

Christ-Centered Counseling: Radical Ministry in a Darkened World—Philippians 2:1-18

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The Radical Idea: To Cultivate the Atmosphere of Christ-Centered Counseling in Our Churches We Must Live Worthy of the Gospel by Living *Through* Christ, *Like* Christ, and *For* Christ

The Real-Life Picture: A Living Example of a Christ-Saturated Life

It was Easter Sunday, April 14, 1974. I'd been attending Grace Baptist Church in Gary, Indiana for six months. Being from an un-churched home, I began attending when my older brother started dating a girl from Grace Baptist. *If you date a Baptist girl, you go to a Baptist church.* If your older brother doesn't want to go to church alone and he's one of the best wrestlers in the state, he *makes* you go to church with him. Humanly speaking, that's how I started hearing the gospel every Sunday morning from Pastor Bill Goode.

On that Easter Sunday, during the invitation at the end of the service (it was a Baptist church after all), I went forward and was met by Pastor Ron Allchin, Youth Pastor at Grace Baptist Church. Pastor Ron walked me through the gospel, clarifying for me what I already knew in my heart. I was a sinner; I could not save myself; Jesus died and rose again to save me from my sin; and I needed to confess my sin, repent, and entrust my soul to Christ as my Lord and Savior.

Pastor Ron was not only gospel-centered; he was also discipleship-centered. Over the next eighteen months, he spoke and lived the truth in love as he built into my life. Part of that ministry included discipling me to preach my very first sermon. I chose the same text that I've chosen tonight—Philippians 2. I remember Pastor Ron helping me in my preparation by explaining to me what theologians call the “Kenosis Passage” in Philippians 2:6-8. When he said “Kenosis,” I thought it was a city in Wisconsin and I had no clue how that related to this passage. But Pastor Ron patiently explained the theological truth so that I could accurately handle God's Word.

That Sunday evening, this sixteen-year-old preacher boy stood for the first time in the pulpit with notes for a forty-five minute message. When I was done, I looked at my watch and had spoken for all of twelve minutes! Let me assure you, I have the opposite problem these days, so don't expect a twelve-minute sermonette.

Pastor Ron not only taught me how to preach God's Word, he modeled and taught me how to live out God's Word. I remember the night when my entire non-Christian family invited Pastor Ron to our house for a full evening of asking questions about Christ. Can you imagine that? An unsaved family inviting a Baptist preacher into their living room to talk about Jesus! That's like saying, “Sick 'em!” to a dog. Why would my family invite a pastor into our home? Because they had watched Pastor Ron's life as he ministered to me. Because, even though they did not believe in Christ, they were attracted by the evidence of Christlikeness that they witnessed in Pastor Ron's life.

Pastor Ron also helped me to face my struggles in life. Growing up in an unsaved home, I had my fair share of struggles. Struggles to live godly. Struggles to live wisely. Struggle to know how to handle my emotions maturely. Struggles to maintain purity in my thought life. Struggles to relate to others sacrificially instead of selfishly.

As Pastor Ron helped me with those struggles, he did *not* point me to self-help manuals. He did *not* point me to the world's supposed answers. He did *not* point me to myself and tell me to try harder. He did *not* point me to himself.

Pastor Ron pointed me *to Christ*. He understood that I needed Christ not only for my salvation, but also for my daily life as a Christian after I was saved. He helped me to begin to understand and apply the central message of the Bible—*Christ is indispensable!*

That's the radical message of our text this evening—Philippians 2:1-18. And it's the radical idea that we must apply to our lives. For if we are to cultivate the atmosphere of Christ-centered counseling in our churches, then we must live worthy of the gospel by living *through* Christ, *like* Christ, and *for* Christ.

I. Our Means for Christian Living: We Live Worthy of the Gospel by Living *Through* Christ—1:27-2:1

To see our desperate need to live *through* Christ, we have to begin with the context that precedes Philippians 2. In Philippians 1:27, Paul shares the foreboding words, “Whatever happens...” As Paul pens these words he's in prison—in chains for Christ. And it's not just Paul who is suffering for Christ. In verses 28-30, Paul explains that the Philippians are also being persecuted and opposed. They are also suffering on behalf of Christ. They are going through the same struggle that Paul is going through.

This word “struggle” relates to an athletic contest, with all the strife, exertion, and hardship connected with it. Paul writes to real people with real problems out of his and their very real struggles. It's as if Paul says:

“We don't know what might happen next. We don't know what new opposition, what new opponent we might face tomorrow. We don't know what new suffering and struggle the next day might bring. We don't know how the world might try to beat us up and knock us down.”

