



guidelines for living

a 5 minute message

February 28, 2018

BECOMING A NEW PERSON

If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whosoever loses his life for me will save it. Luke 9:23-24

While Socrates became famous for his saying "Know Thyself!" the man who was born some 400 years later, Jesus Christ, lived the admonition, "Give thyself!" There is a great deal of difference between knowing yourself and giving yourself.

A knowledge of self is important. But altogether too often, once we get to know ourselves, we aren't very happy with what we have discovered. Socrates was right when he said, "It isn't a pleasant picture to know ourselves..." It may be a fine point, but yet it's important. There is a good deal of difference between a knowledge of self, and self-knowledge. Self-knowledge is an endless search, a journey which some people embark on, never to arrive at a destination. They are the ones who are always going to a seminar, reading a new book, trying a new therapy to discover who they really are, but a knowledge of self is different. It is the frank appraisal of who you are which comes by accepting what you see, instead of avoiding the reality of what you really are.

Paul agreed. You read about his struggle, accepting the knowledge of who he really was, in Romans 7. There, Paul took a look at his life in light of what God expected, and he didn't like what he saw, for he came up lacking. He said, "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do." Continuing he admitted, "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing" (Romans 7:15, 18-19).

You may completely relate to what Paul wrote. When you acknowledge who you really are, you don't like it. You know that repeatedly you have done what you condemn others for doing. The thoughts which often fill your heart would embarrass you greatly if they were flashed on a screen for your friends or your family to see. They are a reflection of the real you.

Modern psychology, and, frankly some modern theology, makes you comfortable with who you really are. Acceptance and understanding are their themes, but not Jesus Christ. His knowledge of people went far beyond the veneer of respectability; he saw people just as they were. But he didn't spend his energy condemning them, or placating them, stressing the fact that "we are just human."



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Instead, he said, "Give yourself!" In giving we receive and in dying we live. But giving yourself runs contrary to your old nature. We want to receive, not give. We want our strokes, not to suffer the humiliation of learning to serve. Here is how Jesus put it: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whosoever loses his life for me will save it" (Luke 9:23-24).

The beautiful thing about giving yourself, first to God and then to others, is that in giving ourselves, our old self changes. Paul described it as becoming "a new person," one who is intrinsically different, not simply a glossed-over version of the old, which was pretty evil. This is the beauty of conversion--of becoming a new person in Christ Jesus.

Yes, it is important to know yourself--to know your weaknesses, your failure, your sin--but once you know that, do something about it. Give yourself, and in so doing you will become the person God wants you to be.

Resource reading: Romans 12:1-3