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“Paradox Principles for Life”

Luke 9:43-48

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There are several times in the Bible that we read about paradoxes as teaching tools. A paradox is a statement that seems contradictory or absurd but is actually valid or true. In this message Pastor Gary takes a look at five paradoxes that seem to be contradictory but are, in fact, important principles for us. These are counterintuitive statements from God that prove to be true and valuable lessons for life.

1. Which one of us is the greatest?
 - a. Pastor Gary said, “Jesus... [took] a little child and [set] the little child next to him and [used] the child as a living example to teach these immature adults.
2. A paradox is a statement that seems contradictory or absurd but is actually valid or true.
 - a. Pastor Gary said, “There are several paradoxes throughout the Bible that Christians need to understand, and really, not just Christians but anybody, even if you are not a Believer because these are principles that [God’s Word] teaches that are necessary to understand for life.”
3. To be great, you must be least
 - a. [Luke 9:48](#) - “...[Jesus] said to them, ‘Whoever receives this little child in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me. For he who is least among you all will be great.’ ”
 - b. Pastor Gary said, “When Jesus talked about being great, he meant doing great things for God so that he can get the glory, not being great so that you can get the glory. God will never share his glory with another, so he doesn’t make people great to exalt man; he uses people in great ways to exalt himself. And this is the idea behind greatness: that wherever God plants you, however God wants to use you, he wants you to be great for him that he

might be exalted, which is why it's so important to use whatever position he's put you in, whatever stage of life, whatever influence he's given you, you need to do it in a way that brings him glory to make him known. ... The way we are going to be great for him is to be least among men. ... [If] we are humble, then God can use us to our maximum, but if we are haughty and proud and arrogant, God can't use us... because we are not really reflecting him. ... We have to model his character. ... In [Matthew 18:2](#) when a similar story transpires, Jesus actually [said], *'You must become as little children.'* [Jesus said in [Matthew 18:4](#)], *'Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.'* ... So, in effect, what Jesus was calling people to [do was to give up their status, rights, and humble themselves] before God. ... [Then] trust God to promote you and take care of you and use you for his sake. Aspire to do great things for God! ... In order to do that, though, you must become least so that he can become great through us. ... less of us and more of Jesus so that he may become great through our leastness."

- i. [John 3:30](#) - *"He must increase, but I must decrease."* - John the Baptist

4. To be strong, you must be weak

- a. [2 Corinthians 12:7-10](#) - *"And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."*
- b. Pastor Gary said, "[Paul wrote about a physical affliction or a spiritual attack, but whichever it was], we know that he suffered, and we also know that he prayed that his suffering would be relieved. ... We should never hyper-spiritualize things and say, 'Well, my suffering is just the lot that God [gave] me and I should [just] accept it.' ... [There's nothing wrong with praying that God would take away your suffering; Paul prayed in that way, and Jesus did too, right in the Garden of Gethsemane right before he was crucified. When Jesus prayed, he meant the cup of suffering. Jesus prayed and asked if there was another way to accomplish the plan of redemption that it would happen in a different way. ... [If] God does not take [suffering] away then it is in order to produce a weakness so that through our weakness we will find our strength in God's grace. Good, godly people sometimes go through life with suffering and sometimes never get relief this side of heaven, but [these

people] serve as testimonies of God's sustaining grace, and Paul was one such saint."

- i. [Luke 22:41-42](#) - *"And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed, saying, 'Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.' "*
- ii. [Isaiah 40:29-31](#) - *"He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."*

5. To be wise, you must be a fool

- a. [1 Corinthians 3:18-20](#) - *"Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, 'He catches the wise in their own craftiness.'; and again, 'The LORD knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.' "*
- b. Pastor Gary said, "There is a wisdom of this age that is foolishness in God's sight. Man thinks that he has all of the answers only to expose his ignorance in the process. ... What we need is wisdom from above, and the only way we are going to be wise is to admit that we are fools, [who don't know anything]! God knows everything and we know nothing, and he is the dispenser of wisdom - all wisdom. ... There's a big difference between knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. Knowledge comes through education, [and] it's the accumulation of information. Understanding is the interpretation of that information. But wisdom is the application of [information]. And if you don't have wisdom from above, you can be very, very smart and have a lot of education and a lot of letters after your name and not be wise at all. ... God wants us to apply wisdom from above. God wants us to have his understanding of what it is to really be wise, and we cannot be wise in our own eyes because [we would just be fools]."
 - i. [Proverbs 4:7a](#) - *"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom."*

