



I'm An Aspiring Optimist!
[1 Corinthians 13; Matthew 23]

When you close your heart to people, you close your heart to God — Cynicism is so cruel. When I was at my most cynical, the thing that died within me was hope – hope that the future world will be better than the past, hope that the next time could be different, hope that my heart would feel again. - Carey Nieuwhof, Didn't See It Coming

A. Sliding Into the Abyss of Cynicism

- 1] The Knowledge that Brings Sorrow [Ecclesiastes 1:8]
- 2] The Calloused Heart - Patterns [Hebrews 3:12-13]
- 3] The Jaded Life - Loss of trust, hope, and belief - affects your relationship with God and the people around you [Matthew 23 - Seven woes . . .]

"The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing. One cannot help but be in awe when one contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery every day. Never lose a holy curiosity." - Albert Einstein, "Old Man's Advice to Youth: 'Never Lose a Holy Curiosity.'" LIFE Magazine (2 May 1955)

B. The Antidote to Cynicism: Cultivating Curiosity

- 1] Pondering/Processing - Thinking Time [Philippians 4:8]
- 2] The Power of Open-Ended Questions [Proverbs 1:5]
- 3] Admitting You Don't Know the Answer [Proverbs 18:2]
- 4] Dream Big With God Again [Ephesians 3:20-21]
- 5] Ask two Questions - Why? and Why not? [Col. 3:17]

C. Outcome/Source/Result - Renewal/The Spirit/Love [1 Corinthians 13]

Discussion Questions

1. Read Hebrews 3:12-13. Scripture reveals that the Pharisees were cynical about Jesus and his ministry. What 5 hypocritical behaviors did Jesus point out were rooted in their lives that affected their spiritual life and hindered their ministry?
2. Read the four antidotes to cynicism driven by a commitment to cultivating curiosity. Which ones do you think you need to work on?
3. Pray for God to cultivate a "Holy Curiosity" in you this week.

Ecclesiastes 1:8 All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.

Hebrews 3:12-13 Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. 13 But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Matthew 23 [7 Woes to the Pharisees]

[1] Hypocrisy that led to keeping people out of the Kingdom of Heaven - points to their rejection of Christ [13]

[2] Hypocritical leadership to the new converts - the led their converts into religion [driven by works], instead of true righteousness [15]

[3] Lack of focus on teaching truth, and using their time debating and arguing about irrelevant things and finding loopholes in the law - *blind guides and blind fools* [16-22]

[4] Committed to avoiding offenses in minor things of little importance, while tolerating or committing great sins ignoring the important matters of the law: justice mercy, and faithfulness.— *strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.* [23]

[5-7] They kept up the appearance of purity and holiness, but inside they were dark and dirty - full of greed and self-indulgence. [25-30]

[a] Dishes intensely cleaned on the outside but dirty on the inside

[b] Whitewashed tombs full of dead bones on the inside

[c] Hypocrisy of the monuments that were built for the prophets their ancestor had killed

Philippians 4:8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Proverbs 1:5 Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance,

Proverbs 18:2 A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion.

Colossians 3:17 . . . whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Ephesians 3:20-21 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

1 Corinthians 13:13 So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.