

Characteristics That Define Our Transformation Part 2

Characteristics of True Christianity #2 –

Characteristics That Define Who We Are

Intro. Someone once wrote:

- "**Christianity** made people who were things ***into real men and women...***
- It gave those who had no respect, ***their self-respect***; it gave those who had no life, ***life eternal***;
- It told people that, even if they did not matter to other people, ***they still mattered intensely to God.***
- It told people who, in the eyes of the world were worthless, that, ***in the eyes of God they were worth the death of his only Son.***
- Christianity was, and still is, the ***most uplifting thing in the whole universe.***"

In this series of messages we are looking at the characteristics of true Christianity.

- We are discovering **what it means to be a Christian**,
- **What a real Christian looks like**,
- **How a Christian acts and behaves**
- **And the purpose of a Christian.**

We are using ***Peter as our example*** of one of Christ's followers **whose life was transformed** from a profane fisherman to a mature Christian, ***who had these defining characteristics operating*** and manifesting in his life.

- **Peter wasn't perfect**, Yet we see him as **one who was striving to walk** in these **Christ-like characteristics**.

In the previous message we looked at the transforming characteristics and saw that **our transformation begins** -

- **With the new birth** with the **Divine seed of God being planted** into our hearts
- To **begin producing** these **new and dynamic characteristics in our lives.**

As a result a new growth begins to come forth and we begin to **put off the old man** and **put on the new man** who is being created in the likeness of Jesus.

Then we saw **how this seed transforms** our lives **into one that radiates Christ.**

Jesus explains the parable of the four soils

Matthew 13:23 - But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

The four types of soil represent different responses to God's message...

People respond differently because they are in different states of readiness...

- **Some are hardened**
- **Others are shallow**
- **Others are contaminated by distracting worries**
- **Some are receptive...**

- **How has God's word taken root in your life???**
- **What kind of soil are you???**

In this message today: I want to look at

Characteristics that help to define our new relationship and who we are in the kingdom of God.

These are all characteristics that help to produce the kind of fruit that God desires to bring forth in our lives in varying degrees.

Point: Four Defining Characteristics

1. We Are Sons Of God

John 1:12 - Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—

- **All who welcome Jesus into their lives are reborn spiritually...**
- **The new birth changes us from the inside out...**
- **Rearranging our attitudes, desires, and motives...**

Our primary relationship that defines who we are is that of being one of God's own children. We are all members of His family.

The spiritual family that God has placed us in now takes precedence over our natural family.

***Jesus shows this in His own example of His mother and brothers...
Matthew 12:46-50 - Jesus' Mother and Brothers***

⁴⁶ While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. ⁴⁷ Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you."

⁴⁸ He replied to him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" ⁴⁹ Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. ⁵⁰ ***For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.***"

Luke 14:26 - "If anyone comes to me and ***does not*** hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, ***even their own life***—such a person cannot be my disciple.

Jesus was not denying his responsibility to his earthly family...

- He criticized the religious leaders ***for not honoring their parents...***
- ***He provided for His mother's*** security as he hung on the cross...

He was pointing out that ***spiritual relationships are as binding*** as physical ones...

He was paving the way for a new community of believers, ***our spiritual family!***

Our position in life is often defined accordingly - ***poor, middle class, rich.***

- In the kingdom family there are ***no class divisions.***
- We are all part of the ***same family.***

The more we ***relate to our spiritual position*** rather than ***our natural position*** - ***The more kingdom fruit we will bear*** in our lives.

The Choice is yours.

- ***Which family*** has the greatest priority in your life?
- ***Is it your natural family or your spiritual family?***

We see this characteristic in the life of Peter when ***he responded to Jesus*** on one occasion and said, ***"See, we have left all and followed You."***

There was that period in Peter's life when he literally ***forsook his natural relationships to be near to Christ*** so that ***He could grow as one of God's sons.***

Luke 18:28-30 - Peter said to him, ***"We have left all we had to follow you!"***

²⁹ "Truly I tell you," Jesus said to them, "no one who has left home or wife or brothers or sisters or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God ³⁰ will fail to receive many times as much in this age, and in the age to come eternal life."

