Coming Home June 7, 2015

The One Another Vulnerabilities

Many things in life require us to take a risk.

Leaving home.

Asking someone on a date.

Going to university or college.

Getting married.

Moving to a new town.

Having kids.

Starting a new job.

Retiring

Question: What is the most risky thing you have ever done? Why did you take such a risk?

Feedback

You can’t be in any kind of relationship with others without there being risk.

The one another verses we’re going to look at today, speak of the vulnerabilities (the risks) that we take in becoming part of a church and being in relationship with one another.

There are five vulnerabilities that we’re going to look into - the first two today and the remaining three next Sunday.

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and* ***admonish one another*** *with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God*. ([Colossians 3:16](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col.%203.16))

**Submit to one another** *out of reverence for Christ.* ([Ephesians 5:21](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph.%205.21))

*Therefore* ***confess your sins to each other*** *and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.* ([James 5:16](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/James%205.16))

*Be kind and compassionate to one another,* ***forgiving each other****, just as in Christ God forgave you.* ([Ephesians 4:32](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph.%204.32))

*Above all, love each other deeply, because* ***love covers*** *over a multitude of sins*. (1 Peter 4:8)

**Admonish one another:** *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God*. ([Colossians 3:16](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Col.%203.16))

Whether we are at the beginning of our Christian life or well into it, this one constant is to define all who follow Jesus – that the word of Christ dwells in us richly.

The verse doesn’t say, let the words of the Bible dwell in you.

It says… let the word of Christ…dwell in you.

Jesus was the most effective communicator ever.

The words he spoke were truth and life.

Our God is a communicating God.

And we have in this book… his words.

This is a game changer.

Many question the authenticity of the Bible.

There are agnostics and atheists who argue that this is a human book, poorly put together with suspicious if not evil intention.

But this book is the word of our God – who communicates verbally.

God spoke to and through 40 different human authors – who came from different backgrounds, social standings and cultures. The human authors were kings, scholars, poets, fishermen, farmers, physicians and philosophers.

The sixty-six books of the Bible were written over a 1600 year span in different setting - in palaces; in prisons; in large cities, on deserted islands and in barren desert.

The sixty-six books include diverse styles of literature: history, biography, poetry, philosophy, ethics and prophecy.

The Bible was written in three different languages – Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek.

It was written on three different continents – Africa, the Middle East, and Europe.

And it tells one story. There is no book like it.

Can you imagine if someone began to write a book in 400 AD that was just completed, utilizing along the way all the criteria that describes how the Bible was written? How would that book read? Would it even make sense?

When it comes to the manuscript evidence the evidence is also astounding!

Norman Geisler, wrote in Christian Apologetics, that there are over 5000 Greek manuscripts containing all or part of the New Testament. Someone might respond, yeah, so what?

5000 manuscripts doesn’t seem like a lot. Or does it?

How many manuscripts do you think exist concerning Julius Caesar’s life? Ten!

What about the histories of ancient Greece and Rome? Two hundred.

How about the Illiad written by Homer? Six hundred and forty-three.

And when later manuscripts of the Bible are compared with earlier ones, the variants (the differences) are miniscule.

I appreciate that this verse in Colossians reminds us that the Bible is the word of Christ.

We are told that we are to let his word make its home in us.

This is something we are to do. This is not something that God does for us.

We open the door to our life and welcome the word of Christ in.

And the extent to which we are to let his word in… is described by the word “richly.”

The word of Christ is to live in us; it is to saturate our lives; it is to seep into and then spill out of every aspect of our being.

Three activities are identified as the outflow of Christ’s word living in us.

*…as you teach and admonish one another will all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.*

Teaching is coupled with admonishing, not only in this verse but also in 1:28.

To teach is to instruct with the goal of imparting knowledge and/or skill.

To admonish is to warn.

But what this verse doesn’t directly say is what we are to teach nor what we are to warn of.

It is implied that the word of Christ is what we teach and also what we warn one another about. But before we answer the question why we warn and what we warn each other about, there is a qualifying phrase that tells us how we are to teach and admonish: **with all wisdom.**

It’s not about us simply offering our opinions to another member in the church.

It’s about us sharing with one another the wisdom of God and how that wisdom applies to daily life and is being worked out in our own lives.

We may not use the word admonish in our day to day conversations, but we regularly admonish. If you have children or teens at home or even if your children are now adults you still admonish. You teach them many things; but you also warn about many things.

The Bible regularly gives warnings.

Colossians 2:4; 2:8; 2:16.

When we become part of a church and live together as a community of faith, God will use you and me to warn and to speak truth to others and he will use others to warn and speak truth to us. It’s here…. there is vulnerability.

It is risky to speak truth or to warn another person.

There is the risk of being misunderstood.

It’s also risky to receive truthful input from another.

Because in receiving you give another access to your life.

This is why the quality of our relationship with one another is so important.

Proverbs 27:6 says: *Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.*

Who but a friend speaks the truth in love? Even when that truth is hard to hear!

Who, but our brothers and sisters in Jesus, help us along in our walk of faith – by teaching and by warning?

Teaching and admonishing one another is how God grows us spiritually and morally and ethically. Yes, God does speak directly into our lives, by his Word and by the Holy Spirit.

And in addition, God often chooses to speak to us through our brothers and sisters in Jesus.

This can only work and works as God intends, when each of us lives by the Spirit, is led by the Spirit and keeps in step with the Spirit.

Otherwise we are at risk of speaking when we shouldn’t or not speaking when we should and rejecting when we should receive or receiving without discerning.

Because the third activity of singing is addressed in the next one another command – we’ll address it there.

**Submit to one another** *out of reverence for Christ.* ([Ephesians 5:21](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Eph.%205.21))

This verse tells us how we best can receive teaching and warning from one another.

