



GOING DEEPER

DISCUSSION GUIDE

February 5, 2017

Discussion Guide

THE GIFT OF IMPERFECTION

CONNECTING:

45 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A WAY OF CONNECTING WITH ONE ANOTHER SO THAT YOU MIGHT PARTNER IN THE WORK GOD IS DOING IN YOUR LIVES.)

- IN WHAT WAYS DID GOD MOVE IN YOUR LIFE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS DID YOU RESPOND TO HIM?
- WHAT WAS YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE THIS WEEK? IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, DID YOU INVITE GOD INTO THIS CHALLENGE?
- HOW HONEST HAVE YOU BEEN WITH US? (GRACIOUSLY THANK GROUP MEMBERS FOR THEIR HONESTY IF THEY STATE THEY HAVE HELD BACK.)

GETTING STARTED:

10 MINUTES

- WOULD YOU SAY THAT BEING A PERFECTIONIST IS A GOOD OR BAD THING? COULD YOU ELABORATE?

DIVING INTO THE TEXT:

60 MINUTES

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE YOUR GROUP WITH A SIMPLE ROAD MAP THROUGH THE TEXT. FEEL FREE TO USE THESE QUESTIONS IN WAYS THAT BEST FIT YOUR GROUP AND THE DYNAMICS OF YOUR OWN MEETING.)

- USING THE NOTES, DISCUSS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN

PERFECTIONISM AND JESUS' INVITATION TO MODEL PERFECTION.

- READ LUKE 2.40-52 ALOUD. TRY TO PUT YOURSELF IN THE SCENE AS AN OBSERVER. PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT YOU SEE AND FEEL. PAUSE. READ THE TEXT ONCE MORE, SEEKING TO BE AN OBSERVER ONCE MORE. SEE IF ANYTHING STANDS OUT TO YOU. READ THE TEXT ONCE MORE, THIS TIME, SEEKING TO PUT YOURSELF IN THE ROLE OF MARY OR JOSEPH. WHAT DO YOU FEEL OR SEE?
- TAKE SOME TIME AND DISCUSS, AS A GROUP, WHAT YOU SAW, FELT, OR NOTICED IN THE TEXT.
- IN THIS PASSAGE, LUKE DISPLAYS THE TENSION BETWEEN JESUS' DUAL NATURE OF HUMAN AND DIVINE. WHERE, IN THE TEXT, DO THESE NATURES COME TO THE SURFACE AND WHAT TENSIONS DO THEY CREATE? SEEK TO FIND AS MANY AS POSSIBLE.
- ONE TENSION WHICH SURFACES IS THAT JESUS OBEYED HIS PARENTS PERFECTLY, BUT HE NEGLECTED TO INFORM HIS PARENTS OF HIS PLANS, HE MADE A MISTAKE. PONDER FOR A MOMENT MATTHEW 5.48 AND JESUS' CALL TO PERFECTION. WHAT MIGHT THIS TENSION IN JESUS' LIFE SAY ABOUT THE NATURE OF JESUS' CALL IN MATTHEW 5?
- DO YOU THINK THAT PEOPLE SEE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SIN AND MISTAKES, THAT IT IS POSSIBLE TO BE PERFECT AND STILL MAKE A MISTAKE? COULD YOU ELABORATE?
- THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SIN AND MISTAKES HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MORAL PERFECTION AND PRACTICAL PERFECTIONISM. HOW DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE TWO TO BE DIFFERENT?

- AS WE SEE IN THE LIFE OF JESUS, AS HUMANS, WE MAKE MISTAKES, BUT TO MAKE A MISTAKE IS NOT TO SIN. JESUS' CALL TO MORAL PERFECTION IS NOT A COMMAND TO BE A PERFECTIONIST. DO YOU FIND THIS EASY OR DIFFICULT TO HEAR AND ACT UPON? COULD YOU ELABORATE?
- IN WHAT WAYS, IF ANY, MIGHT OUR MISTAKES PROVIDE US WITH OPPORTUNITIES TO MODEL THE PERFECT CHARACTER OF GOD? WHAT MIGHT THIS LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICAL TERMS?
- WHAT MIGHT IT TAKE TO APPROACH MISTAKES AS OPPORTUNITIES TO SHOW GOD'S CHARACTER RATHER THAN VIEWING THEM THROUGH THE LENS OF SHAME? HOW MIGHT THIS GROUP BE INVOLVED IN MOVING TOWARD APPROACHING MISTAKES IN THIS MANNER?

