

Osaka International Church

March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020

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Title: The Goal of our Instruction - Part 1

Key verses:

1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1:5 (NASB) – “But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”

Romans 12:2a (NASB) – “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...”

Good morning, everyone. It’s good to see you all here today. Most of you know me, but some of you don’t, so I will briefly introduce myself. My name is Brad Houdyshel and I have been a part of the OIC church family for many years. For the past two and a half years, I have occasionally given the sermon here. And now that Pastor Alistair has retired, you will see me give the sermon here a few times until a new pastor arrives.

As most of you know, I have been engaged in a series of sermons on my favorite verses and Biblical themes. Two months ago, I spoke on Colossians 3:16 and I made the opening phrase of that verse the title of that message: “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you...” I encouraged you to get to know your Bible and to let its words transform your mind and heart. I gave you several techniques for incorporating God’s Word into your thinking. But I wanted to give you something more: I wanted to share with you some of the Bible verses that have been especially impactful to me as I have come across them again and again during my personal Bible reading. Of course, as I said two months ago, reading Scripture or memorizing verses are not an end in themselves. We don’t do this just for Bible knowledge or theological understanding. The main point of incorporating Scripture into yourself is to transform your heart and your mind. Romans 12:2a says, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...”

In today’s message, I will give some examples of specific Scripture verses that really impressed me and showed me that I needed to change my thinking or my behavior. If I needed to be admonished by those verses, then I imagine there are several people here today who also need to be challenged by them. While preparing this message, I discovered that there were a lot of things I wanted to say, so actually I will be making this a two-part series. Today will be Part 1, and then I will be here again two weeks from now to give you Part 2 (on March 22<sup>nd</sup>).

The title and the theme of my two messages comes from 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1:5 (NASB) – “But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”

The goal of Christian instruction isn’t Bible knowledge. It isn’t learning a theological system. Of course, it is important to have a good understanding of correct doctrine, but the ultimate goal of Christian instruction is *forming disciples who will love God and love people*.

As 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1:5 says: disciples who will ... <sup>A)</sup>love ... <sup>B)</sup>from a pure heart ... <sup>C)</sup>from a clear conscience ... <sup>D)</sup>and from a sincere faith. (This will be the outline of my two-part message).

When I went off to college in Los Angeles, I joined some Christian groups and I was introduced to some excellent evangelical churches, such as the one pastored by John MacArthur. It was there that I first encountered expository preaching: sermons that went through entire books of the Bible verse by

verse. I noticed in these churches that they would often insert a sheet of paper in the bulletin designed for taking notes on the sermon. I indeed used them and I enjoyed soaking in the teaching and taking notes on the sermons.

It's great to be interested enough in the sermon to take notes on it. But the objective is not to collect sermon notes. The objective, rather, is *to put the words into practice in your life* ... to be transformed by the words. This leads me to share with you a serious comment made by another famous preacher of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The preacher's name is Dr. J. Vernon McGee, and he was the pastor of a famous church in Los Angeles called the Church of the Open Door, from about 1950 to 1970. After retiring as a pastor, he started a popular radio broadcast called Thru the Bible Radio, which gave commentary through the entire Bible in a five-year period. I used to listen to his radio program frequently in the 1980's.

The Church of the Open Door was founded early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century during the formation of the fundamentalist movement. The fundamentalist movement began as a reaction against what was called "modernism" in America's churches - what today we would call liberalism. Modernism denied the inerrancy of Scripture, the virgin birth of Christ, the bodily resurrection of Christ and some other fundamental doctrines. While the mainline denominational churches were becoming more liberal, many other churches held on to the fundamental doctrines.

