**VICTORIOUS LIFE CHURCH BIBLE STUDY**

**SILENT KILLERS- EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY CHRISTIANITY**

**PASTOR WILLIAM A. LEE, II**

**(Continuing Lesson 2)**

6. Doing for God instead of being with God

Being productive and getting things done are high priorities in our Western culture. Praying and enjoying God’s presence for no other reason than to delight in him was a luxury that we could take pleasure in once we got to heaven is the way many Christians have been taught. For now, there was too much to be done. People were lost. The world was in deep trouble and God had entrusted us with the good news of the gospel. We need to realize that work for God that is not nourished by a deep interior life with God will eventually be contaminated by other things such as ego, power, needing approval of and from others, and buying into the wrong ideas of success and the mistaken belief that we can’t fail. When we work for God because of these things, our experience of the gospel often falls off center. We become **“human doings” not “human beings.”** Our experiential sense of worth and validation gradually shifts from God’s unconditional love for us in Christ to our works and performance and the joy of Christ gradually disappears. Our activity for God can only properly flow from a life with God. We cannot give what we do not possess.

**Luke 10:38-42**

**38 As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. 39 She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said. 40 But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!” 41 “Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, 42 but few things are needed—or indeed only one.[a] Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”**

7. Spiritualizing Away Conflict

The belief that smoothing over disagreements or “sweeping them under the rug” is to follow Jesus continues to be one of the most destructive myths alive in the church today. For this reason, churches, small groups, ministry teams, denominations, and communities continue to experience the pain of unresolved conflicts. What do you do when faced with the tension and mess of disagreements? Some of us may be guilty of one or more of the following:

• Say one thing to people’s faces and then another behind their backs

• Make promises we have no intention of keeping

• Blame

• Attack

• Give people the silent treatment

• Become sarcastic

• Give in because we are afraid of not being liked

• “Leak” our anger by sending an e-mail containing a not-so-subtle criticism

• Tell only half the truth because we can’t bear to hurt a friend’s feelings

• Say yes when we mean no

• Avoid and withdraw and cut off

• Find an outside person with whom we can share in order to ease our anxiety

Jesus shows us that healthy Christians do not avoid conflict. His life was filled with it! He was in regular conflict with the religious leaders, the crowds, the disciples—even his own family. Out of a desire to bring true peace, Jesus disrupted the false peace all around him. He refused to “spiritualize away” conflict.

**Matthew 18:15-17**

**15 “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. 16 But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’[c] 17 If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.**

8. Covering over brokenness, weakness, and failure

The pressure to present an image of ourselves as strong and spiritually “together” hovers over most of us. We feel guilty for not measuring up, for not making the grade. We forget that not one of us is perfect and that we are all sinners. We forget that David, one of God’s most beloved friends, committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered her husband. Talk about a scandal! How many of us would not have erased that from the history books forever lest the name of God be disgraced? David did not. Instead he used his absolute power as king to ensure the details of his colossal failure were published in the history books for all future generations! In fact, David wrote a song about his failure to be sung in Israel’s worship services and to be published in their worship manual, the psalms. (Hopefully he asked Bathsheba’s permission first!) David knew

**“the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise” (Psalm 51:17).”**

9. Living without limits

There are many Christians who carry around guilt for never doing enough. This guilt often leads to discouragement. And this discouragement often leads Christians to disengagement and isolation from “needy people” because they don’t know what else to do. The core spiritual issue here relates to our limits and our humanity. We are not God. We cannot serve everyone in need. We are human. When Paul said,

**“I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13)**

The context was that of learning to be content in all circumstances. The strength he received from Christ was not the strength to change, deny, or defy his circumstances; it was the strength to be content in the midst of them, to surrender to God’s loving will for him

**Philippians 4:11-13**

**11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength.**

Jesus modeled this for us as a human being—fully God yet fully human. He did not heal every sick person in Palestine. He did not raise every dead person. He did not feed all the hungry beggars or set up job development centers for the poor of Jerusalem. He didn’t do it, and we shouldn’t feel we have to. But somehow we do. Why don’t we take appropriate care of ourselves? Why are so many Christians, along with the rest of our culture, frantic, exhausted, overloaded, and hurried? Few Christians make the connection between love of self and love of others. Sadly, many believe that taking care of themselves is a sin, a “psychologizing” of the gospel taken from our self-centered culture. I believed that myself for years. It is true we are called to consider others more important than ourselves

