Sacred Selfies

# (1 Corinthians 6:12, 17)

Good morning, I’m so glad to have you with us here today at Christ’s Community Church. And welcome to those of you who are watching all over the world online. Today I want to talk to you about having a new perspective on the world, on life, faith, and yourself.

Now, I’m going to assume that most of you know something about some form of social media even if you’re not a regular user. And so, if you’re on Twitter, sending your thoughts to the world; or Instagram, uploading your pictures; or Facebook, posting your thoughts, pictures, locations, even what mood you’re in; in all of these things you’re connecting with other people, projecting an image of yourself, and it’s this image, this Sacred Selfie that I want to talk to you about today.

Now, if you don’t know what a selfie is, it’s just where you take a picture of yourself with your phone, with your mobile device, and you post it on whatever form of social media you prefer. Within seconds there’s going to be comments, feedback, likes, you know, people clicking on the little thumbs up. Maybe you’ll even put a comment with your picture, hashtag new hair, hashtag awesome dinner tonight, hashtag summer vacation, but whatever it is, you’re connecting with other people and with what they’re thinking, saying, or doing. And while I value social media because there are so many incredible benefits, there are also many unintended negative consequences.

You see, even though social media gives the illusion of companionship, friends, and relationships, for many of us we’re longing for something real, something more authentic, not the filtered, touched up, edited version of our lives but the real you. Now, I know that many of you are very comfortable relating to people online, but the downside of social media is that we become very dissatisfied, very discontent with ourselves, because it’s a feeding ground for comparison, covetousness, and lust. And so, we create this image, this Sacred Selfie, to present to the world as we’re peering into the lives of others, viewing those snapshots of another great night out, those perfect selfies, and those seemingly constant adventures. What makes it even worse is that we can see the amount of activity or lack thereof on our own page as a reminder of just how boring our life really is. This comparison and discontentment can lead us into trying to keep up or impress others by defining ourselves with things that have no lasting value, such as our jobs, our recreation, our physical looks, even the relationships in our lives instead of in Christ.

And so, today I want to talk to you about following Christ in a selfie centered world, because our looks, our position, our activities, our responsibilities, and our relationships will always change, but the identity that Christ has given us in himself will never change. In fact, in the first century, the apostle Paul had to address a similar situation with the church in Corinth. Now, this was a church that was much like ours, they didn’t have to choose between iPhones or android, but it had a lot going for it, the Holy Spirit was moving, the people were exercising spiritual gifts, but there was a lot that wasn’t right also. They were people that were running wild, living in sin, and yet nobody was talking about it because they were into tolerance and diversity instead of holiness and truth.

This morning, I’d like you to consider whether that image, that “Sacred Selfie” that you have of yourself, on your page, represents holiness and truth, represents your faith, represents your identity in Christ, or does it represent some worldly view of tolerance and diversity. Paul addresses this in first Corinthians chapter 6, knowing that it could get messy, but he also knew that they’d been changed by Christ, that they’d been bought at a price, they’d been filled with the Holy Spirit, but they were still living in the flesh and they weren’t living out that spiritual reality, and so he says,

"Everything is permissible for me, but not everything is beneficial. Everything is permissible for me, but I won’t be mastered by anything…” (1 Corinthians 6:12).

And then he says this, “But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in Spirit” (1 Corinthians 6:17).

This is important because being confident of your identity in Christ, knowing that you’re free from the power of sin, knowing that you’re worthy of God’s love gives you absolute freedom to move from discontent, disillusion, and feelings of discouragement to live fully for Christ. And so, to be united with him, to be one with him, is the foundation that allows us to accept our true identity and to reject the insecurities that come from being in a culture obsessed with self. Therefore, number one, we must be one with him in spirit.

1. One with Him In Spirit
In our culture today, we’re taught that our image defines us, and therefore we ourselves become idols. You know, we want to do whatever we want, whenever we want, with whomever we want, but in the back of our minds we’re still living for the approval of others. And we’ll do whatever it takes to maintain a certain status, a desired image of a blessed life that’s defined by comfort, but it’s a counterfeit comfort and not a godly comfort.

You see, a counterfeit is an imitation of something valuable or important with the intention to deceive or defraud. And so, it’s a forgery, a fraudulent imitation, a representation of something of value, but it’s not, it’s worthless. And yet we fall for this self-defined image, this sacred selfie, believing we need… we deserve this blessed life in Jesus name. So, we find ourselves chasing this thing that we can never catch, this comfort, this blessedness, believing that God wants us to wear the best clothes, drive the best cars, and have the best of everything, but it’s a counterfeit comfort.

