

# “The Quest”

## Part 6 – The Life You’ve Always Wanted

Proverbs 4:20-27; Matthew 6:33; 10-37;  
Colossians 3



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Last Sunday afternoon the planners of this year’s Mexico mission trip gathered everyone together who planned to go to Tijuana over spring break for a two hour orientation for those going on the trip over spring break. I was there because this year I get to go myself – not as a pastor, but as a participant. The kids met in the youth room; their parents in another part of the church while the leaders talked with both groups about how to prepare and what to expect. The planners are smart enough to know that if the kids miss something the parents will be their “back up” system. I floated from group to group because I wanted to meet the parents as well as the kids. During the question and answer period one parent asked, “What size bag should my daughter pack?” I was half expecting to see Steve and Richard to show a mock up of an overhead luggage bin the airlines use. You know: “If it doesn’t fit in here, don’t bother to bring it.” Actually, they were a little more generous than that but still they tried to emphasize that kids usually pack way more clothes than they will ever need; the emphasis was traveling light.

I thought I knew what it meant to travel light. I can remember smiling condescendingly when I have walked past people at airports lugging huge suitcases, duffelbags and trunks. Now with wheels on them - some suitcases seem big enough to house a family of four.

But I got my comeuppance on a mission trip to Cuba a few years ago when one woman on our team showed up at the airport with just a bag not much larger than a purse. Come to find out she was an experienced traveler. She packed one reversible dress and with the help of a scarf and a belt looked different each day. Each night, delighted with ready access to water, she washed out her clothes. She knew she wouldn’t get back to her home base for another nearly a month but clearly she knew how to travel light.

Different kinds of journeys require different kinds of packing. Most vacations and short-term mission trips are “there and back again” journeys. We go on adventures when we are bored with life, needing a bit of excitement, we look for something fun to do, something different. For those kinds of trips we pack in certain ways.

But there’s another kind of journey called the Quest. In the *Lord of the Rings Trilogy*, when Frodo, Bilbo’s nephew sets out on his journey there is no sure sense that he will ever return because its not a “there and back again” journey. It is not motivated by boredom. He doesn’t get to plan his itinerary and whether he feels like going or not. The Quests just grab hold of him. He’s drawn into it. It compels him and changes him. Packing for that kind of journey is altogether different than packing for a mission trip or a vacation.

In chapter 12 of his book, *The Life You’ve Always Wanted*, John Ortberg writes about those who set out to find the Holy Grail. When I was a boy I was enamored with King Arthur and the Knights of the round table. I imagined I was Sir Lancelot and got dressed up in all the armor – helmet, shield, and sword – to prepare for my quest. I was ready to sacrifice my body, purify my heart, do whatever it took to win the prize and fulfill my imaginary quest. I had no clue about this business of a Holy Grail. It was only much later that I learned the quest wasn’t about finding some lost treasure or golden relic of the past. Come to find out the Holy Grail was the ultimate symbol of communion with Jesus Christ. It was about the pursuit of life in the kingdom of God, the kingdom of which Camelot itself was only a faint echo.

One thing was sure: the quest was not a casual undertaking. It was something for which a person would gladly give up everything.

The transformational journey we have been discussing over the past six weeks is that very quest. It’s not a “there and back again” adventure. It’s a desire that we are drawn into more and more; deeper and deeper. It’s a yearning for meaning, for purpose, for the missing piece, for the hole in our hearts to be filled. It’s a quest that changes us and leads us away from the safety of old ways. Once it has claimed us, our lives are changed and there is no turning back.

Sometimes we get confused though about the goal of the quest. Too many of us think that the goal of life is balance. We want to reach the point where each part of our lives fits perfectly together in balance and harmony with all the other parts. I’m old enough to remember the old variety shows on early television like the Ed Sullivan Show.

Perhaps you remember how he used to have an act on every so often. It was a man spinning plates. Each plate would be put on a long pole. By spinning it, the plate would balance on the pole. He would get one started and then another, then another. Soon he would have to go back to the first to give it another spin as it began to wobble. Before long he would have a dozen or more plates spinning as he frantically ran from plate to plate keeping them going. Trying to keep all the pieces of our lives spinning smoothly becomes a consuming quest, but it’s a limited goal, and not a very satisfying one at that. Your focus is always on the plate about to fall and all your energy goes into running around in circles.

There’s another disadvantage to this goal and that is that it thinks you can just neatly divide up life into seven or eight slices, one labeled “financial,” another “vocational,” and so on, with one of the slices reserved for “spiritual.” Balance encourages us to think in terms of having certain separate “compartments.” It implies, for example, that a category such as “work” or “finances” is “non-spiritual” category since there is a separate one with the name “spiritual.” It blinds us to the fact that God is intensely interested in every moment, every activity, every area of our lives. There really is no such thing as the “sacred” part and the “secular” part, because God has created all time and all space. And the God who has given us all the gift of life, has also given us a greater purpose and higher quest.

That quest is nothing less than to “seek first the Kingdom of God” as Jesus put it; it’s to become more and more like him in every way until he is formed in us.

This past Saturday I heard the popular author and lecturer, Marva Dawn, speak at a Vancouver Church. Her topic was a world-changing church and she talked about the need of every person to *know* God better. She reminded us that the Hebrew word to “know” meant “to have intimate knowledge.” When you skip over to the New Testament, and to the letters of Paul in particular, you come across a phrase “In Christ.” Paul uses it dozens and dozens of times in his letters to New Testament churches. What he’s saying is that, “If you are serious about accomplishing Christ’s work in the world, if you truly want to lay claim to his kingdom, you need to learn to live “in Christ.” Paul said, “I have been crucified with Christ therefore I no longer live; Christ lives in me.” (Galatians 2:19) He meant you and I need to die to ourselves, just as he did, and being raised to new life just as He was. This season of Lent, give us the opportunity to walk more closely with Christ on that journey; to take up that quest. But how do we pack for such an adventure? What should we bring along? Is it necessary for us to develop a plan or can we just stumble into this quest?

William Paulsell reflects on how we human beings are wired and says, “It is unlikely that we will deepen our relationships with God in a casual or haphazard manner. There will be a need for some intentional commitment and some reorganization in our own lives. But there is nothing that will enrich our lives more than a deeper and clearer perception of God’s presence in the routine of daily living.”

Indeed John Ortberg says in his book, *The Life You’ve Always Wanted*, “Spiritual transformation cannot be orchestrated or controlled, but neither is it a random venture.” We need some kind of support or structure, much as a young vine needs a trellis. All of us know the frustration of random, haphazard efforts that lead nowhere. A plan is necessary for every Christian or else how can we possibly respond to the question, “How do I know that I am living as a disciple of Christ? What is it, precisely, that a disciple is supposed to do?” Throughout history Christians living in different times have asked this important question. Certain monastic orders like the Benedictines and Franciscans developed what they called a “rule of life.” The Latin meaning of the word “rule” means something that is done regularly.

A rule involves a daily rhythm that helps us to be more intimately connected with God.

Paul writes to the church at Colossae some instruction on transformed living: “Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” What does it mean to do something “in the name of the Lord Jesus?” Generally speaking, in the Bible, when a person’s name was invoked you formed an image in your mind of the character of that individual. So doing something in the name of the Lord Jesus means to do it in a manner that is consistent with the character and teaching of Christ.

So, if that’s your goal as his follower, the next step you need to take is to make a daily plan that is likely to help you achieve your goal. So let’s just walk together through a typical day. If you’re in a small group you’ll find a helpful check list in this week’s lesson. It’s in a section called *Living in Jesus’ Name* and it is a guide that takes you through a typical day:

- waking up
- greeting those you see first thing in the morning
- eating
- transporting yourself from one place to another
- working outside or inside the home
- shopping and bill paying
- recreation
- household tasks
- leisure
- going to sleep

So just walk through this with me to see how this could apply to you. What would it mean for us to wake up “in the name of the Lord Jesus?” A woman was once asked if she wakes up grumpy in the morning. She said, “No, I just let him sleep!” When the alarm clock goes off, what kinds of thoughts would pass through our minds if we awake with the awareness that God was there to greet us in that moment? What would it mean for us to drive in the name of the Lord Jesus? What does it mean to do household chores in Jesus’ name? This doesn’t mean that we always have to do things the same way. It’s more of an attitude; an awareness.

How do I work in Jesus’ name? How do I shop or spend money in Jesus’ name? Are you beginning to get a sense of the radical nature of what Paul means when he says, “whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus?” We sometimes want to divide up life like a pie chart but that misses the whole point of being a disciple. Paul said, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” (Romans 12:2) Jesus said, “Whoever would be my disciple must take up their cross daily and follow me.” (Luke 9:23) Notice the word “daily.” In other words, you and I must be intentional about arranging our lives each day in such a way that we allow Christ to transform us body, mind, and spirit. Did you catch that word “intentional?” This is about making a conscious, deliberate choice.

Make a plan. Keep it simple and flexible. Focus on God’s abiding presence and keep directing your thoughts back to God throughout the day – asking for guidance, thanking God for certain blessings, lifting up to God the needs and circumstances of people you encounter.

You and I have been invited to participate in the greatest quest anyone could ever undertake. It’s bigger than balance; it’s bigger than Camelot. It comes with a promise: “Seek first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added to you as well.” (Luke 12:31)