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

PERFECTIONISM

THE MODERN CONCEPT OF PERFECTIONISM INVOLVES THE DRIVE TO SET AND MEET HIGH STANDARDS SUCH AS ABSOLUTE EXCELLENCE AND UTTER RELIABILITY. PERFECTIONISM IS PART OF ALMOST EVERY ARENA IN THE MODERN WORLD, APPEARING IN THE WORKPLACE, SCHOOL, AND ATHLETICS. THE TYPICAL PERSON UNDERSTANDS PERFECTIONISM TO BE A TRAIT TO BE ADMIRABLE, AS PEOPLE WHO BEAR THIS TRAIT ARE OFTEN ORGANIZED, HIGH PERFORMERS WHO ARE HIGHLY DEPENDABLE. HOWEVER, PSYCHOLOGISTS OFTEN CLASSIFY PERFECTIONISM AS A FORM OF NEUROSIS BECAUSE IT OFTEN LEADS TO DEPRESSION, AGGRESSION, EATING DISORDERS, AND HYPERCRITICISM OF ONESELF AND OTHERS. AT ISSUE IS THE UNDERLYING PRETENSE OF PERFECTIONISM: NO MISTAKES ARE ALLOWED. WHILE IT IS NORMAL AND ADMIRABLE TO SET HIGH GOALS AND TO ATTEMPT TO PERFORM WITH EXCELLENCE, PERFECTIONISM MAINTAINS THAT MISSING THESE GOALS IN ANY WAY IS UNACCEPTABLE. ONE IS NOT ALLOWED TO FORGET, TO HAVE AN OFF DAY, TO BE UNABLE IN ANY WAY TO MEET THE HIGH STANDARDS WHICH HAVE BEEN SET. ACTUALLY, PERFECTIONISM IS A TRAIT IN WHICH SHAME HIDES ITS PRESENCE, BUT IT IS THE ENGINE WHICH DRIVES A PERFECTIONISTIC SPIRIT. SHAME WHISPERS TO THE PERFECTIONIST THAT IF SHE DOES NOT MEET THE STATED GOALS, SHE IS NOT ENOUGH OR HAS NOT DONE ENOUGH. THIS IS SHAME.

IN SCRIPTURE, JESUS INSTRUCTS HIS FOLLOWERS THAT THEY ARE TO PURSUE PERFECTION (MATTHEW 5.48), A PERFECTION WHICH IS PRESENT IN THE FATHER. WITH THIS STATEMENT, JESUS REMINDS HIS DISCIPLES OF THEIR TRUE CALLING, TO BE THE ICONS OF THE DIVINE, REFLECTING HIS TRUE CHARACTER TO THE WORLD (GENESIS 1.26-28). THE PRESSING QUESTION FOR THE 21ST-CENTURY READER IS "WHAT IS THE PERFECTION WHICH IS FOUND IN GOD?" AT THIS POINT, IF WE ARE NOT CAREFUL IN READING THE TEXT, OUR MODERN UNDERSTANDING OF PERFECTIONISM CAN BE BROUGHT TO BEAR, THAT OF MAKING NO MISTAKES. THE REASONING THEREFORE COMMENCES

THAT GOD DOES NOT MAKE MISTAKES, THEREFORE TO REFLECT HIS IMAGE IS TO NOT MAKE MISTAKES. PERFECTIONISM. THEREFORE, THE SPIRITUAL "HIGH BAR" FOR PEOPLE IS NOT TO EVER MAKE A MISTAKE, AND TO DO SO WOULD BE TO FALL SHORT OF LIVING THE LIFE ONE WAS CREATED TO LIVE, I.E. TO SIN. WITH THIS KIND OF REASONING, EVERY ACCIDENT OR FORGETFUL MOMENT, EVERYTHING LESS THAN AN A+, EVERY MOMENT WE ARE SIDETRACKED IS SIN, SOMETHING FOR WHICH WE MUST CONFESS AND ASK FORGIVENESS. LIKEWISE, EACH OF THESE EXPERIENCES IS SOMETHING FOR WHICH WE SHOULD BE ASHAMED.