The larger context of this verse is most important. We need to go back to verse 17.

v.17 – *Therefore…*

Remember – therefore means that the writer is about to tell us how the truth is to be applied.

v.17 - *…do not be foolish…*

Foolish about what?

From 4:17 and onward, this letter has been speaking about:

 the old and the new nature

the specifics of putting off and putting on - the clothing of the old and the new nature

the difference between darkness and light

The truth of who we become when we receive and believe in Jesus is staggering.

Because the old has gone and the new has come we are not to foolishly give ground in our life for old habits to continue. It is not business as usual when Jesus enters our life.

v.17 - *…but understand what the Lord’s will is.*

The teaching in this letter and the application of the truth is all about how God wants us to now live in light of the new person we have become. What is the Lord’s will for us?

v.18 – *do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit*.

This verse tells us that we choose what or who controls us.

Yes, we choose. We are not helpless pawns.

Do you know how we know that?

Because God’s says to us in v.18 – *do not…instead, be…*

Wine is not the only controlling agent that has influence on a person – we all know there are others. These other control agents enable and empower our old nature. And they do enslave us. 2 Peter 2:19b – *people are slaves to whatever has mastered them.*

And the good news regarding Jesus is that a slave can be set free!!!!

We can’t free ourselves but Jesus can – and he does.

When a person receives and believes in him, God causes a new nature to be born in them.

There is only one agent that can enable and empower our new nature – God’s Holy Spirit.

And God says to those who follow Jesus: this is my will for you when it comes to living as a new person with a new way of life – be filled with my Spirit.

While it is an obvious question, for the sake of emphasis let me still ask it: what does it mean to be filled? **Illustration**: pour water into a glass.

Stop several times and ask: is the glass filled yet?

The glass is filled when there is water in every part of it. And so it is with our lives.

The tense of this word “be filled” in the original language tells us that being filled with the Spirit is not a one-time event, but is to be an on-going reality.

God’s will for us is that we would continually and constantly be filled with his Spirit.

So how do we do that?

This passage tells us of two ways.

v.19-20.

This verse expresses similar truth to the verse we just considered in Colossians.

One of the ways we are to keep our lives filled with the Spirit is by speaking to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Had you ever considered that corporate worship is one of the ways to keep the presence of God’s Spirit strong in your life?

This is why it is so important when it comes to our worship in song, that in addition to our songs being God-focused – speaking of who God is and what he has done – that our songs also are rock solid in the truth they express.

Our songs are to lift the eyes of our heart to the Lord and give us words to express our thanks and our gratitude to God.

We are told of a second way by which we can keep our lives filled with the Spirit.

v.21 – submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

When we are born of the Spirit we are given a new nature that is like the nature of Jesus.

Submission to his Father defined Jesus.

***Not my will but yours be done*** – was not a one-time prayer spoken in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was how Jesus lived every day.

In order to keep our lives full of the Spirit, we are told to submit to one another.

Did you ever consider that submission is a key way to keep the presence of God’s Spirit strong in your life?

This verse has no qualifiers regarding age, sex, social standing, ethnicity, etc.

Mutual submission is what distinguishes life in God’s kingdom and life in Christ’s church.

It is what enables us to live peaceably with one another.

It’s what allows the grace of humility and the spirit of servant-hood to grow in us.

It is what draws God’s Spirit to manifest his presence among us.

The filling of the Spirit enables us to submit to one another.

And the act of submitting to one another, keeps the Spirit’s fullness within us.

Life in God’s kingdom will often feel upside down.

But it’s actually life without God that is upside down.

When we set out to follow Jesus we are learning to live right side up.

And the reason why we choose to submit to one another?

Look at v.21 again. Because of Jesus.

Much of the conflict in our world is due to individuals demanding that their will be done.

Without God in their life a person has to constantly look out for their own interests; to demand that others give them what they deserve; in order to build or to maintain the world they’ve carved out for themselves.

When a person bows the knee to Jesus, they lay down all that selfish striving.

They give up their kingdom for his.

They lay down their aspirations to pursue after his good and perfect will.

They trust him to have their back, and their front and their side.

The church in addition to being an outpost of heaven… is also a learning community.

We are learning how to follow Jesus together.

We are learning to be a community that lives by heaven’s rule and order.

It is risky to submit to one another.

It is risky to teach and admonish one another.

But we took a far greater risk when we submitted to Jesus.

If we can trust him with our life and eternal destiny, can we not trust him when it comes to his instructions on how we are to live together as his church?

The practicing of these one another vulnerabilities is simply the outworking of our yes to Jesus. They are not options.

They are how we live in Jesus’ church.

It’s always been about community.

The community of God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit, who created us, who acted to rescue us, and who’ve invited us to live in fellowship with them through faith in Jesus.

Do you remember what Jesus said when he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane?

John 17:20-23: *I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.*

*I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*

Jesus has linked the spread of the good news of his salvation to the unity of his people.

…that the world may believe…

…that the world may know…

To be one as the Godhead is one is humanly impossible to forge.

It is a unity that only the Spirit of God can create. And he does.

But it is a unity that we are then responsible to maintain.

Ephesians 4:3: *Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*

Our responsibility; the effort we are to make…. is to practice, with the help of God’s Spirit, these one another commands.

We celebrate **the Lord’s Table** today.

In these ordinary elements – bread and juice – we are reminded of what Jesus did for us.

As the bread and the juice are offered to you, the worship team is going to lead us in a song that speaks of how amazing is the grace of God.

**Prayer of Thanks**

Jesus laid down his life for us.

In response to his sacrifice of love; we lay down our lives for him.

We choose his way, his will, always.

**The Blessing**

Ephesians 6:24