

Introduction

American Christians have always found great comfort gathering with other believers during times of crisis. In war, economic distress, and even after 9/11, believers in the United States have found refuge, hope, and encouragement in the darkest times when they gathered together. But not this year.

Because of public gathering restrictions due to the coronavirus, America will experience the first Easter in our nation's history where churches cannot gather together to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. On what is traditionally the highest attended Sunday of the year, churches across the nation will be empty.

It's undoubtedly a surreal moment in our nation and the world.

The Church in Transition

Last week, I said that the global church is in transition. Like the disciples and the crowd, we are crossing over during a fierce storm. What is His goal in this transition? As we see in John 6, it's this: *That we would no longer try to fit Jesus into our lives but we would make Him our life.*

As I pondered what to preach on Passover and Resurrection Sunday, I thought *what could be better than preaching Jesus' Passover message in John 6.* This message is very timely for the global church during this pandemic.

We're all familiar with the *What Would Jesus Do* (WWJD) bracelets. But we also need some WWJP back in our pulpits—*What Would Jesus Preach.*

I have a strong hunch that Jesus would preach a similar message to His John 6 Passover message for Passover 2020.

Notice that Jesus' message, where He reveals God's ultimate intention for Him to be the indwelling life we live by, was spoken when "the Passover. . . was near" (John 6:4).

Jesus' Guide to Living by His Indwelling Life

In John 6, when Jesus sought to transition the self-seeking crowd away from *fitting Him into their life to making Him the life we live by*, He gave us seven steps and seven ways. These seven steps and seven ways are a guide of how *we can live by His indwelling life.*

This week we will look at four of these steps, and in the weeks ahead, we will look at the other three steps and then the seven ways we live by His life.

Seven Steps to Living by Christ's Indwelling Life

1. Stop living for the temporal.

Jesus told the crowd, "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal" (John 6:27).

Let's focus on the phrase "do not work for the food which perishes." What, exactly, is this perishable food? It's everything temporal in this life, including food, entertainment, vacations, sports, fashion, earthly success, and the praises of people. It's living your best life now.

This doesn't mean that we can't enjoy delicious food, a relaxing vacation, and God's abundant blessings. It doesn't mean that we can't watch sports or be entertained by an engaging movie. It means that we don't live for these temporary pleasures. We don't toil and spin our lives away—working 60 to 70 hours a week until we retire—for the transient things of this life.

Hopefully this pandemic has revealed just how fleeting, temporal, and shakable our earthly treasures are. Everything that is not built on the rock of Jesus Christ is sand that will collapse when the end-time pressures increase.

Jesus is urging us, "Stop trying to fit Me into your life. Stop working endless hours for a life that can only offer you temporary pleasure. Stop trying to fit Me into your box. Stop serving and obeying Me when it's convenient for you."

Take this crisis to evaluate your life. Will you carry your earthly work into eternity? We waste so much energy sweating and toiling for what is temporary.

Your life is a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

If we are going to stop trying to fit Jesus into our lives and start living by His life, the first step is to cease living for the temporal.

2. Start living for the eternal.

When the crowd asked Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?", Jesus' answer was brilliantly simple (John 6:28). He said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent" (John 6:29).

Jesus reduced the "works of God" to the "work of God." He turns their attention from the things of God to the God of all things. He refocuses them from the many external things to the one internal thing, which is the "one thing" that Jesus told Mary would never be taken from her (Luke 10:42). *Intimacy with Him.*

Jesus Christ is the beloved Son in whom the Father is well pleased. Jesus Christ is God's ultimate intention. Just like the Father told the disciples, He also says to the church: "This is My beloved Son. Listen to Him" (Matt. 17:5).

The work of God in the person of Jesus Christ, as presented in John 6:29, is synonymous with "the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:11).

The Father's eternal plan is to make His Son preeminent in the church and in the nations. The Father's timeless purpose is to give humanity the most precious gift of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. In this present Church Age, the coming Kingdom Age, and the eternal ages to come, the Father's number one goal is to make His beloved Son the preeminent One.

Like Paul, who received an internal revelation of Jesus Christ, the Father yearns to reveal His Son in us.

Jesus Christ Himself is our destiny. Knowing Him, loving Him, worshiping Him, and partnering with Him is why we were created.

Sometimes people hear this and think that sounds boring. Some won't say it, but they think *that's a little disappointing. Let's get on to something more exciting.*

If this is what you think, it only reveals how little you know Him. If your mentality is to move on to another more intriguing topic because you've mastered the "Jesus thing," it only underscores how little you truly know Him. It reveals just how deeply the tree of knowledge is ingrained within your soul.

When John saw the resurrected, glorified, and ascended Christ, he comprehended firsthand that Jesus is everything. Christ truly is the beginning and the end. I assure you: John was neither bored nor disappointed that Jesus alone was His destiny and inheritance. The problem is we don't know Him. We only know about Him.

During this divine rest created by the pandemic, the Lord has given the world a *selah* moment. *Selah* means to pause and consider. It's used 71 times in the book of Psalms. The Lord has practically forced us to pause from our business-as-usual lives and to consider what and who we are living for.

In this divine pause, consider what life source you are living by—your self-life or Christ's divine life. *Psychē*, soulish life or *zōē*, spiritual life, which is Christ's life within you.

This *selah* moment is divinely intended for us to enter fully into God's perpetual Sabbath rest. Hebrews 4:9-11 states, "So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest."

God designed the human heart as the place where all our beliefs originate. As Paul said, "With the heart a person believes" (Rom. 10:10).

