

On December 9, 2007... Matthew Murray shot and killed Tiffany Johnson, 26... and Philip Crouse, 24... at a Youth With a Mission (YWAM) training center... in the Denver suburb of Arvada, Colorado. ... He later killed two more... at New Life Church in Colorado Springs...

Director of the Arvada YWAM... Peter Warren... spoke with *Christianity Today* about the shooting...

Matthew was in the building for half an hour talking with students... and then he asked to spend the night. ...Tiffany was called to the front because she handles hospitality. ... Normally, we would not have someone spend the night without knowing them... or arranging ahead of time. ... After that, Matthew said... "Then this is what I've got for you" ... pulled out a gun and began shooting.

After firing a few shots... he had his foot in the door... and at some point his foot slipped and he fell back. ... The door slammed shut on him and automatically locked... so he could not get back in again. ... Right then, other staff and students were driving up and saw Matthew banging on the door... trying to get back in. ... When Matthew saw them, he ran away.

After a student performed CPR on Tiffany... she regained consciousness and asked another trainee named Holly... "Is it bad?" ... Holly said, "Yes, it's bad." ... Tiffany looked at Holly and her boyfriend, Dan, who was also shot... and said, "We do this for Jesus, right guys? We do this for Jesus."

... ..

I can hardly think of a better question for us to ask ourselves...as it rises from our text today in the Gospel of Luke. ... “Church... we are doing this for Jesus, right...?”

Even though we have not personally suffered such physical violence... I want to begin this morning by asking you to honestly consider two very important questions. ... The more honest you are with your answer... the better understanding you will have... about what kind of a disciple you are... and perhaps your answer will give you some insight... as to how you are coming along in your spiritual growth. These questions are about our motives... what is driving us.

Now... here are the questions: “As you live your life... day to day... (not just here on Sunday mornings) ... what is your source of security...?” ...and second...” Where do you gain your sense of worth in the world?” ... Here is another way of asking them: “What are you striving to achieve in life... and why?”

Some of you may be formulating a pious sounding answer along the lines of “I am striving to glorify God in all that I do!” ... To which I say, “Wonderful!” ... “But what does your day to day behavior **essentially** demonstrate that you are striving to achieve... and why?”

Do your behaviors betray that it is really... “to be liked by others... well thought of... lots of friends...?” Has that been behind much of what you do? ... Are you in large part motivated to be seen by others as being: intelligent... generous... wise... cool... “with it”... understanding... fair... creative... loving... independent... financially stable... popular... pious... spiritual...? ... Were you motivated quite a bit this week to stand up and

defend your rights... or to protect... or even enhance the reputation you desire to have...? Does your source of security and your sense of self-worth come - predominantly - from what others (friends and family... and even strangers, in some cases)... ... what THEY think of you...?

What do your **actions** reveal... as to what you striving to achieve in life... and why?"

Our true motivation is front and center to the passage of our study this morning. These verses will address... in a practical way... the things we should and should not do to attain a stronger sense of security and significance in our lives.

Dr. Larry Crabb is a Christian psychologist... who in the late 1970's and early 80's developed a counseling strategy that was based on the principle that the driving force in all of us... our most basic motivation for anything we do... is to build or maintain a sense of security and/or significance for ourselves.

This counseling strategy attempts to have the counselee evaluate the wrongful ways they have been trying to obtain security and significance. Because ...there are many... many... attempts we **often** make... to draw this water from the **wrong well**. ... And this is why we have struggles in life. We act out in the flesh... we loose our temper... we say things that we know are wrong... we act in total selfishness... we lie... we cheat... we steal... all because we are pursuing (or trying to protect) some sense of security... or significance... and we are going to the wrong source. ... Our security and our significance do not come from our fleshy behaviors... nor does it come from all of the good things we do in order to impress others...

Real security and significance is not a matter of how well we perform before people. It doesn't even come from our performing before God.

We must learn this... and... to base our entire sense of security and significance on what God already thinks of us. As a believer... He looks at you and sees His Son... Jesus. ... You do not have to perform for His acceptance. You already have it. It is secure! Be grateful... and now...from that gratitude... obey Him.

As we turn to our passage today... we find Jesus among those who were at the wrong well... trying to secure for themselves a greater sense of security and significance. It is easy for us to see that the characters in this narrative were **indeed** seeking these two things – security and significance for their lives. ... In the first segment of our passage today... we see how Jesus had made the Pharisees of His day very insecure... and He was upsetting their sense of significance... so they wanted to trap Him and permanently do away with Him.

