

October 31, 2021

“Francis Schaeffer on the Christian Life”
Reformation Sunday 2021

FCF: Lack of reality to the Christian life

PROPOSITION: (anchor) The Lord calls us into an abundant life.
(magnet) But this comes along a particular path.

TOPIC INTRODUCTION:

Halloween brings costumes. Of course the personas we take on are not real. They aren't meant to be real. No expects them to be so it's not a big deal. The problem comes when we wear costumes through the year - not an outfit we buy in a store but a posture we still try to wear. Pretending. It's not real but in this case, we mean for others to think it is. And that is a big deal.

It's self-delusion. It's warped messaging - all the worse when Christians do it. But we are meant for more. And the Lord holds forth more for us. We're going to look at this together for a few minutes and, on this Reformation Sunday, consider what Francis Schaeffer teaches us.

SCRIPTURE READING: [John 10:7-15](#) (v.10)

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION:

Francis Schaeffer was one of the most influential apologists of the 20th century. In 1965, *TIME* magazine called him “a missionary to intellectuals.” His 22 books have been translated in several languages. His films and lecture series were something of a phenomenon. The impact of L'Abri is impossible to measure, given the many whose lives were changed by their experiences.

A theme of Schaeffer's labors was his concern for “reality” - both the reality of Truth and a reality to our lives. This is reflected in an article published in 1951, *The Secret of Power and the Enjoyment of the Lord*. It's worth knowing a bit of background. By “power,” he meant the fruit of a transformed life as well as more people coming to faith. By “enjoyment,” he meant delight, peace, and joy in the Christian life. Schaeffer was concerned there was precious little of either in his day - both as he looked around him and within his own heart. This created a painful crisis for him. As he came out the other side, he began to reflect. This article was borne of that crisis. Schaeffer himself said it was the most important thing he ever wrote. It took him two years to finish. He would give copies to workers at L'Abri. Clearly, this was significant to him.

Schaeffer's concern was the thrust of our text in John 10. Jesus, as the Good Shepherd, is inviting us to something new and wondrous. Are we hearing it? That's Schaeffer's concern in this article. It's so vital, we're going to look at its highlights. The Lord calls us to an abundant life, life in the full. He calls us to an abundant life. But this comes along a particular path.

This path is set by two guardrails. First, the need for purity. Second, the need for love.

I. THE NEED FOR PURITY

First, the need for purity. Schaeffer began here, likely knowing this was an obvious place of agreement for many of his readers. But then he began to press in ways we might not expect.

A) Deeper Than We Think

For as he puts forth this need for purity, he shows it is much deeper than we often think.

1. Not merely outward

For biblical purity is not merely outward. It is not just rules to be kept, things easily measured.

2. But touching the heart

Purity touches the heart. Think of the Ten Commandments. The first nine can be broken without any outward act. The tenth - having to do with coveting - is completely within. Purity is inward.

B) Beyond What We Hear

It is deeper than we think and it is beyond what we hear, the way it is typically explained.

1. Not merely personal

True purity is not merely personal. It goes beyond the idea that "this is just about me and Jesus."

2. But truly corporate

No, biblical purity is not just personal. It is truly corporate. This is clearly stressed in the Old and New Testament. The doctrine and life of one matters to the whole. So if we compromise on orthodoxy or orthopraxy, we must be excluded for the sake of the body and the Lord's honor.

C) Never Just Negative

Purity is deeper than we think and is beyond what we hear. And is never just negative.

1. Not an end in itself

Purity - personal or corporate - is never an end in itself. It is not the goal. If separations over purity come with purity as the end goal, they are just sinful divisions. We've had plenty there.

2. But out of love for Christ

No, our purity must only be out of love for Christ. We seek first what pleases and honors Him. Exclusion and separation must never come with a gladdened zeal but only with a bended knee.

This is biblical purity. It is never easy. But it is absolutely necessary.

Application:

Again, Schaeffer said all this as he was looking at the church and himself, striving to diagnose a deep soul sickness. He was making profound points, asking searching questions that we must ask in our own time. Do we know what true purity is - that it is not just outward, that it is not just personal, that it is never to be pursued for its own sake? Do we know these things? Are we known for such things? Are we marked by such things? Or is it all just more division?

