

Class Notes from The Prodigal God

Chapter One: The People Around Jesus

Biblical Context

"It's crucial to notice the historical setting that the author provides for Jesus's teaching. In the first two verses of the chapter, Luke recounts that there were two groups of people who had come to listen to Jesus. First there were 'tax collectors and sinners.' These men and women correspond to the younger brother. They observed neither the moral laws of the Bible nor the rules for ceremonial purity followed by religious Jews. They engaged in 'wild living.' Like the younger brother, they 'left home' by leaving the traditional morality of their families and respectable society. The second group of listeners was the 'Pharisees and the teachers of the law,' who were represented by the elder brother. They held to the traditional morality of their upbringing. They studied and obeyed the Scripture. They worshipped faithfully and prayed constantly." *-pg. 9, 10*

1) Which brother are we more like in terms of own religious experience?

Note: It's important to remember that we are always susceptible to both of these brother types. We can always choose to indulge in sin (younger brother). And, we can always try to earn the blessing of God (elder brother). Those two errors are constantly a potential pitfall for every believer.

"So to whom is Jesus's teaching in this parable directed? It is the second group, the scribes and Pharisees." *-pg. 11*

"Jesus is pleading not so much with immoral outsiders as with moral insiders. He wants to show them their blindness, narrowness, and self-righteousness, and how these things are destroying both their own souls and the lives of the people around them. It is a mistake, then, to think that Jesus tells this story primarily to assure younger brothers of his unconditional love." *-pg. 12*

2) Does anyone take issue with that premise? Why might some be upset with it?

Contemporary Context

"Both older brothers and younger brothers are with us today, in the same society and often in the very same family."

"Frequently the oldest sibling in a family is the parent-pleaser, the responsible one who obeys the parental standards. The younger sibling tends to be the rebel, a free spirit who prefers the company and admiration of peers." *-pg. 14*

3) Has anyone witnessed that characteristic first hand?

"To some degree the so-called culture wars are playing out these same conflicting temperaments and impulses in modern society. More and more people today consider themselves non-religious or even anti-religious. They believe moral issues are highly complex and are suspicious of any individuals or institutions that claim moral authority over the lives of others. Despite (or perhaps because of) the rise of this secular spirit there has also been considerable growth in conservative, orthodox religious movements. Alarmed at what they perceive as an onslaught of moral relativism, many have organized to 'take back the culture,' and take as dim a view of 'younger brothers' as the Pharisees did." *-pg. 15*

Personal Evaluation

“The crucial point here is that, in general, religiously observant people were offended by Jesus, but those estranged from religious and moral observance were intrigued and attracted to him. We see this throughout the New Testament accounts of Jesus’s life. In every case where Jesus meets a religious person and a sexual outcast (as in Luke 7) or a religious person and a racial outcast (as in John 3-4) or a religious person and a political outcast (as in Luke 19), the outcast is the one who connects with Jesus and the elder-brother type does not. Jesus says to the respectable religious leaders ‘the tax collectors and the prostitutes enter the kingdom before you’ (Matthew 21:31).” —pg. 18

“Jesus’s teaching consistently attracted the irreligious while offending the Bible-believing, religious people of his day. However, in the main, our churches today do not have this effect.” —pg. 18

“If the preaching of our ministers and the practice of our parishioners do not have the same effect on people that Jesus had, then we must not be declaring the same message that Jesus did. If our churches aren’t appealing to younger brothers, they must be more full of elder brothers than we’d like to think.”

—pg. 18, 19

4) What’s your response to Keller’s assertion that our churches must be “more full of elder brothers than we’d like to think.”

5) How can we avoid thinking, feeling, and acting in the same manner as the elder brother?

Are we conforming our lives to the Word of God and experiencing His grace?

We probably all agree with this statement: An objective reality is far weightier than our own subjective experience. Our experiences do not/cannot determine reality. Reality exists independent of our experience.

Conservative Christians in the U.S. tend to embrace the objectivity of God’s Word—and rightly so. For example: expository teaching, biblical theology, systematic theology, Christian apologetics, etc.

However, our personal experience (subjectivity of God’s Word) is often downplayed—and sometimes even disdained. For example: “Our experiences are irrelevant, God’s truth is all that matters.”

It’s very important that we elevate the objectivity of God’s Word. But, we tend to use that as an excuse for our lack of Christian experience—i.e. our lack of spiritual growth.

Here is a definition for spiritual growth: Growing spiritually is growing closer and closer to Jesus by becoming more and more like Him.

