

Christian Ethics – Feb 26, 2012 – Barry Asmus

The goal? The touch of Jesus saying: "Well done good and faithful servant."

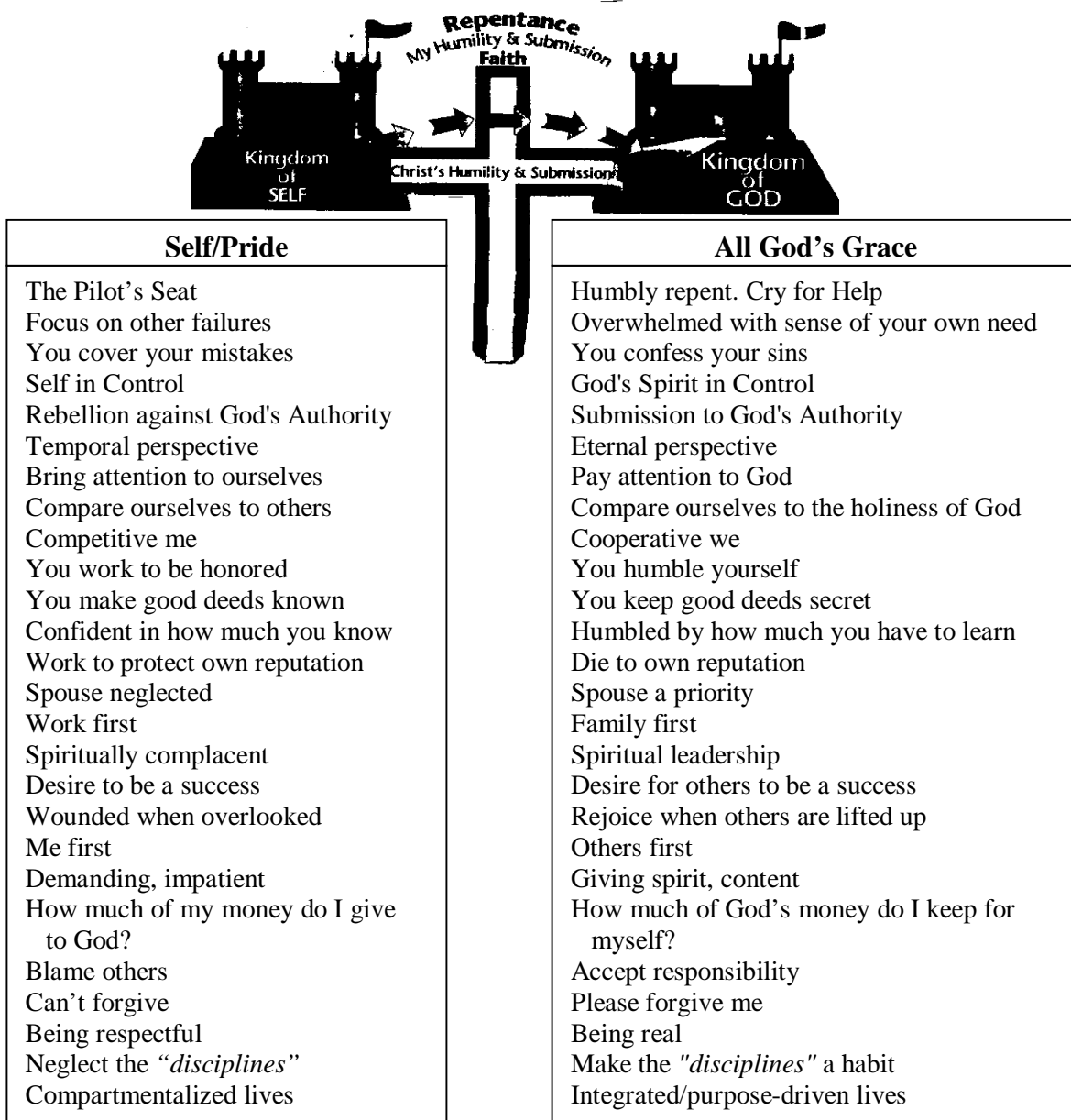
My commitment: To be a pleasure to you Lord and a light to the world.

The "how to" template: Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness . . .Matt. 6:33

Why a mission statement?

- Criterion by which you measure decisions.
- Template for everything you do.
- A guide to make choices on the basis of what really matters most.
- Facilitates a purpose-driven life.

Spiritual growth is about the transformation from SELF to GOD.



God is not always impressed with tears.
God is not always impressed with confession.
But God is **always** impressed with repentance.
Trembling, humbled, honest, without excuse. Palms open to receive God's grace.

The best way to move from the Kingdom of Self to the Kingdom of God is not to attempt to reform yourself. Jesus never defined a set of rules that his followers could then fulfill with a sense of satisfaction. How could we possibly "*love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with your entire mind and . . . Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect*"? Jesus clearly said that God's law is so perfect and absolute that no one can achieve righteousness. Instead of ranking sins as significant or less significant, Jesus raised his listeners' sights to a perfect God, before whom all of us are sinners. The solution to the Kingdom of Self is not to impose an ever-stricter code of behavior. It is to humbly repent, ask for help, and if God gives us another day, to know Him better.

Winning the battle of being critical, work driven, angry, prideful, lustful, or whatever, can best be fought by growing in Christ. When we focus on Christ we cannot be intrigued by negative preoccupation with self and sin. When we glorify God our hearts and minds are pointed in a totally different direction.

As we die to self, we grow. The proof of spiritual maturity is not how "pure" we are but an awareness of our impurity. That very awareness opens the door to grace. Our sense of sin is the measure of our soul's awareness of God. When we focus on the law, on being good, it's like someone standing in the light of a lantern fixed to a post. There is light all around him but there is nowhere farther for him to walk. But when a man focuses on Christ, it is like a man carrying a lantern on a pole: the light is always in front of him, always lighting up fresh ground and always encouraging him to walk further: serving, forgiving, encouraging spouse and family, i.e., conforming to the image of Christ.

One more example. In one of his last acts before death Jesus forgave a thief dangling on a cross, knowing full well the thief had converted out of plain fear. That thief would never study the Bible, never attend synagogue or church and never make amends to all those he had wronged. He simply said "*Jesus, remember me.*" And Jesus promised "*Today you will be with me in paradise.*" It was another shocking reminder that grace does not depend on what we have done for God but rather what God has done for us.

Ask most people what they must do to get to heaven and they will reply "be good." Jesus' stories and parables contradict that answer. All we must do is cry "help". God is indeed the One who loves.

All of the class lessons and outlines are posted on the class website <http://www.christianessentialsbc.com>.