



COURAGEOUS RELATIONSHIP

Affinity Groups

EPIPHANY 2020

Week 3: Image versus Authenticity

Big Idea: One of the things we're talking about throughout this season is worldview. By worldview we mean that which defines meaning, purpose and identity, maturity comes in how I understand who I am. This week we'll consider what worldview is dominant in your life/family.

What are we talking about? An example of image vs. authenticity:

(have someone read aloud)

I'm Facebook friends with a high school classmate who is a regular broadcaster of the going's on of her life. Posting with great frequency about the fun things they were doing with their kids, pictures of smiling family members dressed in matching clothes and appearing to have it all together. From what I could see they had nice things, they drove nice cars and regularly went on family vacations, outings etc. From the outside looking in, I wondered just how they had the time, energy and money to have a Disneyland life.

Recently, right after one of these posts from her, I ran into her and learned that in the last 2 years, she went through a messy divorce, her parents had both been in a car accident and the kids were struggling amidst all the change and chaos of the last few years. She was broken, tired and right there in the middle of a restaurant I learned that everything I had seen of her life online was not only an inadequate representation of her life, it was not at all the real story of her life.

And if I'm honest, I've done it in my own way too. Moved the mess out of the way, turned my body a particular way or romanticized the real story to portray something a bit more perfect or put together.

Why do we do this? Why do we tell everyone we're "fine" or keep up appearances, or broadcast a sliver of truth? We live in a time where we see everyone's lives in real time, but not in real form broadcast in front of us all the time. Have you ever scrolled through an Instagram or Facebook feed and thought to yourself, "wow, they have the best life... the most fun... the perfect family... the most beautiful home... etc. etc. etc." or "they seem to have it all together, meanwhile we're just trying to keep things together"

People are hungry for connection and authenticity, but those same people are unwilling to share what's real and instead post the posed, perfect and best pictures that have the appearance of a particular image they're trying to portray.

It's a deep, dark hole sometimes when we measure our real lives to someone else's highlight reel. We've all been there in the comparison and perfection loop, whether on social media, or movies, tv shows, or anything that our culture has told us is the norm, or the "right way", the lies being fed to us all the time seep in to give us a skewed sense of reality.

Who are we really trying to impress? Whose opinion actually matters?

The beatitudes in Matthew's Gospel read very different than a Facebook wall! Nowhere in scripture does it say, "blessed are the perfect", "blessed are the posed", "blessed are those who appear to have it all together". On the contrary, we learn that the poor in spirit are blessed, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Discuss:

Have you learned to portray an inauthentic image so that people would look at your family, or family system as "having it all together"?

Who were/are you protecting by living this way?

Does anyone's perception of you/your family have any bearing on your salvation, claim, or worthiness?

Make it personal: Image vs. Authenticity

Take some time to create a list of each of the following as a group

1. What is success according to American Dream or according to what the world tells you?
2. What is success according to our understanding of the vocation of (insert family role here) or according to what our faith tells us?

Looking at these lists, what worldview is dominant in your life/family?

Spiritual practice

Strengthening the healthy wolf

There are two wolves in our mind, one is healthy and loving and the other is harsh and critical. In an epic battle which wolf do you think will win? The answer is: the one you feed.

Think of an event where you felt genuine and authentic and you liked how you were. This week, bring that event to mind daily and recall with words how you felt. Notice that you have a healthy part of you that exists even though you don't always feel that way.

Each day focus for a moment or two on how you feel when you like yourself and feel good. Strengthen your healthy wolf for the battle.

Close with the prayer of good courage.

O God, You have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen