

## R12.2 May 2023 Blog Who Is *Really* On Center Stage?

“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”  
(John 1:14 NASB95)

“Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith.”  
(Hebrews 12:1-2a NASB)

The year 2023 has been designated “2020ME” by many, a sad reminder of man’s hubris in celebrating self. It is a time when selfishness has seemingly risen to a new high. Nowhere is this clearer than on digital media, where there seems to be no limit to the level of toxic communication (even among those calling themselves Christians). If James were to write his epistle today it would likely include a lengthy chapter on the proper use of digital communication tools.

Obviously, the title of this blog is rhetorical, but it is worth exploring because of our propensity to sin in an area where we can so easily rationalize almost anything to “get even” subconsciously. Selfishness puts the individual on center stage, not our Lord and Savior Jesus. Jeremiah reminds us, “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?”<sup>1</sup> So, what are we to do?

Our core text is not a bad place to start. What if we were to be excellent students of our Lord Jesus Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit endeavor always to be “full of grace and truth” in our interactions with others on this earth? Wouldn’t our relationships then be more apt to bring glory to Jesus (and be more intimate and richer for us this side of eternity)?

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah 17:9 (NKJV)

“And he (Jesus) said to all, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?’”<sup>2</sup>

There it is... “deny myself, take up my cross daily, and follow Jesus, full of grace and truth.” We must submit to Jesus’s headship. He is at the core of the gospel, and He must sit on the center stage of our lives. We are called by grace to emulate Him, and in our submission to Him everything we do and say should be governed by His Word.

But how?

“May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>3</sup>

“And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”<sup>4</sup>

This is serious business. If Easter was the last time you meditated on how much Jesus loves you through the giving of His life in exchange for yours, then I encourage you

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<sup>2</sup> Luke 9:23-25 (ESV)

<sup>3</sup> 2 Peter 1:2-8

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 10:38-39 (ESV)

to slowly read through one or more of the gospel accounts of Holy Week and consider the infinite love the Savior has for you and me. The Worthy gave everything, everything for the unworthy. As John tells us in 1 John 4:19, “We love because He first loved us.”

If Jesus is center stage in my heart, on what basis can I legitimately mistreat another person or withhold love from them? Emulating Jesus requires that I approach everyone “full of grace and truth.”

Applications:

1. Ask yourself, “Who really is on the center stage of my life?”
2. If Christ truly is center stage in your life, dive into the scripture passages included here and develop personal convictions about how you will and will not treat people, whether in person or via digital communication. Then routinely check how you are doing in living out your personal convictions.
3. Preach the good news of Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection (i.e., the Gospel) to yourself daily, and lift praise to God continually.
4. Remind yourself that you are “a partaker of the divine nature” and that “His divine power has been granted to us in all things that pertain to life and godliness.” Call on the Holy Spirit to guide and protect you accordingly.
5. Consider Peter’s building blocks of qualities that should be growing within us:
  - Faith*
  - Virtue*
  - Knowledge*
  - Self-control*
  - Steadfastness*
  - Godliness*
  - Brotherly*
  - Love*Test whether these qualities are growing within you.
6. With the help of the Holy Spirit, endeavor to approach every individual you encounter “full of grace and truth.”