

Identity Wars 14 – Same Gods, Different Names

Have you ever been with a group of friends and something just didn't feel right about what was happening? Has this kind of experience ever happened at a church function you attended?

Is it possible for something that you always enjoyed doing suddenly to become not so enjoyable?

What happens to a heart that it can be changed so much, that the things you once liked you now dislike?

- Is it simply a matter of 'growing up'?
- But how does this work in the spiritual life? How do we grow up in our spiritual experience?

1 Corinthians 13:11 "When I was a child ..."

1 Corinthians 3:1-2 "and brethren, I could not speak to you as spiritual ..." (Change of life takes time)

1 Corinthians 14:20 "Brethren, be not children in understanding, ..."

Ecclesiastes 11:10 "Therefore remove sorrow from your heart, ..."

Galatians 4:1 "Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child ..."

Paul's Damascus road experience. Acts 9:1-6

Do you have a story about how your life turned around
and you started to want to learn more about God?

Do you remember any great changes that took place in your life at that time? Was it easy to change?

- Did you have any regrets? How you spoke, what you liked talking about, where you liked to go?

Becoming a Christian is a bit like moving to a foreign country and learning a new language and customs of that kingdom. But having grown up in another kingdom, another culture, the changes are quite dramatic, so it takes time to learn and change.

- But let me encourage you: God is patient, He waits for us to become acquainted with the principles of His kingdom. The Bible says He's waiting for the precious fruit of the earth.

How did you feel when you first felt the love of Jesus in your heart? First love experience.

Understanding that the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, which we came from,
are completely opposed to each other in every aspect,
how do we progress from where we were to where God wants us to be?

Hebrews 12:2 The key is to look to Jesus. For by beholding His life, with its compassion and faithfulness, we will be changed. If we love what we see we will be transformed into that same image, from glory unto glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Corinthians 3:18

We all bring baggage to God's church. One of the interesting, and somewhat challenging things I have seen in the church is how accommodating Christians are with new believers.

- Any faults or sins that are evident in their lives are overlooked as we try to welcome and win the newcomers to the love and forgiveness of the Lord. Truly this is a good thing – a nonjudgmental attitude towards baby Christians as they grow and learn.

- The problem or challenge arises when the newcomers attend for a 'long' time and don't grow in grace, knowledge and experience in their Christian walk.
- The youth in particular become influenced by the conduct and appearance of the member whose failures are accepted for a long time. They interpret the acceptance of that struggling church member as acceptance of their actions.
- The actions which are not in harmony with the Bible become the new standard of Christian experience if not dealt with.

Bringing our former kingdom attitude, mentality, and practices into God's church can be a stumbling block to others, and if we don't gain the victory over these things, it will eventually lead to the cheapening of God's grace.

Let's compare how gaining value by performance is attained inside and outside of God's church.

In the World	In the Church
Education	Bible Knowledge
Athletic Ability	Public Speaking Ability
Artistic Ability	Music Ability
Job Status	Church Office
Possessions	Spiritual Gifts
Physical Appearance	Church Fashion Parade
Nationality	Conservative/Liberal

Satan works hard to hold us to the principles of his kingdom even when we join God's church. That's why there is just as much bitterness, anger and fighting in the church as in the world.

- We try to look pious at church but church business meetings can bring out our true colours.
- What about judging others? Or talking about them behind their back? Jealousy of others can so easily creep into God's church when value by performance enters our minds.

Disunity and a lack of true Christian love are symptomatic of a wrong mindset, a wrong spirit.
We need the mind of Christ. Philippians 2:5.

Having the same thinking as those in the world is idolatry. Worshipping or getting value from our own performance, position, possessions or power is not God's way.

Isaiah 2:8 "Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made:"

This verse applies just as truly in the church as in the world. The disciples constantly battled their own desires to be the best and have the best position in God's kingdom.

Matthew 18:1 This question exposed their self-interest.

Mark 10:35-37 clearly demonstrates the same problem of idolatry, with self at its centre. The response of the other disciples shows that they harboured the same desires inside their own hearts. Mark 10:41

When we allow old kingdom principles to rule us, contention will always result.

- "I am better than you" just doesn't work in God's kingdom. It doesn't belong there.
How did Jesus respond to this clash among the disciples? Mark 10:42-45.

The apostle Paul, after his conversion, clearly understood the principles of God's kingdom.

Philippians 2:3 "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."

These principles both protect and heal us from our idolatrous tendencies.

- There will be no manipulation and attempt to control others to get our own way when we receive the Spirit of Christ.

As Jesus was preparing to demonstrate the great love of God, on that final night with His disciples, He was faced with the sad reality that they had not yet learned the most precious lessons of life – to be humble and love one another. Luke 22:20-24. (“Which of them should be accounted the greatest?”)

Are we any better today? Have we learned anything from their experience?

It’s been two thousand years since the cross and we still don’t understand the basics of God’s kingdom Jesus came to demonstrate and teach. We are no further along the road of learning and understanding as were the disciples way back then.

During this series of studies, where have we discovered our true value comes from?

- It comes through relationships.

What kind of kingdom is God’s kingdom? It is a relational kingdom.

How do we know that?

The enemy of souls wants to drag us back into thinking and living our old ways; trying to gain value as Christians through performance and position in God’s church.

God’s will for our lives and His church will never be fulfilled as long as we hold on to the principles of Satan’s kingdom. Let’s seek the Lord and His ways, and we will shine as lights in this dark old world.

To be great in God’s kingdom means we will be meek and humble, preferring others before ourselves. What an amazing kingdom to be a part of. Everyone looking out for and caring for each other. Sounds a lot like heaven to me.

May God help us to be set free from these self-seeking principles so we can experience the fullness of joy in His kingdom.