

**To Know and Be Like Christ**  
**Psalm 19:1-4a, 7-10, 14**  
**Philippians 3:4b-14**

There is story that deals with a rather old fashioned lady, who was planning a couple of weeks vacation in Florida. She also was quite delicate and elegant with her language. She wrote a letter to a particular campground and asked for reservations. She wanted to make sure the campground was fully equipped but didn't know quite how to ask about the "toilet" facilities. She just couldn't bring herself to write the word "toilet" in her letter. After much deliberation, she finally came up with the old fashioned term "Bathroom Commode," but when she wrote that down, she still thought she was being too forward. So she started all over again; rewrote the entire letter and referred to the Bathroom Commode" simply as the "B.C.". Does the campground have its own "B.C.?" is what she actually wrote. Well, the campground owner wasn't old fashioned at all, and then he got the letter, he couldn't figure out what the lady was talking about. That "B.C." really stumped him.

After worrying about it for several days, he showed the letter to other campers, but they couldn't figure out what the lady meant either. The campground owner finally came to the conclusion that the lady was and must be asking about the location of the local Baptist Church. So he sat down and wrote the following reply: "Dear Madam: I regret very much the delay in answering your letter, but I now take pleasure of informing in that the "B.C." is located nine miles north of the camp site and is capable of seating 250 people at one time. I admit it is quite a distance away if you are in the habit of going regularly but no doubt you will be pleased to know that a great number of people take their lunches along, and make a day of it..... They usually arrive early and stay late. The last time my wife and I went was six years ago, and it was so crowded we had to stand up the whole time we were there. It may interest you to know that right now, there is a supper planned to raise money to buy more seats.....They plan to hold the supper in the middle of the B.C., so everyone can watch and talk about this great event.....I would like to say it pains me very much, not to be able to go more regularly, but it is surely not for lack of desire on my part....As we grow older, it seems to be more and more of an effort, particularly in cold weather..... If you decide to come down to the campground, perhaps I could go with you the first time you go...sit with you...and introduce you to all the other folks..... This is really a very friendly community.....<sup>1</sup>

Communication is a funny thing. What we mean isn't always what we say, and what we say doesn't always come out the way we mean. And on top of that, what others hear is not always what we want for them to hear. Miscommunication happens not only in verbal conversation, but also in written and visual conversation. I am sure you can think of times when you thought you heard something that turned out to be not what you thought you heard. In the digital world, the same is true, especially when we look at the world of texting and social networks. There have been many occasions when I have read a text or a posting on facebook and thought to myself, what in the world does that mean?

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<sup>1</sup> Source Unknown. <http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/c/communication.htm> (accessed September 27, 2011)

Effective communication, however, is when the speaker and the hearer are on the same page. But in order to have effective communication, the speaker must also have authenticity. We are more likely to trust and correctly understand someone when he or she does so in an authentic way with integrity. We are much more likely to listen to someone we trust than someone we don't trust.

The same was true 2000 years ago in Paul's day. Although Paul did not have the technology of today, he still had to communicate in ways that demonstrated his authenticity and integrity. In his day, it was common to preface important instructions with an impressive background. Listeners were more likely to respond to a person of dignity and power than to one who was lowly and shift in nature. Paul, therefore, had all the credentials needed to be heard with authority.

His impressive listing of status is not meant to be boastful or arrogant. It is not meant to turn off the listener, but to authenticate his words so that he could be heard. Just as an impressive resume might help a person get a really good job, an impressive background would get Paul to be heard in his day.

But this is also where Paul uses his impressiveness to demonstrate that none of it really matters. He can state everything in his past that was honorable and worthy and powerful, but none of that matters when it comes to faith. The only thing that truly matters is that he knows and follows Christ. Everything else is rubbish.

I remember the incredible high I felt as I walked up in front of the crowded congregation when my name was called and I received my diploma for the doctor of ministry degree. It was an awesome feeling knowing that I had worked so hard to complete this education and the relief I felt to finally be done with it. Yet none of it matters when compared to the gift that I have been given through Christ. To know and follow Christ is so much more than any accomplishment I could receive on my own. It is so much more important than any position of power or authority. And like Paul, I know it is an honor to press on towards the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

We live in a world where information and communication is on a super-highway. Information and communication is virtually instant to almost any part of the world. Even in remote villages without technological advances, communication can be instant with the use of satellites. But as powerful as communication is, we still find it difficult to share with others just how important our faith is. Simply speaking about our faith in Christ is often challenged by the flooding of different views around us. And like Paul, we face a difficult task in sharing God's love to those who don't know our credentials.

This is why it is so important to demonstrate our faith with integrity and authenticity. When we humble ourselves and give Christ the credit for our salvation and achievements, then we recognize that we live our life in a new way. No longer are we motivated by status or power or nice titles, but by the living of our faith.

Others can tell when our faith is genuine and genuine counts a lot in a world where so many cut corners and rely heavily on greed and power. I am sure all of you can think of others who have said things that sound great, but their actions have demonstrated selfish motives. So Paul reminds us that our goal should not be for more status, power, or selfish gains, but out of gratitude that Christ has made us his own! Therefore let us press on towards the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus and live our lives in ways that communicate authentic and genuine trust in our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Prayer:**

Gracious God,

Hold us accountable when our motives are selfish. Help us to understand that you love us unconditionally and not for our accomplishments. Guide us to live humble and authentic lives so that your love will shine effectively for others to see. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.