As we look to the word of God, it’s important to seek a balanced emphasis of Scripture, to avoid extremes which will frustrate rather than help us in our walk with God. And so, I want to look at a passage of Scripture from the apostle John who was one of the inner circle of Jesus disciples. He was called the beloved disciple and there was nothing that happened in Jesus ministry that John didn’t witness. He saw it all, but now many decades later there was some dangerous theology within the early church and he says,

“Don’t love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15).

Contextually, John is telling us don’t fall in love with the cultural system of this world or what you might say the spirit of this world. In other words, don’t love, build, or seek to make a life for yourself in this world where you stop seeking God. You know, doing whatever you want to, whenever you want to, with whoever you want to, and becoming independent of God. Don’t love that, because it is evidence of a spiritual emptiness, that the love of the Father is not in you.

Now, I admit that often when I read this Scripture it leads me to feel guilty for loving my truck, my house, or our vacation, but that’s not what he’s saying. John is simply warning that there is an aspect of the love of the Father that may not have penetrated your heart if you’re elevating the things of this world to a place that is reserved for him. And it’s those desires of our hearts that James tells us in chapter 4,

“When you ask, you don’t receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures” (James 4:3).

In other words, the desire of our heart is not the best criterion by which the will of God is determined, because there are times when that which seems best, that which seems right to us, may not be the will of God. In fact, the Bible says,

“There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death” (Proverbs 14:12).

And so, what the Holy Spirit is trying to tell us is that if you’re chasing something out there in the world, if you’re promoting your image, chasing after comfort, longing for the blessed life, it could be that you’re lacking something in your heart. And so, as believers, if you and I are one with Christ, wouldn’t the love of the Father have penetrated our hearts? Wouldn’t his love have gotten so deep inside of you that you are compelled not to live for what’s easy, not to live for comfort, but to live for what breaks the heart of God?

In fact, the Bible tells us,

“Christ's love compels us … that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again” (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

And so, Christ’s love is a game changer, we’re one with him in Spirit, and so his love for the poor, the broken, and the forgotten, is a love that’s deep inside of us. And as we come together in worship, as we open his Word, we get our eyes off of ourselves and put them on him who died and was raised again. The Bible tells us,

“Whoever pursues righteousness and love finds life, prosperity and honor” (Proverbs 21:21).

And suddenly that counterfeit comfort, that spiritual emptiness is replaced by a contentment, a prosperity that is not found in things of this world, but it’s found in Christ alone. And so, number two, we need to embrace the authentic.

## 2. Embracing the Authentic

You see, when you allow the love of the Father to get inside of you, you can’t pursue something as shallow as comfort. In fact, I’m not really sure it’s even possible to walk by faith and live for yourself, because Christ’s love compels us to something greater. The apostle Paul described it this way,

“When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known” (1 Corinthians 13:11-12).

And so, there’s this process of love maturing and growing, but we must be led by the Spirit and our lives flowing forth from the Word of God, because it’s Christ love that compels us. He’s the full embodiment of what we’ve been longing for, he’s the one who comforts us in all our troubles, and so we want to embrace Christ because he’s the real thing, he’s authentic.

The comfort and contentment that we’re longing for doesn’t come from what we see in the world system of our culture, but from what we see presented in the Word of God. It’s there in the Word of God that we find riches beyond what we can even imagine, but today, in this life it goes without saying that Jesus emphasized the cost of following him. In fact, in Luke’s gospel at chapter 14, Jesus said,

"Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it?” (Luke 14:28).

Again, in verse 31, "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand?” (Luke 14:31).

And so, he says, “In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33).

Jesus emphasized the cost of following him and the necessity of assessing that cost. In fact, he went as far as to say in verse 26, if you’re going to be my disciple you’ve got to love me more than your family, more than your own comfort…

"Yes, even (your) own life... And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26-27).

In other words, when you become a Christian your allegiance changes from the world to him. When you embrace the authentic, you’re rejecting the shallow pleasures and comforts of this world and so Jesus says count the cost.

On Wednesday nights we’ve been studying Peter’s first letter, and he was writing to believers who were facing extreme persecution for following Jesus. Historians tell us that the evil Emperor Nero was doing incredibly brutal and inhumane things to these believers and it was in that context that Peter wrote these words inspired by the Holy Spirit.

