



# CONNECT GROUP NOTES

## Sunday 02.07.2023

---

“A heart on things above”

### **Preacher**

Ps. Andy Maccallum

### **Scripture**

“Since you died with Christ to the elemental spiritual forces of this world, why, as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its rules: 21 “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”? 22 These rules, which have to do with things that are all destined to perish with use, are based on merely human commands and teachings. 23 Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your[a] life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”

Colossians 2:20-23, 3:1-4

### **Thought**

Could it be that the biggest threat to our faith is not the culture around us, but our own religious mindset?



As we progress in faith, we naturally want to measure our progress, and religion makes this easy to do. If there are a set of firm parameters, some rules that we simply have to follow, we can easily measure that.

The idea of returning to the traditional laws of Judaism was attractive to the early church because everything that is murky appears to be clear when there are fixed rules. But it's just external. It's an external costume, an appearance. When we follow a set of rules, we simply appear to have it all together, regardless of the true state of our heart.

The Apostle Paul said that when it came to the law, he was flawless, but he also said he was the greatest of sinners. He knew that one can appear to obey the law, but still have a heart gripped by the control of sin. It may be alluring to measure our faith purely by what we do, but the core of our faith is in our heart.

In the Old Testament, we see that the Israelites were saved from captivity through many miracles and acts of provision, and yet we find them grumbling on the journey, wishing they could go back to Egypt. It seems that the human heart, even when saved from bondage, still seeks the certainty of regulations, even if that certainty brings oppression. They had experienced the hand of God, but hadn't yet encountered the heart of God.

The same can be true of us. We measure our faith by the presence or perceived absence of the hand of God, rather than our growing desire for a deep heart-connection with the Father. We tend to seek tangible rules to follow, a mark to measure ourselves against, rather than walking the road of relationship with Jesus through its ups and downs.

True faith is a pilgrimage to discover the heart of Jesus, not just his hand. Let our heart's affections be towards Him. This is the distinctive marker that separates Jesus from all religion. Not that we have to work and follow rules and regulations, but that He is enough and invites us into a better way to live. We trust only the cross for forgiveness of sins, and only Christ as our turning point.

And yet... Faith transforms our behaviours. The true revelation of God's heart, His unmerited grace affects our relationship and our actions. We act



differently, not to achieve his grace, not even to measure His grace, but simply because we have received it.

And so, we lift our eyes to the horizon, focusing on where we are going, focusing on the person of Jesus. We set our eyes on Christ, even when the storms of life blow around us. We call Him Lord, we acknowledge that He is greater. We lay down our will and align with His, and in doing so, we enter into His peace and certainty in our hearts, a certainty that can never be shaken.

### **Discussion Points**

1. How can we know whether we are living our lives according to a set of rules, or whether we are living to know Jesus more?
2. What does keeping our eyes on Jesus look like practically - day by day?
3. What is one thing you can do this week that will help you to “set your heart on things above”?

### **Personal application + Prayer**

Dear Lord,

I lift my eyes to you afresh today, and surrender my will to your everlasting hands. Help me to seek Your heart, to know You more, to be aware of my own insufficiency, yet be overwhelmed by the joy of your ever-sufficient grace. Thank you that You, and You alone are my joy and my strength, forever.

Amen