6. To receive, you must give

- a. [Luke 6:38](#) - *"Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."*
- b. Pastor Gary said, "God promises that he will not only take care of us... [he] will supply us more than we need. He is the supplier of all things. ... It's interesting how a stingy hand results in poverty [and] a generous hand results in generosity. ... I just want us to live by the principles of God's Word."

- i. [2 Corinthians 9:6](#) - *"... He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully."*
- ii. [Proverbs 11:24](#) - *"There is one who scatters, yet increases more; and there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty."*

7. To find your life, you must lose it

- a. [Matthew 16:24-25](#) - *"Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.'"*
- b. Pastor Gary said, "There are so many people in this world who are trying to find meaning and purpose in life, and they are looking in all of the wrong places, trying to find fulfillment and satisfaction. ... [There's] an instinctive need in every single one of us to have purpose and meaning [in our lives]. The problem is that if you don't know Jesus, you are going to be searching for purpose and meaning in all of the wrong places that will only temporarily satisfy but never for the long term. There will be moments of feeling happy or satisfied or content until you need to go to the next thing and then the next thing and then the next thing. Hopefully, you will find the ultimate one, who is Jesus. But in order to find life, you have to die to self. ... You have to die to your own selfish ambitions; you have to die to your own sins; and you are going to have to turn to him because he is the author of life and the giver of life, and he makes life available to all who would believe and receive. ... If you only live for this life, you will come to miss the life that is to come, but if you surrender this life to Jesus, if you die to self and follow Jesus, you will not only find fulfillment and satisfaction and contentment in this present life but also in the life to come, which is eternal life. There is a reward that awaits every believer in Jesus. Heaven is open wide to all who would confess their sins, believe in Jesus, trust him as Lord and Savior, and when you come to that place of full surrender, then you will really find life."
 - i. [John 10:10](#) - *"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."*

Discussion Questions

1. Read [Luke 9:43-48](#) to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Read the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
3. Discuss the contrast of Jesus' selfless nature to that of the disciples.

4. What does Jesus teach about human nature from this account? (See #1a above)
5. Read and discuss the working definition for a paradox. (See #2 above)
6. Read [Luke 9:48](#) and invite the people in your group to share a time when they saw God exalted because of someone's humility and desire to make God known. (See #3a above)
7. Read and discuss [Matthew 18:2](#) and [Matthew 18:4](#) and invite the people in your group to discuss ways they have witnessed people in their lives go from proud to humble and how God was glorified. (See #3b above)
8. Read [John 3:30](#) and invite the people in your group to share ways people might decrease so that God can increase. (See #3b-i above)
9. Read [2 Corinthians 12:7-10](#) and invite the people in your group to share a time when God said to them "My grace is sufficient for you." (See #4a above)
10. Spend time talking about the difference between knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. (See #5b above)
11. Read [Luke 6:38](#) and allow the people in your group to give God praise for the times he has taken care of them and supplied them with more than they needed? (See #6a above)
12. Spend time talking about the instinctive need in every single one of us to have purpose and meaning.
13. Read [Matthew 16:24-25](#) and discuss what it means to lose your life for Jesus' sake, in order to find your life. (See #7a above)
14. Spend time talking about what it means to 'die' to selfish ambitions and sins.
15. Allow the people in your group to share how they came to the point of realizing Jesus is all they need to sense purpose, meaning and fulfillment.
16. Read [John 10:10](#) and invite the people in your group to share how they have had life more abundantly with Jesus as Lord of their life. (See #7b-i above)
17. Review the five paradox's and invite the people in your group to share of a specific paradox that has been especially impactful to their spiritual growth. (See #3, #4, #5, #6, and #7 above)
18. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)