

## **The Jesus Box Self**

### **Consecration**

- *Leviticus 11:44; Matthew 16:24; Luke 9:23; Matthew 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 17:33; Romans 6:11; Galatians 2:20; 1 Corinthians 15:31; Joshua 3:5*

### **Sanctification**

- *Leviticus 20:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; Ephesians 5:18*

**Consecration is what we do; sanctification is what God does.**

- *Joshua 3:5*

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**West Valley Church**  
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## **The Jesus Box: Self**

Many of you know that before we moved here to be your pastor 16 years ago, I was the pastor of the Nazarene Church in Mountain Home, Idaho for eleven years. It's a small town about 45 minutes southeast of Boise. There's really nothing around it for miles; it would only be a potato town except for the Mountain Home Air Force Base, which is about 8 miles outside of town. About 60% of the church was either active or retired military.

If you don't know, the military is famous for their acronyms; they like to name things with big official titles but then reduce them to their first initials. I'll give you some examples, but I apologize to those who are listening to the Spanish translation, because I know it's not going to translate well from English. Some examples are SAC (Strategic Air Command), UAV (Unmanned Aerial Vehicle) or AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System), and over in Tacoma is JBLM (Joint Base Lewis-McCord). Well one acronym that was very common was TDY. TDY stands for Temporary Duty Yonder – that was when a service member was temporarily stationed somewhere else – anywhere from 3 months to 364 days. It had to be less than a year or else they would have to pay you more. Also, a soldier couldn't take his or her family with them on a TDY.

I learned a lot about how to minister in that kind of environment, and how to minister to military families, especially with so many PCS's, rotations and TDY's. We joked about putting a revolving door on the front of the church.

Over the years there I noticed something else: for some in the military, that kind of life tended toward a life of compartmentalization; they would often compartmentalize the different areas of their lives. Here's what I mean: they had the "military duty" part of their lives – that was their work lives or duty box. That meant that for some of them, they would behave and do things in that box that they wouldn't necessarily do in other parts of their life. This was especially true if they had been in combat duty and seen and done horrific things. When they returned home, they were expected to close that box and only open it up again when duty called. If they were on combat duty, they were encouraged to box up any other part of their life that hindered them from doing their duty. Soldiers had a home life box where they'd do what was expected of them there. They would even have a church box, where they would attend church, volunteer, and maybe give money. They had a civic box, where they would volunteer in their community – and often, doing those things helped them get promoted in their duty box. Again, this wasn't true for all soldiers, but it was true for many. In each box they would behave differently, especially when it came to duty. I remember one conversation I had with the Base Commander about this, and he was very proud of how well he could compartmentalize his life. He said that for truly successful officers, it was a necessity. The problem was, from my observation, that it could wreak havoc on their personal lives and their faith. I saw that especially in many of their marriages. One phrase that got used a lot was this: "What happens TDY stays TDY." That

meant that whatever you had to do to keep up your morale and do your job was okay while away on TDY – no matter how much it violated your family box or church box or any other box. I counseled several marriages where the soldier had an affair while TDY and justified it because he or she felt it was needed to keep up their morale.

Keeping things boxed up and separate from each other was especially true if they came home with PTSD, which many, many did after 9/11 and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. All this would very often lead to fractured personal lives.

I hope that encourages us to pray for our military personnel and families – they make sacrifices for our country and the world that change their entire lives. They are often faced with very difficult decisions where there are no easy answers. Then, when they retire or separate from the military, they have these boxes that they feel like they can't open because people wouldn't understand.

Why am I telling you this? Because it was from observing and working with the military that the concept of the Jesus Box first began to make sense to me. I would often counsel our church folks who were military to begin putting everything into the Jesus Box and begin to live an integrated, whole life in Christ.

To have all these different boxes is to live a dis-integrated life. To live *integrated* means to have integrity; to live your life from *one* place, *one* center, at all times, not from many. One life, one Lord. Let me put it this way: those of you who remember math, what is the definition of an integer? An integer is a *whole* number – not a fraction. A life of integrity is a whole life, not a life of fractions. It means we live our lives from *one* box, not made up of many boxes. The Christian life is a life of integrity; a life lived out of *only one box*, and that's the Jesus Box. One life, One Lord. So we've talked about putting the challenging areas of our lives into the Jesus Box: our work, our relationships, our stress and anxiety and difficulties, our money and conflicts.

This entire series has been leading us to today: to put *everything* in our lives into the Jesus Box. So today we will conclude by deciding whether or not we will put *ourselves* – our entire lives – in the Jesus Box. We are talking about...

## **Consecration.**

Consecration is the act of giving ourselves completely to God – putting our lives in the Jesus Box. This isn't a new idea or even a New Testament command; at the very beginning when God gave the law to Moses, he said this:

“I am the LORD your God; *consecrate* yourselves and be holy, because I am holy.”  
(Leviticus 11:44, niv)

This is the answer to a whole and complete life.

