

## The Mind of Christ In the Christian – Part 3

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. *Thanks To Gayle Erwin*

#### B. *The Livingstones*

1. Two brothers were discussing their life goals after Sunday School.
2. The first brother's goal was to be rich and famous.
3. The second brother's goal was to follow Christ to the fullest.
4. He went on to achieve his goal; his name was David Livingstone, the renowned medical missionary and explorer of Africa.
5. The first brother also went on to attain his goal; he became rich but his fame came from the fact of his being related to David.
6. The epitaph on his tombstone reads, "Here lies the brother of David Livingstone."

#### C. *Greatness*

1. The world counts greatness by how much money, power or fame a person manages to acquire.
2. A trip to the bookstore and a perusal of the magazine rack tells the story of how the world assigns greatness.
3. I went to Borders this week and scanned the shelves; many of the titles reveal the contents of the magazines
  - a. *People – Vogue – Fashion – GQ – Hip*
  - b. *Us – Self – Shape – Muscle & Fitness – Flex*
  - c. the articles in these magazines tell readers how to carve out a measure of success – How To
    - 1) Win by intimidation
    - 2) Have bouncier and sexier hair
    - 3) Lose those unwanted pounds and get cut
    - 4) Dominate your enterprise by new technologies
    - 5) Revamp your wardrobe for a whole new you
    - 6) one article I saw was titled – "99 things you can do to be happier & more successful"
      - a) I couldn't resist so I took a look at the list
      - b) it was all about *me*; about focusing on *myself* and *my* needs

4. Leaving the magazine rack and heading back to the psychology section you find the self-help books; with titles like –
  - a. *Looking Out for Number One*
  - b. *Being Your Own Best Friend*
  - c. *Think And Grow Rich*
  - d. *Self-Esteem: The Secret to Happiness*
5. A trip to the bookstore reveals that the world’s ideas on greatness and successful living are very different from what the Bible has to say.

## II. THE GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM

### A. Mark 9:33-34

**33 Then [Jesus] came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, [the apostles] “What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?”**

**34 But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who *would be the greatest*.**

1. When I say the word “*apostles*” what do you see?
  - a. I see tall, dignified looking men
  - b. handsome with deep voices, who walk in unison with Jesus wherever He goes
  - c. when Jesus finished speaking, they form the *Apostolic Choir* behind Him and break out in singing “Just As I Am”
2. But this isn’t at all accurate.
3. Do you know what activity the apostles engaged in more than any other we see recorded in the gospels? They *argued!*
4. And you know what it was they argued *about*?
  - a. surely they discussed such weighty theological issues as the Sovereignty of God vs. Free Moral agency.
  - b. or they debated the root of evil or some other such thorny subject
  - c. no – they argued over - *Who among them was greatest!*
5. You know what the problem with arguing is, don’t you?
  - a. it’s never really over!
  - b. specially with the people you *live* with like family or roommates
  - c. the argument you think you just won – you didn’t!

- d. the person you think you just trumped is thinking of a response
  - e. it may take a few days or weeks – but be sure the argument isn't over.
6. This is the way it was with the disciples.
    - a. they had an on-going disagreement on who was the greatest.
    - b. and even though Jesus spoke to this issue again and again, it seems they were slow in the uptake.
  7. Here we read that they'd been arguing once more over who was the greatest.
    - a. but they'd managed to keep the debate away from the ears of Jesus – they thought
    - b. when they arrived in Capernaum and were finally settled, Jesus turned to them and said,
    - c. “So fellas – I noticed you guys were arguing about something today. What was it?”
    - d. now – it's difficult to tell Jesus that you were arguing about something like this, so they were embarrassed and acted as if they didn't know what He was talking about.
      - 1) “Arguing? Disputing?”
      - 2) “Why, um' we don't know what you're referring to Jesus.”
    - e. but Jesus knew what they'd been talking about so he decided to settle the issue.
    - f. He would tell them who was the greatest in the Kingdom
  8. I can just see Peter – Standing there with his arms folded saying to himself, “Good. We're finally gonna' get this settled. It'll be easier for them to hear this coming from Him than from me.”

