**Calvary Fellowship 10.16.2022 Matthew 16:21-17:9 “How to Find Yourself”**

* **When I 1st started college I had no idea what to major in - my goal up until that point was to become a rock star by 21 & I didn’t think they were offering a Bachelor’s of Heavy Metal degree**
* So I went to the guidance counselor who led me to a computer to take a test & answer some questions about myself
* **This test was supposed to reveal w/ 99.9% accuracy what I should devote my life to - Now, I wasn’t a good student in HS - I was on the 5 yr. plan**
* That’s why when I talk about being a senior, I say it was the best 2 years of my life - like my math class was called, “Consumer math”
* This was the class where they put all the mutants who can’t do algebra
* It was the most basic math they could get away w/ teaching & it still be legal
* We spent an entire week learning how to write a check
* **Think about that - My guess is, U learned how to write a check in 5 minutes if someone taught U or in 10 minutes by yourself**
* This class took a week to teach us what should go in the line that says “date”
* 1/2 the class wrote, “yes, I’d love a date”
* The part where the teacher said to sign, the people wrote “capricorn”
* So back to my test - I took the whole 30 minute test & w/ 99.9% accuracy that test said that I should become… a mathematician
* **It’s frustrating b/c I think all of us would love to take a test that could help us figure it all out - what to do w/ our lives & what our gifts are**
* But it’s usually not that easy - there’s some trial & error - there’s skills that we learn, there’s experience that we pick up along the way
* And hopefully, as we grow & walk w/ God, there’s some godly direction that He gives us about what we should do w/ our lives & how to invest our years
* **B/c as parents, we do something to our kids that’s so confusing & we don’t realize we’re doing it - we say, “U can be whatever U want to be”**
* 1st, that’s a lie - no 1 can be whatever they want to be b/c you’re not good at everything - no matter how hard I try, I cannot be a ballerina (leotard is too tight)
* 2nd - our job as parents is to know our kids so well that we can speak words of life into their lives & clear the confusion, so they can see their future clearly
* 3rd - our kids need to be operating out of a sense of calling in their lives, not simply from a list of all available careers
* **But Jesus is going to talk to His disciples today as we continue in our series through the Gospel of Matthew about how to find yourself**
* Lots of people talk about finding themselves - what I always find interesting is that people who talk about finding themselves are usually abandoning all responsibility in the process
* Jesus is going to teach us something completely counter intuitive
* He’s going to show us that finding yourself isn’t about abandoning commitment, its actual found in embracing commitment
* While the culture is saying, “Abandon everything external so U can find yourself internally” - Jesus is saying, “Start internally & all the externals will fall into place
* And if you’re a high school or college student here today, this is for U
* If you’re raising a high school or college student, this is for U
* If you’re thinking about what’s next in your life, listen carefully, b/c I believe God has a message for U today
* And if you’re in the grind of the same ol’ same ol’ - God has a word for U today as well b/c U could be doing exactly what He wants U to do…

