

Galatians 4:19 & 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

2/23/25

My hope and prayer for you is that your friendship with Jesus Christ deepens. What Hope and I want most for our boys and your children is that they have friendship with Jesus Christ.

Hope told a funny story the other day how she opened a call meeting with “I hope you have joy down in your hearts.” “What an interesting way to begin a meeting,” one woman replied. Another lady said, “Wait a second, that’s a song I used to sing.” “I’ve got the joy, joy, joy, joy, down in my heart. Where? Down in my heart! Where? Down in heart to stay.” Another person whispered, “She’s a pastor’s wife.” Jesus lives to live in us.

Many were intrigued with the question, “Did Jesus live His best life ever?” How do you think Jesus would answer that question? Would He choose to live His life, over and over, and over again, repeatedly, eternally? Would He choose to be conceived by the Holy Spirit, born to Mary, practice daily prayer and weekly worship, to end His life by generously giving His life for the sake of sinners on a cross? I would argue “Yes!” because the Good Lord not only experiences every moment of history in the present but chose this life from the beginning! And Jesus knows it’s not all about Him! Jesus lives for Christ-Centered Community.

The reason I want our boys, all of our children, all of you to have friendship with Jesus is to have joy, joy, joy, joy, down in your heart, which is eternal life. As childbirth is hard work but brings life, building Christ-Centered Community is hard work that brings eternal life!

Change is at the very core of Christianity. God’s Word teaches us, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds...”-Romans 12:2 Jesus lives to transform us, as God’s Word teaches us in 2Corinthians 3. Are you committed to positive change? Are you **Committed to Christ-Centered Community**? The Lord needs us to change to realize His vision for humanity!

Let’s hear how we can do that in Romans 12:1-2.

... so that you may discern what is the will of God...

I recommend watching *The Return of the King: The Fall and Rise of Elvis Presley*. Did you know that some thought he was a threat to society? Elvis learned his rhythm, moves and sound from the Black Church. The fear was that Black culture would negatively influence children.

Its sounds silly now, except when Kendrick Lamar performed as the Super Bowl halftime show. The internet was all a buzz. Our boys are huge Kendrick Lamar fans, and I have also grown to appreciate his sound. The half-dozen boys that were at my house for the Super Bowl party sang each of his songs word for word. Should Christian boys be listening to Elvis, I mean at 24 he started dating a 14-year-old!

How do Christian parents, how do Christians decide not to be conformed to this world but to be changed into the image of Christ? We must commit our lives to Christ. By prioritizing Christ and Christ-Centered Community we communicate and demonstrate our values to our children and the world.

God's Word teaches give your best to Christ. When we are Committed to Christ-Centered Community we will be empowered to know the will of God. If our children our deepening their friendship with Jesus Christ through daily prayer and weekly worship, they will easily see that Elvis and Kendrick are putting on an act. They will easily see that being gay or transgendered is not a threat to society. They will easily see why we should only have children within marriage. They will easily see our government's most important tasks are to protect individual freedom and poor people, not only here but around the world. We can enjoy their music and critique the way they try to influence us by comparing them to Jesus Christ.

When Paul tells us to present our bodies as "living sacrifices" he has Leviticus 1 in mind. To demonstrate commitment, God commands in Leviticus 1 to sacrifice the very best of our cattle, sheep, goats, and birds. In fact, the sacrifice to be made to God is to be perfect, without a blemish. You may not have any cattle or goats to give to God, and that is no longer necessary because God offers for us His best, His Son, Jesus Christ for our sins.

Pretty much every religion, except Christianity, is works based. Meaning if your life's goods outweigh your life's bads, then you get Heaven. Sometimes even Christian teachers have fallen for this because it seems fair, and God is fair, just and good. But God's Word teaches us all these other religions are false, not that we can't learn something from them, they are wrong on this central truth that we can earn God's love, that we can earn Heaven. When we meet Jesus Christ, we abundantly see that we are all sinners and fall short of the glory of God. -Romans 3:23 Even the best of us are putting on an act like Elvis and Kendrick. God knows the inmost heart, and it's not pretty!

To solve the sin problem, God generously sends His very best as the sacrifice for all sin as Hebrews 10 teaches us. In response to Christ's love for us, we are to give the very best of our lives back to God. Its not about getting into Heaven, Jesus Christ teaches us that friendship with Him is Heaven. Friendship with each other is Heaven. The hard work of building Christ-Centered Community is Heaven!

Jesus needs us to change to realize His vision for humanity. Jesus needs you, we need you to commit to daily prayer to deepen friendship with Christ. We need you to commit to weekly worship to deepen your friendship with Christ-Centered Community.

We don't need to fear the world, Elvis, Kendrick Lamar when we are teaching our children Jesus Christ. Offer your life to Christ and Christ's Holy Spirit will change you to know the difference between right and wrong. You will be empowered to know the will of God!

Love,
Pastor Curtis