

The Self

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What follows is a lecture transcript, delivered as part of the college course, “Christian Dynamics in Psychological Perspectives” offered during the Fall Semester, 1977, at Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, OK. It serves as a clinical description of discovering the mastery of conviction built into the human soul.

Let us see if we can determine God’s strategy as it relates to a sort of biblical progression. In the Old Testament, there is evidence in the example of Israel of a very real strategy. Abraham should be a blessing and he should bring redeeming power to all the families of the earth. In him should come something new in the full movement of God’s enterprise. In Abraham, a special called of people, Israel, are to be a prepared people who are continually becoming. They are to be a demonstration put in the highway of a nation in the very center of that day. They are a pilot project of what God means, is and can do for people. Israel’s demonstration is to be seen out in the open. It is to be done in such a fashion and of such quality that others would see and come to ask of its source. An important concept begins to issue forth: If man can only see God as He really is – while some will rebel against Him – it is this sight that reaches man’s need and will surely conquer.

The strategy, then, by which God intends to bring man unto Himself is the sight of Himself as He is. One way He does this in the Old Testament is through the children of Israel. They were a group who could outlive, outgive, outdo and who could remain as a little handful of people against a multitude. They had such strength, vigor, vitality, and creativity that as they set the example, others came to say, “We want to know our people.” All of this became disturbed by idolatry. God Himself was misunderstood. Instead of the Israelites seeing the divine purpose given to them, they thought they should be overlords of people. Instead of seeing that their call was to serve people, they felt people should serve them. They did not see that they were living demonstrations of what God can do with common, everyday people.

In the New Testament, the strategy of Christ is revealed as a continuation of the concepts found in the Old Testament. There are many examples, but Calvary becomes the supreme picture. That Jesus was willing to adopt the method of the Cross, to save man from himself, without reservation, brings people to behold God the Father. If we want to know who God really is, we must behold His Son.

Shaking Conclusions

It is the contention, here, that the “how” of doing implementation cannot come until we understand fully what can and will happen to us. When the term “us” is used, it will stand for laymen, clergy and every child-saint of God. Our present state is that we have a genuine love for Christ. It has to be true because we have seen and understood things that only the Holy Spirit could motivate us to do. As

we look deep within, however, we find that we do not really love Christ as we ought. We must first come to recognize that if we are honest, the love of Christ is very small within us. We have to begin here.

Perhaps we have tried making ourselves love Christ with greater intensity, but have found that we are unable to do it. We may have discovered that love is not something we can force up out of us by an act of the will. And yet, Jesus said, "Love your neighbor." The truth is that love is of such nature that it comes out of light-life. The only way we can get love is to get light. Therefore, God is willing to give His Spirit to those who ask Him. This Spirit will bring light within us, which begins to generate real power. If we love something enough, it will capture our thinking. Since we need motivation for cross-bearing, self-discipline, self-honesty, and God-likeness, we must ask God to pour fuel on the little flame until compassion burns brightly.

Suppose God answers our prayer for light and love. What will actually happen? Will we have some great Pentecostal power, in which we obtain new spiritual resources, complete deliverance from sin, deliverance from temptation, the evil that is in us driven out, the wrongs we have done will be overcome completely, and we shall find happiness, peace, joy, and completely victorious living? Is this what really happens? This is what we wish would happen. Then God's miraculous power could do it, and we would not have much to do.

It seems to me that what really happens is we find ourselves shoved out into the true stream of life. It may mean we experience more doubts than we ever had before. We will have more of the evil in us exposed to our own view. It means we will have Satan's forces turned loose upon us in greater strength than before. It means that when we solve one set of problems, another set will immediately be raised. If we ask for light and realize what will really take place, there will be a new struggle with sin. There will be a kind of loneliness in the progression of transformation. There will be greater demands from God, like more vicarious suffering. Eventually, the truth will dawn on us that this new experience of light will possess us rather our possessing it.

Now, realizing all this, can we in the deepest part of our being continue to ask God to pour more fuel on the flame? If we are totally honest, we find despairingly that we cannot do it! And yet, this is a healthy thing for us because now, perhaps for the first time, we begin to know what Sin is. Most of us start out knowing what sins are, but none of us really know what Sin is. Suddenly, we discover something inside us that is in direct opposition to God as much as an ice cube is to heat. It resides way down on the inside where we cannot reach it; it is beyond control and most of us are motivated by it. There is, then, something within us that literally hates God, and this discovery humiliates us.

