

Compartmentalized Christianity 2023

Pastor James Foley – Shared on Sunday, October 22, 2023

SETTING THE STAGE

NOTE 1 – This morning I want to offer a short standalone sermon on a theme I have previously noted as Pastor. Those who have attended New Life for some time do well to hear this lesson anew (repetition is a good teacher). Those who are newer to this assembly (e.g., less than five years) do well to hear these words for the first time!

NOTE 2 – Let us turn to the Book of Colossians (i.e., noting a brief selection from the third chapter of that work):

Colossians 3:17b (NIV)

17 . . . whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus . . .

Colossians 3:17b (Emphasis Mine)

17 . . . whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it **all** in the name of the Lord Jesus . . .

NOTE 3 – Keep this passage in mind as we take a few moments to look to the screen (**SLIDE**). Note the following:

THIS IS YOUR LIFE PT. 1

Q. What do you see on the TV screen(s)?

A. A grid comprised of twelve separate compartments.

Q. Why am I showing you a twelve-block grid this Sunday AM?

A. This image is an illustration meant to represent the whole of your life.

NOTE 1 – Imagine with me that this grid is your life and every aspect of your life fills one of these empty boxes. Of course, the whole of your life could never fit onto a twelve-block screen, as life is far too complex and nuanced to be so reduced. However, for the sake of time, this image will prove sufficient to illustrate my overarching pts.

Q. What would you place into these twelve boxes?

Q1. What makes up your world (i.e., varying components)?

Q2. What role(s) do you play? What responsibilities do you have?

Q3. What requires time, attention, energy, emotion or commitment?

Q. How many can begin to mentally fill in these compartments with the matters of your life and living? GREAT!

NOTE 2 – For the sake of time I have filled in these boxes with possible answers (i.e., for the sake of discussion):

THIS IS YOUR LIFE PT. 2

Q. What elements make up daily life and living?

A1. Relationship with Christ (**ANIMATION**)

If you are a Christ-follower, it is likely that Christ and a walk with Him are key components of daily life and living.

A2. Spiritual Disciplines (**ANIMATION**)

It is quite likely that you dedicate some time and energy to key spiritual disciplines (e.g., prayer, study, worship).

A3. Marriage (**ANIMATION**)

A great many believers are married, requiring that we dedicate a large portion of time and energy to this arena.

A4. Children (**ANIMATION**)

Moreover, many who are married also have children. How many realize that raising children requires hard work!

A5. Family & Friends (**ANIMATION**)

There has to be a place in our lives and hearts for family and friends (i.e., people outside the nuclear family unit).

A6. Church (**ANIMATION**)

Church is yet another segment of life and living (e.g., corporate worship, small group connections, friendships).

A7. Ministry & Service (**ANIMATION**)

Many believers have a ministry post or assist in some way (e.g., Small Group Leader, Board member, I/T & CC).

A8. Community Involvement (**ANIMATION**)

Many believers are engaged in some community service beyond the walls of the church (e.g., Coaching, Scouts).

A9. Work (**ANIMATION**)

Most likely you have a job which requires a significant portion of your time and energy (i.e., some 40–60 hours)!

A10. School & Studies (**ANIMATION**)

School or some form of continuing education (CEU) is likely a key component for many in the sound of my voice.

A11. Daily Routines (**ANIMATION**)

Much of life is filled with daily errands (e.g., shopping, dinner prep, dump runs, house-cleaning, repairs, travel).

A12. Recreation & Hobbies (**ANIMATION**)

It is necessary to have hobbies or healthful sources of enjoyment, yet they require time, energy and investment.

THIS IS YOUR LIFE PT. 3 (THE + SIDE)

KEY – Interestingly, this image serves as an accurate pictorial representation of how a great many live their lives.

NOTE 1 – A great many are so pulled in so many directions and wear so many hats, the only way they know how to get anything accomplished is to compartmentalize roles, responsibilities, duties, obligations and relationships.

NOTE 2 – I should also add that in many ways this is a sensible way to lead an efficient life. After all, we have a finite amount of time, energy and emotional capacity, and no one can get everything done at the same time! Thus, in an effort to navigate our busy lives we adopt a highly compartmentalized lifestyle as a “survival” tactic.

