

Intro: H1N1 has been a big story this past year. But it has gotten under control, but right now a case of PCD is running rampant. The outbreak of PCD is a big deal. People are feeling lethargic, physically ill, families are hurting because PCD is spreading at a tremendous rate. **PCD is Post Christmas Depression**- all the build up, hype, and stress of the holidays has left many people feeling empty. The cause of PCD isn't exactly clear- it can be something as simple as getting a vacuum instead of the diamond earrings you wanted, or burning the Christmas turkey to a crisp, or getting annoyed by Uncle Jim and his incessant desire to discuss politics. But the causes of PCD can be much weightier- the loss of a loved one in the last year, and looking at their empty seat around the Christmas dinner, the unfulfilled desire to have someone to enjoy Christmas time with, the absence of children, a lack of love in the house- or maybe just a sinking feeling that while everyone else is joyful, you feel that there really isn't that much to celebrate. PCD can be very damaging.

The reality of PCD sank in with me this last week on my way home from vacation. We departed from Santa Fe on Wednesday morning, and there was a small amount of ice and snow on the road as we left town heading for Dallas. On a two lane road about 10 minutes outside of Santa Fe, we found ourselves riding behind a VW bug. In what seemed like the flash of an eye, on this two lane highway, a Suzuki coming from the other direction hit a patch of ice and came barreling into our lane. The Suzuki first hit the VW, and then both cars came slamming into us. Both of their cars were totaled beyond recognition, and ours was severely damaged. 3 of the four people in the other car are in critical condition, and one of them passed away right before our eyes. The one couple, from which the man passed away had been married for 30+ years and had 3 sons. In fact they were driving to Austin to see one of their sons for Christmas. The other couple, of whom both were critically injured were heading back from their father's funeral the previous day. You talk about a case of PCD. Death, injury, loss, and heartbreak around this Christmas season, and I am betting none of them really feel like celebrating. From the things I saw with my eye and the pain I have felt in my body the past week, it seemed easier not to preach today, but in all reality the truth of this message was applied directly to my heart.

Although PCD is centered around the holiday season, it is really just a glimmer of a deeper human condition - The desire to be fulfilled. The commercial Christmas seasons is built entirely upon being fulfilled. Whether it is the onslaught of being fulfilled by the perfect gift, the perfect party, or the perfect time with family and friends, many people find the hype outweighs the payoff. Fulfillment is missed and emptiness sets in. This is but a glimmer of the larger picture. People search for fulfillment but finding it fleeting in the myth of next. My next job will fulfill me. My next house will fulfill me. My next car will fulfill me, my next spouse will fulfill me. Invariably, next never delivers- the equation for fulfillment in the world always comes up short. Rich or poor, young or old, single or married, sick or healthy- everyone at some point has asked- is this all there is? Where will I find fulfillment?

If you do not believe this is at the core of the human condition, that PCD is but an expression of humanity's desire to be fulfilled- look at the NY Times best seller lists full of self help books. Scour the internet for advice on living well. Watch motivational speakers push unattainable goals of riches and fame. In all of these- they are selling fulfillment- through better salaries, better love lives, better homes, better vacations, better fitness. This truth is evident in the small child who is sick to their stomach after consuming endless amounts of holiday treats, it is evident in the person who got everything on their

wish list, but still feels empty, it is evident in the person who pulled off the perfect Christmas from presents to parties to decorations- and still feels a lingering emptiness. With all of the books, all of the talk shows, all of the sales- it seems like selling fulfillment is the best strategy ever, because those in the know understand it cannot be had in more, better or next. All of this begs the question- how do we find fulfillment? How do we avoid the doldrums of PCD around this season? But on a much larger scale, how do we avoid the carousel ride of more, better and next? What is the vaccine for the fast spreading epidemic of PCD?

Series Reset- final week of our series *Wonderfull* Christmas. During the Christmas season, we get bogged down by endless checklists, parties, and preparations and many times end up only partially celebrating this momentous time of year- the entry of God into this world. The season some 2000 years ago where the greatest gift of all was given. In each of these weeks, we have moved towards a full appreciation and celebration of this season with this reoccurring theme of fullness. The Greek word- *plyroma* that pops up time and again- meaning full, complete- perfect. We studies the timing of Christmas as Paul declared in Galatians that Jesus was born in the fullness of time- the simple truth that God is always on time. In the past two weeks we have understood the amazing truths that Jesus was fully God and fully man. He was fully man so that he could enter into our condition, but he was also fully God so that he could save us from our condition. And now in this final week- what does a full life look like? Where is fulfillment to be found? How do we embark on a wonderful life? The truths about the timing and essence of Jesus are foundational- but we must now live in light of the implications. Jesus did not come, live, die and become resurrected so that we could go to Heaven. Praise God this is true- but there is so much more. Jesus said he came to give life- abundant and eternal. John 10:10- abundant life- full life, fulfilled life. So why does it seem so fleeting? Why do we often find ourselves quoting this verse but rarely finding its application?

