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Wrap Up - Testimony

This year as following with the CCSA theme, we explored what we consider to be “the commitment line”. The commitment line: who was Christ and what does it mean to really follow him.

We addressed this issue of sin: We would all consider sin as the wrong things, the evil things that happen around us. It is a violation of God’s standard of being righteous, good and holy. Our sin is the reason why we rebel against God. 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 everyone (1 Corinthians 10:13). Each one of us is guilty of it we are not born good, and taught to sin. Sin is in our nature right from the beginning.

Now my dad is a pastor and I was brought up with most of these ideas and things engraved into my heart from childhood. Although I knew what the heart of the Christian message was, the Bible and Christianity never appealed to me. Sure I knew who Jesus was and what he did on the cross, but I never came to truly understand the transformation, the change that is demanded from us, the sacrifice on the cross was meaningless to me. If you knew me back in my youth, you would be surprised to hear that I came from a Christian household. I considered myself a Christian, a “good” person regardless of my attitude in my life because I had the mindset that God would forgive me regardless of what I did. I swore, stole, lied, cheated, and fought with others and claimed to be a follower of God. These things came naturally to me and I enjoyed it, I thought it was alright, because Christ already died for me and forgave these sins for me anyways. Little did I know that I was in fact a hypocrite and was separating myself further and further away from God.

Another concept we covered this season was the separation from God because of our sin, and how we are not able to repair the damage that’s been done with our own hands. Analogy: Perfect clear water is the relationship with God that our ancestors Adam and Eve had. It was God’s original intent for the human race. Our ancestors are told to keep the water pure, and untainted. Yet when they disobeyed God’s commandments to refrain from eating from the tree, they sinned, the sin (oil) pollutes the water and it spreads, there is no way for them to cleanse it or get rid of this sin. Soon they are consumed by it; their children are born into this world that is already overflowing with it. Out of the pollution, there are eternal consequences. 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), as mentioned before it is part of our nature, and this pollution has consumed us.

Very soon I was heading down the wrong path, in high school I befriended the wrong crowd which led to cutting classes, parties, drinking, etc... Friday’s and Sunday’s I was forced to go to fellowship and church. In my heart I thought that this was fine, isn’t God merciful? If I accepted Christ, I would be forgiven! I was a “good” person; I did good things like go to church, pray before I ate. This should get me into God’s good books.

However, there is no one that is good or blameless in the eyes of God, for only He is good (Luke 18:19). The penalty for sin is death and eternal separation from God. The bridge to God that was originally intended for humankind to enjoy was now broken and irreparable because of sin. Yet God provided one way to approach him again, to fix this broken bridge, through Jesus Christ, whom God was sent into this world to die in our places, to rid the world of its sin. Jesus is the bridge.

1. Christ's death

Christ is the son of God. He was free of sin. He was the perfect sacrifice. 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. When Christ died on the cross over 2000 years ago, Christ died for you and me. He was judged for you and me. When God comes to judge us for the sin we have committed against Him, He sees Christ's sacrifice, and His righteousness in place of our own. (Romans 4:19-25) Our own merits are meaningless and it's only through Christ that our relationship is restored to God. This was the only way for it to happen. Yours and my sin became His burden and He died with that burden of our sin on the cross. There could be no other way. We are tainted with sin from birth and only someone free of sin could mend the relationship. Christ is the only way to get to God (John 14:6)

But, the story doesn't end here. Christ didn't just suffer and die with our sin, three days after he was crucified, He rose from the dead. "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive." – 1 Corinthians 15:22. Just as how Adam and his race were condemned to death for sinning, Christ not only triumphed over death and defeated sin at the cross, but the price of sin which is death was fulfilled once and for all. God's wrath was satisfied. The resurrection of Jesus is a testimony to the resurrection of human beings; we are made alive through Christ. Although the body we have today will one day perish, the promise we have in Christ is of a new everlasting life after we leave this world (1 Corinthians 15:49). We can enjoy a rectified relationship, a new life with God, because of Christ's sacrifice.

2. Committing to Christ

Christ's sacrifice is a gift given freely from God and all you need to do is ask for it. But in accepting this gift, we are to submit and obey, and give our lives to Christ. We are committed to Him, to live lives apart from this sinful polluted world (Romans 12:1-2). We are to cast off our idols – things we worship and value and place Christ first above all by following Him (Mark 8:34).

When we repent before God we are forgiven through Christ's sacrifice, but the commitment is costly - it costs us literally everything and there is no compromising in our commitment (1 John 1:5-7). Just as the disciples gave up everything for Christ and followed Him to their very own deaths. If we claim to walk with God in fellowship, we must give 100% of our heart, soul, mind, life, and strength (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).

It's a commitment, and it's one that we cannot afford to take lightly.

3. End of testimony

1 John 2:3 "We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands."

The lifestyle I chose to live in high school was my own. I considered myself a Christian yet, I didn't want to commit to God. I acknowledged Christ's sacrifice but continued to live the way that suited my own needs and desires. I ignored his commands which consisted of placing God first, loving others, and obeying His Word. I was a sinner, and my heart was far from God. I was trying to get the best of both worlds. I didn't give God everything, my heart and time belonged to God for 5%.

Towards the end of high school, my mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. I didn't commit at that moment to God, but I made a conscious effort to improve my attitude in life. I changed my mind set; I realized how short life was and how valuable it really was. I got away from my group of peers and got involved with a different group. This new group of friends challenged my very weak beliefs in God but it served to help me seek answers to the core of Christianity. I graduated and went to university. It was there that I made the commitment to follow God wholeheartedly with everything I have back in the winter of 2006 at a Christian conference.

It has been over 3 years since I would consider myself a real Christian. Since accepting Christ, asking for forgiveness and surrendering my life over, I have been challenged and have grown to love God more and more.

4. Call to the non-believers / believers to rectify their relationship with God

I challenge each and every one of you here today. Maybe you were like me once when I just attended church for the sake of it, thinking that is the way to get on God's good side. Or maybe you have never even heard of this message before and have never considered the magnitude of your offence towards God. I ask you to consider Christ's claims. There is only one way to God, and it's through receiving His sacrifice for you and surrendering your all to Christ. And the scripture is quite clear, you're either with God or you're against Him (1 John 5:10).

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. What will your response be to Christ's calling?