A. When This World Knocks You Down, Be Sure You're Living *For* Christ's Kingdom: 1:27-30

That's why in Philippians 1:28, Paul prays that the Philippians would not be *frightened* by those who opposed them—by the world that sought to knock them down for their gospel faith. “Frightened” pictures a timid, scared, or skittish horse. It means to be startled, terrified, fearful, worried, anxious, and *overwhelmed*.

Have you ever felt like that in life? Have you ever been beaten down by life? Let's be honest, when life is knocking us down, for most of us and for most of our counselees, most of our prayers are all about, “Lord, change my circumstances. Please make life easier. Rescue me from these hard times!”

But in this context of real people with real problems, Paul's not satisfied simply to change their circumstances or their feelings. He's focused on changing their *character* as he writes in Philippians 1:27, “Whatever happens, *conduct* yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.”

This word “conduct” was associated with the practice of good citizenship in the Roman Empire. It was used in Paul's day to exhort Roman citizens—who were free and not enslaved—to live up to the privileges and responsibilities they had as citizens.

In Philippians 3:20, Paul reminds us that *our* citizenship is in heaven. We could paraphrase Paul like this.

“Behave as citizens of heaven, in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Even when you’re opposed, persecuted, suffering, struggling, and beaten down by this world, live like citizens of Christ’s kingdom—of the next world, of the world to come. Christ has broken the chains of sin and freed you from Satan’s power—so live like the new person you *already are* in Christ. When the world knocks you down, don’t turn to the world for answers. The world teaches us to live as *citizens of earth: through self, by self, for self*. God’s Word teaches and empowers us to live as *citizens of heaven on earth: through Christ, like Christ, and for Christ’s glory*.”

Having said this, Paul understands how difficult it is to live a godly life in an ungodly world. That’s why he describes in Philippians 1:27 *how* we stand firm when the world wants to knock us down. “Stand firm in one spirit, *contending* as one man for the faith of the gospel.” The word *contend* is a compound word made up of *sun* which means *with* and of *athleo* which means *athlete—athletes together*.

We don’t stand firm alone, we stand firm together. This means that if our churches are to become saturated with biblical counseling and one-another ministry—we have to learn to be a team standing firm together. It means that Christian husbands and wives are a team—standing firm together. It means that Christian parents and children are a team—standing firm together.

When I counsel couples, they often come to me “at each other’s throats!” The wife perceives her husband to be her enemy. The husband acts as if his wife is his adversary. So, I’ll start the biblical counseling session by saying, “Your spouse is not your enemy. Satan is your enemy! Let’s work together as teammates, as soul mates to defeat your true enemy—Satan!” That’s also true of us as brothers and sisters together in our churches. We stand firm and contend together as spiritual Olympic athletes living as teammates *through* Christ.

B. When This World Knocks You Down, Be Sure You’re Living *Through* Christ’s Power: 2:1

This vital background from Philippians 1 helps us to understand why we need to live *through* Christ’s power. Assaulted by internal fears and external opposition, the people Paul ministered to were tempted to give up and give in rather than to stand firm for the gospel. When people in your church come to you feeling like this, or when *you* feel like this, where do we turn?

In Philippians 2, notice where the Apostle Paul *doesn’t turn* and what he *doesn’t do*. He doesn’t tell a bunch of cute stories. He tells the truth about Jesus. He doesn’t point people to their own resources. He points people to the resources of Christ. In Philippians 2:1, Paul says to struggling people:

“If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion.”

We’ve read this verse scores of times. Now let’s re-read it *in the context* of Philippians 1.

“Even when the world tries to knock you down, you can stand firm together *because* you have already received encouragement from Christ, *because* you have already received the comfort of His love, *because* you already have the fellowship of the Spirit, *because* you have already received tenderness and compassion from God the Father.”

Paul's counsel, biblical counsel, is Christ-centered. Here's how we communicate it in the Biblical Counseling Coalition's *Confessional Statement*.

"We point people to a person, Jesus our Redeemer, and not to a program, theory, or experience. We place our trust in the transforming power of the Redeemer as the only hope to change people's hearts, not in any human system of change. People need a personal and dynamic relationship with Jesus, not a system of self-salvation, self-management, or self-actualization. Wise counselors seek to lead struggling, hurting, sinning, and confused people to the hope, resources, strength, and life that are available only in Christ."

