

## Sermon Discussion Questions for November 8, 2015

### Ephesians 5:1-17

#### Supernatural Discernment

1. What is a “mandate” and what is the “admonition” and “prohibition” of this text?
2. In verse 3 there are three sins that ought not even to be named among Christians. What are they? Are you surprised to see the presence of the third one? What does that word mean? Name two things that you “covet” (they could non-material things such as affirmation, success, popularity, etc). Why is *covetousness* called *idolatry*?
3. Ponder these statements: “The law of God has power to reveal God’s holiness, convict us of sin, and direct our decisions, but it does not have the power to transform our hearts – only the power of the gospel can do that”. “The law of God supplies wonderful moral mandates but can not supply the motive to obey those mandates – only Jesus does that.
4. What is the proper relationship between “being” and “doing” in the Christian life? How does our identity in Christ shape our living for Christ in *verses 7-10*? What are the “indicative” and the “imperative” of these verses? In your Christian walk, which of the two receives more focus, and why?
5. Do you agree that the Christian lifestyle, in essence, is a day-by-day journey in trying to *discern what is pleasing to the Lord (verse 10)*? Where do you look to do this – what is the basis of your daily decision-making process?
6. Is the management of your personal finances an area of your life that you intentionally seek to *discern what is pleasing to the Lord*? If so, why? If not, why not?
7. Many reasons were given to support the notion that *tithing . . . is pleasing to the Lord*. They are summarized below. Reflect and comment upon these reasons.
  - a. It is a spiritual principle that pre-dates God giving His law through Moses, (*Gen. 14:20 and Gen. 28:22*)
  - b. It is a way of acknowledging God’s ownership of all things (*Psalms 24:1; Lev. 27:30*).
  - c. It recognizes that it is God who gives us the ability to earn money (*Deut. 8:18*).
  - d. It was commended by Jesus in His rebuke of the Pharisees (*Matt. 23:23*).
  - e. Refusing to tithe is a form of theft from God (*Malachi 3:8-9*).
  - f. The challenge of tithing exposes our covetousness and “loosens our grip” on our monies (*Matthew 6:21*).

- g. It stretches and strengthens our faith (*Malachi 3:10*).
  - h. It blesses and strengthens God's church, which is holy and sacred in His sight.
  - i. It challenges our natural tendency toward self-reliance and calls forth greater dependency upon the Lord for our physical and financial well-being.
  - j. It compels us to be more diligent and intentional stewards of the remaining 90%.
  - k. It eliminates prideful comparisons with other believers (I give more than others) and builds unity in the body of Christ.
8. What is the short, simple, and compelling reason to tithe: "It \_\_\_\_\_ my Lord."
9. What is the biblical basis for making the radical statement that: "Tithing is a good place to \_\_\_\_\_?"
10. The recent "Vital Signs" Congregational Survey was cited. Discuss the comments below. (We had 609 respondents, which represent 68% of our worshipping congregation).
- a. We have a very high view of Scriptural authority – "Scripture is the literal Word of God" (64% strongly agree, 19% agree, 7% tend to agree).
  - b. The #1 priority for all three age groups (under 35, 35-64, and 65+) was "to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to reach new people and incorporate them into the life of the church."
  - c. The "signature strength" of CPC is our "spiritual vitality."  
"My spirituality is really the basis of my whole approach to life" (53% strongly agree, 30% agree, 12% tend to agree).  
"I work to connect my faith to all other aspects of my life" (50% strongly agree, 36% agree, 11% tend to agree).
11. Stewardship at Central Presbyterian Church:
- a. Average household income: \$145,000
  - b. Average contribution per household: \$4,100
  - c. Average % of income given to CPC: 2.8%
  - d. Those who identify as faithful tithers: 35%
12. Where is the "disconnect" between our high view of Scripture, our "spiritual vitality", and our struggling stewardship?

13. The congregational survey indicated a very strong presence of “congregational anxiety” and a “wait and see” attitude. Do you manifest either or both of these tendencies? If so, why? If not, why not?
14. Pastor Hopper offered his own personal opinion regarding the basis of this “disconnect” by using the terms, “pragmatism over principle” and “fear driven rather than faith led.”  
  
Do either or both of these describe you? What is the difference between seeking the Lord’s help to make wise and God-honoring decisions that have fruitful pragmatic consequences as opposed to the seduction of “pragmatism” in the Christian life? In your personal financial life, are you led by “cultural pragmatism” or “biblical principle”?
15. What are the “indicative” and the “imperative” of verses 1-2 of our text? How does the gospel (*Christ loved us and gave himself for us*) address our fears? What did Jesus have to say about *anxiety* in *Matthew 6:25-34*?
16. List three fears in your personal life that tend to influence (or control) your decision-making. How would Jesus counsel you (what would He say and how would He say it) about those fears? Can Jesus be trusted as you walk through the valley of those fears?
17. List three fears that you have about Central Presbyterian Church that tend to influence (or control) your view of and participation in the life of this congregation. How would Jesus counsel us about those fears? Can Jesus be trusted with our future? Praise Him!