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II. THE NEED FOR LOVE

That path is marked by the need for purity. But it is also marked by the need for love. This is the other side of the coin. It's hard to disagree with. But impossible in our own strength.

A) Toward Others

Schaeffer made clear that love is not to be a slogan, merely something we just talk about.

1. Fellow Christians

We are to love our fellow Christians, no matter what camp or group they may belong to.

2. Fellow man

We are also to love our fellow man. This is the lesson of Jesus' story of the Good Samaritan. It is not just words passed down to be dismissed as we happen to see fit. They are to be lived out.

B) Truly Demonstrated

We are to love others and to do so in a way that is truly demonstrated, that can be seen.

1. Acts of kindness

We are to show acts of kindness. Schaeffer points out how many of the great heroes of the faith had a tender heart towards children. There is a real gentleness and tenderness seen in their lives.

2. Fair dealings

We are to show acts of kindness and to deal fairly with each other, carrying out the Golden Rule. We should be known for our honesty - how we speak both to and of others. Intolerant of slander.

3. Willing to hurt

Acts of kindness, fair dealings, and willing to hurt and be hurt. That is, a willingness to say what needs to be said for the good of another person, pointing out error and sin. And that can cost.

C) Rightly Patterned

Love has to be shown towards others, be truly demonstrated, and be rightly patterned.

1. Needed warning

Oh, how we need this warning today. In this article from 1951, Schaeffer wrote ([READ](#)):

If we have come to the frame of mind where we are so occupied with the struggle against fleshly sin, or unbelief, that we act as though any means is permissible, then the love has gone and the power has gone. Combat, to be for God's greatest glory, must be fought according to God's rules. It is possible to struggle for personal purity and the purity of the church without having the struggle based upon love and leading to a deeper love of God and man. When this is done it leads inevitably to dead orthodoxy, and dead orthodoxy is always the threshold to new heresy.

2. Later expression

This is what Schaeffer later came to express saying, "we must do the Lord's work in the Lord's way." Without that, it's just our work. It's just pride and ego. It's all fear and a desire to control.

But we are called to biblical love. Again, it's never easy. But it's absolutely necessary.

Illustration:

All of this is captured well in an appearance Schaeffer made with Bishop Pike before a moderator and an audience in Chicago. It was January, 1968. Pike was an Episcopal priest who had denied the fundamentals of the faith. He was an alcoholic on his third wife, 24 years his junior. The topic that evening was, "What Relevance Has Historic Christianity for Modern Man?" Most present said that Schaeffer clearly had the better arguments. He won, in that sense.

But Schaeffer wasn't interested in winning a debate. He was concerned for the man. This was the thing that really stood out - his kindness towards Bishop Pike. He refused to go on the attack. Pike said he had never met anyone like this man. Which began a correspondence between the two that lasted until Pike's mysterious death some months later in the Sinai desert.

Application:

Why do I bring this up? Let me take you back to the point of that paper. Schaeffer was trying to diagnose this sickness he had known in himself and could see in the people around him. Part of it involved a lack of true purity. But it also involved a lack of love. Could we need this?

Do we know what such love really is? What it looks like? Do we know how deeply we have been loved in Christ and how that love should then flow out of our very pores to others?

Yes, the Lord calls us into an abundant life. But this comes along a particular path.

CONCLUSION:

Consider L'Abri. It is not a retreat center, a think tank, or a commune. It is a work begun in Switzerland (now spread around the world) that came about by accident with a simple vision statement (**READ**): "To show forth by demonstration, in our lives and work, the existence of God." What does this mean? Real and earnest dependence on the Lord. The desire to give honest answers to honest questions. A real community united under the finished work of Christ.

And it has flourished. It has flourished in this time of a growing number of "none's", of the de-churched, and of children turning their back on the faith in which they were raised. What then is the secret of L'Abri? Why has it had such a direct impact upon so many and proven to be so culturally transferable? It answers something in the human heart. In many ways, it's what Schaeffer was writing about in 1951 and in his many books after that. And folks are drawn to it.

Again, the Lord calls us into an abundant life. He made us for it. And this comes along a particular path. Where those things are present - real purity and real love - people notice. People notice. Perhaps that's something we need to be reminded of. And to ask the Lord to do in us.

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