Luke 14:1-6

It was a setup all the way. ... They had gone to great lengths in order to protect their security and their significance. ... The place had been carefully chosen — the home of a prominent Pharisee... where he and his notable guests could observe Jesus first hand... and then bear unified testimony to the anticipated transgression... that they waited for Jesus to commit.

This was another test to see if Jesus would violate their man-made traditions... that went beyond God's actual Law... concerning Sabbath.

Keep in mind that Jesus had already "violated" their Sabbath traditions on at least **seven** prior occasions to this one. On the Sabbath Day... He had cast out a demon (Luke 4:31-37)... healed a fever (Luke 4:38-39)... allowed His disciples to pluck grain (Luke 6:1-5)... healed a lame man (John 5:1-9)... healed a man with a paralyzed hand (Luke 6:6-10)... and in our passage two weeks ago (Luke 13:10-17)... He delivered a crippled woman who was afflicted by a demon... and... finally... He healed a man born blind (in John 9). ... Why these enemies of the Lord thought that they needed one more bit of evidence... we do not know... but we do know that Jesus turned their scheme around on them... and used this opportunity to teach about the true source of security and significance.

The snare had been set for Jesus... which they disgustingly baited with a misery that they knew... Jesus would find irresistible. This afflicted man normally would not have been invited to such an important dinner... But the Pharisees wanted to use him as "bait" to catch Jesus. They knew that Jesus could not be in the presence of human suffering very long without doing something about it. ... If He ignored the afflicted man... then He was without compassion. ... But if He healed him... then He was openly violating the Sabbath tradition and they could accuse Him. They put the dropsied man right in front of the Master so He could not avoid him... and then they waited for the trap to spring.

Dropsy is a painful disease in which... because of kidney trouble... a heart ailment... or liver disease... the tissues fill with water. ... How **heartless** of the Pharisees to "use" this man as a tool... to accomplish their wicked plan. But if we do not love the Lord... we too will resort to all sorts of cruel and unfeeling ways to gain a better sense of security and significance for our

lives. ... Often when we feel the need to increase our sense of security and significance... and our eyes are not on the Lord for it... we can be very stubborn in refusing the right way to attain it.

Even after many warnings that Jesus has already given to the religious leaders of Israel... they failed to heed them and have a changed heart. ... But Jesus doesn't give up. The fact that He attended this scheming party... set up to trap Him... and then sticks around... as we will see... to teach them... shows that He was willing to give them yet **another** chance.

So Jesus confounded them with a single question: "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?" ... If they said "yes"... they would appear soft and hypocritical regarding the stringent measures they required for Sabbath observance. ... But if they said "no"... they could be accused of being inhumane and uncaring about human suffering. ... It was one thing for the Pharisees to condemn Jesus for healing on the Sabbath. ... It was quite another to take responsibility for denying recovery to a needy person.

Jesus had trapped **them**... and they only had one response... It wasn't a change of heart and confession that Jesus was right. Instead it was a pitiful... sulking... silence. ... Just like what we often do... Christ says "Drink from God's well..." but they were bound and determined to get their security and significance from a well that did not offer it.

It was a false security that they were after. They would rather retaliate than repent. They wanted to promote man's traditions... rather than protect God's truth.

In the church... Christians often try to protect their sense of security by clinging to traditions and methods which are not explicitly taught in Scripture. For example... When the Pilgrims landed on American shores... a new tradition was born for how churches should operate – democracy! ... Leaders are supposed to find out what the will of the people... the membership is... and to enact the will of the people...” This became the tradition in the American church – even though the Apostle Paul wrote letters to Timothy and Titus telling them, instead, to select Godly men... who are in close communion with Him... and are most likely to discern **Christ’s** will... and to make Christ’s will the focus of the church. ... Another example would be a tradition that has been with us only since the late 1800’s ... and began with Evangelist Charles Finney. He used the method of an **alter call** for people to walk down an aisle... coming forward to demonstrate a commitment to Christ... (usually while music plays and people are singing). The tradition took hold... and today there are many who believe the church **must** have an alter call every week... as though it is the only way people commit their lives to Christ.

