

1101 Creative Living: Mastery

1. Dignity Precedes Mastery

- who we are is foundational to what we do, identity precedes works
- foundational pattern – the person of Christ dignifies the work of Christ i.e. incarnation is prior to atonement, or, the life (history) of Jesus is what he does for us
- Jesus is “Lord of all” (Acts 10:36) because he has triumphed over all the forces of evil in his own life experience
- Christology (who Jesus is) has priority over soteriology (our salvation), because the former is the content of the latter

2. Reactive or Proactive Approaches to Life

- a thermostat or thermometer approach, an internal or external “locus of control”. (Locus of control refers to the extent to which individuals believe that they can control events that affect them.)
- a “social mirror” by which we understand ourselves in the world is unavoidable, it is usual to take cues about self- identity from parents, peers and other significant others.
- this is because the basic pattern was set by God for man in creation, e.g. in beholding Eve, Adam knew who he was as a male, “Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”” (Gen 2:23).
- children, for example, will understand themselves in the reflection of their parents, this is because imaging (God – representation) is essential to what it means to be human, “When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. **2** Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created. **3** When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.”(Gen 5:1- 3).
- the primary place where humans beings were always meant see themselves was in the mirror of the Word of God
- sonship, and all that it entails, was to be known through the Word of the Father
- without sin, Adam and Eve (and all other humans) would have perfectly imaged God’s character to their offspring
- the Fall means that this whole process has been distorted (Rom 1:18ff.)
- the revelation of God in the old covenant began to remedy this darkness and idolatry, “For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light.” (Ps 36:9)
- Jesus as the Word made flesh is the image of the invisible God (Col 1:15), to see him is to see the Father (John 14:9).

·with respect to every element of the recreation of the true image of God we are to look to Jesus (Heb 12:2); for example, Christ is “the mirror of our election” (Calvin)

· Jesus imparts to us the reality of every significant relationship, he restores our sonship by uniting us with the Father (Rom 8:15 - 16), he is our friend (John 15:15), our brother who teaches us to love others (Rom 8:29), he is the true husband of the eternal bride (Eph 5:25-32; Rev 19:6-8.) His acts and life reveal what it is to have dominion over the earth in the Kingdom of God. His perfected priesthood opens it up for us to be kings and priests on the earth (Rom 5:17; 1 Pet 2:9; Rev 1:6 etc.)

·the degree to which our relationships are healed from the impact of the fallen “social mirror” is determined by the (sole) authority we give to Christ

3. Overcoming Temptation

·Genesis 3 presents the original temptation in terms of a test about wisdom, “the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise” (Gen 3:6)

·this was essentially a rejection of God as faithful and just

·there are only 2 wisdoms, “Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. **14** But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. **15** This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. **16** For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. **17** But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. **18** And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace” (James 3:13 - 18)

·humility, as the renunciation of one’s own wisdom and ambition, is the essential prerequisite for overcoming temptation

·believers, through the Word and Spirit, are able to share in the means by which Jesus himself overcame temptation (Matt 4:1ff.). To do so is to enter into Jesus’ permanent mind of lowliness (Phil 2:5ff.) in which victory over sin is assured, “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” (James 4:7).

·the cross is the supreme temptation, where Jesus is called to trust God under the conditions of wrath (Mark 15:34; 2 Cor 5:21). This is a place where none of the promises of God seem true.

·the faithfulness and justice of God is vindicated in the resurrection of Christ, which remains the primary object of hope for believers under any sort of trial (Acts 23:6; 24:15; 1 Pet 1:3)

4. Criticism and Conscience

·the weight we give to personal criticism is wholly dependent on the state of our conscience, or “the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen 2:17)

·conscience is a necessary but unreliable guide to right and wrong (1 Cor 8:7; 1 Tim 4:2)

·Paul could say, “But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. **4** For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. **5** Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.” (1 Cor 4:3 – 5 cf. 14:4)

·this is to acknowledge Jesus as the sole judge of humanity (John 5:22); “Jesus Christ is my conscience.” (Bonhoeffer)

·we will respond to criticism according to the way we believe in our hearts Christ judges us

·this means that the object of our faith under circumstances of criticism is Jesus as revealed in the gospel, “Would Jesus say that to me?”

5. Dealing with Depression

·what are your personal impressions or experiences in the area of depression?

·how do you think the experience of depression is often linked to criticism?

·what is the relationship (often) between depression and a sense of personal worth?

·how would you use the teaching of this unit to help a depressed person?