Faith that sees through culture

Lesson 2: A struggle with what is inside

# Getting going

1. How important do you think happiness is? What do you think most makes people happy?
2. Our own Lutheran confessions commented, “Man’s nature is gradually growing weaker as the world grows older.” (AC 23:14) Do you think that might be correct?

1. What has God been up to in your life this week?

# Getting the Word into our lives

In lesson 1, we gained a faith that sees through the culture with regard to what is outside us. We identified a whole range of ways that people respond to the external world: Some people completely imbibe the world and culture. They never question anything. Others completely reject the world and culture. The Christian sees that the world was made good, but is also infected by the devil and sin. This lets us see through the culture.

Lesson 2 deals with a common struggle: the struggle to live with the things inside us, otherwise known as our sinful flesh

1. Peter writes about this struggle in 1 Peter 2:11-12. “Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. 12 Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.” What does Peter say about the struggle? What does he say that really helps us see the struggle today?
2. The author of our study writes about a couple of internal struggles because our culture. Do any of them sound familiar? What cultural norms or ideas make these struggles so hard?
* “it feels like a tractor beam for wanting more is always activated, and we tend to align ourselves with it. We steer our own ship so as to synchronize with what is often a sinful allurement.” (pg 36)
* “The first thing they did was realize they were not right. They were suddenly aware of their nakedness. For the first time, self-consciousness and self-condemnation filled them. No longer were they outwardly preoccupied with God and his love; now they were inwardly preoccupied with their condition without God.”
* “Fear reigned in their hearts toward God. Shame and fear go hand in hand.” (pg 38)
1. Compare the cultural answer for dealing with our internal struggle with the biblical answer. How are they similar? Different?
* Cultural answer - “Emotions and feelings are determinative. To feel authentic I must express my desires and never suppress them.” (Tim Keller)
* Biblical answer - “Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.” (Colossians 3:5)
1. God has not just said that we should put to death these desires. He has also said, “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.” (Colossians 3:12–14) What do you notice about what he says we should put on?
2. God has said that Christian faith will both die and rise. It puts to death our desires and raises new desires and life. How does that faith see through what the culture tells us about our inner life?

# Going forward in faith

Split into groups of 2 or 3.

1. How is your happiness? What is one thing you can do about it?
2. What’s a passage from this Scripture that impacted you?
3. How are you going to respond to this message?
4. Who is one person you’d like to share this with?