**———(v. 21-23)———**

**#1 - Your Future is Subject to God’s Plan**

* **This is important b/c too often we want God to bless our plan - our plan shouldn’t be the goal & it’s definitely not God’s goal**
* Our goal should be God’s plan b/c that’s the only thing God is working towards in your life seeing His plan unfold & manifest in your life
* Some of us keep pushing our plan & it’s not working out & that dissonance between God’s plan & our own will is what’s making us miserable
* **Look at what happens in what we just read - Jesus starts talking about His death & Peter take Jesus aside & starts rebuking Jesus**
* Could U imagine the nerve of someone listening to Jesus talk about how He’s going to die & the person says, “Lord, I hear U, but I don’t like that plan at all”
* “Jesus, are U familiar w/ the phrase “Living your best life now” - How about “YOLO. Do U know that 1?” - Jesus would say, “U only live once. Yeah, I don’t think that applies to me.” - it sounds insane & that’s what Peter does
* **Why does Peter do this? B/c Peter just confessed that Jesus was the Messiah - this is the person all of Israel was waiting for**
* They believed the Messiah would be a military figure who would throw off the Roman yoke & allow Israel to be free
* Jesus is saying, “That’s not the kind of Messiah I am. I’m not going to destroy my enemies. I’m going to die for them.”
* Peter is essentially saying, “Jesus, I don’t think U totally understand the job description. So let me explain it to U.”
* That’s why Jesus stops him 1/2 way through & says, “Get behind me Satan.”
* It’s a pretty big swing - a few minutes before Jesus commended Peter for confessing that Jesus was the son of the living God
* “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.’” (Matthew 16:17 NKJV)
* Peter goes from that to being called the devil - Can U imagine what Peter was thinking? “Jesus, don’t U know who I am? I’m going to be the 1st Pope.”
* So why does Jesus call Peter “Satan”? - It’s b/c that thinking isn’t original to Peter - that thinking, take the easy way, instant gratification, do it your way
* That’s what Satan offered Jesus when He was tempted & it’s what we get offered everyday when we have the opportunity to do God’s will vs. our own
* **Now listen, Peter loved Jesus & followed Jesus - and truth be told, the counsel He was giving Jesus was well-meaning**
* But just b/c someone is giving U well meaning counsel, that doesn’t make it good - just b/c someone is a Christian, that doesn’t mean their counsel is good
* Jesus told Peter that He was looking at this situation as a man, not like God
* B/c people who are not operating in the spirit are always looking at situations in ways that benefit them or only serve their own purposes
* **My son & I were throwing a frisbee around a while back & the frisbee fell into the pool - so I told him to get the pool cleaner & scoop it out**
* He says, “Dad, what would U do if I jumped into the pool?” - I said, “Please don’t do that. That’s the last thing we need.”
* So he gets the pool cleaner & scoops up the frisbee & then Livi let’s go of the pool cleaner - I tell Xander, “Quick grab the handle before it sinks.”
* He says, “No worries. I’ve got this Dad!” As he jumps into the pool fully clothed
* He pulls the pool cleaner out & gets out & says, “I thought U meant that U wanted me to jump into the pool.” As he gets out of the pool
* So I say, “Xander where’s the frisbee?” - He says, “Oh man. I think I left it in the pool.” - which he did by the way - & this is why parents age in dog years
* But we do the exact same thing & try to talk God into the thing that we want to do & then say, “Well, that’s probably what God would have wanted me to do”
* And then when it doesn’t work out, we blame God for not blessing something that He didn’t want us to be involved in in the 1st place
* “Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.” (James 3:13-17 NKJV)
* **There’s several things to infer from these characteristics, but 1 of them is that this type of wisdom is not manipulative**
* Whenever someone tells U that U need to do something & they are benefitting from your decisions, be careful b/c U could be dealing w/ a manipulator
* Do U have any idea how many times when I was in Bible College, I heard guys tell girls, “God spoke to me that we’re supposed to be married.”
* Which, by the way, is a terrible pick up line - if U want to be slick, U walk up & say, “Hey, I was reading the book of Numbers & I realized I don’t have yours.”
* U say that, U just go ahead & buy the ring, there’s no stopping U
* But the problem is, we do this nonsense to ourselves - we do whatever we want & then try to sanitize it by saying, “Yeah, this is probably what God would want.”
* Instead, pray & ask God to reveal His will to U - it will work out a lot better…