However, it is a healthy discovery, because it is real. Perhaps now, we can more fully understand what is happening to people everywhere. We can understand the drunkard (who does not know what is pushing inside him) and have compassion on him regardless of his behavior, because the closer we get to God, the more we see what Sin is. This the passion we should have for lost people – not simply to save them from Hell – but confused, frustrated, distorted, twisted people who do

not know what is ruining their lives. As we view these concepts, we see how our very lives are under the grace and mercy of a loving Father. There is nothing more productive in all the world than to know that we stand wholly and simply upon the grace of God. This is the most creative energy releaser in the world. The problem comes when it is mixed with lesser things, only to discover it becomes less potent and less productive.

When we discover what Sin is, and what God's strategy in us really is, we can begin to see the resources of life, the potency of abundant life. These potencies have been imprisoned; now they begin to break up and some energies can be found. Perhaps we had heard and thought we knew what Christ's complete acceptance of us was, but now, the meaning of unconditional surrender grows clear. We need to experience a time each day wherein we might ask God to increase our love for Him until it glows with passion. Immediately, we feel we cannot do it. Thus, we must be willing to want to. There is a part of us that wants it and part does not. Therefore, we must ask God to listen only to that part of us that is willing and override the rebellious part. We need to set aside a time each day as a discipline just like we discipline ourselves to do other things, and ask God to listen to the real self that wants proper relationship.

Realizing what God may do through us, with fear and trembling, we must keep on asking until suddenly, from deep within us, will come a projected inner force that has developed into a spontaneous groaning after God. Then we can know that God has begun to answer our prayers. Now, if we can actually find that this is a reality – that prayer is being answered – then we find ourselves being motivated to take a new grip on life. One of the first things that will happen is real awareness that something inside has happened and a process has begun. The process has a quality of repentance, and we begin to repent for being the liar or thief that we used to be. We gain assurance when we discover ourselves saying, "Oh God, it is not just that we want to quit doing certain things, but help us to have the forces of our lives cleansed again."

A Wholly Other Life

We could never do this on our own. Because we discover our dependency upon God and how trustworthy He is, our faith will begin to develop. For the first time, perhaps, we begin to discover who and what we are in the deep regions of life. We have started a process of acquaintance with the real self who truly does want to love God. Now, we no longer have to try to be somebody else or something we are not. We can be content with who we are and the process which the Holy Spirit propels within us. We will stop this world of acting that we have been doing in front of people. We can stop trying to make ourselves out to be what we think people expect us to be. We begin to be what we are.

When persons are freed from the bondage of artificial living, then motivation increases and the vitality astounds us. We will stop mishandling guilt and we will begin doing things simply because of the joy that is in them. When people begin doing things from the perspective of joy, they experience a kind of life which is its own reward. Even our imagination becomes a positive weapon so that the hard

problems do not cause us to run away, but rather, they drive us to more creative energy and endeavors. Those creative energies cause further satisfactory experiences for life. Now, the life begins to develop an earnest joy that flows with the abundant power of God, and this flows deeper than mere happiness, pleasure, or pain. This is a fulfillment of life which is that “abundant life” of which Jesus spoke.

Therefore, this fulfillment of life means that those who possess real joy will be the kind of people who solve the tough problems, and even tackle the “impossible” for God. We even need to come to the place where we could, like the Apostle Paul, share some of Jesus’ burdens and suffer with Him. Then, we would know what real servanthood is, and that God is the greatest Servant. When we lay hold on the real self, it produces joyful motivation such as is found in God Himself. Now, it can flow from the inside out.

Conclusions

In this formula, the final outcome is an adventure of love for the Christian. Too often, we have relegated evangelism and its implementation to only one method or level, without instilling in the hearts of people God’s strategy in all this. To me, this is the reason more of our people are not truly motivated to the kind of action that has a quality of adventure. Place all of these concepts back into the lives of those who make up the local church, and evangelism will once again become a definite sign of maturity of the saints. Free the laymen and clergy from the bondage of artificiality and real life will flow.

Framework for Strategy:

1. All truth is God’s truth (Colossians 1:16-19).
 2. Truth and love are the strongest motivators for persons.
 3. Learn to love self properly, being honest with self and others.
 4. Find or develop an atmosphere, a group in which to learn how to take down masks of artificiality, to come to grips with the real persons we are, so we can develop healthy-mindedness which brings strength for creative search and application of potential.
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