**Philippians 2:3**

**3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,**

We are called to lay down our lives for others

**1 John 3:16**

**16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.**

But remember, you first need a “self” to lay down. As Parker Palmer said, “Self-care is never a selfish act—it is simply good stewardship of the only gift I have, the gift I was put on earth to offer others. Anytime we can listen to true self and give it the care it requires, we do it not only for“we do it not only for ourselves, but for the many others whose lives we touch.”

10. Judging other people’s spiritual journey

**The monk,” said one of the Desert Fathers, “must die to his neighbor and never judge him at all in any way whatever.” He continued: “If you are occupied with your own faults, you have no time to see those of your neighbor.”**

One of the greatest dangers in Christianity is when it becomes “us versus them.” In Jesus’ day there was the superior “in group” of Pharisees who obeyed God’s commands. And there was the inferior “out group” of sinners, tax collectors, and prostitutes. Sadly, we often turn our differences into moral superiority or virtues. We judge people for their music (too soft or too loud) and the length of their hair (too short or too long). We judge them for dressing up or dressing down, for the movies they watch and the cars they buy. We create never-ending groups to subtly categorize people:

• “Those artists and musicians. They are so flakey.”

• “Those engineers. They are so cerebral. They’re cold as fish.”

• “Men are idiots. They’re socially infantile.”

• “Women are overly sensitive and emotional.”

• “The rich are self-indulgent and selfish.”

• “The poor are lazy.”

We judge the Presbyterians for being too structured. We judge the Pentecostals for lacking structure. We judge Episcopalians for their candles and their written prayers. We judge Roman Catholics for their view of the Lord’s Supper etc….“We end up eliminating them in our minds, trying to make others like us, abandoning them altogether or falling into a “Who cares?” indifference toward them. In some ways the silence of unconcern can be more deadly than hate. Like Jesus said, unless I first take the log out of my own eye, knowing that I have huge blind spots, I am dangerous. I must see the extensive damage sin has done to every part of who I am—emotion, intellect, body, will, and spirit—before I can attempt to remove the speck from my brother’s eye (Matthew 7:1–5).

**Matthew 7:1-5**

**Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. 3 “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.**

**VICTORIOUS LIFE CHURCH BIBLE STUDY**

**SILENT KILLERS- BRINGING TRANSFORMATION TO THE DEEP PLACES**

**PASTOR WILLIAM A. LEE, II**

Once people begin their journey with Jesus Christ and join a church or community, our first task is to help them connect with God and grow spiritually. At VLC we want to get them Connected.

“Connect with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Connect with \_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Connect with \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_”

Our sincere hope is that they will allow the Word and the Spirit to transform each aspect of their lives. We teach them to:”

• attend church each week for worship, the Word, and, to participate in the Lord’s Supper;

• have a quiet time (some call it devotions), preferably at the start of each day;

• participate in a small group or Sunday school class for spiritual nourishment, fellowship, and the study of Scripture;

• trust God by giving financially to God’s work;

• let Christ inform the way they behave at work, home, school, and in all other relationships;

• discover and use their spiritual gift inside the church and serve somewhere—as an usher, greeter, small-group leader, or board member;

• evangelize by telling others who do not know Jesus how they were “blind but now see” and inviting them to church events as appropriate; and

• attend retreats and conferences, read books, and listen to tapes to continue growing.

All of these are excellent steps to begin a journey with Christ. Yet, I dare say that in many cases they are simply not enough. Why, because activities alone are not enough to transform people and free them from a past that has deeply rooted behavioral patterns that if not dealt with properly can actually move Christians away from Christ because they remain entrenched within their souls. One church member recently was quoted as saying

**“I was a Christian for twenty-two years. But instead of being a twenty-two-year-old Christian, I was a one-year-old Christian twenty-two times! I just kept doing the same things over and over and over again.”**

Another former church attender in explaining why she had not attended church for more than five years, asked privately, Why is it that so many Christians make such lousy human beings?