When *you and I* struggle, where do *we* turn to find victory in our suffering and victory over our besetting sins? Paul turns us to Christ. *Paul does not offer self-help, but Christ-hope.*

In Philippians 2:1, Paul gives four Christ-centered means of Christ-hope. We'll consider the first one as an example—encouragement from Christ. When we're tempted to give up and give in, we must apply the Gospel truth of encouragement from our union with Christ. Encouragement is *paraklesis* which means to come alongside to help. In John 14, Jesus promises His fearful disciples that He would not leave them as orphans, but would send them another counselor, another *Paraklete*—the Holy Spirit—not simply to come alongside and help them, but to dwell within them to encourage them—to place courage within them by dwelling in them.

Every week I counsel by phone with a young missionary to Italy. He's single and struggles with loneliness and fears. He also loves the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. In one of our phone counseling meetings, we talked about the final scene in the second *LOTR* movie. Frodo is about to give in and give up. He's reaching up to surrender himself to this evil flying creature. Just in the nick of time, Frodo's friend, Sam, tackles Frodo, preventing him from giving up. Knife in hand, Frodo is half-crazed and about to kill Sam. Sam looks up from under Frodo and says, "Mr. Frodo, it's me. Your Sam. Don't you remember your Sam?" Realizing what's happening and dropping his knife, Frodo tells Sam, "*I just can't do it. I can't go on.*"

In response, Sam shares an incredibly inspiring story that empathizes with Frodo's exhaustion, but also encourages Frodo that there's something worth fighting for. There's a bigger picture than just their two little Hobbit lives. The scene ends with Frodo encouraged and telling Sam that he could not go on without his Sam—his spiritual friend and traveling companion.

As my young missionary friend and I discussed that scene, we turned to Philippians 2:1 and rejoiced together that Christ is our infinite, ultimate Sam. He doesn't just travel with us; He travels in us. He doesn't just talk about fighting for the Hobbit Shire; He calls and equips us to fight for His Kingdom purposes. He doesn't just speak words of encouragement to us; He is our Encourager.

We're not done yet with this sermon—remember, it's not a twelve-minute sermonette. However, I want to do something a tad different right now. I want to stop now, one-third of the way through our message, and pray for *you*.

"Heavenly Father, I don't know what's beating down my brothers and sisters right now. I don't know what is so discouraging in life and ministry that they sometimes feel like they're ready to give up and give in. But I do know the One who is their *sun-athleo*—the One who is their Teammate ready to fight for them. I do know the One who is their *para-klesis*—their Encourager. Heavenly Father, may my brothers and sisters know Your Son and Your Spirit as their 'Sam' standing ready to encourage them—to place Your eternal, all-mighty power,

courage, and boldness within them by dwelling in them. In the name of Jesus Christ our Savior, Friend, and Encourager, I pray. Amen.”

II. Our *Model* for Christian Living: We Live Worthy of the Gospel by Living *Like* Christ—2:2-8

Our sermon is not finished yet because the Apostle Paul is not finished yet. Having taught us our *means* of Christian living—that we live *through* Christ, Paul now helps us to apply the truth that we live worthy of the gospel by living *like* Christ. He is our *model* for Christian living. Here’s how Paul says it in Philippians 2:2-5.

“Then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.”

A. When This World Knocks You Down, Keep a Radical Focus on Other-Centered, Christ-Like Living: 2:2-5

That’s radical. You’re not going to hear that radical message of humble, other-centered, Christ-like living from the *world’s* counsel. For example, late last year *Time Magazine* published its 2012 list of “Ten Ideas That Are Changing Your Life.” Some of the usual suspects appear: “Computers are destroying our brains.” “Humanity is destroying the earth.” But at least half the entries mask a core idea that’s been causing us problems for thousands of years—our self-centered desire and demand for self-sufficiency, self-fulfillment, and self-focus. Here are two of its latest disguises.

- **Living Alone Is the New Norm:** In one of the biggest societal changes ever witnessed, the number of Americans living alone has increased from 4 million in 1950 (9% of households) to 33 million (28% of households) today. But NYU sociologist Erik Klinenberg says this is the ideal life: “Living alone serves a purpose: it helps us pursue modern values—individual freedom, personal control, and self-realization. Living alone allows us to do what we want, when we want, on our own terms. It liberates us from the constraints of our partner’s needs and demands and permits us to focus on ourselves.”
- **The Rise of the Nones:** The fastest-growing religious group in the U.S. (16%) is the category of people who say they have no religious affiliation. That doesn’t mean “the Nones” don’t want any kind of church; no, they just want to be free from “rigid dogma” and do religion their way.

