

Does What You Want From Your Christian Life Flow From A Relationship? Bill Loveless

I recently went through a period of brokenness as a result of making ministry a higher priority than my relationship with God. God revealed to me during this time there is no higher priority in my life than my relationship with Him and that my ministry will flow from that relationship. As I am refocusing my attention upon Him, I am beginning to experience ministry at new levels. As I have given deeper thought to this issue of relationship with God and the overflow of that relationship, I am seeing in new ways that this principle applies in several (if not all) areas of our Christian life. I would like to share a few examples.

One pertains to marriage. As I was teaching the last marriage conference, I remember the Lord putting these words in my mouth to share: "Marriage is not about marriage. Marriage is about a relationship that God uses to draw you individually into a deeper relationship with Him. The overflow of that relationship with Him will produce the harmony, intimacy, and oneness that you desire in your marriage relationship."

Let's apply this truth to the issue of evangelism. For most of my Christian life evangelism was a religious duty that was expected of me as a Christian. I took courses on evangelism. I dutifully passed out evangelism tracts. I failed miserably at sharing Christ because I did not really know the One that I was told to share about with others. And, I did not want to experience the rejection that can come with sharing the gospel. However, telling unbelievers about Jesus today just comes naturally. Why? As a result of developing a relationship with Christ and experiencing His love, power, and transformation in my life, it is now very easy to share Christ for salvation and for life.

A final example is the development of a Christ-like attitude (Philippians 2:5). Examples of a Christ-like attitude are listed in Galatians 5:22, 23: Love, joy, peace, patience, etc. As we focus on our relationship with Christ, these Christ-like attitudes will eventually be a natural flow as a result of that relationship.

Why relationship is so important to understand is that it differentiates between religion and spirituality. Religion ALWAYS attempts to produce the overflow that can only come from our relationship with God apart from that relationship. Let's apply this principle to the examples we have just discussed. In marriage religion focuses on how man must self-manufacture harmony, intimacy, and oneness in marriage. As a result, conferences and curriculum are centered around tips and techniques that one needs to accomplish in order to produce these qualities in marriage. Early in our marriage Paige and I attended several of these types of conferences and tried to manufacture these qualities. We failed miserably! As it pertains to evangelism religion makes "training" on how to evangelize the priority rather than on knowing the One about which we are presenting. The result is that evangelism becomes a religious duty rather than a godly desire. Concerning a Christ-like attitude, how many books, sermons, etc. have been written or spoken that tell you how to attain God's peace, patience, love, etc.? How many of those steps, methods, or formulas have produced a Christ-like attitude in you?

It is no wonder that the author of Hebrews says in 12:2 to fix your eyes on Jesus. As you do, rivers of living water will flow in you and through you (John 7:38). That flow of living water will produce ministry; harmony, intimacy and oneness in marriage; a desire to evangelize; a

Christ-like attitude; and so much more! It also produces a deeper hunger and a thirst for God Himself. Therefore, Paige and I pray for you the encouragement given by Paul in Colossians 2:7 (NLT):

“Let your roots grow down into Him and draw up nourishment from Him, so you will grow in faith, strong and vigorous in the truth you were taught. Let your lives overflow with thanksgiving for all He has done.” Amen!

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