The chances are that we each have some traditions that bring us comfort and stability... perhaps it is a style of worship music... a certain version of the Bible... the only way to pray (with our eyes closed... head bowed... and maybe hands folded)... a worship service must follow a prescribed order of events (first announcements... then meet and greet... then songs... offering... and then sermon.) But if we insist that these are the only proper ways... we are trying to draw from the **wrong** well of security. ... We deserve the same challenge that Christ tried to give the Pharisees of His day.

It can be so easy for us to become closed- minded... as we seek our own sense of security. Even when Scripture indicates our tradition may not be His leading for us. ... It probably **never** occurred to the Pharisees of Jesus day... to pray and ask God if there was anything they were stubbornly missing about His leading. ... Does it ever occur to us to pray that way? I think we need to ask God from time to time to open our eyes and show us what **we** have misunderstood. Just like these Pharisees... how haughty... how full of pride we must be... to assume that we have it right in all areas.

Recently I have been re-considering the Gospel... and how I have frequently presented it. "Have I misrepresented it because of traditional ways I have been taught to present it?" Here are some things I am discovering:

We have turned the gospel into a mere transaction... a ticket into heaven. Just like a ticket to an amusement park... once inside... we put the ticket we used to get inside... into our pocket and forget about it. But the Gospel is more than an entry ticket. It is far more ongoing than that... The Gospel involves a brand new heart that is given to us... which has different desires and goals... The Gospel also involves the gift of the Holy Spirit... Who lives inside of us and works to significantly transform us ... I am beginning to see that repentance (that necessary ingredient to salvation) involves a radical change of mind about Who God is. And this is ALWAYS (in every instance of true salvation) *followed by* a significant transformation of one's actual life. Repentance is such a radical change of mind about Who God is... that it will **always** result in a radical change in our life. ... We have got to stop treating the Gospel as merely an entry ticket... giving people a **false** assurance that they are going to heaven... simply because they have

obeyed some Evangelical tradition... of praying the sinner's prayer... or coming forward at some time in their life by responding to an alter call at church... but have shown no significant life change.

Let's not be like the Pharisees in our passage this morning. They wanted to promote man's traditions... rather than protect God's truth. They were going to the wrong well to gain their security. ... Let's repent... rather than retaliate. ... Lord... Open our eyes to any well that we may be going to... that only offers false security!

Jesus must have taken a lot of pity on the party-goers... He really loves His enemies... Just look how He reaches out some more... in yet another attempt to teach them the right way to obtain security and significance. This time He focuses on significance... He does this by teaching about a wrong sense of importance... followed by another lesson about the wrong sense of praise. ... Let's look at His lesson about the wrong sense of importance.

Luke 14:7-11

You know what this reminds me of...? It reminds me of people who scramble to churches based on the prestige they think it gives them. Both pastors and church members will move from one church to another... if they think being seen in the new church gives them a higher platform of respect. It is just like running to get the seat of highest honor at a dinner party that Christ commented on here.

There is today a definite sense of status that is given to church members and to pastors... that is based upon what the size of your church is. The

more people that attend your church... the more prestige you are given. Pastors and church members try to play one-ups-manship on those from a different church based on the size of their congregation. ... It is all part of a false significance... wanting to feel important.

Experts in management tell us... that most people wear an invisible sign that reads - "Please make me feel important"... ... If we heed that sign... we can succeed in human relations. ... On the other hand... if we say or do things that make others feel insignificant... we will fail. Then people will respond by becoming angry and resentful... because everybody wants to be noticed and made to feel important.

In Jesus' day... as today... there were "status symbols" that helped people enhance and protect their high standing in society. ... If you were invited to the "right homes" and if you were seated in the "right places"... then people would know how important you really were. The emphasis was on **reputation**... not character. ... It was more important to sit in the right places than to live the right kind of life.

Pride and status are social issues in any culture... and the ancient Jewish culture was no exception. Status brings pride... and Jesus regards this equation as destructive to our spiritual health. Those who are truly humble persons recognize their desperate need for God... not any right for blessing.

The true way to achieve significance... is to be a humble person. ... These party attenders in today's passage were going to a different well... weren't they...? And so do we!

We often engage in struggles of our own for prestige and perceived honor...! We want to be seen by others as being important people... so we jump into visible positions of leadership... so that others can view us as significant. ... We serve in ways that will be noticed and appreciated by our contemporaries. ... And if we do not receive the appreciation or attention that we anticipated... then we become very upset. We put extra effort into our church work... with far more thoughts about how it will be perceived by our fellow church attenders... than our thoughts about God's perception.