Taken together these studies frame a picture of a large capital “I.” “*I want what I want and I want it now on my terms in my way!*”

You will not hear those values promoted at churches seeking to cultivate an environment of one-another care. Instead, you’ll hear the same values Paul highlights in Philippians 2:2-5. Unity: Self-Giving, Humility: Self-Denying, Charity: (*Agape* Love): Self-Sacrificing.

Biblical counselors understand that although we all naturally want to be encouraged, loved, and comforted; following Jesus means that we adopt *His* mindset. Therefore, our first order of

business becomes not to be encouraged, but to encourage others *because* we've *already* been encouraged in Christ. Our first order of business becomes not to be loved, but to love others *because* we're *already* loved in Christ. Our first order of business becomes not to be comforted; but to comfort others *because* we've *already* received comfort in Christ.

See how radical this is? Instead of insisting that others think like me and that it's my way or the highway, we choose self-giving unity—being likeminded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose (Philippians 2:2).

Do you think that might make a difference as we seek to cultivate an atmosphere of Christ-centered counseling in our churches? As vital as it is that we teach about Christ-centered counseling, it's just as vital that our relationships in our homes and churches model Christ-centered living if we want to saturate our congregations with a joyful commitment to one-another ministry.

Once again, we're not done yet with our sermon, but I want to stop now for a second time and pray for you, pray for us.

“Heavenly Father, you know the relationship struggles that my brothers and sisters and I are experiencing. Lord Jesus, Your Word tells us that You were tempted in all points just like us, yet without sin. So we pray that as we face relationship struggles, we will respond like Christ. When we're tempted to demand that our spouse, our children, or our parents think my way or the highway, may we remember Christ who said, 'Not my will, but Yours be done.' When we're tempted in our homes, at work, in ministry, or at church to demand that others esteem us and think highly of us, help us to remember and follow the example of Christ who in humility sacrificed His life for us. Father, when we're tempted to look out for our own interests and focus on ourselves, may we like Christ empty ourselves and die to self and live for others. Father, radically change us so that our churches are radically changed as we live like Christ. In His name we pray, Amen.”

B. When This World Knocks You Down, Keep a Radical Focus on Applying God's Word to Your Daily Life and Relationships: 2:5-8

Paul's radical counsel gets even more radical in Philippians 2:5-8. As Paul counsels people struggling against external suffering, internal fears, and self-centered temptations, he doesn't offer “Four Steps on How to Be a Good Friend.” He doesn't offer “Five Principles on How to Be a Better Parent.” Steps and principles can be helpful—if they're founded on gospel truth applied to life. This is where Paul focuses in Philippians 2:5-8.

“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!”

In ministering to frightened and discouraged people, where does Paul turn? To theology! To “Christology”—the doctrine of Christ's life, death, burial, and resurrection. He doesn't give us self-help books. He drops the doctrine of Christ right smack-dab on top of our suffering and sin. Why? Because he's teaching us that truth is for life, that doctrine is for practice, and that the Bible is relevant for every life issue we face!

Even in our Evangelical church world, we misunderstand and minimize theology. For example, I offer full-day seminars on *How to Care Like Christ*. The morning sessions highlight a theology of biblical counseling where we explore life's seven ultimate questions from a biblical perspective. The afternoon sessions emphasize a methodology of biblical counseling, where we introduce four core biblical counseling relational skills. I recently had a pastor at an Evangelical church say, "Could you either skip the theology part or rush through it, so that we could spend the bulk of our time on the *practical* stuff?"

After I picked my jaw up off the table, I explained that I could *not* do that because theology *is* practical. If we truly believe in the authority, sufficiency, and relevancy of the Bible, then we believe that theology has implications for daily Christian living. That's why, when Paul wants to help people to understand what it looks like to live in unity and humility with charity, he paints a portrait of Christ.

And what an awesome portrait it is. Christ, who is God and who has always enjoyed perfect unbroken fellowship with God the Father and God the Spirit, voluntarily left the thrown of glory. Voluntarily became like the creatures He created. Voluntarily humbled Himself to the point of taking on our sin and dying on the cross in our place.

Think about this. If this infinite, eternal Jesus made Himself nothing, then what about us? It's humbling to realize that even if we stoop to serve, to humble ourselves, and to count others as more significant than ourselves, that we will *never ever* humble ourselves lower than Christ humbled Himself in serving *us*.

