he would live in exile. As an eyewitness of Christ, he wrote authoritatively to give this new generation of believers assurance and confidence in God and in their faith.

2:15 – What does John mean by ‘the world’?

Does it mean that we’re not suppose to appreciate the beauty, splendor and resources of the earth and heavens? Of course not. We live in this world, and God has given us the earth to appreciate and enjoy.

Yet this world (the earth) is passing away. It is deteriorating and will eventually be destroyed according to God’s Word. The issue is attachment. John is telling us not to be attached to the world, and instead be attached to God. We’re not supposed to be so in love with the world so much so that it becomes our desire to stay here.

The world is a system of man-made governments and societies, some good and some bad, but none perfect. Therefore, we’re called to respect it and be loyal to the good, and reject the evil. The issue again is attachment: we must not become attached to the systems of human organizations. We’re called to attach ourselves to God.

Scripture reminders:

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” (Rom. 12:2 NIV)

As our minds are renewed by feeding on the revealed Word of God, our ways of thinking change hence our ‘doing’ also changes. As we begin to see things the way God sees them, our perceptions change, priorities change. The things we once thought were important lose their value in exchange for kingdom values.

“Those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.” (1Cor. 7:31)
Beware of ‘building bigger barns’ lest they interfere with God’s call on your life, or as Jesus himself said, ‘this night your very life may be required of you.’

2:16 – “lust for physical pleasure, the lust for everything we see, and pride in our possessions.”

Three things happen to believers that cause us to return to the world and to the love of the world:

- 1) Some of us begin to enjoy nature and the beauty of the earth so much that we no longer worship regularly. We forsake the worship of God and the study of His Word in order to be out in nature (e.g. fishing, golfing, biking, camping, sports). Yet we are called according to the Word “And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other, especially now that the day of his coming back again is drawing near.” Heb. 10:23
- 2) Some of us become so involved in government and social organizations that we become more **attached** and faithful to them than they do to God and His church and its mission of salvation. (think about the time we put into our political associations and social organizations. Are we more committed to them than to Christ’s Church. Remember, its not our church, it’s Christ’s Church, its His Body. If we a part of the body are lacking in our function, this affects the whole Body. Is this how we display our love for the Lord to Him and to a world that needs to know Him?)
- 3) Some of us become hungry for the world and its things that we begin to return to its pleasures and possessions. (see the discipline of Simplicity for help)

I. The Lust of the flesh has to do with feeling, touching, tasting, smelling, hearing, and seeing. It is the seat of desires and urges. There is nothing wrong with desires and urges.

It is part of our creation as human beings. We would be considered unhealthy without them. The issue is self-control. If these desires and urges are not controlled, then the flesh begins to lust (an unhealthy desire) more and more.

- a) when the flesh desires something that is directly forbidden by God (e.g. sex outside of marriage, adultery; one helping of food is not wrong, but several helpings is gluttony.

- b) when the flesh desires and desires and consumes and consumes, then it becomes indulgence and license. (e.g. we desire food in order to maintain life. If the flesh desires food in order to consume and indulge, then the desire is wrong. The desire becomes lust, consumption, indulgence, and license. (See **1 Corinthians 6:12, 13**)

Specific sins of the flesh:

- **sexual immorality**
- **idolatry**: the giving of one's primary devotion (time and energy) to something other than God.
- **witchcraft**: the use of drugs or of evil spirits to gain control over the lives of others or over one's own life. In the present context it would include all forms of seeking the control of one's fate including astrology, palm reading, séances, fortune telling, crystals, etc.
- **hatred**
- **discord**: strife, contention, quarreling, dissension. This means that a person striving against another person in order to get something whether it be: position, promotion, property, honor, or recognition. Particularly when deception is involved.
- **Jealousy**: wanting and desiring to have what someone else has, whether it be material, recognition, honor, recognition.
- **Fits of rage**: explosive temper; anger
- **Dissensions**: division, rebellion, standing against others, splitting off from others
- **Envy**: this goes beyond jealousy. It is the spirit that wants not only the things that another person has, but begrudges the fact that the person has them. It is the spirit that wants a person to lose the things he has, and wants him to suffer through the loss of them.
- **Drunkenness**: taking alcohol or drugs to affect one's senses for lust or pleasure; becoming tipsy or intoxicated; partaking of drugs; seeking to loosen moral restraint for bodily pleasure.

II. The lust of the eyes have to do with seeing and wanting to have what one sees. Again, there is nothing wrong with the desires. The problem is:

- a) when we see and desire what is directly forbidden by God.
- b) when we see and desire in order to consume it upon our lusts and to indulge

There is lust of the eyes for sex (Matt. 5:28; 2Pet. 2:14)

There is the lust of the eyes that fill a person with darkness (Matt. 6:23)

There is the lust of the eyes after the things of other people (Luke 12:15)

There is the lust of the eyes after the pleasures and possessions of the world. (Eccles. 2:10; Prov. 23:29-31)

III. The pride in our possessions, is boasting in what a person has and does. (See 1Timothy 6:2b-10) This is:

a) **boasting in what a person has and does in terms of self-centeredness.** One who is focused on himself and wants others to notice him. One whose mind and thoughts are primarily on himself. This is displayed by:

- seeking attention through dress or looks
- seeking attention through rank or wealth
- seeking honor
- seeking recognition
- seeking fame
- seeking power
- seeking position
- seeking luxury
- seeking wealth for recognition and power
- seeking to outshine others
- seeking importance

b) **then there's the pride of life in terms of self-sufficiency.** One who is focused on herself and feels completely capable of handling life herself. One who feels that self-image, public image, ego and personal strength are the basis of life; a person who feels little if any need for God. One who feels she can plow through life herself and conquer whatever problems and circumstances confront her. One who feels the world is an end within itself, that there is probably nothing beyond this life. Therefore, the aim/goal becomes to get all the comfort, pleasure, luxury, honor, and glory that she can while living.

Hence, the attitude of arrogance; conceit; boastful; feeling better than others because of rank or wealth; feeling superior to others in looks and ability.

Beware of self-sufficiency (Prov. 27:1)

Boasting of wealth (Psalm 10:3; Psa. 39:6; Psa. 49:6-7; Ezek. 28:5)

Boasting of position (Ezek 28:11-13)

Boasting of power (Lev. 26:19)

Boasting of intelligence (1Cor. 8:2)

Boasting of self-glory (Psa. 36:2)

17: The bottom line is obedience to God and Seeking His will. Resist attachment to the things of the world.

See Matthew 7:21; 1Corinthians 7:31

Doing God's will can be satisfying food for the soul. Satisfaction can be found in doing God's will through:

- **praying with a friend/ interceding for a friend**
- **giving money to your church or to missions**
- **letting someone else have the limelight**
- **doing a job no one else wanted to do**
- **choosing not to buy something you really wanted**
- **spending time in bible study in community**