HOWEVER, THE PERFECTION OF WHICH JESUS SPEAKS IS NOT PERFECTIONISM. THE PERFECTION OF WHICH JESUS SPEAKS IS THAT OF BEING WITHOUT MORAL BLEMISH OR DEFECT. ONE MIGHT BETTER UNDERSTAND THE PERFECTION OF WHICH JESUS SPEAKS IF HE USES THE WORD RIGHTEOUSNESS, TO BEHAVE IN AN UPRIGHT MANNER. THIS IS THE CHARACTER OF GOD WHICH IS ASKED OF HIS PEOPLE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT (PSALM 101.2, 6; JOB 1.1, 8; 8.20). THE AUTHORS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT MAKE THE SAME POINT, NOTING THAT GOD'S INTENDED END FOR US IS MATURITY AS PEOPLE, PEOPLE WHO BEAR HIS MORAL IMAGE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (COLOSSIANS 1.28; 4.12; JAMES 1.3-4). TO BE WITHOUT MORAL BLEMISH OR DEFECT IS TO BE WITHOUT SIN, BECAUSE TO DO SO IS TO LIVE AS WE WERE CREATED TO LIVE REFLECTING GOD'S IMAGE, BUT THIS DOES NOT INCLUDE SUCH THINGS AS MISTAKES. TO FORGET AN APPOINTMENT IS TO MAKE A MISTAKE, SOMETHING WHICH HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS. TO INTENTIONALLY LIE, BLAMING ANOTHER PERSON FOR FORGETTING THAT APPOINTMENT, IS A SIN BECAUSE IT REFLECTS A CONTRADICTION TO GOD'S MORAL CHARACTER IN THE LIFE OF HIS CHILD. THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN A SIN AND A MISTAKE (PERFECTION AND PERFECTIONISM) IS AN IMPORTANT ONE FOR MODERN BELIEVERS TO MAKE AS IT DISTINGUISHES HUMANITY FROM GOD. BY DEFINITION, GOD CANNOT MAKE A MISTAKE. HE KNOWS ALL THINGS AND CAN DO ALL THINGS. IT IS THEREFORE IMPOSSIBLE FOR HIM TO FORGET, TO OVERLOOK, OR TO MAKE AN ERROR IN JUDGMENT. ON THE OTHER HAND, PEOPLE DO NOT KNOW THINGS, NOR DO THEY HAVE ALL POWER BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT GOD. IT IS THEREFORE POSSIBLE, FROM THE FIRST MOMENT OF CREATION FOR PEOPLE TO MAKE MISTAKES, AND GOD RESPECTS AND UNDERSTANDS THIS. ONE MIGHT GO SO FAR AS TO SAY THAT PEOPLE ARE CREATED TO MAKE MISTAKES, A TRAIT WHICH HELPS TO REMIND THEM THAT THEY ARE NOT GOD. THIS IS WHY HE ASKS FOR PERFECTION, HIS MORAL IMAGE AND NOT PERFECTIONISM, THE PRACTICE OF NOT MAKING MISTAKES.

THE TEXT

LUKE 2.40-52:

THE TENSION BETWEEN DIVINE AND HUMAN

IN LUKE 2, LUKE PROVIDES A QUICK SURVEY OF JESUS' CHILDHOOD, FROM HIS BIRTH, TO HIS DEDICATION, TO AN EPISODE WHEN JESUS IS TWELVE. LUKE PROVIDES THE MOST INSIGHT INTO JESUS' CHILDHOOD, WHICH IS NOT MUCH, A COMMON LITERARY TECHNIQUE IN ANCIENT

BIOGRAPHICAL BOOKS. TYPICALLY, IN SUCH BOOKS, VAST AMOUNTS OF THE SUBJECT'S CHILDHOOD WAS OVERLOOKED, WITH ONLY A FEW SELECTED EPISODES BEING INTENTIONALLY TOLD. THOSE WHICH WERE TOLD HAD BEEN CHOSEN WITH THE EXPRESSED INTENT OF SUPPORTING A CLAIM, TRAIT, OR DESTINY OF THE SUBJECT WHICH WOULD LATER BE DEVELOPED IN THE WORK.