**———(v. 24-28)———**

**#2 - Your Future is Determined by Your Commitments**

* **So what does it mean to take up your cross? It’s become a phrase that we use in our culture, that something difficult is our cross to bear**
* **My wife & I are happily married & we’ve been happily married for the last 25 years - And truth be told, we don’t argue much**
* But 8 years ago, something came into our lives that became a lightning rod in our relationship - it was an elliptical machine
* My wife & I couldn’t agree on where to put this thing - I wanted it in the garage
* She wants it in our bedroom - so I laid out all of reasons as to why the elliptical machine only makes sense in our universe if it’s in the garage - she disagreed
* And I had a sarcastic side of me that would occasionally come out
* So 1 time my dad came to our house & I wanted to show him a pic of our kids in our bedroom & he says, “Hey, I didn’t know U had an elliptical machine.”
* I said, “Yes, it watches over us as we sleep.” - that did not end well for me
* So if Carey & I haven’t gotten into an argument in a while, all I have to do is say the word “elliptical” & it’s on
* U might think, “Pastor Bob, you’re talking about the elliptical machine right now. Is that going to be a problem?” Yes. Yes it is.
* Actually we moved recently & she finally agreed that the garage is the right place - but I can’t push it or it will end up in our room & I’ll be in the garage
* Now, this is where people say, “Well, that elliptical machine is just your cross to bear.” - Or if they were talking to my wife, they’d say, “Bob is your cross to bear”
* But taking up your cross is about self-denial - Jesus’ disciples would have understood what it meant b/c everyone in Israel saw crucifixions
* People were crucified in public places as a deterrent & as a reminder what happens when U mess w/ the most powerful empire in the world
* But Jesus is saying that following Him requires a self-denial & trusting Him rather than trusting our own wisdom or ideas
* **But then He tells just that if U want to find your life, U need to lose it**
* This idea goes completely contrary to everything our culture stand for
* **How do we know that? B/c of the invention of the selfie stick**
* History will record that there was a moment when all of civilization was lost
* It wasn’t legislation we passed - it was the selfie sticks that were purchased
* Think about this - a person buys a selfie stick b/c the thought of taking a picture that they aren’t in is too much to bear - If I’m not it, why bother taking the photo?
* “Yeah, but just a picture of the Grand Canyon.” - Do U know what would make the Grand Canyon just a little grander? My face at a slight odd angle
* **So what does it mean to deny yourself & take up your cross?**
* In your career, it means doing good work even when no one’s watching
* In your marriage, it means serving your spouse & putting them before yourself
* In your finances, it means living & giving generously
* In your church, it means that U don’t just come & receive - it means we serve
* In your parenting, it means engaging w/ your kids, even when you’re tired
* It means directing them towards the things of God even when it’s hard & U don’t want conflict w/ them - but U do it b/c it’s the job God has given U
* But here’s the counter-intuitive idea that Jesus is saying, when U decide to lose your life - that is, give up putting yourself 1st, you’re actually gaining your life
* This is the upside-down way that the kingdom of God works - the last are 1st & those who lose their lives will find it
* And here’s the thing that I can tell U from experience - I know it sounds crazy, but if U will do what Jesus is saying, there’s more joy than U could dream of
* Your marriage, it will flourish when 2 people put the other person’s needs 1st
* Your kids, they will flourish b/c you’re teaching them to walk w/ God & not put other things 1st - listen, youth sports are great, but don’t let them get in the way of your kids walking w/ God
* B/c over the years I’ve had countless parents do travel sports w/ their kids & then they stop going to church & the parents call me & say, “Pastor, please call my son. He won’t go to church, but he’ll listen to U.”
* I say, “No he won’t. I’m not his pastor & I’m barely yours. You’ve been gone forever. If he won’t listen to U, what makes U think he’ll listen to me.”
* But do U know I’ve never had parent keep their kids in church & help them grow & they come to me & say, “Pastor, U need to help me. My son refuse to play sports. I threw a ball at him & he won’t even catch it.”
* We need to be wise - your kids most likely aren’t going to go pro, but they are going to live in this world - so they need to be in church & growing in their faith
* Your finances, they will flourish - why? B/c God blesses generous people
* B/c when you’re generous, you’re showing God that U can be trusted w/ more b/c U won’t consume it all yourself - this is why some keep getting blessed
* Your career, it will flourish b/c everyone works when the boss is around, but a person of integrity who is working hard when no 1 is looking is a treasure
* Listen, everything I’m saying to U is completely counter cultural
* And if U disagree w/ what I’m saying, that simply reveals that your worldview isn’t biblical - The Bible isn’t what informs how U see the world
* The problem is, do U know how our culture is doing? We have never been more depressed, anxious, medicated, angry, narcissistic, or suicidal as we are now
* We are gaining the wold & losing our soul - we’re trying to keep our lives & we’re losing it in the process - it’s not ending well
* Or we can do it the Jesus way & have more joy that we thought possible