“For those God foreknew he also predestined to be *conformed to image of his son*, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.” —Romans 8:29, *emphasis added*

Conformity creates experience. If we are conforming our lives to the Word of God, then we should be experiencing God’s grace in very personal ways (see *Five Faith Based Experiences* and *Personalizing Scripture*).

One way to avoid the elder brother syndrome is to ensure that we’re experiencing God’s grace *personally* by conforming our lives to His Word. Can we articulate our Christian experiences?

If we are truly becoming more and more like Jesus, we should be able to talk about that process. Are we able to communicate to others what God is doing in our lives?

If not, we might be approaching God from an elder brother mindset.

Chapter Three: Redefining Sin

Two Kinds of Lostness

“Jesus uses the younger and elder brothers to portray the two basic ways people try to find happiness and fulfillment: the way of *moral conformity* and the way of *self-discovery*.” —pg. 34

Elder Brother Lostness

“The elder brother in the parable illustrates the way of moral conformity. The Pharisees of Jesus’s day believed that, while they were a people chosen by God, they could maintain their place in his blessing and receive final salvation through strict obedience to the Bible. There are innumerable varieties of this paradigm, but they all believe in putting the will of God and the standards of the community ahead of individual fulfillment. In this view, we only attain happiness and a world made right by achieving moral rectitude. We may fail at times, of course, but then we will be judged by how abject and intense our regret is. In this view, even in our failures we must always measure up.” —pg. 34, 35

1) Can we personally identify any merit-based tendencies in our own thinking?

Younger Brother Lostness

“The younger brother in this parable illustrates the way of self-discovery. In ancient patriarchal cultures some took this route, but there are far more who do so today. This paradigm holds that individuals must be free to pursue their own goals and self-actualization regardless of custom and convention. In this view, the world would be a far better place if tradition, prejudice, hierarchical authority, and other barriers to personal freedom were weakened or removed...

“The person of conformity says: ‘I’m not going to do what I want to do, but what tradition and the community wants me to do.’ The person choosing the way of self-discovery says: ‘I’m the only one who can decide what is right and wrong for me. I’m going live as I want and find my true self and happiness that way.’” —pg. 35-37

Observation: Our culture has esteemed the way of self-discovery. In some instances, that way has been very constructive. In other instances, that way has been very damaging.

2) In what ways has the attitude of self-discovery been a positive influence in our culture?

3) In what ways has the attitude of self-discovery been destructive in our culture?

4) Can we identify areas in our own lives where we have a self-discovery mindset?

Spectrum: Keller points out that there is a spectrum here. Some people experiment with both approaches in order to find meaning in life; some people hold on to both approaches depending on the area of life; and others jump back and forth depending on the season of life.

“Despite these variations, these are still only two primary approaches to living. The message of Jesus’s parable is that both of these approaches are wrong. His parable illustrates the radical alternative.”

—pg. 39

The Absence of Genuine Affection

“...the brothers’ hearts, and the two ways of life they represent, are much more alike than they first appear.

“What did the younger son want most in life? He chafed at having to partake of his family’s assets under the father’s supervision. He wanted to make his own decisions and have unfettered control of his portion of the wealth. How did he get that? He did it with a bold power play, a flagrant defiance of community standards, a declaration of complete independence.

“What did the older son most want? When we think about it we realize that he wanted the same thing as his brother. He was just as resentful of the father as was the younger son. He, too, wanted the father’s goods rather than the father himself.” –pg. 41

“The hearts of the two brothers were the same.” –pg. 42

Keller then further illustrates the elder brother mindset, and stresses that the elder brother mindset is actually a more poisonous form of error—it’s more deeply entrenched and self-justified.

Note: Obviously, some forms of flagrant sin are equal to or worse than religious piousness (e.g. the self-righteous person in the pew is not always more alienated from God than the serial killer). Keller’s point is this: one form of sin (the elder brother form) doesn’t even acknowledge or realize that it’s alienated from the God.

“Elder brothers obey God to get things. They don’t obey God to get God himself—in order to resemble him, love him, know him, and delight in him.” –pg. 49

“By being chaste and charitable he was not doing God’s will rather than his own...” –pg. 50

We don’t obey God so that He will approve of us; we obey God so that we will experience more of Him—in order to deepen our relationship with Him.

5) What do we think about that central truth? (We obey God to know Him more.)

6) Are we confident that we could articulate this ongoing experience to another person?