AS ONE WHO WAS LITERARILY TRAINED, PERHAPS THE MOST TRAINED OF ALL THE NEW TESTAMENT AUTHORS, LUKE DOES NOT VEER FAR FROM THE LITERARY PRACTICES OF HIS TIME. HE PASSES OVER MORE THAN THREE DECADES OF JESUS' LIFE AS A CHILD AND ADULT, CHOOSING ONLY A HANDFUL OF TEXTS WHICH HE WOULD HAVE CHOSEN TO MAKE A POINT. THE QUESTION: IS WHICH POINT? HERE, WE CAN ONLY SPECULATE AS WE NO LONGER MAY ASK LUKE WHAT HIS ORIGINAL LITERARY INTENT WAS. HOWEVER, WHEN ONE CONSIDERS LUKE'S CONTEXT AND THE WAY HE FRAMES HIS SECOND CHAPTER, ONE MIGHT SUGGEST THAT LUKE HAS CHOSEN EPISODES WHICH SEEK TO MANAGE THE TENSION BETWEEN JESUS' DIVINITY AND HUMANITY. THIS TENSION ACTUALLY BEGINS WITH THE ANGELIC VISIT TO MARY, PROMISING A CHILD OF GOD BORN OF A HUMAN MOTHER (LUKE 1.26-38). THE HUMAN CHILD IS BORN (LUKE 2.1-7) BUT IS CELEBRATED BY ANGELIC MESSENGERS AS GOD'S MESSIAH (LUKE 2.8-20). JESUS IS CIRCUMCISED ACCORDING TO MOSAIC LAW, BUT HE IS RECOGNIZED AND CELEBRATED BY TWO PEOPLE WHO DECLARE PROPHETICALLY THAT THIS CHILD IS NO ORDINARY CHILD (LUKE 2.21-39). THIS SAME TENSION IS WITNESSED IN LUKE 2.40-52, AS LUKE RELAYS A STORY FROM JESUS' CHILDHOOD IN WHICH JESUS IS PRESENTED AS HAVING UNIQUE WISDOM AND PURPOSE WHICH CAN ONLY BE DIVINELY GIVEN EVEN AS HE MAKES A CHILDLIKE ERROR IN JUDGMENT CONCERNING INFORMING HIS PARENTS OF HIS CHOICE TO STAY IN JERUSALEM.

WHY WOULD LUKE SEEK TO PRESENT THIS TENSION OF JESUS AS BOTH HUMAN AND DIVINE, EVEN CREATING A RADICAL TENSION BY PRESENTING JESUS AS HAVING INCREDIBLE WISDOM BUT AT THE SAME TIME MAKING AN INNOCENT MISTAKE (LUKE 2.40-52)? PERHAPS, SOME OF THE CONTEXT FOR LUKE'S DECISION IS FOUND IN PAUL'S LETTER TO THE COLOSSIANS. LUKE WAS A MISSION COMPANION OF PAUL IN HIS ASIA MINOR TRAVELS. IN THE LATER PART OF PAUL'S MINISTRY, THE SEEDS OF A SECOND CENTURY HERESY CALLED GNOSTICISM BEGAN TO SPROUT IN SOME OF THE CHURCHES. GNOSTICISM IS ACTUALLY A FORM OF CHRISTIANITY HEAVILY INFLUENCED BY BOTH PLATONIC THOUGHT AND THE ANCIENT MYSTERY RELIGIONS. ONE OF THE HALLMARKS OF THIS ILL-DEFINED MOVEMENT IS THE DENIAL OF JESUS' HUMANITY. WE CAN SEE THIS KIND OF THINKING BEING ADDRESSED BY PAUL IN COLOSSIANS 2.9. PERHAPS, IN HIS WRITING OF THIS GOSPEL, LUKE SOUGHT TO JOIN PAUL IN HEADING OFF THIS LINE OF THINKING BY PRESENTING JESUS AS BOTH HUMAN AND DIVINE, THOUGH THE COMBINATION OF THE TWO CREATES AN INTERESTING TENSION AT POINTS.

LUKE 2.41-52 IS A SELF-ENCLOSED SECTION OF SCRIPTURE, BRACKETED BY TWO STATEMENTS OF JESUS GROWING IN WISDOM AND FAVOR/GRACE. WITH THESE STATEMENTS, LUKE MAKES IT CLEAR THAT JESUS DID NOT SKIP THIS NECESSARY PART OF BEING HUMAN. HE TOOK TIME TO GROW UP AND LEARN. HOWEVER, HIS DUAL NATURE CREATED AN INTERESTING TENSION WHICH BROUGHT ABOUT MIXED RESPONSES, AS IT ALWAYS WOULD WITH JESUS.

