



Discussion Guide

August 19, 2018

Contrast: Final Exam

Introduction

We have come to the conclusion of *Contrast*. Paul has been calling for Christ followers in Corinth and the world at large to exhibit the obvious contrast, the positive difference that following Christ makes in a person's life. He says in concluding remarks in chapter 13 of II Corinthians, "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test? Jesus Christ within you should be making life different in every good way."

Discussion Questions

1. In his sermon on Sunday, Bart suggested 4 postures we can take with God, that tend to miss the mark in a vital relationship with him. The 4 postures are *above God, under God, from God and for God*. Did you see yourself in any of those 4 postures that gave you pause for thought?
2. Take a look at Luke 15:11-32. The Story of the Prodigal Son. Jesus is explaining the nature of God's heart to his Jewish brothers and sisters. As you read this narrative, which of the 4 postures is taken by the younger son? The older son? [there could be more than one posture displayed by each as the story progresses.] Do you see the appeal of the father in this narrative to be **with** his sons, encouraging them to lay aside any other posture? Do you see God's appeal to you?
3. This comes down to a very personal question - do you sense that you are living **with** Jesus? Is he a real person to you – or just a concept? Do you experience his reality in your life? Do you love him as the lord and savior and brother that he is to you? Are there other terms you would use to express how you live your life **with** Jesus and not separate from him?

4. Bart said in his sermon, “*How about rather than trying to control the world around us by manipulation of God, and then getting upset or feeling betrayed when it goes out of control - how about if we find peace in simply being with God and knowing he is with us no matter what happens?*” How does that sentiment strike you? Is it in synch with Jesus’s remark in John 16:33? [*These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation but take courage; I have overcome the world.*] Is it too fatalistic or passive in considering our life **with** God in times of trouble?

5. Meditation is “*the activity of calling to mind, and thinking over, and dwelling on, and applying to oneself, the various things that one knows about the works and ways and purposes and promises of God. It is an activity of holy thought, consciously performed in the presence of God, under the eye of God, by the help of God, as a means of communion with God*”. **J.I. Packer** What is the difference between coming to scripture in study as a source of knowledge, and coming to scripture as the voice of God speaking into your life? Did the experience of reading, meditating, speaking and contemplating resonate with you as you consider how you come to scripture? Not suggesting it must be an either/or choice. But can you see how meditation can be a valuable discipline in coming to know God, so that you live with God?

6. Perhaps as a group you can pick out some scriptures that you will use this week to practice the discipline of “praying the scriptures.” The progression is simple but takes adequate time to make it meaningful. Read a passage. Make it short enough to digest. What statement stands out to you? Allow time for God to apply that statement to your life in the quietness of your mind. Speak to him in response – whatever you are thinking or feeling. Then listen for him to speak in return. It can take time to feel comfortable in this discipline because we generally come to scripture with the thought of study rather than as a two-way conversation. Give it a try.

Moving Forward:

*Mark 3:14 He [Jesus] appointed twelve **that they might be with him** and that he might send them out to preach.*

First, they were with him – then he sent them out to preach. For three years they were with him – and it changed their lives, and they changed the world. The 12 didn’t love the Great Commandment. They loved Jesus. They didn’t love the Great Commission. They knew Jesus and loved him deeply and were ready to die for him while serving his mission. And most of them did. What does that say to us as to the powerful effect of living our lives with Christ, as opposed to any other approach.