## **B. V. 35**

**35 And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.”**

1. Now – think about it!
  - a. the apostles had been arguing about who was the greatest in the Kingdom of God.
  - b. what they meant was among them as the *Apostolic Traveling Band*, who would rank highest in the Kingdom.
  - c. you see, in their minds, a kingdom was ordered by differing

- ranks of authority and power.
- d. they thought that Jesus had come as the Messiah to set up a *political* kingdom very much like the kingdoms of this world.
  - e. they were preoccupied with the issue of when Jesus finally set up His kingdom, who among them would be *closest* to Him, His chief lieutenant – His right hand man.
2. Jesus turns their ideas on greatness *upside down*.
  3. And when they ask about the greatest in the Kingdom of God, they ought to have recognized that there can be only one who is greatest – and that is Jesus!
  4. In all these passages where Jesus teaches on Kingdom greatness, He’s speaking of Himself – for He is the greatest!
  5. We see that here – Jesus said

**“If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.”**

6. Truly this sets the world’s idea of greatness on its head!
  - a. the world says that greatness is demonstrated in *how many* serve YOU!
  - b. greatness is not about being *last* but about being *first*!
  - c. you want to be in the Top 10 and then once you make it to the Top 10, you want to be in the Top 3, and then once you climb there – You have to be on top!
7. *Kingdom* greatness is found in being a *servant*.
8. Isn’t this exciting? Not really.
  - a. I could go on TV and say,  
“Ladies & gentlemen, normally people travel thousands of miles and spend hundreds of dollars to attend this seminar – but I have a special deal just for you. If you’ll send me \$500, I’ll send you 15 tapes and 12 books and in just a few weeks you too can be a slave!”
  - b. I’m probably not going to get many calls
  - c. now if I said,  
“Ladies & gentlemen, normally people travel thousands of miles and spend hundreds of dollars to attend this seminar – but I have a special deal just for you. If you’ll send me \$500, I’ll send you 15 tapes and 12 books and in just a few weeks you too can be a rich!”

- d. well, somebody would get rich!
- 9. There's a billion dollar market in seminars, classes and publishing that teaches people how to attain success through wealth and influence.
- 10. But it seems no one is interested in learning how to be a servant – and yet that is exactly where Jesus said true greatness lies.
- 11. Now, what is a servant's job? What makes someone a servant?
- 12. It's quite simple really –
  - a. a servant is someone who makes life better for others.
  - b. a servant's job is to live towards others in such a way that it *frees* them to become all that God has created them to be.
  - c. as you read the book of Galatians you can't help but be struck by how much Jesus has done to set us Free!
  - d. Freedom is a big part of the Good News.
- 13. So, bottom line – a servant is *others*-oriented. – as opposed to being *self*-centered.
- 14. I am incredibly self-centered!
  - a. I don't want to be, I pray constantly about it
  - b. but I can't help it – I am.
  - c. I think about myself most of the time.
  - d. when I see a group photo, the first thing I do is look to see if I'm in it.
  - e. I've never met a mirror I didn't like
  - f. in fact, I'll bet the first thing most of you thought when you woke up this morning was “I wonder how Lance is doing?”
- 15. What's so sad about being self-centered is that it's miserable; it's a miserable way to live.
  - a. Jesus said so!
  - b. He said, “He who seeks to save his life will lose it, but he who loses His life for my sake shall find it.”
  - c. you know – we can be absolutely certain Jesus said that because it's not at all what *the world* would say.
    - 1) the world says – “You only go around once, so you gotta' grab for all the gusto you can.”
    - 2) it says – “You gotta' look out for ole #1, because no one else will look out for ya.”
  - d. but Jesus says – “If you hang on to your own life, you'll lose it. You want to find life, *real life*? Lose yours for My sake.”

16. Our modern age has this all turned around and now we hear a steady message of having to have high self-esteem and a positive self-consciousness.
  - a. but I've discovered the *more* self-focused and more self-aware I am, the miserable I am.
  - b. I can never get my hair quite right.
  - c. my clothes don't fit in a fashion that suits me.
  - d. you ladies – how do you feel when you get a runner in your stocking?
  - e. the way some of you act, you think all of Ventura County has come to a stop just to stare at your leg!
17. It's true – the self-centered life is miserable!
18. The servant is others-centered.

### **C. The Body**

1. It's for good reason that the Church is often referred to as the *Body of Christ* and that the NT contains many metaphors to how each of us are a vital part of one another and that Body.
2. Each part of the body is a slave to all the other parts – every part serves the rest.
3. Think about that activity we call eating.
  - a. your hand grasps a dangerous weapon –
  - b. jabs a piece of steak
  - c. flips around and comes toward your face with blinding speed
  - d. at precisely the right moment, your mouth snaps open, the meat is inserted, your teeth close around it, the fork withdraws and you chew
  - e. there are dozens of muscles, ligaments, tissues, and bones involved
  - f. and they all play their part in singular harmony
4. What if one part of the body decides that it doesn't want to serve the others any more?
5. What if the hand decides that it's not getting enough attention and decides to do its own thing? You could lose an eye!
6. It *is* possible for one part of the body to serve only itself – it's a medical condition well known to doctors and many of us – it's called '*cancer*.'
7. Self-centeredness is a *spiritual* cancer in the Body of Christ.