NOTE 3 – However, such compartmentalization does have a downside or negative aspect (i.e., particularly for believers who seek to possess and experience life eternal and abundant cf. Jn. 10:10). Can you identify the issue?

THIS IS YOUR LIFE PT. 4 (THE - SIDE)

Q. What is the failing of this life-model?

NOTE 1 – This model fails in that it compartmentalizes Christ Jesus, and the life He offers is thus greatly hindered. That is, in this framework, Christ and our connection with Him is simply one compartment of life among many. Jesus is reduced to one component of life that we have to balance and incorporate amidst competing elements!

NOTE 2 – He is walled off and segregated from the rest of life, and we fail to connect Him the whole of living. Sure, we may connect Him with closely-related blocks like Spiritual disciplines, church or ministry and service, but not neglect His influence and role in our marriages, child-rearing, work, friendships, or hobbies and interests!

KEY – In essence, we fail to grasp and/or apply the principle Paul communicated in Colossians chapter 3:

Colossians 3:17b (Emphasis Mine)

17 . . . **whatever** you do, whether in word or deed, do it **all** in the name of the Lord Jesus . . .

Q. What is Paul saying in this passage?

A. Each and every aspect or compartment of living is meant to intimately connect with and glorify the Lord. There is no secular-sacred split in the eyes of God. The Lord Jesus is not meant to occupy one compartment. Rather, He is meant to be the Lord of all!

NOTE 3 – It should also be noted that when we reduce Christ Jesus to one compartment of living among many, He will invariably be treated as a lesser concern amidst more pressing issues. In other words, we have a bad habit of letting the urgent steal us from the important. This is not biblical Christianity!

NOTE 4 – Therefore, this model or framework for life and living is not conducive to the fullest of life Jesus offers.

Q. Is there a better way?

A. Yes there is. Consider the following:

(SLIDE)

A BETTER WAY

NOTE 1 – In this model, your relationship with Christ is no longer reduced to one compartment among many. Rather, your relationship with Christ now serves as the foundation for any and all compartments in life or living. In this model Jesus is now intimately and equally connected with every other element and aspect of daily living.

NOTE 2 – Your relationship with Christ now supports, informs and enables your Spiritual Disciplines, Marriage, Child-Rearing, Familial Relationships and Friendships, Church Participation, Service, Community Volunteerism, Work, School or Ongoing Professional Studies, Myriad Daily Routines and Hobbies (i.e., Matters of Recreation).

KEY – Such a model is far more scriptural in nature, bringing us into conformity with Colossians 3:17 and beyond!

A BETTER WAY PT. 1 (+)

KEY – Of course, this model of living has its share of pros and cons that should be both identified and established:

Q. What are the merits of this model?

NOTE 1 – Firstly, this model of life and living affirms and establishes the lordship or supremacy of Christ Jesus. It causes us to recognize that there is no aspect of living that is beyond His influence and reach. That ancient Romans had a saying: “Caesar is lord” (i.e., meaning that Caesar reigned supreme over all things – emp. “all”). In light of this historical context, the following remarks of the apostle Paul would have had great sp. significance:

Romans 10:9 (Emphasis Mine)

9 If you declare with your mouth, “**Jesus is Lord,**” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Q. What do you think it meant when you confessed Jesus as “Lord”?

NOTE 2 – Secondly, this model of life and living compels us to prioritize the teachings, will and ways of our Lord. If Jesus is Lord, His way is the only way for us, and we will be moved to: **a)** study His Word; **b)** hearken to His Word through active faith and obedience; **c)** persist in His Word (i.e., even when we grow weak and/or weary). This arrangement for living ensures that we contend with cautionary words like the following in a proactive way:

James 1:22

22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

Luke 6:46

46 “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”

NOTE 3 – Thirdly, this model of life and living releases His supernatural power in the whole of life and living. Christians are those who believe that the power of the Lord is paramount (i.e., our power is insufficient alone)! We are a people who believe that great things are not achieved by human might and/or power, but by His Spirit (cf. Zech. 4:6). After all, what did our Lord and Master teach? Apart from Him we can do nothing (cf. John 15:5).