“The gospel is distinct from the other two approaches: In its view, everyone is wrong, everyone is loved, and everyone is called to recognize this and change.” –pg. 52

“...the prerequisite for receiving the grace of God is to know you need it. The people who think they are just fine, thank you, are moving away from God.” –pg. 52

“The Lord... cares for the humble, but he keeps his distance from the proud” –Psalm 138:6 NLT

Are we actively killing our sinful nature? (Read Romans 7)

“Be killing sin, or it will be killing you.” –John Owens (Puritan theologian)

Note: As Christian, we can’t *only* be killing the sinful nature. That creates a vacuum. We need to be killing sin *and* replacing those sinful desires with righteous desires.

“Delight yourself in Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.” –Psalm 37:4

Resources:

How to Kill Sin... 3-part sermon series by John Piper (www.desiringgod.org)

How We Love ... book by Milan and Kay Yerkovich

Resources Posted on Church Website:

Experiencing God... learning to talk about spiritual growth

Personalizing Scripture... intentionally conforming our lives to the Word of God

Response Patterns... summary of response types from *How We Love* by Milan and Kay Yerkovich

Chapter Five: The True Elder Brother

The Father's Initiation

"Notice how the Father comes out to each son and expresses his love to him, in order to bring him in. He does not wait for his younger son on the porch of his home, impatiently tapping his foot, murmuring, 'Here comes that son of mine. After all he's done, there had better be some real groveling!' No, he runs and kisses him before his son can confess. It's not the repentance that causes the Father's love, but rather the reverse. The father's lavish affection makes the son's expression of remorse far easier." —pg. 82, 83

"The father also goes out to the angry, resentful elder brother, begging him to come into the feast. This picture is like a double-edged sword. It shows that even the most religious and moral people need the initiating grace of God, that they are just as lost, and it shows there is hope, yes, even for the Pharisees." —pg. 83

"We will never find God unless he first seeks us, but we should remember that he can do so in very different ways. Sometimes, God jumps on us dramatically, as he does with the younger son, and we have a sharp sense of his love. Sometimes he quietly and patiently argues with us even though we continue to turn away, as in the case of the older son." —pg. 84

1) Can you think of anyone who depends on their own righteousness for salvation? Have you ever tried explaining to them how the gospel is different? What are some ways we could do that?

Authentic Repentance

"We also learn from this parable that our repentance must go deeper than just regret for individual sins. When the younger brother comes back, he has a long list of wrongdoings for which he must express remorse. When we think about repentance we think, 'If you want to get right with God, you get out your list of sins and you tell him how sorry you are about each item.'" —pg. 85

"Repentance is not less than that, but it is much more..." —pg. 85

"When Pharisees sin they feel terrible and repent. They may punish themselves and bewail their weakness. When they finish, however, they remain elder brothers. Remorse and regret is just part of the self-salvation project. Pharisaical repentance doesn't go deep enough to get to the real problem." —pg. 86

2) Presbyterians have a Puritan heritage. Puritans are well known for their self-effacing posture. Do you see this tendency in your own attitude? It's good to have a proper view of our sinful nature, but having a shame complex will not draw us any closer to God.

"To truly become Christians we must also repent of the reasons we ever did anything right. Pharisees only repent of their sins, but Christians repent for the very roots of their righteousness, too." —pg. 87

3) Christianity is often more offensive than people think. The gospel isn't primarily focused on eradicating sinful *behavior*; it's focused on eradicating the sinful *person*—in order to foster newness of life. What are your thoughts surrounding that particular message of the gospel?

We must admit that we've put our ultimate hope and trust in things other than God, and that in both our wrongdoing and rightdoing we have been seeking to get around God or get control of God in order to get hold of those things [i.e. God's favor/blessing]." —pg. 87, 88

"This, however, only brings us to the brink of Jesus's message, not to its heart. This tells us what we must turn from, not what, or whom, we must turn to. We have seen that we need the initiating love of

the father, and this deeper, gospel repentance. But there is one more thing we need in order to enter the festival joy of salvation.” —pg. 88

The True Elder Brother

“Luke 15 informs us in verse 1-3 that Jesus told not one but three parables to the Pharisees who were complaining about his fraternization with sinners” —pg. 89

The Parable of the Lost Sheep... The Parable of the Lost Coin... The Parable of Two Lost Sons...

