



## Me, Myself and ... You

People - you can't live with them and you can't live without them. Sometimes they can make you crazy. Other times life would lose all meaning if we were completely on our own. Somewhere between self-absorption and self-fusion we can find a life.

**Matthew 20: 20-27** Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to him with her sons, and kneeling before him, she asked a favor of him. And he said to her, 'What do you want?' She said to him, 'Declare that these two sons of mine will sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.' But Jesus answered, 'You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?' They said to him, 'We are able.' He said to them, 'You will indeed drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left, this is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.' When the ten heard it, they were angry with the two brothers. But Jesus called them to him and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave.'

### For Personal Study

Why do we do what we do? What is the true motive for our actions? How can we change? How can we sustain healthy change?

If you have been pressing yourself toward a more balanced life in this series, you have probably bumped up against these questions. It's easy to get stuck, but that is not God's design for us. Let's look at balance from another angle.

God designed us to grow. If we stay the same, something is wrong. If we don't grow, we die.

Do you hunger for growth? Are you open to learning? If there are areas of your life that resist change, you may have closed yourself off to accepting a new and growing perspective. You have sabotaged your own life by becoming a "closed system."

In today's scripture, the disciples along with the mother of James and John were closed in their thinking. They looked at leader-

ship only as an opportunity for a step up and focused on self-gain. Jesus' responded to them "*it will not be so among you.*" He turned their world up-side-down with a model of leadership designed as an opportunity to serve the needs of others. How long do you think it took the disciples to fully understand what he meant? Perhaps his words came to them as comfort when they were each martyred. Even as they gave their lives, they had the opportunity to bring truth and hope to others.

In my heart I know "it's not about me," but I still get out of balance. I examine my behavior and recognize how often I would love the world to cater to my needs. I love to be successful. I want to be right. I prefer change to just fall down onto me from heaven without all the effort. And I can be oblivious to the wake that rolls behind me, often knocking down others as I think first about myself.

Henry Cloud's book, Integrity outlines our need to live as an "open system." We are open to Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Open systems —

- Are in the process of growing
- Connect to a source of life
- Have a model to follow for healthy growth
- Take new things in
- Use what they take in
- Invest energy into change and growth
- Risk failure for the sake of growth

Is Christ your source & truth? What is the new thing that you are taking in and how will you put it into practice? What keeps you from risking and gets you stuck? Be encouraged — you are designed to grow.

#### Resources:

Integrity: the courage to meet the demands of reality, Dr. Henry Cloud, © 2006.

Leadership and Self-Deception: Getting out of the Box, The Arbinger Institute, © 2002.

A Passionate Life, Mike Breen & Walt Kallestad, © 2005.

## Readings & Questions

**Monday, October 16**

Psalm 92:12-15

Ephesians 4:15-16

What do we need for healthy growth?  
Are you growing?

**Tuesday, October 17**

Romans 7: 14-25

Paul names Jesus as the answer to our continual struggle between our desire to do what is right and our tendency to do what is wrong (sin). In what areas of the balanced life do you experience this struggle?

**Wednesday, October 18**

Philippians 2:2-5

Psalm 119: 35-37

In what aspect of your life could you grow by applying the phrase "in humility consider others better than yourself?"

**Thursday, October 19**

1 Corinthians 3:18-20

James 3:13-16

Who do you know who is wise? What do you learn about balance by observing them? How will you apply wise teaching to your life?

**Friday, October 20**

Proverbs 16:1-3

1 Chronicles 28:8-10

Spend a few moments in prayer to ask the Lord to reveal what ways in you seem innocent to yourself, but are motivated by selfish need. Ask for healing and help in this area.

### Prayer for the Week

Lord, examine my heart. Open me up to the new things of Christ. Open me up to the work of the Holy Spirit as I apply your teaching. Turn my heart first to the people around me and let me exercise my trust in you as I wait on you to meet my needs. Through the grace of Christ, Amen

# The Balanced Life ...for Families

## Discussion Starters

- Think about a teacher or coach you really respect. What qualities earn your respect?
- Think about Jesus and his dealings with others. What made him a good leader? A wise teacher? A humble servant?
- What qualities would you like to see in yourself?
- What can you do this week to serve others at home? A friend or acquaintance? Someone you don't even know?
- Sometimes you'll hear at St. John that lost people matter to God, therefore they matter to us. What is a lost person? Do you know any? How can you help them?

## More For Young Kids

- Did Jesus help other people?
- Why did he help others?
- How does your family help you?
- How can you help your family?
- How can you help your friends or other people?
- How does helping others make you feel?

## TEENS...

We all have tough conversations with people sometimes... you know, the ones that make knots in your stomach! When you handle it in a healthy way, it's good for both you and your friend. One way to lessen the stress and perhaps lead to a good outcome is to use the Awareness Wheel. It helps you be clear about what's happened, thoughtful about what you want in the future, and more confident about what you'll say to help get you there.

Use the wheel to think through an issue or problem. Start with the facts, setting emotion aside until later. As you work around the wheel, it will help you decide the best way to handle your next conversation. When you do talk, try to avoid making accusations; they tend to bring out people's defenses. Instead try to present your dilemma another way. Perhaps figure out ways that both of you are in the same boat and search for solutions that will help you together. For example, let's say you went to a football game with a friend, but the friend left you to sit with some others. You're really upset! Later you think through the wheel, cool down, and decide to say...

"Hey," (said with a concerned, curious voice, not an accusing voice), "I was having great time at the game last night, and it was so fun to go together. But when you left to sit with the others, I didn't get the feeling that I was invited to go along. Maybe I got it wrong, but my feelings got hurt... I know neither of us wants to do that to the other, so I have an idea. How about we go to the game on Friday, but if one of us wants to join another group, we agree to bring the other one along. OK?"