But something was bothering Dr. J. Vernon McGee about what he saw in his church and in other churches. One day while listening to his program, I heard him say something that startled me. After a lifetime of faithful proclamation of the gospel, he noticed that something was not well with some of the churches that would call themselves fundamentalist or evangelical. My own observation was not as pessimistic as his, but perhaps that's because his experience was broader than my own. I would like to share his statement with you, as best as I can remember it. He said something like this (this is a paraphrase, not his exact words):

"We fundamentalists had the right doctrines ... we had full churches, fine preachers ... our people were taking notes on our sermons and filling their notebooks. But we were not prevailing over the modernists. We had a weakness and I finally figured out what it was. *There was a profound lack of ethics in the lives of so many of our people.* They were not putting into practice what we were teaching them. Many of them remained worldly. Their lifestyles were not distinguishable from the lifestyles of non-Christians. Many of them had ungodly practices: some of them cheated on their taxes ... some cheated on their wives ... they lied and used foul language, etc, etc. There was this profound lack of ethics – too many of our people were not living by the Christian standards we taught them."

Wow. Dr. McGee's words really hit me. But, yes, I had begun observing some of these things already. Although I had attended some good Christian groups in college and attended some good evangelical churches, I had noticed numerous church-goers who were attending church more out of habit (and a desire for socializing) than a desire to grow in their spiritual life. His observation of a profound lack of ethics in the lives of many people who claimed to be Christian was hard-hitting for me, and I resolved never to be the type of lukewarm or nominal Christian that he was lamenting.

We need to read God's Word, to read good Christian books, to listen to sermons from evangelical preachers ... and we need to make it a habit to always be open to being challenged by what we

read or hear, and always ready to examine ourselves to see if there is something in our life that we need to change to be more conformed to living the way God wants us to live.

“The goal of our instruction is **love** ... from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”

Part A of today’s message is: Love.

1st John 4:7 (ESV) – “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.”

In John 13:34-35 (ESV), Jesus says to His disciples: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. <sup>35</sup>By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

This is how people will recognize Christ’s disciples: if they love one another. And they are to love each other *just as Christ has loved them*. In service and sacrifice.

Matthew 22:35-40 (ESV) – “And one of them, a lawyer, asked him [Jesus] a question to test him. <sup>36</sup>“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” <sup>37</sup>And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup>This is the great and first commandment. <sup>39</sup>And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. <sup>40</sup>On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.””

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The “Law and the Prophets” ... this means the Law of Moses and the books of the Prophets – this is a reference to the Old Testament, the revealed Word of God which the people of Jesus’ day had. The fundamental command to God’s people is to love Him with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. And also: to love your neighbor. *On these two commandments depend the whole of revealed Scripture.*

But sometimes we can get distracted from truly loving God and our neighbors ... even getting distracted by good things.

I am impressed by 1st Corinthians 13:1-3 (ESV) where Paul says this– “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am [*just noisy*... I am] a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup>And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup>If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.”

If you have these rather flashy gifts like tongues or prophecies, but you don’t have love for people, then that’s useless, it’s nothing. If you have great knowledge or great faith, but don’t have love for people, it still counts for nothing. Verse 3 – if you sacrifice for people, but don’t actually have love for them, you gain nothing, there’s no profit in it. More important than exercising your gifts or being knowledgeable or sacrificing for people, is that we actually would love our brothers and sisters. It is all for nothing if you do not have love for people and for our Creator.

Love is the greatest virtue, so says the Bible. I once heard a wise preacher say that *we are on this earth for one main purpose: to learn how to love. To learn how to love.* I think he got it right.

Continuing with 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13, let's look at verses 8 to 10 (ESV) – “Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. <sup>9</sup>For we know in part and we prophesy in part, <sup>10</sup>but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.”

Prophecy, tongues, and knowledge have only temporary usefulness, during our short, limited time on earth. It is love which never ends. One of the ancient church fathers said something like this: “You can not take anything with you into the next life, except the virtues which you have gained during your life on earth.” By “virtues” I think he means the crucial character traits that we develop while living here. *Character traits* are intangible, but *these* are what we will bring with us to heaven.

