

“WITH”: REIMAGINING THE WAY YOU RELATE TO GOD

A STUDY OF “WITH” BY SKYE JETHANI

LESSON 1: LIFE AFTER EDEN

I. God’s Plan: To be with (in relationship with) men and women. God desires to live and rule with His people.

- A. This plan is a reflection of God’s communion with Himself

John 1:1-2 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning.”

- B. This plan was established at the beginning of creation.

Gen. 1:26-27 “Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground. So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”

- C. This is the ultimate plan for all eternity

Rev. 21:1-3 “Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.”

Rev. 22:5 “There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.”

“Thou hast made us thyself, O Lord and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee” Augustine

II. The effect of the fall (Genesis 3)

- A. “We all share a world confused by chaos. We cannot predict what will befall us.” (p.16)

We are confused

- B. “We all share a world marred by ugliness” (p. 16)

Injustice appears to triumph

- C. “We all share a world plagued by scarcity” (p. 16)

We struggle to survive

- D. There is a compelling need to control our circumstances. But we cannot.
The net affect (after Eden) is that **we are all afraid.**
- E. Human religions (in one form or another) all try to address the results of the fall
“each one is an attempt to overcome suffering, fear and death by exerting control over natural and sometimes supernatural forces.”

III. Our need “to control God” and address our fears

“But rather than engage life giving communion with Him, we opt for one of four other postures through which we try to manipulate, use, cajole or appease Him.

Consider these postures:

- Life under God: A simple cause-and-effect relationship. We figure out what God approves/disapproves – we remain in those boundaries. He is obligated to bless us. We manipulate through obedience.
 - Life over God: We determine the proven formulas for pleasing God and there are controllable outcomes. We are focused on principles not the person of God.
 - Life from God: We are interested in God’s blessings/gifts but not interested in God Himself. Self is central.
 - Life for God: This is the religious attempt to please God by service. Surely this will require God to bless us. We use Him and His mission to gain a sense of direction and purpose.
- A. Sin has warped the way we relate to God. See Genesis 3.
- B. There is a shadow cast: there is an obfuscation by an evil world
The world “offers a substitute form of Christianity, one that cannot break through the shadows and that never really satisfies the deepest longings of (our) souls.” (p.3)
- C. The “substitute” we settle for:
Just enough God to ensure our eternal destiny, but not enough to change our pattern of living.
- D. Our “inoculation”
“A method purposefully infecting a person with a disease in a controlled manner so as to minimize the severity of the infection and also to induce immunity against further infection.” (Dictionary)

Many leave the church “without ever seeing a beautiful and enthralling vision of life with God.”

E. Since it is difficult, such a relationship is left untried.

“The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting, it has been found difficult and left untried.” G.K. Chesterton

II. Life with God

A. “Being” God’s “favorite”

Lazarus: John 11:3 “Lord, the one you love is sick”

John: John 13:23, 19:26, 20:2, 21:7 and 21:20 “The disciple whom Jesus loved”

B. “Behaving” like God’s “favorite”

Consider John 15: The vine and the branches

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to have a relationship with God? What kinds of things affect that relationship?
2. What does fear have in your relationship with God?
3. Which of the four postures (life over, under, from and for God) best describes how you relate to God? Which posture best describes the way your church relates to God?