

FOUNDATIONAL SAYINGS OF JESUS

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INTRODUCTION

When we study the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, we see three aspects:

1. There is the WISDOM of Jesus in His teachings, His parables, and the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus was all of God's wisdom wrapped up in a human body.
2. There is the POWER of Jesus in His healings, His miracles, and His delivering people from demonic power. Jesus was all of God's power wrapped up in a human body.
3. There was THE LIFE THAT JESUS LIVED FOR US. The Apostle Paul wrote in Galatians 2:20, "The life that I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me." He loved us and gave Himself up for us. Jesus was all of God's love wrapped up in a human body.

In this study, we are going to examine the wisdom of Jesus, specifically His foundational wisdom for our lives contained in three of His specific sayings. Jesus is the very wisdom of Almighty God, spoken to us in the form of a human life lived by Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus is called the Word of God, the Word made flesh dwelling among us (John 1:1; 1:14).

The apostle Paul tells us that one of Jesus' primary functions toward us in both His earthly and risen ministry is to be God's wisdom to us. "But by His (God's) doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." (1 Corinthians 1:30) We can even go so far as to say that Jesus functioned in the Old Testament times as the wisdom of God as the pre-existent Word and second Person of the Trinity before He became the Word made flesh! It is even appropriate, I believe, to substitute the name "Jesus" wherever we see "wisdom" in the Old Testament scripture! We see all the Old Testament wisdom translated into the human life of Jesus in the New Testament.

The three sayings we examine in this study are absolutely foundational for a successful Christian life. They are words from the very mouth of the Son of God Himself and require our attention and obedience. Let's proceed to the first foundational saying.

SAYING #1 DON'T BE ASHAMED OF JESUS

The first foundational saying that the Lord Jesus Christ gave us is found spoken by Jesus in three gospels on three different occasions. The essence of Jesus' teaching, however, is the same in each case and is vital to each one of us:

“For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” (Mark 8:38)

“Everyone therefore who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 10:32-33)

“And I say to you, everyone who confesses Me before men, the Son of Man shall confess him also before the angels of God, but he who denies Me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.” (Luke 12:8-9)

The Lord Jesus has made perfectly clear the foundational truth that we must not be ashamed of Him before the people of this world and that we must boldly confess and present Him to mankind, not fearing rejection or ridicule because we are His. Mark 8:38 tells us that our very salvation, our eternal destiny depends upon our confessing Jesus before men. The Apostle Paul wrote: “If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.” (Romans 10:9-10)

Beyond that, Matthew 10:32-33 warns the timid believer that if he is ashamed to confess Jesus before men, Jesus will not confess that person before the Father when Jesus exercises His role as Intercessor and Great High Priest. The believer who is ashamed to confess Jesus before men will not get his prayers answered and will have no access to the benefits of the Kingdom of God. It is necessary to confess Jesus publicly and boldly to release the power of the Kingdom of God (e.g. Acts 8:5-8, Acts 14:1-3). Luke 12:8-9 also reveals that Jesus will not allow the angels, who are ministering spirits whose purpose is to supernaturally protect and serve the needs of believers (Hebrews 1:13-14) to perform their ministry for the believer who is afraid to boldly confess Jesus.

There are, on the other hand, great rewards for those willing to boldly confess Jesus and believer that God the Father, Jesus Himself and the angels will back them up for being bold and unashamed. The Apostle Paul is a

shining example of someone not afraid to confess Jesus before men. He stated, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.” (Romans 1:16) As a result of Paul’s boldness, Jesus blessed him with perhaps the most powerful and far-reaching ministry of his day, gave him abundant spiritual revelation which became part of the eternal Word of God in the epistles he wrote, and undoubtedly a place of eternal honor in heaven. Another person not ashamed of Jesus was the woman in Luke 7, a great sinner, who nevertheless had repented because she had been powerfully touched and spiritually cleansed by Jesus. We read in Luke 7:36-50 she didn’t care that the self-righteously religious people would scorn her as she came to Jesus and poured precious ointment on His feet and washed His feet with her tears. She just wanted to honor her Lord for what He had done. As a result, Jesus used her as an example of faith and love and her story is eternally recorded in the gospels. Because she was not ashamed to confess Jesus, Jesus was not ashamed to put her story in the gospel!

The Apostle Paul knew how vital it was to confess Jesus before men. We see how, in this second letter to Timothy, he urged his young protégé, “Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner; but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God.” (2 Timothy 1:8) This letter was probably the last one written by Paul who was in prison awaiting execution. For many years, Timothy had been part of Paul’s evangelistic team. The bold Paul had provided a “covering” for Timothy who had served the Lord in Paul’s shadow and protection. Now, however, Timothy was pastor of the church at Ephesus and had to exercise leadership without the presence of Paul. Paul exhorted Timothy to have holy boldness and not be ashamed of Jesus, regardless of what battles he might face, because God would back Timothy up with spiritual authority and power.

The important thing for us to remember is that if we are not ashamed of Jesus, JESUS WILL NOT BE ASHAMED OF US! We read in Hebrews 2:11, “For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren.” We read later in the same book of Hebrews that God extends His favor and blessing to those who will embrace Jesus even at the cost of the world’s rejection of them: “therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city of them.” (Hebrews 11:16)

The only thing to really fear is NOT being on Jesus’ side.

SAYING #2

SEEK FIRST GOD'S KINGDOM

Jesus' second foundational saying for our lives was spoken in His Sermon on the Mount in the gospel of Matthew:

“Do not be anxious then, saying ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘With what shall we clothe ourselves?’ For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek: for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.” (Matthew 6:31-33)

The driving force of Jesus' ministry was His proclamation of the Kingdom of God. His original preaching was a call for people to repent, or have a change of heart, come to their senses, and go in a new direction toward God instead of away from Him. He called for people to repent for the Kingdom of God was near (at hand) (Matthew 4:4).