While what we’re teaching new believers is good it is not enough to combat the deeply rooted patterns that lay beneath the surface of those involved in just activities. What most people are left with when only experiencing the teaching is a long list of things to do and not to do- ten new things to feel guilty about. What is needed is the injection of an antidote into all aspects of the Christian life—an antidote that turns our spiritual lives right side up. What is needed is emotional health and contemplative spirituality. Together these two possess the power to unleash a revolution in the lives of God’s people.

**UNLEASHING FROM THE BEAST**

As a church we journeyed through the book of Revelation where we studied the forces that will be present in the last days on the earth. One of those was identified as the Beast. This ferocious dragon in Revelation represents active, powerful satanic power who makes war against the people of God and eventually God Himself. While we do not believe that the Beast of Revelation has been released as of yet, we do believe that the spirit of the antichrist is present and active in this world as it works to set up the events of the end times. It is this spirit that we now find ourselves battling in our day to day activities that is entrenched and dominant in the culture in which we live. Os Guiness wrote

**“Due to the combination of capitalism, technology, and modern communications, the most powerful communications, the most powerful civilization ever- a global culture- has been formed. This global culture threatens to swallow us today. The core values of the beast scream at us from computers, billboards, televisions, DVD’s, music. Schools, newspapers, magazines and iPods.”**

The beast tells us the following.

\*happiness is found in having things

\*you should get all you can for yourself, as quickly as you can

\* security is found in money, power, status and good health

\* above all, you should seek all the pleasure, convenience, and comfort you can

\* God is irrelevant to everyday life

\*Christianity is just one of many alternatives spiritualities

\* there are no absolutes, whether is true for you is what is true

\* you’re not responsible for anyone but yourself

\* this life on earth is all there is.

We eat, drink, drive, watch television and movies, attend schools, shop, work, raise families, listen to the music, and even participate in churches within a society that feeds the beast within us. That beast being, our desire to rebel against God. The apostle Paul had the courage to look at his own inner beast as he wrote about the inner struggle.

**“So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?” (Romans 7:21–24).**

Paul was willing to look within and to be honest about what he saw which is sadly missing in many of us as believers today? How often do we really stop and do an honest assessment of what we see inside of ourselves. What do we see inside ourselves? Many of us are afraid to even look. Our most natural prayer is

**“My Father in heaven, hallowed be my name, may my kingdom come, may my will be done on earth.”**

We’re afraid of God’s will being done because we can’t control what he will do, when he will do it, how he will do it, and what the outcome might be. God’s will requires surrender and trust, and often that is something that many of us are unwilling to offer to God. So many Christians walk around with their primary question being, **What can Jesus do for me?** Can he make me more prosperous, well-adjusted and peaceful. We have been so overtaken by the mindset of the beast and our inner desires that we act as if God functions for us as our personal assistant. Our heavenly Santa Clause (Jesus Clause) who is just existing to serve us and meet the demands on our everyday Christmas list.The only way to be set free from this inner monster and outward beastly spirit of this age that is trying rule us is through knowing Christ, being Committed to Emotional Health and engaging in what has been called Contemplative Spirituality. When emotional health and contemplative spirituality are interwoven together in an individual’s life, small groups, a church, or a community, people’s lives are and will be dramatically transformed. This dynamic duo will work as an antidote to heal the symptoms of emotionally unhealthy spirituality that we have discussed and they provide a means to decisively conquer the beast that is presently within us and in our culture.

**Romans 12:1-2**

**I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.**

**Romans 12**

**J.B. Phillips New Testament**

**1-2 With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I beg you, my brothers, as an act of intelligent worship, to give him your bodies, as a living sacrifice, consecrated to him and acceptable by him. Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity.**

**DEFINING EMOTIONAL HEALTH AND CONTEMPLATIVE SPIRITUALITY**

When we talk about Emotional health we need to understand what it looks like. It is concerned with such things as

• naming, recognizing, and managing our own feelings;

• identifying with and having active compassion for others;

• initiating and maintaining close and meaningful relationships;

• breaking free from self-destructive patterns;

• being aware of how our past impacts our present;

• developing the capacity to express our thoughts and feelings clearly, both verbally and nonverbally;

• respecting and loving others without having to change them;

• asking for what we need, want, or prefer clearly, directly, and respectfully;

• accurately self-assessing our strengths, limits, and weaknesses and freely sharing them with others;

• learning the capacity to resolve conflict maturely and negotiate solutions that consider the perspectives of others;

• distinguishing and appropriately expressing our sexuality and sensuality; and

• grieving well.

