

Option 3 – Going Wholehearted, Part 1

(appropriate for High School Graduates)

Michael R. Daily January 2017

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Congratulations! You have graduated from High School and have begun your adult life. Things are going to change for you.

(1 Corinthians 3:11)

When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.

You are on your own. The authority of your parents over you (and their protection) is rapidly disappearing. Your childhood training has been completed. Now, its time to find out who the real you is. You have some very important decisions to make that will have impacts on the rest of your life. Choose wisely.

Young adults emerging from a “Christian” childhood typically end up doing one of three things:

- 1) They go “Prodigal”
- 2) They go “Lukewarm”
- 3) They go “Wholehearted”

Tonight we will look at the path of the Wholehearted.

The Path of the Wholehearted

As a young Christian I asked a missionary once what it takes to be a successful missionary. He stated that they have to be able to live in a culture that provides no social support for Christians and not only survive, but thrive spiritually and be a leadership example for others to imitate. No Christian music, no Christian bookstores, no Thanksgiving or Christmas or Easter celebrations, no church infrastructure. Essentially, the missionary must be able to do their work in an environment where there is nothing that provides any external encouragement or motivation for them to do what they do except their relationship with God and His Word and their willingness to follow and obey Him without reservation or hesitation. They must be wholehearted.

Wholehearted: *completely and sincerely devoted, determined, or enthusiastic; marked by complete earnest commitment; free from all reserve or hesitation*

To create a picture of what it means to be wholehearted lets look at the seven churches of Revelation and see how Jesus evaluated them. If we create a list of all the things Jesus said they were doing right and then add to the list the opposite of all the things Jesus said they were doing wrong, then we should be able to get a realistic picture of what it means to be wholehearted. For part 1 we will look at the church at Ephesus.

The Church At Ephesus

Ephesus was a city on the western coast of Asia Minor (i.e. Turkey), near the mouth of the Cayster River. The city was famous for its temple of Diana (i.e. Artemis), and pilgrims came to Ephesus from all over the Mediterranean world to worship the goddess. The temple was considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The ruins of ancient Ephesus are located about 2 miles southwest of present day Selçuk in Izmir Province, Turkey.

(Acts 19:35)

After quieting the crowd, the town clerk said, “Men of Ephesus, what man is there after all who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of the image which fell down from heaven?”

Revelation 2:2-6

'I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; 3 and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. 4 But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 5 Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent. 6 Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

Characteristics of the Wholehearted (from Ephesus)

- 1) They do not leave their first love
- 2) Their deeds result from their relationship with God
- 3) They hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans – false teachers who teach licentiousness / sexual immorality.
- 4) They put to the test those who call themselves apostles
- 5) They do not tolerate evil men
- 6) They toil, persevere and endure for His Name's sake and do not grow weary

They do not leave their first love

Psalms 63:1&6

O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, In a dry and weary land where there is no water.

⁶When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches, ⁷For You have been my help, And in the shadow of Your wings I sing for joy. ⁸My soul clings to You; Your right hand upholds me.

Psalms 42:1-2

As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God. ²My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God?

Isaiah 41:10

'Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'

The most important thing to remember in our Christian life is that it is not a set of rules to follow or a social construct with other Christians but what it really is is a personal relationship with the real, living God. We will talk more about this in other studies. People will let you down, churches will disappoint you, leaders will treat you unjustly, but your relationship with God cannot be taken away from you except by your own neglect. In fact, there will be times in life when God will intentionally strip away all the other stuff to see if a relationship with Him is enough for you.

II Timothy 4:9-10, 14-18

Make every effort to come to me soon; 10 for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.

14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. 15 Be on guard against him yourself, for he vigorously opposed our teaching. 16 At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. 17 But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion's mouth. 18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

(Hebrews 13:5-6)

Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, “I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,”⁶ so that we confidently say, “The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?”

I Kings 18:22

Then Elijah said to the people, “I alone am left a prophet of the LORD, but Baal’s prophets are 450 men.

(I Kings 19:9-10)

Then he came there to a cave and lodged there; and behold, the word of the LORD *came* to him, and He said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”¹⁰ He said, “I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.”

II Chronicles 32:31 (Hezekiah)

Even *in the matter* of the envoys of the rulers of Babylon, who sent to him to inquire of the wonder that had happened in the land, God left him *alone only* to test him, that He might know all that was in his heart.

Their deeds result from their relationship with God

John 8:54-55

Jesus answered, “If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God’;”⁵⁵ and you have not come to know Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word.

I John 2:3-6

By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.⁴ The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;⁵ but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him:⁶ the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

They hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans – false teachers who teach licentiousness and sexual immorality.

Irenaeus, an early church father in Lyons (i.e. France), wrote that the Nicolaitans promoted fornication and eating food sacrificed to idols. The eating of food sacrificed to idols was often part of religious rituals that also involved sexual immorality. According to Irenaeus and Hippolytus, the Nicolaitans were founded by Nicolas, the proselyte of Antioch, who was one of the seven chosen to serve tables, along with Stephen.

(Acts 6:2-5)

So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables.”³ Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.⁴ But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”⁵ The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.

If this is true, then Nicolas became an apostate, denying the true faith. Clement of Alexandria says, “They abandoned themselves to pleasure like goats, leading a life of self-indulgence.” The Nicolaitans, like the Gnostics and other false teachers, abused the doctrine of grace and tried to introduce licentiousness in its place. The doctrine of the Nicolaitans appears to have been a form of antinomianism.

