

I'm going to tell you right up front where this letter ends: an invitation to confession and self-examination.

I won't guess at your first response to that news, but I can share mine. It goes something like this, can I do that later, after I get some rest, when summer school is over, when things slow down, when I feel strong enough to look in the mirror? I'm doing *some* good stuff. Do I really have to contemplate *all* the ways I am missing the mark?

And these thoughts are the exact reason why I needed to read Adele Calhoun's definition of self-examination.

*Self-examination is a process whereby the Holy Spirit opens my heart to what is true about me. This is not the same thing as neurotic shame-inducing inventory. Instead it is a way of opening myself to God within the safety of divine love so that I can authentically seek transformation. Confession embraces Christ's forgiveness and restoration while setting us on the path to renewal and change.*

Understanding what is true about me? I want that now, not later. Not inventorying shame, but seeking transformation? I'm in. Restoration and renewal? I am ready.

Maybe I've thought of confession all backwards. It's not merely adding up the done-wrongs; it's letting go of all the lies. And to be honest, at this point in life, I've fallen for enough lies, tried on enough costumes, strived and even gotten hold of enough shiny things. And while I may still get distracted, I still resonate deeply with the desire that leads to confession. Here is Calhoun again.

*To surrender my weaknesses and faults to the forgiving love of Christ and intentionally desire and embrace the practices that lead to transformation.*

And now I am going to guess...I'm not alone in this am I?

The self-help options abound: books, camps, workshops, coaching, products, pyramid schemes. But that's not what we're talking about here.

We aren't talking about a change that comes about when we gather up all our grit and gumption. We are talking about a type of transformation that comes only when we cry out, Jesus, help me.

Are you in that place?

If you are, you are in good company, with the people of God, and the Savior, who came to set them free.

Let's go to Him together.

## Small Group Direction

### *The Fulfillment of the Law*

*17“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.*

- The Hebrew word that is often translated as “the law” is Torah; this, of course, includes the commandments but it also includes the narrative, the story of God’s people.
- In what ways does Jesus embody the moral quality of the law?
- In what ways does he complete the story of God’s people?
- Why is it important to keep both of these types of fulfillments in our minds and hearts?

*18For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.*

- Turn to Luke 24: 25-27.
- Take a look at 1 Corinthians 15:3-4
- How does the OT point to Jesus’ life and work on the cross?
- Finally, flip to Romans 6:8
- In what ways do we see “everything...accomplished” in the new creation unleashed by Jesus’ death.

*19Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

- Practice and teach. Word and deed.
- How do Jesus' words call you to speech and action?

*20For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.*

- A sobering word.
- And a good prompt to re-read 2 Peter 1:3-11

*3His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us by His ownmglory and excellence. 4Through these He has given us His precious and magnificent promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, now that you have escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*

*5For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; 6and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. 8For if you possess these qualities and continue to grow in them, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9But whoever lacks these traits is nearsighted to the point of blindness, having forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.10Therefore, brothers, strive to make your calling and election sure. For if you practice these things you will never stumble, 11and you will receive a lavish reception into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

This week's spiritual discipline is Confession and self-examination. Here is Calhoun's definition. Pay attention; it might surprise you:

Self-examination is a process whereby the Holy Spirit opens my heart to what is true about me. This is not the same thing as neurotic shame-inducing inventory. Instead it is a way of opening myself to God within the safety of divine love so that I can authentically seek transformation. Confession embraces Christ's forgiveness and restoration while setting us on the path to renewal and change.

- What stands out to you in this definition?
- What might it look like for you to put this practice into action this week?