Contemplative spirituality, on the other hand, focuses on classic practices and concerns such as:

• awakening and surrendering to God’s love in any and every situation;

• positioning ourselves to hear God and remember his presence in all we do;

• communing with God, allowing him to fully indwell the depth of our being;

• practicing silence, solitude, and a life of unceasing prayer;

• resting attentively in the presence of God;

• understanding our earthly life as a journey of transformation toward ever-increasing union with God;

• finding the true essence of who we are in God;

• loving others out of a life of love for God;

• developing a balanced, harmonious rhythm of life that enables us to be aware of the sacred in all of life;

• adapting historic practices of spirituality that are applicable today;

• allowing our Christian lives to be shaped by the rhythms of the Christian calendar rather than the culture; and

• living in committed community that passionately loves Jesus above all else.”

The combination of Emotional Health and Contemplative Spirituality together can be used to unleash the Holy Spirit inside us in order that we might know experientially the power of authentic life in Christ.

**THE DYNAMIC DUO**

**Emotional Health** and **Contemplative Spirituality** are both necessary to fulfill the greatest commandment that Jesus gave us.

“Jesus said that we are to, **“love God with all our heart, mind, strength, and soul and that we love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:37–40).”**

**Contemplation-** The action of looking thoughtfully at something for a long time. concentration on spiritual things as a form of private devotion: a state of mystical awareness of God's being : an act of considering with attention: the act of regarding steadily. **(FIRST DEGREE GOD LOVERS)**

Here is what has been said about Contemplation

**“the pure loving gaze that finds God everywhere. (Lawrence)**

**“the mind’s loving, unmixed, permanent attention to the things of God.” (Francis De Sale)**

**God Is Not Dead (Mighty Clouds of Joy)**

Verse 1

If God is dead, What makes the flowers bloom?

If God is dead, What makes summer come in June?

If God is dead, Who is listening and answers prayers?

Chorus

I'm glad I know He lives, He lives,

He lives, He lives, He lives, He lives.

I can feel Him moving through the trees,

In the wind, and the breeze.

I can see Him shining through the night,

In the stars that shines so bright.

If God is dead, What makes my life worth living?

I'm glad I know He lives, He lives,

He lives, He lives, He lives, He lives.

Verse 2

If God is dead, Who mends a broken heart?

If God is dead, Who keeps night and day apart?

If God is dead, Who can tell me where his body lies?

At the same time contemplation is not simply about our relationship with God. It is ultimately the way we see and treat people and the way we look at ourselves. Our relationship with God and our relationship with others are two sides of the same coin. If our contemplation or “loving union with God” does not result in a loving union with people, then it is, as 1 John 4:7–21 says so eloquently, not true.

**7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. 8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. 9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. 10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. 12 No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. 13 Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. 14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. 15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. 16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. 17 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. 19 We love him, because he first loved us. 20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? 21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.**

Moreover, as we shall see, it is about seeing God in all of life.

 Emotional health, on the other hand, concerns itself primarily with loving others well. It connects us to our interiors, making possible the seeing and treating of each individual as worthy of respect, created in the image of God and not just as objects to use. For this reason, self-awareness, knowing what is going on inside of us, is indispensable to emotional health and loving well. In fact, the extent to which we love and respect ourselves is the extent to which we will be able to love and respect others. At the same time, emotional health is not only about ourselves and our relationships; it impacts our image go God, our hearing of His voice and our discernment of His will. Emotional health and contemplative spirituality offer three primary gifts. Each enables us to participate in the enormous”

transformative power of Jesus Christ today. They are:

• the gift of slowing down;

• the gift of anchoring in God’s love; and

• the gift of breaking free from illusions.

**6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. 7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. (Philippians 4:6-8)**

 **If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. (Colossians 3:1-2)**