8. Jesus said that greatness is found, not in seeking to be the one on top that *everyone* serves, but by the very opposite - in being the servant of all.
  - a. greatness isn't about having the world revolve around *you* –
  - b. it's found in focusing on others to set them free so they can become all that God has created them to be.

#### **D. Last Of All • Vs. 36-37**

1. Look at v. 35 again –

**And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all. . .”**

2. The world says that greatness isn't something that *just comes to you* – you have to go after it.
3. You have to *assert* yourself – you gotta' look out for #1.
4. Ambition and self-promotion are just a part of the world's way of doing things.
5. But Jesus said that to be first in *His* Kingdom, we have to be the *last!*
6. He didn't mean that we ought to see ourselves as worthless scum.
  - a. this isn't about having an inferiority complex.
  - b. it goes with being the servant of all.
7. You see, Jesus is not calling for us to strive to be *last in line* or to *compete* with one another in seeing who can take *last* place.
  - a. all of that is nothing more than a perverted brand of being *self-centered*.
  - b. it's an affected form of *humility* which is nothing more than a mask for pride.
  - c. Jesus meant being last as simply putting others **FIRST!**
  - d. it isn't that I am striving to be *last* – I'm just trying to put others *first*
  - e. I hope you see the difference –
  - f. it's the difference in where my focus lies – on me, or others!
8. Jesus then went on to give an object lesson in this -

**36 Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them,**

**37 “Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me.”**

9. In teaching on greatness – Jesus used the example of a little child.
10. How is a child an example of greatness? What are the qualities of a child that Jesus wants us to grasp?
11. In Matthew 18, the disciples were once again arguing over this issue of who was the greatest among them.

**<sup>1</sup>At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”**

- a. they’d been a little slow to catch Jesus’ previous lessons on this
- b. so this time they come right out and ask Him

**<sup>2</sup>Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, <sup>3</sup>and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.**

**<sup>4</sup>Therefore whoever HUMBLES himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.**

12. Once more Jesus uses the example of a little child, but this time draws out the qualities a little child has that have to be duplicated in us if we would attain kingdom-greatness
13. A child is *humble* – *young* ones are anyway – and that’s why Jesus used a *little* child here.
14. Humility is not inferiority!
  - a. I used to think that being humble meant walking around with your head down, refusing to meet the gaze of others because you were unworthy.
  - b. I thought humility was saying, “I can’t do this or that. I have no talent.”
  - c. “I have nothing to offer. I’m no good.”
  - d. and when people would say, “Oh Lance, you’re so humble.” I’d say to myself – Good!
  - e. now I’m okay!
15. But that’s not humility – that’s nothing more than a perverted form of pride.

- a. you see, I was affecting a posture and attitude that was aimed at one thing –
  - b. getting people to tell me how humble I was!
16. True humility means a *totally accurate assessment* of one’s self.
- a. it means being honest and refusing to deceive!
  - b. it means knowing who and what you are and then living without any pretense!
  - c. humility is transparent – what you see is what you get – no hypocrisy!
17. And this is why Jesus uses the example of a little child – because little children can’t deceive! They try, but they’re no good at it.
- a. what they’ve done is written all over their faces and the way they stand
  - b. when they come home and they’re innocent – they just walk in the door and their home
  - c. but when they come home guilty, they walk in the door *innocent*. (whistle)
  - d. “What did you do?” “Nothing!”
18. Jesus said that Kingdom greatness means being humble, living without pretense;
- a. being transparent and honest
  - b. worldly greatness is all about seeking to be something *other* than what you are.
    - 1) never let them see you sweat
    - 2) keep a stiff upper lip
    - 3) never show the real you
    - 4) keep a poker face
    - 5) never let down your guard
19. In Ephesians 3:14 & 15 we read . . .

**14For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,**

- a. what’s God’s name? He told Moses His names is “I AM!”
- b. besides revealing God’s *eternity*, His name reminds us that it is His nature to *reveal* Himself – “I AM”
- c. He doesn’t hide – He doesn’t cover up or deceive.