There are far too many Christians who are more than happy that the guilt of their sin has been removed and they've been forgiven, and are more than happy that Christ saved them and gave his life for them, but at the same time are not so willing to give *their* lives to him. My church family: you can't read very far into the New Testament before you come across the expectation that we are to give our lives for Christ. In fact, it starts in the third chapter

of Matthew, the first book of the New Testament. Chapters one and two are about Christ's birth and all the events around that. Then in chapter three Jesus is baptized and begins his ministry. In that chapter, John the Baptist calls the religious people to surrender to God, and Jesus picks it up from there; Jesus gets very clear about this in Matthew 16:24 –

Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." (Matthew 16:24, Luke 9:23, niv)

He's recorded saying the same thing in Luke 9. This means to die to ourselves and follow Jesus.

That's some very clear, unambiguous direction. So what does it mean to be consecrated? Well, it means to be set-apart. Think about the winter Olympics that we've been watching; those athletes have set themselves apart for a life as an Olympian. To be consecrated means to set yourself apart, *to devote yourself completely to God*.

Let me put it this way (I've used this analogy before): say you've got a pen or a pencil in your hand. That thing was *set apart* to be a writing instrument. *It was made for that*. You *could* use it for something else; maybe clean your ears with it – but that's not what it was made for. It might even sort of work for that, but it was *set apart* to be a writing instrument, and it's most useful when it is used in the ways it was made for. *You were made to be in a relationship with God and to be godly, or to be holy, or to be like Jesus Christ (it is all the same thing), and to make a positive difference in this world*. Now, you can do other things with your life, but that would make as much sense as sticking a pencil in your ear. To be consecrated means to be committed totally, completely, set apart for God and his purposes – to the extent that there is nothing of yourself left. It means you give *all of yourself* – your choices, your actions, your schedule, your money, your time – *everything* in your life is fully given to God. It is literally telling God that he can have control of everything in your life, and then living completely for him. This is the only way to experience true life. Remember that verse we just read where Jesus said that we must deny ourselves and take up our cross – literally be crucified for him? In the *very next verse* he says:

"For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it." (Matthew 16:25, Mark 8:35, Luke 17:33, niv)

Put your life in the Jesus Box. It's the only way to truly live.

Again, this is literally telling God that he can have control of everything in your life and then living completely for him. The Bible describes this as "dying to self" or "crucifying" ourselves so that God can live completely in us. The Apostle Paul said it this way:

"In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus."  
(Romans 6:11, niv)

Completely dead to sin, completely alive in Christ. So if you understand this, then what Paul wrote in Galatians 2:20 begins to make much more sense. Listen and see carefully what Paul said:

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself

for me. (Galatians 2:20, niv) *(repeat)*

In fact, this was so much a part of Paul's life, that he just plainly said:

I face death, every day – yes. (1 Corinthians 15:31, niv)

Dying to self daily.

In a moment, you and I are going to have the opportunity to consecrate ourselves to God, whether for the first time or in a new way.

Do you want to see God move in your life? Do you want to see God move among us? He will. But we must consecrate ourselves.

When the Israelites had been delivered out of Egypt in that miraculous story that we read about in Exodus, they wandered the desert for forty years because of their stiff-necked resistance to God – they refused to give themselves fully to him. As a result, they didn't go straight into the Promised Land but took a forty-year circuitous hike detour. God still provided for them and did miraculous things for them because he never gave up on them, but an entire generation had to pass away before they could enter the Promised Land. Moses was no longer among them, and Joshua was now their leader, and they were on the literal brink of the Jordan River; on the east bank. The promised land was right across the river. Joshua gathered the people together and said this:

Joshua told the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you." (Joshua 3:5, niv)

Do you want to see God do amazing things among us? Then consecrate yourselves. Put your entire life into the Jesus Box. And like the Apostle Paul, we have to "*die every day. Yes.*"

When you and I are willing to do that (and be more serious and devoted than an Olympic athlete), then God will do something amazing in your life. God wants you to be saved and set apart so that you can experience him in a profound way. *Consecration is our part.* And consecration gives way to...