“In each parable something is lost—sheep, coin, and son. In each the one who loses something gets it back. And each of the narratives ends on a note of festive rejoicing and celebration when the lost one is returned.” —pg. 90

“There is, though, one striking difference between the third parable and the first two. In the first two someone ‘goes out’ and searches diligently for that which is lost. The searchers let nothing distract them or stand in their way. By the time we get to the third story, and we hear about the plight of the lost son, we are fully prepared to expect that someone will set out to search for him. No one does. It is startling, and Jesus meant it to be so.” —pg. 90

“By placing the three parables so closely together, he is inviting thoughtful listeners to ask: ‘Well, who should have gone out and searched for the lost son?’ Jesus knew the Bible thoroughly, and he knew that at its very beginning it tells another story of an elder brother and younger brother—Cain and Abel. In that story, God tells the resentful and proud older brother: ‘You are your brother’s keeper.’” —pg. 90, 91

(Story about brother searching the jungles of Vietnam for his brother lost in combat.) —pg. 91

“Over the years many readers [of the parable] have drawn the superficial conclusion that the restoration of the younger brother involved no atonement, no cost. They point out that the younger son wanted to make restitution but the father wouldn’t let him—his acceptance into the family was simply free. This, they say, shows that forgiveness and love should always be free and unconditional.” —pg. 92, 93

4) Have you encountered that attitude in yourself or others? How can we avoid that way of thinking without turning into a Pharisee? Jesus paid it *all*. Works matter... but works can’t save anyone. If our focus is off center, we can turn to the book of Ephesians to reorient our thinking—we have no control over our identity, and our works are a *result* of our identity. Are we *believing* God’s promises?

“Mercy and forgiveness must be free and unmerited to the wrongdoer. If the wrongdoer has to do something to merit it, then it isn’t mercy, but forgiveness always comes at a cost to the one granting forgiveness. [Have you ever apologized to someone, and noticed a wave of acceptance?—not God]

“While act 1 of the parable showed us how free the father’s forgiveness is, Act 2 gives us insight into its costliness. The younger brother’s restoration was free to him, but it came at enormous cost to the elder brother. The father could not reinstate him except at the expense of the elder brother. There was no other way. But Jesus does not put a true elder brother in the story, one who is willing to pay any cost to seek and save that which is lost. It is heartbreaking. The younger son gets a Pharisee for a brother instead. But we do not. By putting a flawed elder brother in the story, Jesus is inviting us to imagine and yearn for a true one. And we have him.” —pg. 93, 94

“Our true elder brother paid our debt, on the cross, in our place. There Jesus was stripped of his robe and dignity so that we could be clothed with a dignity and standing we don’t deserve. On the cross Jesus was treated as an outcast so that we could be brought into God’s family freely by grace. There Jesus drank the cup of eternal justice so that we might have the cup of the father’s joy. There was no other way for the heavenly Father to bring us in, except at the expense of our true elder brother.” —pg. 95, 96
(Three Seasons) —pg. 96-98

“Selfless love destroys the mistrust in our hearts toward God that makes us either younger brothers or elder brothers.” (Remember, it’s not really an either/or situation, it’s more of a both/and situation.)

Chapter Seven: The Feast of the Father (Pt.1)

Tasting the Power of the Gospel

"If we believe the gospel, rest in Jesus's work, and receive a new identity and relationship with God, what then? How will our lives change as we live them based on Jesus's message about sin, grace, and hope?" —pg. 118

1) How exactly does the message of the gospel change our lives?

"Why would Jesus, to convey what he had come to do, choose to turn 150 gallons of water into superb wine in order to keep a party going? The answer is that Jesus came to bring festival joy. He is the real, the true 'Master of the Banquet,' the Lord of the Feast." —pg. 120

"Jesus secures the legal verdict 'not guilty' for us so we are no longer liable for our wrongdoings. However, salvation is not only objective and legal but also subjective and experiential. The Bible insists on using sensory language about salvation. It calls us to 'taste and see' that the Lord is good, not only to agree and believe it." —pg. 120, 121

2) The gospel message is transactional (debt paid) *and* transformational (presently changing our lives).

"There is a difference between believing that God is holy and gracious, and having a new sense on the heart of the loveliness and beauty of that holiness and grace. The difference between believing that God is gracious and tasting that God is gracious is as different as having a rational belief that honey is sweet and having the actual sense of its sweetness." —pg. 121 (Jonathan Edwards)

"Rather than only believing that he is loving, we can come to sense the reality, the beauty, and the power of his love. His love can become more real to you than the love of anyone else. It can delight, galvanize, and console you. That will lift you up and free you from fear like nothing else." —pg. 122

3) Love is the only motive that can overcome fear, pride, and selfishness. If we don't have a tangible sense of the Father's love, we shouldn't expect to overcome these obstacles.