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:13 (NIV) tells us three of these crucial virtues, including the most important virtue – “And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”

Back to our outline. “But the goal of our instruction is **love ... *from a pure heart* ...**”  
Part B of today's message: A Pure Heart.

It's not enough to simply do the right thing. Jesus was concerned that what we do is done with a *pure heart*.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says this in Matthew 5:20 (NKJV) – “For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.”

What's that? The Pharisees were the strictest and holiest group within Judaism at that time. How could Jesus expect us to be more righteous than they? Ah, but the Pharisees' righteousness was an external holiness – they followed a bunch of strict rules to regulate their behavior and to *appear* righteous on the outside ... but inside they actually had corrupt hearts.

In Matthew 23:27-28 (ESV) Jesus says this to the Pharisees – “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. <sup>28</sup>So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”

In verses 25-26, Jesus says – “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. <sup>26</sup>You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean.”

“First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, so that the outside also may be clean.”

We have to clean our inside first and foremost ... make sure our hearts are clean. If that's done, then the outside – the actions people see in our lives – will be clean. This is what it means that our righteousness would exceed the so-called righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.

Back to the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives some examples of how corrupt our hearts can be. I have a question for you: have you ever broken the sixth commandment (*You shall not murder*)? You haven't broken it? Really?

Matthew 5:21-22 (NKJV) – “You have heard that it was said to those [people] of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ <sup>22</sup>But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ [‘Empty head!’] shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire.”

To be angry with your brother (without a legitimate reason, such as him committing a crime) ... to be angry with your brother or sister is parallel with murder. This is a heart issue: to be angry and insulting to someone reveals a hateful heart, and a hateful heart is where thoughts of murder begin. To be angry without a legitimate reason makes you as guilty against God's law as if you had committed a murder. To be guilty enough to deserve hell.

I want to spend a few minutes talking about this issue of anger. This is something that most of us – including me – have had to deal with. A few weeks ago, I told a friend of mine that I would be speaking on this topic in my next sermon and he said, “Brad, I can't imagine you as someone who gets angry.” Well, thanks for the positive assessment – but let me say that I think the reason people might see me that way is that in past years I have been convicted over and over and over again by certain verses in the Scripture about anger and I therefore took action to reduce flareups of anger in my life and feelings of hatred in my heart.

Here are some of those verses:

Ephesians 4:31-32 (NASB) – “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. <sup>32</sup>Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”

1<sup>st</sup> John 3:15 (NASB) – “Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.”

(Wow, that is a hard-hitting verse. If I hate my brother, I am a murderer ... and I give evidence that I do not have eternal life.)

Psalms 37:8 (NKJV) – “Cease from anger, and forsake wrath. Do not fret—it only causes harm.”

Ephesians 4:26-27 (ESV) – “Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, <sup>27</sup>and give no opportunity to the devil.”

Apparently, it is possible to be angry and not sin – yes, if you are reacting to somebody's wrongful or criminal action, then getting angry in that situation is not sinful. But, we should admit that most of the time, we get angry for basically selfish reasons, because we didn't get our own way about something. If you do get angry – look at verse 26 – “do not let the sun go down on your anger,” don't let it last beyond today, deal with it soon and cool down. And look at verse

27: “give no opportunity to the devil.” When you let anger continue in your heart, it grows, and you poison yourself, and you give the devil an opportunity to neutralize your Christian testimony or even turn you into a negative influence in peoples’ lives.

I remember hearing a story told by the founding pastor of this church, Jack Marshall. He has known a lot of other pastors over the years, and sometimes after a pastor passes away and Jack talks with the family, he learns that the man actually had a severe anger problem that never showed itself publicly, but which was expressed in the family and hurt the wife and kids deeply. Jack said he has heard the same scenario too many times. Sometimes, the children are turned away from Christianity as a result. That is a sad end.

Oh, brothers and sisters, don’t give the devil an opportunity. Don’t let anger become entrenched in your heart. Don’t let a flareup of anger last beyond today – deal with it before the day is over.