How do we find fulfillment? How do we live a *wonderfull* life? What I want to avoid today is platitudes. It would be easy to quickly answer this question today with religious and spiritual clichés. For every person experiencing PCD, you need Jesus. True though it may be, it is similar to telling a person who is out of shape that to fix their condition- they need to go to the gym? Then what? And do what? How much? Which way? In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he prays for full lives of the believers. Very specifically he highlights where we lack and what we need. Through his prayer for the church- a couple of simple truths are highlighted for the full life.

READ Ephesians 3:14-21

The boundless love of Christ gives everything meaning

Understanding the depth of his love leads to the heights of this life.

The infinite love of Christ gives finite lives meaning

How wide, how deep, and how long is the love of Christ.

I. Our hearts long for something to worship

- A. Ephesus was a religious city long before Christianity showed up on the scene. Ephesus was a huge bustling port city known as the supreme metropolis of Asia. It was a cultural, political and

economical hub of Asia minor because it was at a strategic hub in the shipping lanes, and it brought people from all walks of life and all of their faith beliefs. The Roman governor of the region lived in Ephesus. Thinking of it in modern terms if their Rome was like our modern day NYC- then Ephesus was like our modern LA. Ephesus was home to the temple of the goddess Diana. Diana or Artemis as she is sometimes called was the goddess of fertility and also of hunting and strength. The temple of Diana was home to countless prostitutes whom people could worship with, and the amount of money given to Diana or changing hands at her temple led to her temple being called the bank of Asia minor. In this huge bustling society, idol worship was connected to sex, money, and power.

- B. I was blessed with the opportunity to travel to Greece and Turkey this fall and I saw countless amazing things- but one thing still blows me away. The library of Celsus is a beautiful structure that I am sure at one time held many classical tomes and was a place of renown and education. What is more amazing than the library itself is the remnants of a somewhat secret passageway from the library into the building that lay beside it, which just happened to be a brothel. This is just a small picture of the society Paul is writing to. One that is courageous enough to tout the rigors of academia, and one that is sneaky enough to connect it to a brothel.
- C. Before Christianity- Ephesians were religious people- they worshipped a false god in Diana that was tied to sex, money, and power. They were religious people. All people long for something to worship. Tim Keller says our hearts are idol factories. We consistently manufacture new things to bow down before as idols. Simply defined, an idol is anything that takes its place above God. Idols are not wooden or clay objects- they are the things we give our attention, our money, and our time towards. Our hearts long for something to worship.
- D. For those people who claim to be atheistic, they still long for something to worship. All of humanity longs for a cause, which in effect is an expression of their desire to worship. Their desire to be a part of something bigger than ourselves. Everyone has a cause, everyone's heart longs for something to worship. Sometimes these are noble causes, sometimes they are not:
- E. Illus- Billboards, commercials, internet- save the Just watch and see what comes up. I am not putting down eco-friendly desires to save certain habitats or certain species- but Google search "save the..." and see what comes up. When I did this- one cause stuck out to me. This is a real website and a real cause- www.savethelight.org is dedicated to saving the Morris Island lighthouse. This centuries old lighthouse has been distanced from the beach by several hundred yards and it is no longer in working condition. It has no function, and you can't even go inside of it- and so the coastguard decided to tear it down. An outcry from town arose, and people banded together to save the lighthouse. They raised enough money to buy the lighthouse and now they have raised another 4.5 million dollars to continue to preserve this lighthouse that still serves no function and still allows no one inside. I forgot to mention- this lighthouse is located on Folly Island.
- F. Our hearts long for something to worship- we desire things that deserve our attention, time, and money. We were created with a drive and passion to make a difference and to give our lives over to something. The problem is simple- Our longing for something to worship rarely leads us to the throne of the Father. Not unlike the Ephesians- we are drawn to money, sex, and power. Our hearts tarry on the temporal. We look for satisfaction and fulfillment in that which can be consumed. We believe in the myth of next. What we don't realize is that day after day, our allegiance to Christ can be cluttered with other objects of affection. A perfect picture of

this is seen in the city of Ephesus itself. When you walk the streets today, you walk down a long beautiful street towards what used to be the waterfront- the source of life for the Ephesian people. But now today that source of life is some 6 miles away. What happened? Ephesus was situated on the Cayster river, this river carried large amounts of silt everyday towards the ocean. Day by day, this pushed the water, the source of life further away. Just a little bit of silt, each day. Pushed them further and further from the thing they were built upon. This is the same problem facing the Ephesians, this is the same problem facing us. Our hearts long for something to worship, and many times we allow in a little bit of silt- something that takes a little bit more of our time, attention, our resources or talents. Before we realize it- we are miles away from our source.