“In this (and you could fill in the blank with whatever you want, but he says, “in this) you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith — of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire — may be proved genuine…” (1 Peter 1:6-7).

And so, Peter says these trials will show that your faith is authentic. In other words, there’s a genuine faith and there’s a counterfeit faith.

Like the parable of the wheat in Matthew chapter 13 where a man planted good seed in his field, but his enemy came and planted weeds among the wheat. When the wheat sprouted and the heads formed, the weeds also appeared, at first glance it looked like the wheat, but it was just a weed and it was unfruitful (Matthew 13:24-30).

In another place, still talking about seed, Jesus gave another scenario saying,

“The seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away” (Matthew 13:20-21).

“The seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful” (Matthew 13:22).

And so, the seed is sown, but some of it’s squashed, some of it’s stolen, some of it’s scorched, and some of it’s choked out. But today I want you to know, that I’ve prayed that you would receive this seed, that your heart would be that good soil, and that you would remain faithful letting it do its work. When trouble or persecution comes you wouldn’t fall away. When the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, even though refined by fire your faith would be proved genuine; being one with him in Spirit, embracing the authentic, and number three, pressing on in Christ strength.

## 3. Pressing on In Christ’s Strength

This is so important because what do we see so often? You see people who are suffering greatly and they begin to question, “Where is God?” Maybe they lose their job or they’re going through a divorce and their faith is choked out and they fall away because they feel like they can’t trust God. But the reality is that their faith wasn’t in the right place, their faith was in what they could see, their faith was in their circumstances instead of being in Christ. You see, when you press on in Christ’s strength, your roots grow deep, and even though the sun is blazing, even though there’s no rain you’re able to stand strong because you have a genuine faith.

In fact, when I’m going through tough times, I like to read James chapter one, he says,

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (James 1:2-4).

In other words, it’s those trials that are preparing you, that are doing that perfect work in you, because it’s the resistance that’s doing something in you. Now you may not understand that right now, you may not be able to see it when the winds and waves are crashing around you, but could it be that God is using that exact thing that you’re praying for him to take a way, to prepare you for something greater?

You know, just consider for a moment Joseph in Genesis chapter 37 and how God prepared him to rule over Egypt. If you remember Joseph had a dream, but he was rejected by his brothers, they hated him and sold into slavery where he was falsely accused of a crime he didn’t commit, but all the while he remained faithful, and God strengthened him and his roots kept growing deeper.

And so, like Moses at the Red Sea or David and Goliath, you profess your faith, you praise God, and you press on in Christ’s strength. You don’t wait until you see, you don’t wait until things turn out in your favor, but you praise him in the middle of that uncomfortable, that difficult or painful circumstance, and you give them all the glory. You don’t wait until the sea parts and you’re standing on dry ground to declare that God is good, that God is able to part that sea. You don’t wait until everything is perfect in your life to enjoy the presence of God. And you don’t wait until you’ve got everything worked out in your life to say, “Here I am God, use me.”

I love the apostle Paul’s perspective as he writes to the Philippians while under house arrest, chained to a Roman guard 24 hours a day, but he says,

“I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:12-13).

You see, Paul was secure because of his identity in Christ, and that’s why he could say with confidence, “He who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in Spirit” (1 Corinthians 6:17).

Those of you today who have a “Sacred Selfie,” who’ve allowed the pleasures of the world to define you, whatever it may be, let me assure you that until Christ is all that you have, you’ll never recognize that Christ is all that you need.

You see, you can search and search, you can get all the likes, all the approval, all the material things you want, but until you allow everything to be stripped away and all you have is Jesus Christ you’ll always be dissatisfied. Because you were born with a longing for something more than this world has to offer and his name is Jesus Christ. He alone offers us the peace that goes beyond our human ability to understand. He said,

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace…” (John 16:33).

In this world you will have trouble, that’s what Jesus says, but he also says I have overcome the world. In me you will have peace. In other words, in the middle of whatever it is you’re dealing with right now, in the middle of this sin filled world, you can have a peace from heaven.

Let’s pray!

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June 02, 2019

[www.cccaog.org](http://www.cccaog.org)

*Graphics, notes, and commentary from LifeChurch, Ministry Pass, PC Study Bible, Preaching Library, and Sermon Central. Scripture from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.*