Humility means ignoring rank or class. Friends can be made anywhere and with anyone. Jesus' point is not that we should connive to receive greater honor... When Jesus advised the guests to take the lowest places... He was not giving them a "gimmick" that guaranteed promotion. ...The false humility that takes the lowest place... is just as hateful to God... as the pride that takes the highest place. ... RATHER... Jesus **is** saying... that honor and a sense of importance is not something that can be seized. ... It is awarded. ... AND... Jesus is not against giving honor to those who deserve it. Clearly... He is against the use of power and prestige for self-glorification... (self-promotion.) Jesus' disciples are marked by humility!

God is not impressed by our status in society... or in the church. ...He is not influenced by what people say or think about us... because He sees the thoughts and motives that fill our hearts. ... and Christian... know this... God will humble the proud and exalt the humble. Luke has been emphasizing this all throughout his Gospel. It is a definite **theme** of this Gospel that we are studying. God will humble the proud and exalt the humble. We've seen this principle of reversal in Luke 1:52-53... 6:21... 6:25... 10:15... and we will see it again in Luke 18... verse 14.

Often when we try to develop a sense of significance for ourselves... we turn to the wrong source of praise. Sometimes it is the wrong sense of **importance**... and sometimes it is the wrong source of **praise**. ... This second one is the subject of Jesus final lesson at this same dinner party.

Luke 14:12-14

Jesus knew that the host had invited his guests for two reasons: (1) to pay them back because **they** had invited him to past feasts, or (2) to put them under his **debt**... so that they would invite him to future feasts. ... Such hospitality was not an expression of love and grace... but rather an evidence of pride and selfishness. ... He was "buying" recognition.

Jesus does not prohibit us from entertaining family and friends. You are missing the point if you are... right now... re-thinking your **family** Christmas get-together. This is a warning against entertaining *only* family and friends exclusively and habitually. ... Make sure that there are times when you host some events... where you invite others who could **never** pay you back.

Jesus was attending a common first century Jewish dinner... that was typically a "mutual admiration society"... where every person invited would next try to outdo this party... It was definitely "keeping up with the Jones" (I mean the Weisensteins)... and no one dared to break the cycle. ...Sad to say... that some of the church social scene... the inner circle... may fit this description.

Listen to these words from Bible Commentator, Kent Hughes:

Elitism indicates a selfish, proud, shriveled soul. Reciprocation as a primary goal is the product of an immense self-focus. If we do not reach out to others who cannot benefit us (and we should not limit this to dinners), we must ask ourselves if we are true believers.

Our motive for sharing must be the praise of God and not the applause of men. ... What is at stake here... is the eternal reward in heaven... and not simply the temporary recognition on earth. ... God promises **blessing** at the resurrection of the dead... if we refuse to have a social status mentality... in our group events.

I pray that our passage this morning has caused you to take a good look inside yourself... by asking... “What is my source of security? ... Am I going to the right well for drawing this water...? Lord, Please open my eyes if I am trying to gain my sense of security from anyone... or anything... but You. ... I am secure because of Your loyal love for me” ... And I hope that you will be honestly asking yourself this week... “Where do I gain my sense of worth in the world? ... What am I striving to achieve in life, and why? ... Am I trying to seize a false sense of importance for myself... instead of allowing Christ to bestow it upon me...? ... Am I seeking the wrong source of praise by concentrating more on the applause of men... rather than God...?”

Dallas Seminary Professor, Howard Hendricks, tells of the time when he sat in a plane that was delayed for take off. ...After a long wait, the passengers became more and more irritated. ... Hendricks noticed how **gracious** one of the flight attendants was... as she spoke with them. ...After the plane **finally** took off... he told the flight attendant how amazed

he was at her poise and self-control. He told her that he wanted to write a letter of commendation for her to the airline. ... The stewardess replied that she didn't work for the airline company... but for Jesus Christ. ... She said that just before going to work... she and her husband prayed together that she would be a good representative of Christ.

Doing it for Christ's sake is the right motivation for anything we do. ... It will bring greater security and significance than any other motive. ... Doing it for Christ's sake is submitting not just to your employer... or your spouse... or parent... or fellow church member... but to the Lord... because of your love and gratitude for Him.

“Church... we are doing this for Jesus, right...?” ... We do this for Jesus!