II. Find fulfillment in the measure of His love.

- A. 3:14-15 I bow my knee before the Father of all families. As you read the Old and New Testament- it is rare to see someone bow to pray. They would normally stand with hands outstretched. Paul probably addressed this idol driven culture with something they knew and gave it new meaning. For the glory of the church and the joy of salvation- I kneel before the one true creator God.
- B. 16-19- Prays for strength to reside with Christ, and prays for the ability to know his love. All of this leads to the fullness of being filled up with God. His strength and his love.
- C. Two side notes- X dwelling in you and knowing his love that surpasses understanding. Both of these allude to an obsession with Jesus. Both point to the centrality of Christ to a person who feels wholeness. They do not experience PCD because they do not rest in the consumption of things for fulfillment. Rather – this is a pure and holy passion.
- D. Dwell- has less of the idea of the esoteric concept of God living inside of you- this greek verb connotes living with, close proximity—daily life. Dwell in you- with you- by you. This shows Christ at the center. This word debunks ATM Jesus. This word debunks spiritual rabbit's foot Jesus. This idea debunks health and wealth Jesus. He is not a sidenote or endnote - He is the center. You dwell with him.
- E. Know and comprehend the love that surpasses knowledge. This love- the width, length, breadth, and depth- this all encompassing deep love that surpasses human comprehension. He is alluding to something beyond measure- imagine how Paul is saying this- the height, the width, the depth- on and on it goes. It is vast, it is endless. Dive into the depth of it. Experience its width. Oxymoron- know that which unknowable. This again points to an obsession- a desire for more- being satiated in your experience of him, but also endlessly longing for more. Being satisfied in your knowledge of him, but constantly desiring more. The Christian life is often distilled down to avoiding that which is bad, that which is sinful. Complete books, events, and movies are dedicated to illuminating and then avoiding the evils of this world. The problem is, this reduces the Christian life to an endless tightrope walk with little meaning and even less joy.
- F. Illus- Many of you/ us will be embarking on NYR to diet in 2010. Invariably- we will begin to focus on that which we cannot have. Avoiding the pizza. Dodging the Oreos. We force down vegetables and other healthy things, and then resume our process of avoiding the bad things. This type of diet never works- a person has to turn towards that which they are called to and learn to love it. The day comes, when a person desires delicately sautéed vegetables to a plate of fried chicken anyday. Why? Didn't walk the

tightrope towards nowhere. Taste and see that the Lord is good. Do not become ensconced in battle of avoiding sin, and constantly watching out for evil. To do justice, love goodness and walk humbly with your God.

- G. From the OT, Jesus quotes a story describing his impending death on the cross, that illustrates this point amazingly- Numbers 21- the people of Israel in their Exodus are attacked by serpents. God commands Moses to make a bronze snake for the people to look upon so that they would be healed. The point is not that this medal had healing powers- but rather their faith to overlook the other possible snakes and pitfalls and look up to him. It would have been easier to watch the ground and make sure that no more snakes would bite- but surely this would still lead to death. Jesus says the same thing. Taste and see that I am good. Become obsessed- dwell with me- know the unknowable- dive into the depths of my infinite love, and know the heights of this life.
- H. He closes this section up with a doxology- or simply worship. And he again talks about measure- glory to the one who can do more than all we ask or imagine. His ability, his blessing is beyond measure. His love is wide, vast, endless- unknowable- dive into it and ask for more. People misuse this verse and assume that this verse applies to the myth of next. Ask for more love, more knowledge- more of that which will never leave you feeling empty. Find fulfillment in the measure of his love.

Conclusion: My birthday was last Wednesday and I got a phenomenal present.

Wednesday is the day that I got in that horrendous wreck. Wednesday is the day that I totaled my Father-in-laws new GMC Yukon. Wednesday is the day I went to the ER and left with the diagnosis of a concussion and a sprained neck. What kind of birthday gift could I have landed in the midst of all of this? I was reminded of true fulfillment and true meaning in this life. A second later, and I might not have been standing here today. However, the gift is not the preservation of my life, but the reminder of what it should be for. My wife and I got to pray with and comfort both couples as they bruised and broken in their vehicles. I found fulfillment in the measure of his love- that in life or death- he has a plan for me- whether that birthday ended up being my last day or whether I have 60 more- I felt his presence in that situation. I experienced a taste of his love and his peace. You can spend 100 years on this globe, but if you don't experience the love of Christ- I believe you haven't truly ever lived. True fulfillment is elusive. Our hearts lead us to consume for fulfillment to believe the myth of next for fulfillment. Fulfillment is found in the measure of his love- how wide, how deep, how long it is. Don't waste your life try to consume your way to fulfillment, and don't waste your life walking the tightrope to nowhere. From this day forward- into 2010, dive into his endless love, dive into the depths of his joy.