"Is it really possible to have this kind of experience? Some people find this more difficult than others, because they are of a more rational, controlled temperament. Other people, I believe, are so hungry for mystical experiences that they read every intuition and strong feeling as a 'word from the Lord.' In short, most of us are too eager or not eager enough for what Jesus offers. But he does offer access to the presence of the Father." —pg. 122, 123

4) What do we think? Is it possible to experience God's love in very tangible ways? How have we personally experienced the love of God? Do we find the experiential element of faith lacking in our own walk with God? If so, what can we do about it? (*Experiencing Faith* resource on church website)

Reorienting Our Thought Life

"Religion operates on the principle of 'I obey—therefore I am accepted by God.' The basic operating principle of the gospel is 'I am accepted by God through the work of Jesus Christ—therefore I obey.'" —pg. 128

"A fundamental insight of Martin Luther's was that 'religion' is the default mode of the human heart. Your computer operates automatically in a default mode unless you deliberately tell it to do something else. So Luther says that even after you are converted by the gospel your heart will go back to operating on other principles unless you deliberately, repeatedly set it to gospel mode." —pg. 128, 129

5) Scripture gave us that insight long before Martin Luther... it's the principle of *daily renewal* (Romans 12:2 and Titus 3:5).

“We habitually and instinctively look to other things besides God and his grace as our justification, hope, significance, and security. We believe the gospel at one level, but at a deeper level we do not. Human approval, professional success, power and influence, family and clan identity—all of these things serve as our heart’s ‘functional trust’ rather than what Christ has done, and as a result we continue to be driven to a great degree by fear, anger, and a lack of self-control.” –pg. 129

6) Many of us are ‘functional secularists.’ We believe the gospel message, but the way we live our lives closely resembles that of many secular Americans. Do we agree or disagree with that statement? Are we content or discontent with the way that we represent Christ to those around us?

“Look at how St. Paul, in his letter to the Corinthian church, helped them grow in the grace of generosity. He doesn’t put pressure directly on the will, saying, ‘I’m an apostle and this is your duty to me,’ nor pressure on the emotions, telling them stories about how much the poor are suffering and how much more they have than the sufferers. Instead, he says, ‘You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich’ (2 Corinthians 8:9). He is saying, ‘Think on his costly grace—until you want to give like he did.’” –pg. 130, 131

“The solution to stinginess is a **reorientation to the generosity of Christ in the gospel**, where he poured out his wealth for you.” –pg. 132 “The solution to a bad marriage is a **reorientation to the radical spousal love of Christ in the gospel**.” –pg. 133

Reorientation is *first* a mental exercise. Second, reorienting our thought life will filter down into our hearts and manifest (display) itself in our attitudes and actions. The mind is the gateway to the soul.

“What makes you faithful or generous is not just a redoubled effort to follow moral rules. Rather, all change comes from **deepening your understanding of the salvation of Christ and living out of the changes that understanding creates in your heart**. Faith in the gospel restructures our motivations, our self-understanding, our identity, and our view of the world. Behavioral compliance to rules without heart-change will be superficial and fleeting.” –pg. 133

Fear-based vs. Grace-based Obedience

“Wait, I have heard people object. ‘You mean that in order to grow in Christ, you keep telling yourself how graciously loved and accepted you are? That doesn’t seem to be the best way to make progress. Maybe the motivation of religion was negative, but at least it was effective! You knew you had to obey God because if you didn’t, he wouldn’t answer your prayers or take you to heaven. But if you remove this fear and talk so much about free grace and unmerited acceptance—what incentive will you have to live a good life?’” –pg. 134, 135

7) Fear-based obedience is not the “new way of the Spirit”—it’s the old way of the Law. If the thought of unmerited acceptance becomes a cause of disobedience, we haven’t really understood the gospel.

“If I was saved by my good works—then there would be a limit to what God could ask of me or put me through. I would be like a taxpayer with rights. I would have done my duty and now would deserve a certain quality of life. But if it is really true that I am a sinner saved by sheer grace—at God’s infinite cost—then there’s nothing he cannot ask of me.” –pg. 136

“Bonhoeffer insisted that people whose lives remained unchanged by God’s grace didn’t really understand its costliness, and therefore didn’t really understand the gospel.” –pg. 138

“We are saved by faith alone, but not by faith that remains alone.” –Martin Luther

Spiritual growth is growing closer and closer to Jesus by becoming more and more like Him.
(See the resource *Growing Closer to Jesus* listed on church website.)

Chapter Seven: The Feast of the Father (Pt.2)

The Importance of Christian Community

“We live in a culture in which the interests and desires of the individual take precedence over those of the family, group, or community. As a result, a high percentage of people want to achieve spiritual growth without losing [any of] their independence to a church or any organized institution. This is often the meaning behind the protestations “I am spiritual, but not religious” and “I like Jesus, but not Christianity.” *pg. -139, 140*

1) Do we know anyone professing Christian’s who embrace this approach? How might we explain the importance of Christian community to them? (Are we able to explain the importance of Christian community from a place of personal experience?)

“Many people who are spiritually searching have had bad experiences with churches. So they want nothing to do with them. They are interested in a relationship with God, but not if they have to be part of an organization.” *—pg. 140*

2) Do we share any of those same reservations—i.e. do we resist or avoid accountability within our own Christian community?

“I have explained in this book why churches—and all religious institutions—are often so unpleasant. They are filled with elder brothers. Yet staying away from them simply because they have elder brothers is just another form of self-righteousness. Besides that, there is no way you will be able to grow spiritually apart from deep involvement in a community of other believers. You can’t live the Christian life without a band of Christian friends, without a family of believers in which you find a place.”
—pg. 140, 141

3) Do we feel this way about Christian community? If not, why not?

“In each of my friends there is something that only some other friend can fully bring out. By myself I am not large enough to call the whole man into activity; I want other lights than my own to show all his facets. Now that Charles is dead, I shall never again see Ronald’s reaction to a specifically Charles joke. Far from having Ronald, having him “to myself” now that Charles is away, I have less of Ronald... In this, Friendship exhibits a glorious ‘nearness by resemblance’ to heaven itself where the multitude of the blessed (which no man can number) increases the fruition [complete picture] which each of us has of God. For every soul, seeing Him in her own way, doubtless communicates that unique vision to all the rest. That, says an old author, is why the Seraphim in Isaiah’s vision are crying, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy,’ to one another (Isaiah 6:3). The more we thus share the Heavenly Bread between us, the more we shall have.”
—C.S. Lewis pg. 141, 142

4) Spiritual growth is growing closer and closer to Jesus by becoming more and more like Him. One way that we grow closer to Jesus is by seeing Him in other people—which happens in relationship. Greater obedience is a process. (Are we actively striving to “work out” our faith in the context of Christian community/relationship?)

5) Are we able to identify ways that God has used the Christian community to draw us closer to Himself?

The Great Feast

(Read Babette’s Feast pg. 143-148)

“Jesus’s parable answers the question that Dinesen’s story poses so skillfully. Jesus says, ‘I am the Bread of Heaven.’ Jesus tells us that both the sensual way of the younger brother and the ethical way of the

elder brother are spiritual dead ends. He also shows us there is another way: through him. And to enter that way and to live a life based on his salvation will bring us finally to the ultimate party feast at the end of history. We can have a foretaste of that future salvation now in all the ways we outlined in this chapter: in prayer, in service to others, in the changes in our inner nature through the gospel, and through the healed relationships that Christ can give us now. But they are only a foretaste of what is to come.” [-pg. 148, 149](#)

Isaiah 25:6-8

“On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare
a feast of rich food for all peoples,
a banquet of aged wine—
the best of meats and the finest of wines.
On this mountain he will destroy
the shroud that enfolds all peoples,
the sheet that covers all nations;
he will swallow up death forever.
The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears
from all faces;
he will remove the disgrace of his people
from all the earth.
The LORD has spoken.

New Resources to be posted on Church Website

Growth-Oriented Learning (.pdf download)

Growing Closer to Jesus (.mp3 download)

Recap of Previous Class

- We systematically outlined a process of application (see the resource *Growth Oriented Learning* on church website). But that process often happens naturally.
- Knowing the mechanics of the process will help to raise our awareness the process as it unfolds, so we can be intentional about finishing the process if it stalls out.
- Some knowledge is memory knowledge (e.g. history); other knowledge needs to be action knowledge (e.g. Love the Lord you God with all you heart and with all your soul and with all your strength).
- We also need to realize that personality plays a major role in spiritual development. Everyone’s on a different growth trajectory—we each grow at different speeds and in different ways. But there are some common denominators: God’s Word is essential, Christian community is essential, obedience is essential, etc.
- We shouldn’t think that think that spiritual growth will happen *without* our concentrated effort.