For four months last summer and fall, my Mother-in-Law, Hilda, stayed with us. We love her and we loved loving her. Because Shirley works hard all day as a kindergarten teacher, and because I work out of the home, from 7 AM until 5 PM, I was Mom's primary caregiver. In those moments when I would start to "get a big head" about what a humble servant I was (that's humble of me to think, huh!), I would remind myself that my service was incredibly miniscule compared to Christ humbling Himself to die on the cross for me.

Those times when I started to whine and complain to myself or to Shirley (yes, I can get like that...and so can you) about how much of my work time it was taking to care for Mom, I would be deeply convicted by Paul's portrait of Christ—who sacrificed everything for me while I was yet a sinner shaking my angry fist at Him.

In my moments of temptation toward arrogance and self-pity, I needed this portrait.

"He did not consider equality with God something to be grasped. But he made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!" (2:6-8).

What about you, what joyful sacrifice is God calling on you to make, in light of the eternal sacrifice Christ made for you? Sounds like another great prompting for prayer. Please join me.

"Heavenly Father, I confess as sin my arrogance and my self-pity. In light of Christ's humility and self-giving, the ugliness and selfishness of my sin is exposed. But I'm not the only self-centered sinner here tonight. So, we ask you together to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We ask you, through the power of Christ, that we would live like Christ—humbly and sacrificially. Help us to forgive others as You have forgiven us.

Help us to bless those who curse us as You have blessed us. Help us to die to ourselves and to live for others. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen."

III. Our *Motive* for Christian Living: We Live Worthy of the Gospel by Living *For* Christ—2:9-18

The believers in Philippi were much like us. They struggled against fear, worry, and anxiety. They lived in a world that opposed everything they believed in. They battled pride, selfishness, and self-sufficiency. They experienced relational conflicts. They were saints, sinners, and sufferers; and so are we.

To saints who struggled with suffering and sin, Paul talks about our *motive* for Christian living—we live worthy of the gospel by living *for* Christ. He communicates it like this in Philippians 2:9-11.

"Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

A. When This World Knocks You Down, Remember: It's All About Him: 2:9-11

I've had the privilege of speaking at Bethel Church in Crown Point, Indiana. As you stand at the pulpit, your eyes catch a sign placed directly above the sanctuary exit. Four simple words provide one profound reminder for the preacher as he preaches and the congregation as they exit. *It's All About Him*. The "Him," of course, is Christ. It's a reminder that all that we do, we do *for* the glory of Christ and of God the Father.

In counseling, it's easy to make the "Him" become "Me." Does the counselee think I'm loving? Think I have a clue what I'm doing?"

Or, the counseling can easily become all about our counselees. We care about them, we feel the pain of their suffering. We sense the damage that their sin has caused them, others, and Christ. So we're tempted to make our counseling all about our counselees. But it's not. "It's all about Him." All about Christ. That doesn't mean that we don't care about our counselees—we care deeply about them. And we demonstrate our deep care for our counselees by equipping them to live according to their *eternal* design and purpose—to *glorify Christ*.

How does the gospel change our focus, change us? We're changed by living today in light of eternity. Paul pictures eternity for us in Philippians 2:9-11. Jesus is exalted. We bow the knee before Him. We confess that He is Lord. So, what better, grander ultimate purpose should we move toward in our lives *today* than living so that, "It's all about Him"?

Consider the difference that mindset could make in our marriages and our marriage counseling. God's Word teaches that our marriages are to be a portrait to an on-looking world of the relationship between Christ and the Church. If you're married, the next time you are in the middle of a fight; stop, think, and ask yourselves, "How would we be handling this disagreement differently if our primary goal was to magnify Christ by reflecting the relationship between Christ and the Church?"

There are likely many here tonight who are not married. As a single person who is dating, or would like to be dating, what difference would it make in your dating relationship, in your purity, if your prayer was something like this? "Father, in Christ I have all the encouragement I

need, I have all the comfort I need, I have all the friendship and closeness I need, so help me to keep my dating relationship pure. Help me not to compromise my standards. Help my dating relationship to bring *You* glory.”

B. When This World Knocks You Down, Remember: It All Leads to Gospel Joy: 2:12-18

We might think that this section concludes with verse 11. However, Paul’s “therefore” in Philippians 2:12 lets us know that verses 12-18 are the natural implication of Philippians 2:1-11. These verses teach us that our Christian lives are not only all about Him, they also *all lead to gospel joy*. Here’s how Paul describes it in Philippians 2:17-18.