LUKE NOTES THAT JESUS' FAMILY WAS VERY PIOUS, LIVING A LIFE OF RHYTHM. ONE SUCH RHYTHM WAS THAT OF CELEBRATING, THE KEEPING OF JEWISH FESTIVALS. WHILE NORMALLY ONLY MEN MADE THESE PILGRIMAGES, JESUS' ENTIRE FAMILY IS PORTRAYED AS GOING, HIGHLIGHTING THEIR DEEP PIETY. ON ONE SUCH TRIP, AT THE END OF THE SEVEN-DAY FESTIVAL, JESUS' PARENTS LEFT TO RETURN HOME, ABOUT AN 80 MILE TRIP. THEY ARE SEEN TRAVELING WITH FRIENDS AND RELATIVES WHICH WAS COMMON. THE ROADS FROM JERUSALEM TO NAZARETH WERE HARD AND DANGEROUS, FILLED WITH ROBBERS AND BANDITS. IT WAS SAFER TO TRAVEL IN A GROUP. HOWEVER, UNBEKNOWNST TO THEM, JESUS HAS CHOSEN TO REMAIN BEHIND IN JERUSALEM, A CHOICE WHICH HE DID NOT RELAY TO HIS PARENTS. AFTER A DAY OF TRAVELING, JESUS' PARENTS BEGIN TO WONDER WHERE JESUS IS. THIS IS NOT POOR PARENTING BUT A WINDOW INTO PARENTING IN THE ANCIENT WORLD. PARENTING WAS DONE BY A LARGER COMMUNITY AND NOT JUST ONE'S IMMEDIATE MOTHER AND FATHER. FOR A CHILD TO BE WITH A RELATIVE FOR A TIME SUCH AS A DAY WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN OUT OF THE ORDINARY. HOWEVER, AT THE END OF THE DAY, WHEN JESUS DOES NOT APPEAR, MARY AND JOSEPH BEGIN TO WORRY. THEY SEARCH FOR JESUS AND CANNOT FIND HIM. THEREFORE, THEY TURN BACK AND LOOK IN JERUSALEM. THERE IS SOME DEBATE AS TO HOW LONG THEY LOOKED. THE TEXT IS NOT CLEAR. IT CAN BE THAT FOUR DAYS ARE IN VIEW, ONE ON THE ROAD AND THREE IN JERUSALEM. HOWEVER, IT CAN ALSO MEAN ONE DAY ON THE ROAD FROM JERUSALEM, ONE COMING BACK, AND ONE SEARCHING IN THE CITY PROPER. REGARDLESS, A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF TIME PASSES BEFORE JESUS IS FOUND.

WHEN MARY AND JOSEPH FIND JESUS, THEY FIND HIM IN THE TEMPLE WITH THE TEACHERS, LISTENING TO THEIR INSTRUCTION. FOR JESUS TO BE SITTING AMONG THE TEACHERS IS A BOLD STATEMENT AS NO CHILD OF HIS AGE WOULD HAVE BEEN ALLOWED SUCH A PLACE. IT SEEMS THAT THEY HAVE RECOGNIZED SOMETHING SPECIAL ABOUT JESUS, BEING AMAZED WITH HIS DEEP UNDERSTANDING AND RESPONSES TO THEIR TEACHING. HERE, LUKE GIVES US A PEEK INTO THE IDENTITY OF JESUS. HE IS NO MERE BOY. HE IS SOMETHING MORE. HOWEVER, MARY IS LESS THAN PLEASED WITH JESUS AND SPEAKS A FIRM COMPLAINT. SHE ASKS WHY JESUS HAS MISTREATED THEM BY CAUSING THEM INCREDIBLY ANXIETY. IT IS NOT HARD TO HEAR THE TONE OF MARY AS A DISTRESSED MOTHER AT THIS POINT, PROBABLY A MIXTURE OF RELIEF AND ANGER. HOWEVER, JESUS SEEMS TO BE UNAWARE OF WHAT HE HAS DONE TO DISTURB MARY AND JOSEPH. HE STATES THAT THEY SHOULD HAVE KNOWN HE WOULD BE IN HIS FATHER'S HOUSE. ONCE MORE, LUKE GIVES AN INSIGHT INTO JESUS' IDENTITY. AT THE AGE OF 12, JESUS

