

Let's Fall in Love with God

Chapter 15: Spiritual Guides for the Journey

(John Henry Alan, edited by Bob Clarkson)

{ Pay attention! }

Beware of Relative Truth { 215 }

“And I will give you pastors, according to My heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.” Jeremiah 3:15. The life *abandoned to intimacy with God* for most Christians is elusive. Many strongly desire it, but have not been taught how to become intimate with God. Several things create this dilemma, the greatest of which is that much of what we believe is actually relative truth (because we got it from our relatives) rather than absolute truth. So it is critical that we choose the right voices to inform our souls (that which we believe).

You Need A Mentor { 216 }

Having a spiritual mentor is essential in most cases. You need someone who has taken the journey to intimacy with God and is way ahead of your current experience of God. To be sure, we must abandon any doctrine, tradition, practice or belief which stands between us and acceptance of the unconditional love of God. Most often it is our guilt, shame, anxiety and fear that cause us to keep a *safe distance* between ourselves and God. We think it is necessary to live a holy and morally respectable

life before God. We think that if we live right enough, then we can have intimacy with God. But when we fail, we run away and hide from God.

Well-meaning But Misguided Guides { 217 }

Unfortunately, most pastors and teachers who have become abandoned to intimacy with God, have made some wrong assumptions about how they became sweet on God. Most of them have mistakenly assumed that their *exemplary moral purity*, their *extensive scripture reading*, their countless *prayers and fasting*, and their *meditations* were the cause of their intimacy with God. However, they are sadly and grossly mistaken.

If they were correct in this thinking, only full-time paid professional clergy could attain an intimate relationship with God. The rest of us do not have the same amount of time to dedicate to God. Most of us have real jobs. Remember Brother Lawrence in the kitchen of the monastery. While overwhelmed with the duties of a full-time job, he attained abandon to intimacy with God by a sure and simple method of keeping God in his awareness at all times and in all tasks.

Blind Leading the Blind

Many *so-called* spiritual guides are wandering around with traditions and practices in hand which they believe are a sure pathway to spiritual perfection. And

these may be useful, if your definition of spiritual perfection is anything other than *abandoning to intimacy with God*. Unfortunately as well, self-effort and self-righteousness are proclaimed as a way to draw closer to God. This is absolutely not true. Falling in love is not an exercise of the mind. It is an experience of the heart.

An Appropriate Mentor

Since you have not been taught how to develop intimacy with God by pastors or teachers, ask God to provide a mentor in this specific journey who has actually developed intimacy with God for themselves. You need a mentor who knows what has hindered your love affair with God and how to remove such hindrances. A mentor of intimacy with God will help you discover your misperceptions of God, yourself and others. Such a mentor will help you know the correct perceptions of relationship at all levels. So, not just any mentor will do.

Absolute Truth { 218 }

God's truth is what He says it is, not what we think He should have said. Our twisted and corrupted interpretations of the scripture keep us from what we want most, *an intimate relationship with God*. God's truth is absolute and pure. Our truth is relative, because we received it from sources other than God. Intimacy with God requires the basic exchange of any relative truth for God's absolute truth on that matter. When we have our

truth aligned with God's truth, we will find the center of love and peace. So in *abandoning our culture* (family beliefs) with an intense desire *to embrace absolute truth* (God's beliefs) we cease the struggle against the purposes of God. It is this struggle that is the source of our anxiety, fear and misery!

Logical Opinions Are Useless { 219 }

There is no shortage of *would be* counselors or **wannabe** advisors. But there is a shortage of spiritual guides (mentors) with the wisdom needed to provide mentees not only the absolute truth of God, but also the courage to disbelieve many of their current beliefs. It is only unbelief or misbelief that trouble our souls. The biggest hurdle for most is their pride in believing that they are farther along in the journey, or at least as far, as everyone around them, except maybe the clergy. Even most of the clergy, who have extensive training and high credentials in theology, have little or no intimate knowledge of God. So unless you are willing to submit to the mentor whom God will bring to you for this journey, you will likely never develop intimacy with God. You will likely have to humble yourself and submit to the authority of someone, regardless of their social or economic status being beneath yours. Otherwise, you may never be taught these ways.

False Spiritual Guides { 220 }

How do you recognize a true spiritual guide? There are far more false or incompetent ones than truly good ones. Therefore, we must watch out for the false ones. The enemy, Satan, revels in using false guides in order to keep believers from this intimate passion for God we espouse. Some false guides are easily recognized as such because their teachings are completely unreasonable.

However, since there are false guides who are close to the truth, we must consider them more dangerous than the obviously false ones. One characteristic of a good guide is an obvious *deeply passionate love for God*. The guide's use of scripture always *conveys the unconditional love of God*. And in compliance with scripture, he *models healthy relationships* all around.

True Spiritual Guides

The true spiritual guide teaches truth without wavering. He will speak truth, even if it hurts, rather than placate or play politics or try to be politically correct. By this I do not mean he is crude or rude. But as Jesus did with the Pharisees, when they tried to corrupt His teachings of God, He had to call them down. A spiritual guide will teach you how to speak truth in love. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend." How can a guide help anyone if he leaves out any truth which might offend the mentee. Walking on **egg shells** of easily hurt feelings will negate entirely the value of a spiritual guide.

Beware of the Three Sieves { 221 }

The Moravians now have what they call the three sieves. Before you speak, you should consider these three things. Is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary? These sound good, but they actually stunt the growth of believers. Absolute truth has no feelings, even though yours are affected by it. Kindness is not about hurt feelings or self-esteem. It is about saying what in the scope of one's life span will produce the greatest potential for the listener. Anything that can be received and incorporated into a mentee's life in order to bring them to a greater love for God, self and others is necessary. Unfortunately we have been largely taught that a good Christian does not say things that hurt people's feelings. That is absolutely *not* true!

Hurt Feelings

Another teaching among Christians is that a good Christian strives to be politically correct. And so on. The problem with these teachings is 1, *they are false*. 2, *they are destructive to relationships*. It causes us to focus on the opinions of others, rather than on God's opinion alone. The irony of the journey to intimacy with God is that one must learn the truth about their own ugly, selfish, hurtful ways in order to deal with them effectively. "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free." This

verse in John is best understood to mean, “You will know the truth about *yourself*. And the truth about *yourself* will be what sets *you* free.”

Contradictions or Cancellations { 222 }

A third characteristic which depicts a true spiritual guide is that his teaching is always consistent. He does not say one thing now and later say the opposite. We expect this from politicians and dishonest businessmen. But, unwittingly, most of our pastors often cancel the message of the sermon by stating logically or spiritually opposing concepts. One of these which is spoken in supposedly grace based ministries is this.

At the beginning of the sermon, there is a honey coating of the love and grace of God. God loves you every moment of every day. He loves you on your worst day as much as on your best day. This general tone is also reinforced at the end of the sermon, so you can go out feeling good. But in the middle, the pastor might say, “*But God is concerned about your behavior. He wants you to live right. He may even punish you if you don’t behave.*”

Behavior Follows Affection { 223 }

To be sure, when we love like Jesus loves, our behaviors will also be more loving toward God, self and others. In order to become intimate with God, we have to eliminate all concern about our *badness* and “Cast all of our cares and concerns upon Him because He loves us.” 1

Peter 5:7 Find your own spiritual guide who will teach you to offer thanks to God for the forgiveness you have in Jesus, instead of groveling and cowering before God in shame when you do sin.

Look At Me

False spiritual guides will place emphasis upon themselves, their credentials or their leadership ability. The true spiritual guide will focus on Jesus Christ and His unconditional love. You are not looking for anyone to be your guide into moral purity or personal holiness, because you can have neither of these except *in Christ*. And in Christ, you have both as God declares it to be so. A true spiritual guide will exude the unconditional love as witnessed of Jesus' ministry in the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John).

Tozer writes about mystics:

Spiritual Physicians { 224 }

There are several other aspects of these spiritual guides that are important. First true spiritual guides are what I would call soul surgeons who possess *the power to diagnose the inner spiritual life - read motives*. Spiritual diagnosis is invaluable in maintaining good spiritual health. It is one thing to diagnose a problem and something else altogether to *prescribe a cure based on scripture* and not on worldly wisdom. We need a spiritual guide who knows God, knows the Word

of God and understands human nature. Their goal is to lead the soul upward into *a passionate love for God*.

The literature of the spiritual mystics focuses on the worshipper rather than the student. Reading it is to experience their passion for God. These writers were able to express their deepest feelings for God. These works were meant to be read in the privacy of personal worship. Here are some guidelines for reading this devotional literature in order to get the most out of it. Never come to one of these books as you would come to another type of literature.

Contemplation and Meditation { 225 }

Read slowly and **do not rush** to finish the reading or you will miss out on the fullest **experience of the presence of God**. Come with a **spirit of longing**. Be **prepared to receive** new revelations from God. Reserve ample time to quietly wait before God and meditate on every word. Come with an **attitude of devotion**. Develop reading disciplines of **silence and meditation**. Humbling ourselves in silence before God will create within us a real spirit of expectation of what we really **anticipate God** will do in and through this book. Before you begin to read, take a deep breath, set your mind on God's Spirit and open your mind to receive inspiration from God Himself.

Come with an **intentional purpose of knowing God more intimately**. These books are for the souls of those who thirst for God and only God. The books will not entertain you, but will enlighten you.

Assemble A Library { 226 }

Sir, Francis Bacon wrote. "Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed and some few to be chewed and digested." The great Christian classics fall under the last category. I encourage you to assemble a small library of the books which have increased your love for God. I further suggest that your library include any and all media, written (books and articles), spoken (audio tracks), sung (music tracks), watched (videos) and so forth which may be stored in electronic form. What better legacy to leave behind than a library which contains the best of the best inspiring and revelatory works which have most helped you abandon to intimacy with God.

The Journey Is Rough

The path we have to tread is one filled with danger, calamity, ill-health, financial crises, troubles and difficulties. It is highly likely that you will need a trustworthy guide to help you along the way and enable you to learn how to live absolutely abandoned to intimacy with God.