Believing in Jesus with our entire hearts is the work of God. It's how we enter the rest of God. But believing in Jesus is far greater than mental ascent, where our mind agrees to a set of facts about Jesus Christ. Or we merely believe Him for salvation.

In this crisis and the much more challenging ones ahead, Jesus Christ is the only One who is unshakable. To the degree that He possesses us is the degree that we will be unshakable.

As the economy and the activity of the world has come to a screeching halt, the Lord invites us to enter His rest. He summons us to enter into His eternal work, which is found in a person—the Lord Jesus Christ. We enter this rest by faith—by believing and trusting in Christ as our everything. Not a one-time act, but a continual way of life.

Trust in the Lord with all of your heart and don't lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight (Prov. 3:5-6).

3. Eternal life is Someone in us who possesses us not somewhere we go.

When most hear the phrase *eternal life*, they immediately think of *heaven*. If this is the way you think, I want to encourage you to rethink this.

Eternal life is Someone in us who possesses us. It's not somewhere we go.

In John 6, Jesus used the phrase *eternal life* ten times in five verses. That's significant.

The word *eternal* means without a beginning or an end. In other words, it is uncreated, indestructible life. The word *life* is *zōē*, which is God's life.

Notice that Jesus said, "He who believes *has eternal life*. . . . He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood *has eternal life*" (John 6:40, 54, emphasis mine).

Believing in and partaking of Christ allows us to possess His life that is without beginning or end. In fact, we won't go to heaven when we die *if we don't possess His life now*.

Jesus is the Life and he who has the Son has the life (1 John 5:12). Or we could say it like this: Those who have the Son have His life dwelling within them.

4. Embracing the New Covenant is how we receive Christ's indwelling life.

Jesus told the self-seeking crowd, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves" (John 6:53). This statement was like the thrust of a sword that offended the majority.

They thought to themselves *I loved when Jesus did the miracles, signs, and wonders. I loved when Jesus provided the bread and fish. But this guy sounds like he's promoting cannibalism. This guy is too extreme for me. I'm out of here.*

The problem was they didn't understand what Jesus was truly saying. They misunderstood Him and allowed their hearts to be offended.

Jesus wasn't promoting cannibalism at all. He was basically inviting the crowd, and by implication the world, to partake of Him as the New Covenant sacrifice.

It's no coincidence that Jesus revealed Himself as the New Covenant sacrifice near Passover. Jesus Christ is the Passover Lamb who takes away the sins of the world.

The progressive revelation in Scripture of the Lamb atoning for the sins of the world reaches its apex in John 6. Here's what I mean. In Genesis 22, it's a lamb for one man. In Exodus 12, it's a lamb for a family. In Leviticus 16, it's a lamb for the nation. Finally, in John 6, it's a lamb for the whole world.

On Passover, the Father cut a covenant between God and humanity. Jesus Christ was both the New Covenant sacrifice and the New Covenant representative.

In essence, Jesus is telling the crowd, "Unless you partake of Me as the ultimate Lamb of God that Passover points to—the sacrifice whose blood secured the New Covenant—My life can't dwell within you."

In John 6:53, *eat* is in the *aorist* tense, which usually means the past tense. Here, Jesus is describing a one-time act. You must embrace Me once-and-for-all as the Lamb.

As my dad pointed out in his book, *Understanding Your Inheritance in Christ*, there were eight common steps when an ancient covenant was enacted. The fourth step was *The Walk unto Death*. Basically, to express how seriously the two covenant representatives viewed their part of the agreement, the two parties would walk around the pieces of the sacrificed animal. Some scholars believe they walked in the form of a figure eight. After this brief walk, the two would look to heaven and say something like this: "Do so to me as has been done to this animal if I break this covenant. If I fail to keep this covenant, may I die even as this animal has died."

Thankfully, Jesus is humanity's New Covenant representative. He is the One who took the walk unto death on the cross. But when Jesus invited us to eat His flesh and drink His blood, He invited us to take our own walk unto death.

It's impossible to enter the New Covenant with a causal approach that seeks to preserve our lives. We can only enter the New Covenant by an unconditional, all-inclusive, hold-nothing-back surrender of our entire lives. All that we are and all that we will ever do must be laid upon the altar to enter the New Covenant.

This is what it means to eat Jesus' flesh and to drink His blood. It is taking our own walk unto death—total surrender of our lives. And when this happens, as part of the New Covenant transaction, Christ comes to dwell within us. We receive His indwelling life. Our spirit is regenerated, raised from the dead, and infused with Christ. We become one spirit with Him and our spirit is made righteous, holy, and complete.

Like Romans 6:5 describes, we become united to Him spirit-to-Spirit. The word *united* means *born together with*. That means, when we enter the New Covenant by fully embracing the Passover Lamb as the New Covenant sacrifice, we are born together with Christ spirit-to-Spirit. At that moment, we are baptized into His body. And then an amazing thing happens. In God's eyes, the Lord's crucifixion, burial, death, and resurrection becomes our very own crucifixion, burial, death, and resurrection. Being baptized into Christ's body, our experience and destiny is joined to Christ, our New Covenant representative. All that is true of Christ is now true of us.

We have now died to sin, to self, and to the Law. We are now a partaker of Christ and His divine nature. We now have His indwelling life in our spirits. We have been sealed by the Holy Spirit for the day of redemption.

Now, having His life—possessing His eternal life—we have the ability to live by His life. We can now make the transition that Jesus is looking for. We can exchange our self-life for His divine-life.