

Daily Thoughts for Christ-followers

First, we must daily “preach the gospel” to ourselves. The gospel of Christ frees us to have our identity in Christ. “So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view...If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation...” (II Cor. 5:16-17). The freedom of the gospel dictates our significance, not our volitional achievements, moral performance, or others’ approval, which is what many refer to as success. By faith in Christ, God declares that we are new creations. We are forgiven, declared righteous, adopted as His beloved, and are destined for greatness. We must daily “preach the gospel” to ourselves, whether we feel like it or not, reminding ourselves Whose we are and who we are in Christ. Such an identity is not based on self-esteem, but on gospel-esteem.

Secondly, we must commit to a life of spiritual surrender. “I tell you the truth,” Jesus says, “unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds” (John 12:24). Christ chose, in obedience to the Father’s will, to be the seed that died in order for God to achieve the harvest of our salvation. What is true in agriculture is true in the realm of the Spirit. When a seed dies, the potentiality of the seed explodes. In our daily Christian life, it is in the dying to self and sin that grows an enlarging faith, a compelling hope, and a transforming love in us for God and others.

Thirdly, we must commit to spending time with our Heavenly Father. Commit to a daily appointment with God. Declare warfare on anything that keeps you from intimate fellowship with the Almighty. A frenzied pace of life can be a great enemy of our souls. “Keep them busy” is the mantra of Hell itself. Life’s pace not only steals time from spiritual devotion, it is a barrier to spiritual humility. The faster we go, the more self-reliant we become. The result is a spiritually superficial life; often coupled with a spiritual callousness to pain in those around us. Spiritual disciplines, primarily Bible intake and prayer, are given by God to cultivate intimacy with Him and His heart for others.

Fourthly, we must grow a larger heart for people. Do we have a heart for the spiritually lost, those destined for an eternity without Christ? Do we even see the pain and brokenness that surrounds us? The problem with the “priest” and the “Levite” in The Parable of the Good Samaritan was that they not only refused to help the dying person along the Jericho Road, they did not really see him. Jesus is very clear that the priest and Levite observed the guy, yet casually passed by on the other side. How could they notice, but not really “see” him? An enlarging heart **sees** others. “Our neighbor,” writes Hadden Robinson in his sermon on this parable, “is anyone we see, whose need God has put us in the place to meet.” How does your “sight and compassion quotient” measure up?

If we grow larger hearts for people, our lives might become more complicated, but they will also become more joyfully meaningful. However, if we choose to narrow our heart towards others, either out of busyness, selfishness or past hurts, the danger is grave. As C.S. Lewis profoundly notes,

“To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket—safe, dark, motionless, airless—it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. The only place outside Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers of love is Hell.”

Fifthly, we must commit to Christ’s simple aim for our lives. Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount says, “Seek first God’s kingdom and God’s righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matt. 6:33). “These things” are God’s good gifts to be enjoyed, but pursue first things first. Pursue kingdom priorities, and you will enjoy many earthly amenities. Pursue earthly things first, and you will never know the true satisfaction of the Kingdom. C.S. Lewis said it this way, “Aim at heaven and you get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you get neither.” Sadly, many in this world and the Church live very tragic lives because of misplaced priorities.

*“I counted possessions while God counted crosses.
I counted gains while God counted losses.
I counted honors and sought degrees. He counted the hours I spent on my knees.
I never knew until one day by the grave, how vain are the things we spend our life to save.” - Anonymous*

Lastly, for God’s glory and for the sake of our saved souls, we must live beyond our comfort zones. A simple prayer for the Christ-follower:

*“Disturb us O Lord when we are too well pleased with ourselves,
When our dreams come true only because we have dreamed too little,
When we arrived safely only because we sailed so close to the shore.
Disturb us O Lord, when with the abundance of things we lose our thirst for God;
When in loving the earth we cease to dream of eternity,
When with desire to build on earth, we have lost our vision of a new Heaven.” - Anonymous*