## **Sanctification,**

...which means to be holy – to be like Christ. When you are saved, you are alive again; you are a "new creation" according to 2 Corinthians 5:17. The old has gone and the new has come it says. You are now fully alive in your spirit; before that, the Bible says that you were dead in your sins, dead in your spirit. When you accept what Christ has done for you on the cross, you become alive in your spirit. Then, when you give yourself fully to him, he is able to fill you completely with *His Spirit*, in every nook and cranny of your life. This is called "sanctification" – God makes you holy. You and I *cannot* make ourselves holy – only God makes things holy. What we *can* do is consecrate ourselves to him so that he can make us holy. Consecration is what we do; sanctification is what God does. God will not fill a vessel that is already filled with something else; in this case, yourself. Putting myself in the Jesus Box means I am emptying myself of me so that he can fill me with Him – the Holy Spirit. God makes you holy. Again, he said it way back when he gave the Law through Moses:

"I am the LORD, who makes you holy." (Leviticus 20:8, niv)

We don't make ourselves holy; only he can do that.

Christians spend a lot of time trying to figure out what God's will is for their lives: does God want me to do this? Does God want me to do that? What job should I take? What career should I pursue? What person should I marry? How does he want me to act? What do I do with money? But there is specifically one thing that *is* God's will and it is very, very clear:

"It is God's will that you should be sanctified." (1 Thessalonians 4:3, niv)

Would you read that with me? "It is God's will that you should be sanctified." If God wills it, and it is God who does it, don't you think if you consecrate yourself to him, he will do it? Of course he will! To be sanctified means to be made holy – to have the character and nature of Jesus Christ – this is what happens as you are Spirit-filled. To put yourself in the Jesus Box is to let him be in charge of your life, not you:

"Be filled instead with the Holy Spirit and controlled by him." (Ephesians 5:18, tlb)

This is where some Christians stop short. Sure, they'll realize that they are running into problems in some parts of their lives, and they realize that Jesus has the answers. So they will put their work, their relationships, their stressful circumstances, their money, their conflict and other things into the Jesus Box so that he can "fix them." But they stop short of putting *themselves* in the Jesus Box; we don't want to consecrate ourselves, so sanctification won't happen. We're afraid to let God have control – we don't want to give up control. But if we don't, we will fall short of the abundant life God promised. We won't see God do the amazing things among us that he wants to do. We'll continue to battle with sin in our lives and always be mediocre Christians who don't even make a dent in this world because we're too surrounded by our own sin and selfishness.

A guy named George Hartsuff of Maryland landed in jail for two months for refusing to clean up his stuff. He can't say he wasn't warned. City officials had been asking him to do some cleaning for years. Court action to ensure compliance was finally taken. Authorities gave him 30 days to clean out the boats, crab pots, vending machines, and all the debris and trash that littered his Maryland yard. When he failed to do it, he was sentenced to 60 days in prison.

Hartsuff and his lawyer insisted they were doing their best to tidy things up; they'd already hauled away four 30-yard dumpsters, all filled to capacity. But it barely made a dent. City officials were fed up.

County spokesperson Tracie Reynolds said, "This cycle will keep going until the property is cleaned up. The site would get cleaned a bit, and it got messy again...it was never brought into compliance."<sup>1</sup>

Consecration brings our life into compliance. That guy's yard is a picture of the sins in our lives if we aren't willing to consecrate ourselves so we can be sanctified. The cycle of accumulation, cleaning, accumulation, cleaning, sinning, asking forgiveness, sinning, asking forgiveness, will just keep repeating itself and cause us damage until we consecrate ourselves and God will sanctify us.

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<sup>1</sup> Associated Press, "Maryland Man Gets Jail Time for Junky Yard," [www.abcnews.com](http://www.abcnews.com), (8/22/07)

***Consecration is what we do; sanctification is what God does.***

When we are saved by Christ and then we consecrate ourselves for him, he can sanctify us by filling us with his Holy Spirit. It is then that we find real freedom, power, and significance. We put our lives in the Jesus Box so he can fill us with His Spirit and He lives out *his* life in us.

Listen again to the promise from Joshua that is for you, right now, today:

“Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you.”  
(Joshua 3:5, niv)

This promise is for you, for us today – *if* we will put our lives in the Jesus Box.

I told you I’m going to give us the opportunity to place ourselves in the Jesus Box. If that’s what you want to do, you’ll notice that there are several tables around the room. On them are these boxes. There are also slips of paper and pens. You’ll want to write your name on it. You might take another paper to write any of the other things we’ve talked about – job, relationships, stress and anxiety, money, conflicts, or anything else you need to surrender to Jesus. You will want to go to a table, write those things down on pieces of paper, and then get a box, fold it so that it is a box and put your papers in it. (But if you don’t put *yourself* in the Jesus Box, it won’t make a lasting difference.) Then return to your seat and remain in prayer. As soon as we are all done, we will close the service together.

If you have significant age or health issues that make it too difficult for you to go to a table, please remain where you are, raise your hand, and we will bring a little “kit” to you so you can do it where you sit.

*Pray/invite*

*Benediction:*

Remember: we must “die daily. Yes.” It is a daily placing ourselves in the Jesus Box. Stand:

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.

(1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, niv)