IS CONSCIOUS OF WHO HE IS AND HIS PURPOSE. HE IS THE SON OF GOD AND HIS PURPOSE IS ATTACHED TO THAT OF THE FATHER. YET, LUKE CREATES TENSION WITH MARY'S COMPLAINT. IT IS NOT REBUKED. RATHER, IT IS ACCEPTED. JESUS LEAVES AND GOES HOME WITH MARY AND JOSEPH. HE SUBMITS TO THEM, OBEYING THEM. LUKE PORTRAYS JESUS AS MAKING A NAÏVE ERROR IN JUDGMENT. HE EITHER DIDN'T OR FORGOT TO INFORM HIS PARENTS OF WHERE HE WAS AND IT CREATED A FAMILY PROBLEM. HERE WE SEE THE HUMANITY OF JESUS SHINE FORTH, AND WITH THIS, TENSION IS CREATED. JESUS IS HUMAN AND DIVINE. THIS MAY RAISE THE QUESTION OF JESUS' SINLESSNESS IN THE MIND OF THE READER, BUT LUKE IS QUICK TO ADDRESS THIS. HE NOTES THAT IN THIS MIXTURE, JESUS WAS SINLESS. HE KEPT THE LAW PERFECTLY BY OBEYING HIS PARENTS (EXODUS 20.12; LUKE 2.51), BUT AT THE SAME TIME AS HE KEPT THE LAW PERFECTLY, HE WAS VERY HUMAN AND MADE MISTAKES JUST AS ANY OTHER CHILD.

REAL LIFE WITH BLAKE:

SHAME. IT TELLS ME THAT I AM NOT ENOUGH, THAT I AM WORTHLESS. ONE OF THE MOST COMMON PLACES I FIND SHAME IN MY LIFE IS IN SOMETHING CALLED PERFECTIONISM. I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN SOMETHING OF A PERFECTIONIST. I HAVE ALWAYS SET HIGH GOALS AND SOUGHT TO MEET THEM. EVER SINCE I CAN FIRST REMEMBER, PEOPLE HAVE COMMENTED ON HOW THEY APPRECIATE MY DEPENDABILITY, MY WORK ETHIC, AND MY STRIVING TO GET THINGS DONE WITH EXCELLENCE. WHILE MY PERFECTIONISM HAS HELPED OTHERS, IN MORE THAN ONE INSTANCE, IT HAS HINDERED ME. MY PERFECTIONISM DOES NOT ALLOW ME TO EVER STOP. THERE IS ALWAYS MORE TO BE DONE, ALWAYS SOMETHING ELSE WHICH NEEDS MY VIGILANT ATTENTION. MY PERFECTIONISM DRIVES ME, OFTEN WITHOUT MERCY. HOWEVER, THE WORST EXPERIENCE IS THE WAY IT IS UNYIELDING WITH MY HUMANITY. MY PERFECTIONISM WILL NOT ALLOW ME TO MAKE A MISTAKE. TO ERR MIGHT BE HUMAN, BUT IT IS NOT TO BE BLAKE. I MUST DO EVERYTHING RIGHT, THE FIRST TIME, ALL THE TIME. THE PROBLEM IS, I DON'T ALWAYS DO THINGS RIGHT. SOMETIMES, I NEVER DO THINGS RIGHT. AND TO BE HONEST, I JUST CAN'T GET IT ALL DONE. I HAVE LIMITS. WHEN I BUMP INTO THESE LIMITS, MY PERFECTIONISM WHISPERS THAT UNLESS I CAN BREAK THROUGH THE LIMITS, I AM NOT/HAVE NOT DONE ENOUGH. THIS IS SHAME.

I AM COMING TO LEARN HOW MY PERFECTIONISM IS JUST ANOTHER NAME FOR THE SHAME I CARRY, AND I AM LEARNING THAT JESUS DOESN'T EXPECT ME TO BE A PERFECTIONIST. JESUS ASKS ME TO BE PERFECT, BUT BY THIS HE DOESN'T MEAN I CAN'T MAKE A MISTAKE. WITH HIS INVITATION TO PERFECTION, JESUS IS INVITING ME TO PERFECTLY REFLECT GOD'S MORAL CHARACTER. HOWEVER, JESUS UNDERSTANDS THAT THIS MORAL CHARACTER OF GOD IS BEING REFLECTED BY ONE WHO IS NOT GOD, WHO DOES NOT HAVE HIS POWER, OR WISDOM, OR UNDERSTANDING. THEREFORE, HIS CALL TO BE PERFECT IS A FAR CRY FROM A DEMAND FOR PERFECTIONISM. IN OTHER WORDS, JESUS ALLOWS ME TO MAKE MISTAKES. IN FACT, MY MISTAKES CAN BE

WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITIES TO DISPLAY THE WONDERFUL CHARACTER OF GOD, DEPENDING ON HOW I CHOOSE TO RESPOND WHEN I MAKE THEM. THE REALITY IS THAT I WAS MADE WITH LIMITS. GOD HARD WIRED ME TO LOOK LIKE HIM, BUT HE DID NOT MAKE ME TO BE HIM. I FORGET THINGS. I GET DISTRACTED. I BREAK THINGS AND MISJUDGE CIRCUMSTANCES. I MAKE MISTAKES BECAUSE I HAVE LIMITS. HOWEVER, MY MISTAKES ARE NOT SIN, NOR OR THEY REASONS TO BELIEVE THE CRY THAT I AM NOT ENOUGH. WHEN I MAKE MISTAKES I AM THE PERSON I AM MADE TO BE, AND MY MISTAKES ARE JUST ONE MORE OPPORTUNITY TO SHOW THE WORLD WHO GOD REALLY IS.

REAL LIFE WITH YOU:

SHAME. IT TELLS US WE ARE NOT ENOUGH. AS WE HAVE BEEN SAYING, SHAME WEARS A THOUSAND MASKS AND GOES BY MANY DIFFERENT NAMES. ONE OF THE MOST COMMON IS PERFECTIONISM. THE BASIC TENET OF PERFECTIONISM IS THAT WE ARE NOT ALLOWED TO MAKE MISTAKES. TO MAKE A MISTAKE IS BAD, TO DEMONSTRATE THAT WE ARE NOT ENOUGH. THIS IS SHAME. HOWEVER, WE ARE NOT CALLED TO BE PERFECTIONISTS. HOWEVER, WE ARE CALLED TO BE PERFECT, TO PERFECTLY REPRESENT GOD'S MORAL CHARACTER TO THE WORLD, AND WE CAN DO THAT IN AND THROUGH OUR MISTAKES. IF WE THINK ABOUT IT, WHEN GOD MADE US, HE MADE US TO MAKE MISTAKES. HE DID NOT GIVE US ALL INSIGHT OR WISDOM OR POWER. WITH THIS IN US, OUR VERY MAKEUP, WE ARE BOUND TO MAKE MISTAKES. WE WILL MISJUDGE, DROP THINGS, OR (GASP!) FORGET THINGS. HOWEVER, IN THESE MISTAKES, WE FIND WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITIES TO PRESENT GOD'S PERFECT CHARACTER. IN OUR FORGETTING, WE CAN SPEAK TRUTHFULLY. IN OUR ACCIDENTS, WE CAN SHOW GOD'S TENDERNESS AND COMPASSION, RIGHTING WHAT HAS BEEN BROKEN. IN OUR MISJUDGMENTS, WE CAN DEMONSTRATE GOD'S FAITHFULNESS AS WE WAIT UPON HIS PROVISION AND CARE. MISTAKES ARE FAR FROM BAD. THEY DO NOT SAY WE ARE NOT ENOUGH. THEY ARE DIVINE OPPORTUNITIES TO REFLECT HIS CHARACTER. THIS WEEK, YOU AND I WILL BOTH MAKE MANY MISTAKES. WHEN YOU MAKE A MISTAKE, FIRST CONSIDER BY RESPONDING IN THE FOLLOWING WAY, "GOD, THANKS FOR REMINDING ME THAT I AM NOT YOU." SECOND, CONSIDER HOW, BY GOD'S GRACE, YOU MIGHT REFLECT HIS CHARACTER. SO, FOR INSTANCE, IF YOU FORGET AN APPOINTMENT, WHEN YOU REMEMBER, CALL THE PERSON AND SPEAK WHAT IS TRUE. DO NOT BLAME SOMEONE OR SOMETHING. ADMIT YOUR LIMITED MEMORY AND DECLARE HONESTLY THAT YOU FORGOT, AND PERHAPS WHY YOU FORGOT. YOU DIDN'T WRITE IT DOWN, ETC. IN SO DOING, YOU HAVE SHOWN WHO GOD IS TO THE PERSON. HE IS TRUTH, AND YOU BEAR HIS IMAGE.



SENIOR
PASTOR
BLAKE
SHIPP

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