- d. His very nature is *light*, not darkness!
  - e. He is “I AM.” He says – “This is ME.”
  - f. Jesus is called the *Word* of God – which means it’s the very *nature* of God to reveal Himself.
20. One of the greatest questions of life is, “What is God like?”
- a. well, God has not left it to us to try and figure it out on our own.
  - b. He’s revealed Himself.
  - c. He’s revealed Himself first of all through creation.
  - d. He’s placed an *intuitive* awareness of Himself in the human heart.
  - e. but then He’s gone beyond that kind of *general revelation* in giving us the Scriptures and sending His Son.
  - f. God is like Jesus, for Jesus IS God!
21. God is “I AM” – and as Paul says in Ephesians 3 – We as the Family of God are *named after Him!*
- a. that means that just as it’s God’s nature to reveal Himself -
  - b. it must be *our* nature to be open and transparent.
22. It takes a lot of energy to hide and cover up, and it never really works anyway.
- a. we always end up getting found out.
  - b. if you want to have some fun, walk into work or school,
    - 1) lean over someone’s desk and say,
    - 2) “That which you have kept secret will be made known today!”
23. Think about the Fall in the Garden of Eden.
- a. as soon as Adam and Eve sinned, it says their eyes were opened.
  - b. they hadn’t gone around with eyes closed before – it means that they suddenly became “*self-conscious.*”
  - c. and they were ashamed!
  - d. so what did they do? They sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.
  - e. have you ever picked figs? If you have you know you have to wear long sleeves because fig leaves have tiny hairs on them that come off and itch like the dickens!
  - f. poor Adam & Eve!
  - g. No wonder God came along and said, “Oh no! This will not do. Here let me make you a couple of lambskin coverings!”
24. Whenever *we* try to hide *ourselves* because we feel we don’t

measure up and if people knew the real us they'd heap shame on us, it never really works.

- a. self-covering is painful
- b. only God can take away our shame and cloth us in a robe of righteousness.

25. And following Him means being *humble* – honest; living without pretense in the midst of a world that's all about deception.

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. Putting It Together

1. Let's put all this together now.
2. Jesus said that Kingdom-greatness is *not* found in emulating the world's way of doing things.
  - a. for the world it's all about position and power.
  - b. the world assigns greatness through such things as wealth and fame;
  - c. and the apostles had fallen into the trap of thinking of greatness in these terms.
3. Jesus stood this idea on its head and said that in His Kingdom, it's the exact opposite.
  - a. the greatest is the servant of all
  - b. and the one who is first is the one who is last because he/she has made others *first*.
4. So the greatest in the Kingdom is none other than Jesus Himself for He made Himself the servant of all and is the only One Who has *perfectly* put others first.
5. As Paul said in Philippians 2 and as we've been seeing in this series – "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

#### B. Called To Be Servants

1. To be a Christian means to *be a servant*.
2. And to be a servant means to be *others-centered*.
  - a. the servant isn't interested in carving out for him or herself a position *above* others.
  - b. the servant is *humble* because as a servant he/she isn't ambitious for position.
  - c. the servant is honest and transparent because he/she knows they

- only have One to answer to – the Master, and so refuses to deceive.
3. The servant has a job, and is concerned about only one thing - being faithful to do it.
  4. The servant is unconcerned with the trappings that mark worldly status and success –
    - a. like the size or location of their office.
    - b. whether they get the best parking place.
    - c. what kind of vehicle they drive
    - d. the label on their clothes
    - e. who their boyfriend or girlfriend is
    - f. being seen with the right people
    - g. living in the right neighborhood
    - h. going to the right school or shopping at the right stores

### **C. Right At Home**

1. As we end this morning, let me bring this down to the most basic level of application.
2. Jesus taught on kingdom greatness again and again, and still it seems the apostles didn't get it till much later.
3. He would teach about greatness and they would wag their heads and promptly go back to arguing over who among them was greatest!
4. If they had understood and done what Jesus was teaching they would have ceased their foolish arguing and begun serving one another.
5. Instead of vying for *first place*, they would have sought to encourage each other.
6. If you and I get what Jesus is saying – then we will stop pretending to be something we're not and will start being what we are – servants!
7. And the place all this will begin is right where we live – in our homes!
  - a. husbands will love and serve their wives.
  - b. wives will love and serve their husbands.
  - c. parents will diligently lead and love their children and seek to set them free so they can become all that God has created them to be.

- d. children will honor and obey their parents – promptly and cheerfully.
  - e. roommates will stop playing those silly games they so often play of refusing to do the dishes or take out the trash.
8. We will be honest and humble toward each other.
  9. When I am being a real servant, I will stop judging you on the basis of how *you* treat *me*, because I will be more focused on what the Lord wants me to do in helping YOU become all that He has created you to be.