**———(v. 1-9)———**

**#3 - Your Future is Empowered by God’s Revelation**

* **Now, there’s a lot happening here & we could spend a few messages talking about all of the implications of the transfiguration**
* But the important thing for us to note is that Jesus has been talking about His death & then He gives them a glimpse of His power & majesty
* He was transfigured - that is, there was a metamorphosis - they saw Jesus as the Son of God, not just the son of man - they saw His glory & His power
* Peter misunderstands what’s happening b/c he sees Moses & Elijah & thinks, “This is Jesus revealing Himself & setting up the kingdom of God”
* But Jesus is doing something else - He wants to show them who He is & the power that He has, b/c His death (about 6 months away) won’t be by accident
* Instead, it will be by the will of God so all people could be saved
* But this experience change them & they never forgot it - after the resurrection, they finally understood what Jesus was trying to do
* “For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.” (2 Peter 1:16-18 NKJV)
* **So here’s what question: Why does Peter even bring this up?**
* The transfiguration in a powerful & he didn’t bring it up just to flex that he was there & that makes him really special - “I’m an A-postle, not a B-postle”
* He brings it up to show us how to find ourselves & find our way in this life
* “We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.” (2 Peter 1:19 NIV)
* Peter says, “Just like the transfiguration helped me understand the will of God when I was on the mountain, U have the Scriptures to help U do the same thing
* And U can sure it’s true b/c it’s built on eyewitness testimony of what we saw
* Peter knew who he was in light of Jesus revealing Himself to Peter
* And the same is true for U - when Jesus comes into your life, U don’t have to wonder who U are anymore - you’re a Christian, you’re accepted & loved
* When U realize who U are as a child of God, U won’t go anywhere else to discover your worth, your value, or your destiny
* U see, this is what parents are supposed to do - they would have a moment where they laid their hand on the child & prayed a blessing over them
* They were saying, “As the people who know U best, this is who U are & this is what we believe God wants to do in your life.”
* It was called the Patriarchal blessing - I know our culture doesn’t like the word patriarchy - well, too bad - I don’t like the phrase “men who can get pregnant”, but here were all - so deal w/ it
* But the idea was that the person who knew U best & loved U most would speak a blessing over U & it would give U clarity & understanding of who U are
* U see this throughout the Bible - father giving the blessings to sons & the kids turning out exactly the way the dad had prayed over them
* **When my dad was in the hospital before he died, I want to see him just about everyday - but on 1 day he told me he needed to see me**
* So I got there & he asked everyone to leave the room & thought it was b/c he wanted me to pray for him, so I prayed for him
* He said, “Robert, I wanted to see U today b/c I want to pray for U.”
* And my dad dad put his hand on my head & prayed a blessing over me, & my wife, & my kids - he didn’t know what I was dealing w/, but his prayer answered every question that was in my heart
* It was so deeply personal & meaningful, I knew this was god speaking to me through my dad & that’s why it meant so much to me
* Parents, U need to do this for your kids - they need it desperately
* **And here’s what U might be thinking, “What if my parents never gave me the blessing? What if they didn’t know? What if they didn’t care?”**
* The Bible calls God the father to the fatherless & He will give U the blessing that your earthly parents never gave U
* God will speak words of life to U & direct U & lead U to become more than U are, so U can become everything He wants U to be
* God’s vision for your life is bright - it’s a vision of hope & blessing
* It’s a vision of life & growth - it’s a vision where He is speaking in your life & leading U & working in U so He can work through U
* So U can become more than U are & become everything He wants U to be
* God is FOR U & He invites U into His family so U can experience His love for U, His forgiveness, His grace, & His blessing…