Jesus' passion was for the coming of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God was the realm of reality where God rules for those who come to Him in faith. This Kingdom originates in the heart of man, the very spirit of man – a kingdom where God rules over the individual's heart (Luke 17:21, 1 John 4:4). Where this rule is set up. All of God's power and God's life is present and when this power is released through faith, all things are possible and nothing is impossible.

For Jesus, the Kingdom of God had very specific meaning:

1. It was a Kingdom where broken fellowship between God and man would be restored and broken fellowship between man and man would be restored.
2. The Kingdom of God was a place where the goal was to make every life whole and fulfilled.
3. The Kingdom would end everything that caused oppression, slavery, and bondage of any and all types.
4. The Kingdom would be a place that offered the option of victory for everything that seemed a defeat, even death.

Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom of God with urgency, for the human race was lost, like sheep without a shepherd (Matthew 14:14). It was urgent that people get into the Kingdom of God so they could be connected to the answer to life's problems. Jesus stated the Kingdom of God was so important, it should be the top priority of every human life. Seeking God's Kingdom is so important that God has promised by covenant, by solemn contract with us that if we give priority to establishing His Kingdom, He will

personally make sure our everyday needs are met. He'll make sure we're in the right place at the right time to receive all we need for our daily lives. Our primary concern should not be our daily needs, but rather the establishing of God's Kingdom.

Interestingly, Jesus' foundational saying is exactly opposite of the concerns of worldly society. Society states we must look for the basics of survival first, then we can look for spiritual development afterward. In behavioral psychology, there is something known as Maslow's hierarchy of values, often represented as a triangle. Maslow taught that human beings must first find a way to survive and meet basic needs, then they could progress to education, culture, and finally spiritual growth and development.

Jesus' hierarchy of values, however, is the exact opposite:

The Kingdom of God is the only place where we find our true identity and destiny. Jesus said, "He who has found his life (his own self-made destiny) shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for my sake shall find it." (Matthew 10:39) All our seeking to mark out our own destiny results in our becoming a copy of some flawed hero or some defective destiny. Only when we surrender our self and identity to Jesus and the goal of becoming conformed to His image do we become by His creative work, a truly unique person with a unique destiny.

Finally, Jesus sent out His disciples and commanded: "And as you go, preach, saying 'the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the leper, cast out demons; freely you received, freely give." (Matthew 10:7-8) How do we know the Kingdom of God is in our midst? The sick are healed, the dead are raised, the lepers are cleansed, demons are cast out.

The Kingdom of God is the only real, effective solution to the reality of human suffering.

SAYING #3

LIFE WITH JESUS IS A CELEBRATION

There is a third foundational saying of Jesus we must examine:

"And John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and they came and said to Him, 'Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?' And Jesus said to them, 'While the bridegroom is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom do not fast, do they? So long as the bridegroom is with them, they cannot fast.'" (Mark 2:18-

19)

Here we see a dimension of Jesus' ministry that is often overlooked – the element of joy and celebration. So often, misdirected religious piety can result in burdensome spiritual and psychological oppression. In His earthly ministry, Jesus brought joy and liberation to people. He set people free from the heaviness and burdens that can come from institutional religion, sickness, poverty, rejection, or demonic oppression, or the sense of guilt and failure that comes from personal sin.

The earthly ministry of Jesus must have brought an awesome sense of joy and celebration to people. Imagine the excitement of seeing sins forgiven, sick bodies healed, the demonically possessed and mentally ill restored, and needs being met everywhere Jesus went. This joy and celebration was released into a historical period of time that was filled with political violence, human suffering and religious legalism. But then, that has always been the case in the realm of the worldly powers of this planet.

The joyful and celebrative texture of Jesus' ministry caused some to come and question why His ministry was so joyful rather than somber and mournful. Jesus replied that His ministry and the Kingdom of God were to be compared to a wedding feast. How can anyone who goes to a wedding sit in a corner and be gloomy? A wedding is a time for celebration and feasting. Someone else paid for the food – it's time to eat and enjoy! Someone else paid for the musicians – it's time to be happy and dance! We even have further evidence in the gospels of the joyful nature of Jesus' ministry when we see Jesus' comment on how some people criticized Him: "For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon!' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax-gatherers and sinners.' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds." (Matthew 11:18-19)

Jesus came to make people free and make them whole. This causes great joy, especially for the people freed and made whole! As the Apostle Paul wrote, "The Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace, and the joy of the Holy Spirit." (Romans 14:17) Even after Jesus ascended into heaven we see the early church in a condition of great joy and celebration after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. We read that the early Christians fellowshiped and ate meals together "with gladness and sincerity of heart." (Acts 2:46) We also see that when Philip went to Samaria and began to proclaim Christ to them, many converted and were healed "and there was much rejoicing in that city." (Acts 8:8)

Jesus came to restore men to the glorious destiny that the Father originally had planned before Adam's sin. Jesus wants people to be free, whole, and

get excited about their lives as an opportunity to glorify God. Jesus shows us that God wants us to enjoy the gift of life and to sow our lives as a seed into His Kingdom to glorify Him for all eternity. If we know Jesus the way we could know Him and if we know Jesus the way we should know Him, it will be impossible to be sad and gloomy in His presence and life will be a joyful celebration.

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We invite you to send any prayer requests you might have for prayer at our chapel prayer meetings. Send to:

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