

Let's Fall in Love with God

Chapter 2: Navigating the Journey

(John Henry Alan, edited by Bob Clarkson)

{Soak in this! Ponder it!}

"If you then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above where Christ sits on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For you are dead. And your life is hid with Christ in God," Colossians 3:1-3. You cannot take this journey unless you have been raised to new life in Jesus. Once committed to this relationship with God, personal resolve to step into the journey to intimacy with Him is essential. It is the first step in the most delightful journey you will ever take. And the good news is that there need not be any particular destination. This journey is about how you journey not where. The best part is that your travel mate is God!

Travel Mates

Travel is more enjoyable when you have someone to share the journey with you. Like any other journey there will be bumps in the road and obstacles to work around. Yet, when viewed as a challenge, each obstacle adds interest and uniqueness to the trip. Falling in love is only the first step in the journey to intimacy with any other. The journey is the very bonding which occurs when two persons grow toward unity. A garden requires the loving touch of a *tender*, whether it is a garden of plants or a garden of relationship.

What We Value Most

Relationship treasurers, whether we admit it or not, are the most valuable of all treasures. And, as opposed to material things and heroes which do not respond to our affections, relationships always produce a return on investment. The more you love, the more you are loved. Another way to view this journey to intimacy is to *live loved and live loving*. “He who would have friends must show himself friendly.” And to be sure, he or she who would be loved, must be loving toward others. It is a simple matter of investment and return or planting and harvesting. This is life.

It Is Not Automatic

Becoming intimate with God for the Christian is far from being automatic. The soul, the seat of our emotions, must be cultivated like a garden. And the will, the seat of our sovereign choices, must be congruent, that is equal in every way, with the Will of God. This would be living as the committed members of God’s great family. When our commitment is to family, our desires and motives must be consistent with Father’s desires. When we have reached that end, it will be demonstrated by our peace in the middle of carnage and devastation as we rely on Dad to handle the situation with our cooperation.

God's Purpose, Not Ours

Joseph and Job are the best examples of this in the Bible. And we must look for the purpose of God in everything instead of trying to logically deduce the meaning of things. This has been clearly stated in the New Testament. Far too many are satisfied with following the crowd and never press on to deeper faith. Relatively few go on to greater love and greater *Christ-likeness*. Our objective is to finish the marathon. Many begin, but few cross the finish line. What is the secret to pressing on? Where is the strength to be found to endure the race until the very end?

The Reason

Christ's payment for our sin, (the separation from God—death) and His subsequent resurrection to a new life captivated the hearts of the first believers. This irrefutable evidence of God's unconditional love and receiving it by faith provided complete release and freedom from guilt, shame and fear. So compelling was this freedom, that thousands of Christians were willing to face martyrdom for the cause of Christ.

The first Christians not only fell in love with God, but also persisted in the journey, abandoned to intimacy with God. They lived and died knowing that Christ had risen from the dead and they had risen with Him. "If ye then be risen with Christ." That word, *if*, is not an if of uncertainty. The intent of the word is "*since* you are then risen with Christ." Paul declared in Romans 6:4, Ephesians

2:6-7 and elsewhere that Christ's resurrection applied to every believer as well.

Consider Your Valuables

Make a list of everything you consider valuable. Then separate them into temporary and eternal, that is those which cannot go with you when you die and those that can. 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 distant 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 earthly list, but when they pass into eternity they then move to the eternal list. Notice also that most of the items in your earth list are things we can physically handle. The quest before us is to develop an even greater affection for God than for our most significant other on earth. God can be our treasure in life and after death!

Genuine Affection

As Christians we are very different from those who are not. We are to be so completely different that everyone notices that we are. And as Jesus put it, "By this will everyone know that you are My disciples, that you have love for one another." So the primary distinctive of

Christianity is unconditional love for each other. That means that people know that we actually have affection for them and are not just going through the motions. We have emotions not just motions toward them.

Everybody Wants It

Every man, woman and child alive today wants to be loved by someone. Christians should be the most loving people on earth. As a matter of fact, if we were, our churches would be bursting at the seams. The one earthly treasure which hinders us the most is the strong desire for a good reputation among men (applause). Another lesser treasure here is comfort and pleasure (indulgence). The third significant thing that is valuable to us here is to be worshipped (in control of) our own personal kingdom, me. It is ever, only and always deep affection for God that causes one to delight in Him and those who are in Him (whether they be down here or up there).

I believe that my **treasures in heaven** are relationships with those whom I loved enough to introduce to a personal relationship with God for themselves. Seeing them again will be my greatest joy. (And, just so you know, no one lives in a mansion in heaven. The correct term is efficiency apartment.) Simply follow God's revelation. Live for the soul, developing relationships that last into eternity, and let the love of God flow so strongly through you that you are asked why you are so peaceful in all circumstances.

