

Volume 3 - Day 8: Behavior-Based Value

We often assess or determine a person's value based on their performance. Many would say that your measure of worth is the sum of your good behaviors minus your bad behaviors. Worse yet, you may live a life full of incredibly good things and commit one very bad deed and your value is associated only with the one bad thing you have done! How narrow minded! How mean! How negative! How ludicrous! How preposterous!

Whether you associate value with good behaviors or the absence of bad behaviors, this measure is faulty for still another very significant reason. Since every human being not only has the potential to behave badly, all human beings commit bad deeds from time to time. (Bad is when it is selfish to the harm of another.) So, if the measure of value of a person is behavior, no one has value. And if one big, bad deed negates all of the good, the quest for good behavior is futile at best and more likely bordering on insanity.

While we are busy condemning people for wrongful behavior, we ourselves are guilty of the same things. While we are busy trying to manage others' behaviors, our own judgment, condemns us if we will but look in the mirror. We are very quick to ask the courts for the maximum penalty for a crime committed against our children. Yet we beg for mercy if the villain is our own relative.

Think about this. If you truly love someone, you want to overlook their faults. If you truly love someone, you want to protect them from physical and emotional harm. If you truly love someone, you place high value on them. So, regardless of what we say about behavior-based value, the truth is that we actually determine another's value to us by how we treat them, not by how they treat us!

This is the essence of God's love. He places high value on every one of His children! That includes you! Believe it! Let God's love overwhelm you. This, and only this, will improve your behaviors toward others.

My Confirming Scripture: My Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day -- John Henry Alan

Volume 3 - Day 9: 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 distinction 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 trying to look like we care. We have **e**-motions not just motions toward them.

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 and respected by others) and to tell others how they should behave. It is ever, only and always deep affection for God that causes one to delight in Him and those who are in Him, regardless of their behaviors.

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 full of grace and peace in all circumstances.

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Volume 3 - Day 10: Superimposing Christianity on our Culture

Christians, although we should know better, consistently try to 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.

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. That is, we are to have the other-preferring nature of God as opposed to the self-preferring nature with which we were born. In order to achieve this you must “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.”

Consider every altercation in your experience with others and look for the self-preferring nature in them. You will find that all of them occur because of this self preference in those matters. Further, most altercations are based only on differences of opinion.

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Volume 3 - Day 11: Christian Tradition

A major problem with our churches is that we get so engrossed in the mundane, routine, traditional ways, 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 were 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 person?

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 *left-overs* 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. Imagine as well if our relationships with those who meet us in church were as deeply affectionate as our family gatherings on holidays. Imagine inviting different ones over for after church dinner frequently.

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Vol 3 - Day 12: The Exchanged Life {mind, spirit, emotion}

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. It also helps us justify emotional destructiveness. Unfortunately this also tends to support hypocrisy in all of us. It also enables us, somehow in good conscience, to operate selfishly while perceiving ourselves as selfless and maybe even generous people. It is mostly our rationale that resists God's purposes for our lives.

Living abandoned to intimacy with God, or anyone else, precludes a divided life. To God 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.

As Christians, we can turn some of the most mundane jobs into wonderful spiritual events. By including God in our awareness while making every choice in our day, we can make every moment a spiritual encounter. And our emotions follow these new choices.

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." He was always happy in the presence of God!

Volume 3 - Day 13: Knowing What to Expect

Every morning as I get up from my bed, I move about expecting God to bless my day and guide me through it. Every time I'm traveling, I expect Him to keep me safe. If He wants to take me to heaven more than He wants me on earth, 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 to Himself. In the meantime, I will thank Him day in and day out for everything.

Don't be distracted from your love of God by anything that promotes your prosperity, popularity or power. Remain constantly aware of the Presence of God within you. By faith God sanctifies us, that is, He declares us to be holy and sets us apart for Himself. We must obviously 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 all around us!

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 you unless it is God's will. No one can kill you, unless it is God's appointed time for your departure from this life. No malady or adversity should cause you to complain. When you see every difficult person or trying circumstance as a learning lab or endurance training, you will 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 the Kingdom of God is to compel them with the unconditional love of God. And His love is delivered by the presence of His Holy Spirit within you. Let His love radiate!

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Volume 3 - Day 14: Intimacy Endures All Adversity

David was known as a man after God's own heart. He seemed to have few lapses in his focus on God. Yet his life was filled with trouble, heartache and relational carnage.

It is recorded in the story of Job that **Job** prayed daily for himself and his family. He was as true as true can be with respect to his allegiance to God. Yet, in one fell swoop, Job lost all of his children and grand children. Everything they had was reduced to rubble. Job was even inflicted with extreme medical maladies.

Another faithful man, **Joseph**, had tremendous faith and intimacy with God, but suffered incredible injustice at the hands of his own brothers. So just because one finds God to be very dear to himself, does not mean that life will be any easier than it is for an irreligious man. In fact, there is significant evidence that life is often more difficult for God's best servants than for most others.

Many believers through the ages from Jesus until now had a similar yet uncommonly deep affection for God. To be sure, their source of love and ours is the same rushing river of God. Anything positive in relationship flowing from us is simply the overflowing of our banks by the rising river of God's love. Left to ourselves our human nature will selfishly extract love from others rather than to lavish it upon them. To become channels of God's love to others is the very purpose for which we were apprehended (stopped in our tracks) by God. