

Volume 3 - Day 1: How You Do Everything

It is likely that as you read the articles in this daily devotional book that you are judging both the content and the author. And if this is true for you, it is also very likely that you do this with everything else you read. It is quite simply the nature of human nature. How you do anything is how you do everything.

How you judge me is how you judge others. How you judge me is how you judge your parents, children, significant others and all others. How you do it is how you do it. There is no escape. And there is no need for escape. Unless, of course, you are not satisfied with how your judgmental nature makes you or others feel.

The good news is this. How you do anything and everything is determined by choice. It is your choices about each encounter you have with any other human beings. And since you chose the manner in which you operate now, you can change your choices as to how you will operate in the future.

Judgment comes in two varieties. One is criticism. The other is discernment. While I am obsessed with criticism, I am essentially rejecting the other person or their point of view. When I am discerning I leave myself open to the possibilities that I might learn something new and valuable from them.

Wisdom would dictate that the latter form of judgment will give me the best possible outcomes in every encounter in life. Therefore, if I would be my best self, it behooves me to change my choices to be discerning rather than critical. The more I can accept anyone else, the more I myself will be accepted. And acceptance is the key to life, love and the pursuit of happiness.

My Confirming Scripture: My Aligning Experiences:.

Vol 3, Day 2: Contemplation as Opposed to Judgment

It seems somewhat ludicrous to have to build a case for contemplation. We are made in an image that is the very essence of love (the highest emotion). Everything we do in life is for the purpose of developing relationships. Yet, we live in such shallow ones that we are often horribly disappointed in others whose actions do not meet our expectations. Yet, our expectations are fundamentally unsound as they are based on incomplete information. This is largely true in that we come to conclusions about the trustworthiness of others based solely upon intellectual analysis or referrals of others.

Contemplation is a key element required in knowing the heart (motives) of others. And it is the motives of others that determine their trustworthiness. Contemplation by its definition and practice actually enables one to feel the heart and soul of another. Without this practice, we leave ourselves open to making decisions (choices) which are based on insufficient information. This leads to all sorts of undesirable or possibly even awful ends.

When we approach the moment (encounter) with a preconceived disposition of rejection, we limit the possibilities. However, discernment is essential and only attainable through contemplation with an open mind. When Jesus said in Matthew 7:1 “Do not judge.” He was encouraging mutual acceptance as the leading strategy for relationship building and intimate knowledge of one another in order to determine the level of mutual trust which might be possible.

Just because you are right does not imply that the other person is wrong and vice versa. Leave room for other points of view while seeking a common motive of love and acceptance.

My Confirming Scripture: My Aligning Experiences:

Volume 3 - Day 3: 'Yes' as Opposed to 'No'

"I think, therefore I am." or "We are what we think." statements leave us with less than optimal experiences of life. To some degree, however, this is actually true because we have made it so. Yet, God refuses to be known by the intellect. God can only be known by the heart. He only allows Himself to be known in relationship.

This is also true of every human being. Relationship is not an intellectual pursuit. Relationship is a matter of the heart alone. The connection which makes mankind stand out as uniquely different from all other living beings is the ability to establish and maintain relationship with each other. And one solid proof of it is this. I can be as aware of and connected with a relative who is far away as I can with one who is standing in front of me.

Uses and abuses of one another come by way of thinking while not emoting. True relationship occurs when and only when genuine affection for another stimulates an other-preferring desire for them. The more I allow myself to embrace another (any other) or to say 'Yes' to them in relationship, the more relationships I will have.

When you start with the 'No' of judgment and personal rejection it is very hard to get back to 'Yes.' And, frankly, you will never be a loving person. When you stop judging and start approaching the moments of encounter with acceptance of the other person, you have a chance of experiencing love for them. The mind is a judgment machine. The heart is the only organ with which we can love.

My Confirming Scripture: My Aligning Experiences:

Volume 3 - Day 4: Praying Without Words

(Contemplative Prayer)

God's therapy for the emotional stress of the human soul is contemplation. Most of the things which trouble us are things that turn out to be unimportant in the final round. When we offer word prayers pleading for release from the turmoil, we often miss the point of praying altogether. Prayer is a time to face the truth about ourselves, the wild beasts of our lives as it were. Prayer is a time to face the humiliation of who we truly are as opposed to who we fantasize ourselves to be.

When we come to the Lord in a speechless manner and humble posture, He can then reveal both the problems with the distemper of our soul and the solution to those problems. Most of them are simply solved by submitting ourselves to the purpose of God in them. In contemplation, we silently ponder the wonder and purpose of God in our current situation. We begin to feel His presence and know why He has put us through what is happening to us in the present moment. And our lack of silence is the only thing that has prevented us from experiencing His healing therapy before.