2. We Must Have Genuine Fellowship With God & One Another

One of the most **defining characteristics of a true Christian** is ***the fellowship we have with God and with other members of the Father's family.***

A scholar once asked his Pastor, ***"Why did not the Lord furnish enough manna to Israel for a year all at one time?"***

The Pastor said, ***I will answer you with a parable.***

Once there was a king who had a son to whom he gave a yearly allowance, paying him the entire sum on the fixed date.

It soon happened that **the day on which the allowance was due was the only day of the year when the father ever saw his son.**

So **the king changed his plan and gave his son day by day** that which was sufficient for the day; and **then the son visited his father every morning.**

He needed his father's unbroken love, companionship, wisdom and giving!

- This is **how** God dealt with Israel and deals with us."

Psalms 145:18 - The Lord is **near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.**

- *He hears our cries and saves us...*

From ***"There's a lot more to health than not being sick"*** by Bruce Larson -

There's a story about a woman who, **on the advice of her doctor, had gone to see a pastor to talk about joining the church.**

She had **recently had a facelift** and when her doctor dismissed her, he gave her this advice: "My dear, I have done an extraordinary job on your face, as you can see in the mirror.

- I have charged you a great deal of money and you were happy to pay it.
- But I want to give you some *free advice*.

Find a group of people who love God and who will love you enough to help you deal with all the negative emotions inside of you.

- If you don't *you'll be back in my office in a very short time* -
- with your face in far worse shape than before."

The greater our *fellowship is with the Lord and one another, The more we are absorbed into the true character of Christ.*

- The more time we spend with someone, the more we become like them.

We see this in the life of Peter and the other disciples.

- They were continually with Christ and couldn't get enough of Him.

John 13:8-9 - Peter said to Him, "You shall never wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!"

- ***Unless Peter submitted*** to him and allowed Jesus to minister in this way,
- ***Peter would never learn the lesson of Humility...***

3. We Receive A New Education

For many of us our secular education has helped to define the person who we are.

As Christians we must realize we are now enrolled in a continuous education of the Holy Spirit and the word of God.

The new education we receive in this realm will help to ***further define the person we are in God*** and His kingdom.

Peter and John before the Sanhedrin council –

Acts 4:12 - Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."

Acts 4:13 *When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.*

The Council was amazed at what being with Jesus had done for them!!!

A Changed life convinces people of Christ's POWER...

John 7:16-17 Jesus answered, "My teaching is not my own. **It comes from the one who sent me.**¹⁷ Anyone who **chooses to do the will of God** will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.

- ***Our words should agree with, not contradict, THE BIBLE...***
- ***Our words should point to God and his will, not ours...***

4. There Is A Continuous Character Building Going On

One of the most important characteristics of a Christian that really helps to define us **is that there is a continuous character building going on in our lives.**

- We continue to get stronger and stronger in the Lord Jesus!!!

Sheldon Van Auken in his book ***Severe Mercy*** has a piece that says, **"The best argument for Christianity is Christians – their joy, their certainty, their completeness.**

But ***the strongest argument against Christianity is also Christians*** –

- When they're self-righteous and smug in complacent consecration.
- When they're narrow and repressive,
- **Then Christianity dies a thousand deaths.**"

Matthew 7:24 - *The Wise and Foolish Builders*

²⁴ **"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.**

- ***To build "on the rock"*** means **to be a hearing, responding, disciple...**
- **NOT** a phony, superficial one...

Practicing Obedience becomes **the solid foundation** to weather the storms of life...

James 1:22 - Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. ***Do what it says.***

This took place in Peter's life as he was the one that was noted for being a rock!!!

2 Peter 1:5-8 - For this very reason, **make every effort to add to your faith** goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. ⁸For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, **they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

CLOSE:

Four Defining Characteristics.

- 1. We Are Sons Of God.**
- 2. We Must Have Genuine Fellowship With God & One Another.**
- 3. We Receive A New Education.**
- 4. There Is A Continuous Character Building Going On.**

PRAISE TEAM:

When we allow **all four of these defining characteristics** to define who we are as Christians -

We will bear the kind of **fruit that brings glory** to the Father and His Kingdom.

Allow God to define these four characteristics in your life today.