

A Transformational Way To See Life

As we approach Thanksgiving, our focus is on growing our gratitude.

1. Warm-up Question: On Sunday, Jeff asked which of the Golden Girls is your favorite – Dorothy, Rose, Sophia, or Blanche. Who’s your favorite and why?
2. There is a strong human tendency to constantly evaluate and compare ourselves and others. Sometimes we feel superior, sometimes inferior, and often a bit of both.
 - a. What’s something that makes you feel superior – one of your strengths?
 - b. What’s something that makes you feel inferior – one of your weaknesses?
3. There were two key leaders in the Church at Corinth. The Apostle Paul planted the church on one of his missionary journeys and stayed in close contact, but Apollos became the ongoing local leader. Some in the congregation favored Paul, others Apollos. In our Scripture passage, Paul addresses that controversy, then goes on to discuss our general human tendency to judge ourselves and the people around us. Read First Corinthians 3:1-6 and 4:1-7.
 - a. In 3:3, Paul refers to “jealousy and quarreling among you.” In 4:6, he states his desire that “none of you will be puffed up in favor of one against another.” Have you ever experienced a nasty quarrel in a church family? What happened and how did it make everyone feel?
 - b. In your experience in churches, work places, families, and friendship circles, what kinds of things are most likely to create jealousy and quarrels?
4. On Sunday we focused on the insight that Paul offers in First Corinthians 4:7, “Who makes you different from another? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?”
 - a. Note Paul’s first question, “Who is it that makes you different from another?” The obvious answer is God. Why do you think God made each of us so different?
 - b. Note Paul’s second question: “What do you have that you did not receive [as a gift]?” How would you answer? Can you think of any good thing about yourself that you “did not receive?” What point do you think Paul is trying to make here? Put his point in your own words.
 - c. Jeff suggested that every personal strength we have is “a result of our DNA and formative life experiences” and, therefore, something that was given to us, rather than being self-generated. Is that true for the personal strength of yours that you mentioned in response to Question 2.a? As best you can tell, how did that personal strength come into being?

- d. If every strength is a gift we have received, then the reverse is also true. You're not to blame for what you're not good at. Your weaknesses aren't because you're defective or lazy or didn't apply yourself, but because God didn't give you that particular gift. Go back to the weakness you mentioned in response to Question 2.b. In your estimation, was that weakness something you chose or something that was a given, *i.e.*, the product of your DNA and formative experiences?
 - e. God gives each person a different gift mix, which means we're all "differently abled." Do you like that way of seeing things? Why or why not?
5. Jeff highlighted three practical insights we gain when looking at life through the lens of I Corinthians 4:7. **Insight No. 1: Instead of focusing on what you haven't been given, focus on what you have and give thanks for that.** This insight was illustrated by the teenage girl who lost half her leg, but responded by exclaiming, "Look how much I have left!"
- a. What are some things you don't have, but wish you did, that tend to preoccupy your thoughts when you're in a negative space?
 - b. What are some wonderful things you do have (aptitudes, abilities, life lessons, opportunities, and experiences) that should be the focus of your thanksgiving and gratitude.
6. **Insight No. 2: Every temptation to judge someone for their "inadequacies" can be turned into an opportunity to practice compassion for what life hasn't given them and gratitude for what it has given you.**
- a. Think of somebody in your life that you spend a lot of time with. What's something they do that causes you to think, "Why do they have to be that way? Why can't they be more like me?" And how would you answer those questions: Why are they that way, and why aren't they more like you?
 - b. Romans 14:4 says, "Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand." What do you think that means?
7. The idea that everything is either given or not given doesn't mean we have no right to critique someone. The key is in the tone of our critique. **Insight No. 3: When someone in your life is falling short, realize that you may be the gift God is trying to give them to help them get better, so instead of getting all judgmental and frustrated (which does no good), respond with encouragement and compassion.** Tell us about a time when someone critiqued you the right way. How did it feel? Did it help? Would you call their critique a gift?

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