Q. Do you want to see His transformative power at work in your _____? CHOOSE THIS MODEL!

NOTE 4 – Fourthly, this model imbues every aspect of living (i.e., both great and small) with eternal significance. When we realize that everything we do is done unto the Lord, no matter how mundane or trivial, it truly matters. When we recognize that everything we do is noted by heaven and shall be rewarded in kind, it all truly matters!

Mark 9:41

41 Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.

Q. Do you want the favor of God for both time and eternity?

A. Learn to honor Him in all you do and maintain an eternal perspective.

Matthew 6:19–21

19 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

A BETTER WAY PT. 2 (-)

Q. What are the particular challenges of adopting this model?

NOTE 1 – Firstly, this model of life and living affirms and establishes the lordship or supremacy of Christ Jesus. It causes us to recognize that there is no aspect of living that is beyond His influence and reach, and this is not always comfortable for our fallen nature. Let us be honest: sometimes we do not want to yield to Christ as Lord. Quite often we are not going to want to recognize His lordship over _____ (i.e., which is our calling).

NOTE 2 – Secondly and similarly, this model of living forces us to prioritize His teachings, will and ways as Lord. This challenges us, for often we do not want to expend the time or effort to study, heed or persist in His Word. There remains a battle between the desires of Christ (i.e., revealed through His Word & Spirit) and our desires:

Galatians 5:16–17 (Emphasis Mine)

16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in **conflict** with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.

Those who would surrender to the commandments of the Master have a battle on their hands, yet it is worth it:

Galatians 5:22–23 (Emphasis Mine)

22 But the **fruit** of the Spirit [i.e., that which is supernaturally produced by the Spirit as we yield to the Lord] is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

FYI – This leads on to the next area of difficulty, however:

NOTE 3 – Thirdly, this model of living prioritizes the release of His supernatural power (i.e., diminishing our own). Let us be honest, despite our claims that God is our help, professions that apart from Him we can do nothing, and songs about the power of the Holy Spirit, we much prefer to rely upon our own capacity, wisdom and ability. There is both a “beautiful and terrible” aspect to a text like the following. Consider this two-fold aspect in kind:

Psalms 23 (Offensive to Our Pride)

1 The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

NOTE 4 – Fourthly, this model compels us to live our lives through the filter of eternity (emp. eternal “reward”). This does not come to us naturally! Our nature inclines us to prioritize short-term benefit over long-term gain. We much prefer eating pizza to fasting, sleeping in to Sunday school, being fed at church versus feeding others, putting an iPad in front of our children v. investing in them, building bigger houses while making little effort to cultivate our home in Christ, etc. When we divorce Jesus from the varying areas of life (i.e., prior model) we will almost always lose the important amidst the urgent, supplanting the heavenly with the earthly. We are carnal creatures, whereas this model necessitates the development of a spiritual perspective in all we do (great/small).

QUOTE – C. S. Lewis vividly articulates this fallen human tendency: “It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.” Note yet again:

Matthew 6:19–21

19 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

CHOOSING YOUR MODEL

Q. What should you do with such information?

A1. Consider the degree to which Jesus is simply part of your life v. the foundation for the whole of your life. Has the time come to re-assess and reorient your life so that Christ J. is connected to and glorified in all you do?

A2. If such a determination has been made, where is His lordship required the most right now? What aspect of life and living is the most challenging? Do you know His heart for this area? Are you yielded to and seeking Him?

Colossians 3:17b (NIV)

17 . . . whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus . . .

Numbers 6:24–26

24 “The Lord bless you

and keep you;

25 the Lord make his face shine on you

and be gracious to you;

26 the Lord turn his face toward you

and give you peace.”

CONCLUSION

NOTE 1 – Feel free to give either in person or online at www.NewLifeBarre.org.

NOTE 2 – Check out our website for any of our beyond Sunday ministries (MM, WM & C.Y.C.).

NOTE 3 – It is that time of year again to run our background checks. All Children's Workers see Pastor!