

Joseph Whittle
August 7, 2010

Devotional 4: Strive for God now, rather than later
August 7, 2010

Discussion question: Name something that you are thankful for. Why?

This year as following with the CCSA theme, we are exploring what we consider to be “the commitment line”. Through our previous studies, we have talked about our separation from God because of sin, and how we are not able to repair the damage that’s been done with our own hands. As we said, sin is a violation of God’s standard for being righteous, good and holy. Our sin is the reason why we rebel against God (sometimes even the concept of God if you’re an atheist). We mistrust Him, we disdain His goodness and His plan for our lives.....and this is *manifested* in the sinful acts that we commit. We are rotten at the core. And this sin is part of our nature and is common to all men (1 Corinthians 10:13). Example: babies lying, fighting. Even at a young age, this sin is clearly engrained in infants, even though I’m sure parents do not purposely teach them to lie or fight. We are NOT born good, and taught to sin. Sin is in our nature right from the beginning.

Now, we also discussed that there is no way for us to cleanse, get rid of this sin in our own power. No matter how hard we try to live a perfect, holy life, we always fall short of our goal. This is because we can’t HELP but to bear sinful thoughts, do sinful things (‘white’ lies, rage, lust, etc) The Bible says that we are held responsible for our sins, and that one day we will face God’s judgment. God is just and He is holy, and so cannot stand even a small speck of sin. So this is the reason that each of us will face God’s judgment –who of us can claim that we’ve lived a perfectly good and righteous life? There is no one that is good or blameless in the eyes of God, for only He is good (Luke 18:19). Therefore, the only way we are to come before God is through the means that God has provided for us – through Jesus Christ whom God was sent into this world to die for you, to die for me. Christ came down from heaven as a human; he experienced a human life filled with pain, joy, sorrow, temptation of sin, yet he lived a perfect life only to be put to death. Christ was the perfect sacrifice, who was free from sin, and he took the penalty of our sins. Your, my sin became His burden and He died with that burden of our sin on the cross.

So when we repent before God we are forgiven through Christ’s sacrifice. By accepting this sacrifice, we call upon God, and when we truly place our trust in God, we have committed to Him. I say truly because as we covered in a previous devotional, there is no compromising in our commitment (1 John 1:5-7). If we claim to walk with God in fellowship, we must give 100% of our heart, soul, mind and life (Deut. 6:5). There is no 25% no 50%. As Christians, It’s either all for God or nothing. God must be the most important thing in our lives; it’s a commandment (Exodus 20:3; Proverbs 3:6). You’re either with God, or against Him (1 John 5:10).

Today we will continue to explore this theme of the commitment line. It is a continuation from our last message of “Striving for what matters to God”. The question that we will explore today is why we need to strive for God now rather than later.

Life is short and unpredictable

Many of us take life for granted, I know I do. How many of us said we were thankful for the life that God has given us? Life is precious, short and unpredictable.

Back in 2009, I just met this guy named Ankit who was in the same program at school as me. I remember working in a group project with him. His life was blossoming, grades were good, had a girlfriend, and he just bought a new Mercedes C-class with a personal loan he took out. You could say he had everything going for him. His life was planned out. Well, one night Ankit was driving around, and he was involved in a disastrous car accident. He had been t-boned and pinned, and sustained heavy injuries. He died a week later. He was 19 years old. He wasn't a Christian, and I never got the chance to share the good news of Jesus Christ with him.

Most of us plan out our lives around the future, "I plan to do this, and I plan to do that". But in reality, our lives can end at any time. Ankit a 19 year old, who I'm sure, could have led a very successful and promising career had everything taken away from him in a blink of an eye. Reflecting on it now, Ankit even seems to be forgotten amongst my friends that once knew him so much better than I did. What kind of legacy do we leave behind to those around us?

"Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes." – James 4:14

I heard this analogy from Francis Chan (Crazy Love author). Imagine all of the world events/history in a storybook. God's storybook, and he flips through the trillions of pages, He reach your own page. This section documents your life, and accomplishments. As Christians, what kind of story would you like this page to document? A life filled with delight in the worlds offering or a life that was like King David, a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:13)?

Reflect on your life, let us imagine that we died at this moment, are you really prepared and content with the way you have lived to face God today? Like it or not, each one of our individuals pages in the storybook are coming to an end, earthly lives are short and whether we believe in Jesus as the One who died on the cross to pay the price for our sins will determine where we will spend the rest of eternity. "...For this world in its present form is passing away." (1 Corinthians 7:31), that's why we need to make the most of it now. None of us knows what the future holds except that it will one day come to an end.

As Christians, to make the most out of this life, we are to strive after the things that are important to God. Is God at the top of your important things to do in life list? Do other things come before Him like videogames, money, and others? Now these things aren't bad, they are good things/blessings, but it is in the priority where we place these things in our lives that we must be careful about. Imagine the world in in 60-80 years; we won't be longer here on earth any longer, the earth and its possessions do not last.

"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." – Matthew 6:33-34. We need to focus on God period, by placing Him above all else, all our needs will be taken care of. God takes care of the birds and the beasts, so how much more do you think He will take care of us (Matthew 6:26)? While we are here enjoying our lives, let's strive for what's important to God and store up heavenly treasures, where moth and rust will not destroy it (Matthew 6:20-21). Let us labour for God and His kingdom, although our labour does not "earn" us anything, it is an act of response/thanksgiving to what He has already done for us, which is providing for our every needs.

By labouring, and seeking after His truth, we will grow in our relationship with God. “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” – James 4:7. By growing, we naturally start to live in a way that is more Christ-like; things that once attracted us while we were trapped in sin should no longer have a hold on us. Example: swearing, while I was younger I use to swear a lot, but once I came to Christ, I realized that swearing was a manifestation of sinfulness in my life, a distain for God’s plans.

Maybe some of us don’t believe in God or are waiting to become older before we accept Christ, because we know what it will mean to commit to Him. I know each of us would love to enjoy life without any rules/restrictions. But your life is short, and you don’t know what tomorrow will hold for us all. But in Christ, we have a promise that one day those that are faithful to Him today in this life will rejoice when see Him face-to-face, and this is the hope and joy that Christians have in this life. And I hope it serves as an encouragement to Christians here today.

If you aren’t a Christian, may I challenge you to carefully examine your life, and what we’ve discussed today? God created you with the purpose of knowing and worshipping Him. Yet your sins have made you enemies of God. I know this is strong language, but it’s absolutely true. If you committed murder and weren’t judged nor punished for it but instead ran away, wouldn’t you be an enemy of the state and a fugitive to be hunted down for justice? Sin is a spiritual, inward thing... the Bible tells us, as an example, it’s not whether you’ve had sex outside of marriage that’s only sin, it’s whether you’ve even looked at someone lustfully. The Bible tells us that it’s not whether you’ve killed someone that’s only sin, it’s whether you’ve been enraged with someone and hated them ‘to death’ in your heart.

Jesus Christ came to die on your behalf so that you wouldn’t bear the consequences and judgment for your sins. He came to restore you to God your Creator so that though your body as it is today will die one day, you will continue to live with God in heaven for all of eternity. If you reject this, just as a murderer will be hunted down to pay for his own sins, the Bible tells us that you will die and your judgment will be hell for eternity. The choice is yours...

So I would like to end with this today, let us make the most of our lives today, while we still can, for we don’t know what even tomorrow holds. When the day comes when God flips through that storybook to your page, what kind of story will it display?