It is no wonder that we have resisted the silence and the humiliation. Whenever we have gotten close to honesty in the past, we have been shocked at the negative, rebelliousness within us. And we shut down so as to stop the clamor of the voices within us. Yet, if we will persist in silence, enduring the shame, we will find the revelation necessary to set us free from all guilt, shame and fear. We will experience the peace which comes from total surrender and absolute trust of our Father's love. Then we can embrace with anticipation every experience and circumstance in our lives. God uses all of them to bring us to maturity in relationship.

Volume 3 - Day 5: Negative Emotion Triples

“For some reason we get a lot of emotional energy from negative emotions. When we can create a story line from someone’s offense toward us and weave it into a condemnation of them, the negative emotion **triples**. Mostly we see each other with clouded vision and colored glasses. Unless and until we develop different eyes to see each other, we will continue to trash each other emotionally.” — Richard Rohr

Cain murdered his brother because he was jealous of God’s approval of Abel’s sacrifice and rejection of his own. Confronted by God for his crime, Cain begged God to protect him from retribution of others who would take his life in return. Amazingly God placed a mark on Cain which was discernible in a completely illiterate society. The Mark of Cain revealed that anyone who hurt Cain would receive **seven times that hurt** from God Himself. Genesis 4:15. So, in essence, the **emotion actually is multiplied seven fold!**

You have likely experienced road rage or line rage (*anger when someone cuts in line ahead of you*). Your anger is definitely harmful to you, both emotionally or physically. Emotional distress causes all sorts of medical maladies. So, to be honest, even if you don’t express your anger, it is still harmful to you!

There is a terrific alternative. Instead of seething in anger, try to imagine a good reason for their behavior. Remember that you have committed similar crimes. Instead of attacking them, pray for their safety, healing or blessing. This will eliminate your anger and replace it with affection for them. Make every offense against you an opportunity to bring love, blessing and peace to those who offend you.

My Confirming Scripture: My Aligning Experiences:

Volume 3 - Day 6: Consider Your Valuables

There are many things in life that are valuable to you. **Make a list** of everything you consider valuable. Then **create a second list of eternal things** (those which can go with you when you die). **STOP!** Make the list **now!**

You will likely notice that the primary difference between the lists is that the eternal valuables are relationships, things of the spirit. Everything else, health, wealth and physical pleasures will cease upon one's death. Notice also that only relationships cannot be stolen or corrupted by thieves and villains.

Think of it like your relatives and the affections you have for them even while they are hundreds or thousands of miles away. We may actually include people in our temporary list, but when they pass into eternity they then move to the eternal list. Notice also that most of the items in your temporal list are things we can physically handle. Notice that the eternal valuables can be on both lists!

The message of Jesus was all about including as many as possible in our list of valuable persons. The whole story of the Bible is relationship and how to attain it. Jesus said, "Store up treasures in heaven where they cannot be corrupted or stolen." Wholesome relationships are the only thing that can be stored for eternity. Yet, we often destroy the very thing we want most by being critical and negative toward those we hold dear.

The quest before us is to develop an even greater affection for God than for our most significant other on earth. It is only, ever the love of God in us that can be other-caring enough to create and maintain loving attitudes toward others. The best news is that God can be our greatest treasure in life and after death! If you will simply move God into the Top 10 of your Passion Hits List, He will do the rest!

DEEPER Every Day -- John Henry Alan

Volume 3 - Day 7: God Is Not Like Santa Claus

Our minds are often informed by well-meaning but misguided people. Among these are our parents. Other things may be as subtle as the fairy tales we tell our children. A predominant one is told in various forms all over the globe. It is the tale of Santa Claus (St. Nicolas) who brings 'good' children presents every year.

On the surface and with only a casual glance we might conclude that the tale is harmless but also useful. Reinforced by the song, "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town," many children learn to fear that misbehaving will cause them to lose some or all of the presents that Santa might bring them at Christmas.

"Oh, you better watch out. You better not cry. You better not shout, I'm telling you why. Santa Claus is coming to town!" He sees you when you're sleeping. He knows when you're awake. He knows if you've been bad or good. So be good for goodness sake." These words teach us that we must behave well or we will suffer. And often we treat each other and our children in this manner. We may even subconsciously hope to manage our children's behaviors by such tales and songs.

The great tragedy of this is that it also affects how most of us perceive God. We begin to believe that God, not unlike Santa, will give us only dirty rocks if we behave badly. We also tend to believe that He is watching constantly to catch us in wrong doing. And we begin to fear Him. And, although it may be subconscious, this causes us to stay at a 'safe' distance from God.

So what is widely believed to be a harmless tradition, could actually drive a wedge between God and the very children He wants to heap goodness and love upon. To be sure, God does see all and know all. But God is the opposite of Santa. He not only **does not** stand over us waiting to strike us, but rather **struck His very own Son** in His crucifixion so He did not have to strike us. God wants us not to fear Him. He wants always to embrace us with His love!

Stop casting God in the image of Santa! See God for the most loving, tender, caring Father He is! Get up close and personal.