Again let’s look at Ephesians 4:31 – “Let all bitterness and wrath ... *be put away from you ...*” *Be put away from you.* Get rid of it! And look at verse 32 – “... forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.” Forgive. Forgive.

Well, let me go on to different heart problem. Perhaps you have never physically broken the seventh commandment. But have you committed that sin in your heart?

Jesus said in Matthew 5:27-28 (ESV) – “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’<sup>28</sup> But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

“Has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” Looking at a woman *with lustful intent*. That doesn’t mean admiring the overall appearance of an attractive woman. This verse is discussing looking at a woman *with lustful intent* – that is, with sexual desire for her body. This is something that most of us men deal with. I’ll admit to you that in my teens and twenties I had to deal with this. But there is a way to overcome it.

Look at the next verse (verse 29), Jesus continues speaking on this topic – “If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.” Wow, strong words. No, don’t take this literally and actually cut off a part of your body. What this means is that you had better *turn your eyes away* from that woman and stop lusting after her. And you had better make this a habit: to *turn your eyes away* whenever you notice those feelings of lust. Turn your eyes away.

This reminds me of something I heard from a preacher once. He told us this story: “A man came to talk to me about a desperate problem he had. He said, ‘Pastor, when I see a woman, all kinds of thoughts go through my mind.’ In reply I said, ‘Praise the Lord: you’re human. That’s natural. But the issue is not the first look at that woman. The issue is the second look. Don’t look *again* at her and *deliberately seek out* those lustful feelings’.” This story has helped me to put verse 29 into practice and not go back to continue looking and lusting after the woman. Just turn your eyes away from her.

Let's continue on to verse 30. Jesus says – And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

When I think of the right hand in this verse, I get an image of someone who is taking his lust to another level. Still not physical adultery, but reaching out for something that will fulfill more lust. I think of a man reaching for one of those dirty magazines in the convenience store or the bookshop. I think of someone reaching for the computer mouse to navigate to a web site showing pornography. Jesus says chop off your hand – no, not a literal chop, but rather a refusal to reach out and look at those dirty pictures. It is better to lose that opportunity for lust than it is to damage your soul. You might lose some thrills, but in the long run you will have more self-respect.

Let me tell you about one of my Christian friends many years ago. He and his wife and kids were preparing to go to the mission field. However, he had a secret sin which his wife discovered one evening. She caught him looking at pornography on the internet – it was an addiction that he had indulged in many times before. Well, he was obliged to resign from the mission agency and he never went overseas. Please don't indulge in that kind of thing – you hurt your wife and you disappoint those to whom you could have ministered.

One of my favorite verses is 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:12-13 (NASB) – Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall. <sup>13</sup>No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

Be always careful – we are all prone to falling into sin. But you don't have to fall to it. Verse 13 tells us that no temptation we face is too much: God is faithful, and He will be with you and *“will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.”* That is a promise I have held on to many times and it has kept me out of trouble. Just turn away from the temptation – it is not hard to do.

I will close this message soon. Let me share with you one last admonition.

Colossians 3:8-10 (ESV) – “But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. <sup>9</sup>Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices <sup>10</sup>and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.”

You must **put off** the “old self,” your old manner of life as a non-Christian.

And you must **put on** the “new self,” your new identity as a Christian. You must fully realize your new status as a child of God, a disciple of Christ, and live in conformity to His standards: Love from a pure heart.

You must put off the “old self.” Then, Colossians 3:12 – “**Put on** then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.”

We are to *shed our old clothes*: anger, wrath, lust, etc.

And we are to *put on our new clothes*: compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.

And the topmost layer of our clothing is in verse 14 – “And above all these *put on love*, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” Our topmost layer of clothing is **love**.

And after we get dressed with our “new self,” verse 17 gives us our guiding principle as we walk out the door and live out our lives – “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

Whatever you do, do it in conformity to Christ’s standards.