Antinomianism: *Doctrine that under the gospel dispensation of grace, the moral law is of no use or obligation because faith alone is necessary to salvation. Therefore, man can freely partake in sin.*

For more information on apostasy please see the study, "How To Interpret Passages That Seem To Indicate Salvation Can Be Lost" available at: <http://gciweb.org/2011/04/youth-bible-study-materials-michael-r-daily/>

These types of people decouple Bible knowledge from action. They essentially claim that Bible knowledge without corresponding obedient action is OK. But God tells us that is not OK.

I Corinthians 8:1

Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies.

James 4:17

Therefore, to one who knows *the* right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.

(James 2:20-22)

But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? ²² You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected;

(Ephesians 2:10)

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Titus 2:11-14

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men,¹² instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, ¹³ looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, ¹⁴ who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

(also see: **Revelation 14:12, Romans 6:1-2, 12-13**)

The Nicolaitans specifically disobeyed the command issued to the Gentile churches, by the apostolic council held at Jerusalem in 49-50 A.D. in Acts 15.

(Acts 15:19-20, 27-29)

Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, ²⁰ but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood.

27 "Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will also report the same things by word of mouth. ²⁸ "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: ²⁹ that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell."

They put to the test those who call themselves apostles

There are people today who call themselves "Apostles". What are we to do with them? Here is the problem. The mission of Apostles and Prophets (creation of the Bible) was completed when the Bible was completed and the last apostle died (John). As a result, during the church age, anyone who claims to be an Apostle or a Prophet is immediately recognized to be false. So, testing those who call themselves apostles or prophets is much easier for us in the Church Age than it was during the Apostolic Age.

For more information on why there are no longer apostles and prophets please see the study, "The Transition Period of Acts", available at: <http://gciweb.org/2011/04/youth-bible-study-materials-michael-r-daily/>

When we come across false apostles, prophets, and teachers in the church (and we will) what are we supposed to do?

Ephesians 5:11

Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them;

We have to say something. If we don't we become participants in the false doctrine being taught. Our job is to correct them and, if they are not willing to repent, to run them off. If you don't, your church will become a gathering place for them because you tolerate them. We don't have to correct everyone at church who says something that is not correct, but if the person has a position of leadership we have to say something.

Matthew 7:15-16

"Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they?"

Some false teachers have a lot of money. If one of them joined your church, gave a lot of money to the church, but unrepentantly taught false doctrine, what would you do? Would it be easier for you to say something than for your pastor? Why or why not?

Psalms 141:4

Do not incline my heart to any evil thing, To practice deeds of wickedness With men who do iniquity; And do not let me eat of their delicacies.

What if the false teacher has a pleasant personality and a lot of the church members like him? How would this affect the dynamics of how to deal with the situation?

Luke 6:26

Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way.

They do not tolerate evil men

I Corinthians 5:9-13

I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; ¹⁰ I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. ¹¹ But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one. ¹² For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? ¹³ But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.

Acts 13:6

When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they found a magician, a Jewish false prophet whose name was Bar-Jesus, ⁷ who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence. This man summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. ⁸ But Elymas the magician (for so his name is translated) was opposing them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. ⁹ But Saul, who was also *known as Paul*, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him, ¹⁰ and said, "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?"

Galatians 2:4-5

But *it was* because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage. ⁵ **But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you.**

They toil, persevere and endure for His Name's sake and do not grow weary

Galatians 6:9

Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.

I Corinthians 15:58

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in vain* in the Lord.

(II Timothy 4:5)

But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

(I Thessalonians 2:9)

For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, *how* working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.

Romans 5:3-4

And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; ⁴ and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;

Romans 15:5

Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus,

II Timothy 2:11-13

It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; 12 If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us; 13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.

Hebrews 10:35-38

Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. 36 For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. 37 For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay. 38 But My righteous one shall live by faith; And if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him.

Conclusion

Notice that in the judgment of the church of Ephesus that Jesus only comments on their actions. There is no credit given for head knowledge. Nowhere does Jesus commend them for spending hours in training classes and conferences. The only things that count are the things that are put into action. So, measure how you are doing not by what you know (which leads to arrogance and self-deception) but only by the parts that you put into action. This same pattern is true for all seven of the churches. Its not what they know but what they do.

Appendix – The Nicolaitans

Irenaeus, an early church father in Lyons (i.e. France), wrote that the Nicolaitans promoted fornication and eating food sacrificed to idols. The eating of food sacrificed to idols was often part of religious rituals that also involved sexual immorality. According to Irenaeus and Hippolytus, the Nicolaitans were founded by Nicolas, the proselyte of Antioch, who was one of the seven chosen to serve tables, along with Stephen.

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(also see: **Revelation 14:12, Romans 6:1-2, 12-13**)

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QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *Option 3 – Going Wholehearted Part 1*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Revelation 2:2-6*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Psalm 63:1&6, Psalm 42:1-2*

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Isaiah 41:10*

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Hebrews 13:5-6*

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *II Timothy 4:9-18*

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *I Kings 18:22, I Kings 19:9-10*

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *II Chronicles 32:31*

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *John 8:54-55, I John 2:3-6*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *I Corinthians 8:1, James 4:17*

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *James 2:20-22, Titus 2:11-14*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Ephesians 5:11, Matthew 7:15-16*

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Psalms 141:4, Luke 6:26*

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *I Corinthians 5:9-13*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Galatians 2:4-5*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Galatians 6:9, I Corinthians 15:58*

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Romans 5:3-4, Romans 15:5*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *II Timothy 2:11-13*

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Hebrews 10:35-38*

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