A Christian Culture

Christians, although we should know better, consistently superimpose our standards onto those who do not share our beliefs. The church often tries to get non-believers to do what we fail to do ourselves. Actually the demands of the church are impossible to achieve. Moral purity is beyond the grasp of the natural man or even the Christian who is not deeply intimate with God. We are often preaching sermons, writing articles, and singing hymns, trying to equate our country and our culture with Christianity. It cannot be done.

Other-Preferring Nature

The Christian Church is something that is supposed to be set apart. It is not the color of our skin, our ethnicity or our social standing that matters. The Christian Church is a new creation born of the Holy Spirit, out of the suffering of Christ. It is another culture altogether. It is a culture where loving others more than ourselves is the norm. We are to be different from the natural man. We are to be other-caring rather than self-indulging, because we are risen with Christ. "Seek those things that are above and set your will (heart), emotions (soul) and thoughts (mind) on the things that are above where Christ sits on the right hand of God."

Affection — Not Tradition

The biggest problem with our churches is that we get so engrossed in the mundane routine traditional format, that God and the people get very little personal time together. We meet and greet on the way in and the way out of the building. Wouldn't it be refreshing if church was more like a family gathering at home on a holiday, where we were spontaneously engaged with one another, and God had a chair at the table and was enjoying the meal and conversation with us as though He were there in the flesh?

Certain imperatives are set before us because Christ is risen. The scriptures say, "seek and set your affections on things above and cease to engage in selfish pursuits." Forgive everybody who has offended you as Jesus forgave those who nailed Him on the cross. Abandon yourself to Him by dedicating your time to Him. Time is, after all is said and done, the only currency of genuine affection.

Most of us give God only the *leftovers* of our time. If Jesus Christ had given us only His spare time, we would all be forever lost. We can, if we desire to see things as God sees them, give Him our attentions and affections at all times. We can include Him in our thoughts no matter what we are doing. But it takes practice to break our old habits of ignoring Him in order to develop new ones that keep Him constantly in our thoughts..

Exchanged Mind

For conscience' sake we tend to separate our experiences into two separate categories. Some things to us are spiritual and others are secular. Things that relate to church, God, religion, and so forth are considered our spiritual lives. All other necessary pursuits are treated as unspiritual or secular. This enables us to disconnect our spiritual principles from most of our life experiences. Unfortunately this tends to support hypocrisy in all of us. It also enables us to, somehow in good conscience, operate quite selfishly while perceiving ourselves as selfless and maybe even generous people. Mostly our spiritual expressions are given much less time and attention than everything else.

CHURCH

FAITH

WORK

Undivided

Little, if any, thought has been devoted to the blending of these two into one. To be sure, we must pay attention to the duties of work, play, education, community service and so forth. But there is no valid reason for leaving God out of these seemingly mundane activities. Just as we often think of our significant others as we go about our routines, we could include God in them as well. Certainly God is as worthy as any person to be included in our thoughts round the clock.

Exchanged Spirit

Living abandoned to intimacy with God precludes a divided life. To God and to the ancient Hebrews everything is spiritual. And in reality, that is true for every man. Craving to be loved, respected, indulged and served are deeply spiritual stimuli. “God is a Spirit and those who worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” Therefore it is only what is spiritual that can be an offering to God. And our spirit is always actively involved in everything we do. It is our spirit that makes every decision we face.

Exchanged Emotions

As Christians, we can turn some of the most mundane jobs into wonderful spiritual prayer meetings. By including God in our awareness while making every choice in our day, we can make every moment a spiritual encounter. Brother Lawrence, was just a kitchen worker in the monastery where he lived. He washed the dishes for the glory of God. When he was through with his humble work, he would fall down, flat on the floor and worship God. Whatever he was told to do, he did it for the glory of God. He testified, "I am so resigned that I would not take up a straw from the ground against His order or from any motive but that of pure love for Him.”

Knowing What to Expect

Every time I leave home, I expect God to bless me and keep me on my way. When I'm traveling, I expect Him to keep me safe. If He wants me in heaven today, I will not get home. There is no need to pray for God's protection. I already have it. When God is finished with me here, He will take me home. Meanwhile, I'll thank Him constantly for everything. Let's stop being distracted from our love of God by anything that promotes our prosperity, popularity or power on earth. Let's be continually aware of the Presence of God within us. God sanctified us! He **declared** us to be holy and **set us apart**. We must do our jobs, but if we do them *with* God, they are no longer mundane. They become opportunities to build relationships with each other and spread the love of God!

Hidden

Your faith is strengthened by assurance. And here is the cure of all cures. **Your life is hid with Christ in God**. Nothing can harm us unless it is God's will. No one can kill us, unless it is God's appointed time for our departure from this life. No malady or adversity should cause us to complain. When we see every difficult person or trying circumstance as a learning lab or endurance training, we can rejoice instead of grouse. The more you love God the more you will trust Him and want to be with Him and do things that please Him. The only way to attract any one to be **born again** is to compel them with unconditional love, God's and yours in the Holy Spirit.