“But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.”

That’s not happiness. Happiness is based upon circumstances and feelings. That’s joy—gospel joy. Gospel joy experiences rejoicing in the midst of suffering, persecution, and even death.

Vibia Perpetua knew gospel joy. She lived in Carthage in North Africa during the persecution of Christians in the second century after Christ. Born into a wealthy, prominent, but unbelieving family, she was a recent convert with a father who attempted to weaken her faith, a husband who was out of the picture, and an infant child. At age twenty-one, Perpetua accepted Christ as her Savior and was baptized. Within a week, she and six friends who also had become believers, were arrested. They were told that they would be executed unless they recanted their faith in Christ. When they refused to deny Christ, they were led to their death. Eyewitnesses penned this account.

“The day of their *victory* dawned, and with joyful countenances they marched from the prison to the arena *as though* on their way to heaven. If there was any trembling, it was *from joy*, not fear. Perpetua followed with a quick step as a true spouse of Christ, the darling of God, her brightly flashing eyes quelling the gaze of the crowd.”

To the on-looking crowd, Perpetua was simply entertainment. But she knew that to Christ, she was His bride. Perpetua’s gospel-centered focus led to gospel joy. She lived Philippians 2:1, “If there is any encouragement from being united with Christ...”

We have the mistaken idea that if we live all out for Jesus, then there’s nothing left for us. But remember what Paul says in Romans 8:17—if we share in His suffering, we also share in His glory. It’s what Paul communicates right here in Philippians 2:15. “So that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in *which you shine like stars in the universe*.”

Do you ever wonder, “Does my life have meaning? Does anyone notice? Do I make any difference? Do I have a purpose?” Philippians 2:15 answers, “Yes! Live *today* worthy of the gospel and your life will have *eternal* purpose!” A life lived *through* Christ, *like* Christ, and *for* Christ leads to your life shining like a star in the universe *for all eternity*.

Did you know that you can go to the International Star Registry and for just \$54.00 they will name a star after you or someone you love? It’s like one of those infamous info-mercials.

“Purchase now and you’ll also receive a beautiful twelve inch by sixteen inch full color parchment certificate personalized with the star name, date, and coordinates. Don’t delay, and we’ll also add a personalized twelve inch by sixteen inch sky chart containing the star name, star date, the constellation, and the location circled in red where the star is in the sky. Order within two hours and you’ll also receive a booklet on astronomy written by a professional astronomer with additional sky charts. Call now and we’ll send you a letter of congratulations for the recipient or for yourself!”

So...here’s my advice. *Save yourself \$54.00.* Instead, invest in eternity. Live your life today for Christ’s glory and you will receive much more than a star named after you. For all eternity *you will shine as a star* in heaven reflecting the matchless glory of our matchless Savior!

Do you want your life to have purpose? Do you want to look back on your life and know you left a lasting legacy? Do you want to experience lasting gospel joy? Do you want to model the type of Christ-centered life that God can use to change the culture of your church? Then live your life today for Christ’s glory and the God of the universe will say to you, “Well done, my good and faithful child. Well done!”

The Radical Question: Who Am I Living *Through*, *Like*, and *For*?

For me, Easter Sunday, April 14, 1974 was just a beginning. We somehow have gained the mistaken notion that the gospel is only for the unsaved. The gospel is also for the Christian. Christ is so much more than a fire insurance policy out of hell! Christ is our reason for existence. The Father brought us into His family so that we could live worthy of the gospel by living *through* Christ, *like* Christ, and *for* Christ.

In light of Philippians 2:1-18, we each need to ask ourselves three searching questions.

- *Question One:* Who am I living *through*? Am I attempting to live in my own power or through Christ’s resurrection power at work within me?
- *Question Two:* Who am I living *like*? As people look at my life, do they see a model, an example of Christ-like sacrificial, giving, humble love?
- *Question Three:* Who am I living *for*? Is my life all about me, or, is my life all about Him?

“Heavenly Father, we long for our lives to be worthy of the gospel. We thank and praise You for our salvation in, through, and for Christ. We ask You to empower us to live our Christian lives through, like, and for Christ. May someone be able to say of us, as I’ve said of Ron Allchin—that we are a small mirror to others of Christlikeness. By Your grace, may our lives be a shining star in *Your* registry of those to whom You will say, ‘Well done, my good and faithful child.’ Please empower us to live through, like, and for Christ so that our churches might become gospel-centered, Christ-focused congregations saturated with one another ministry for Your glory. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.”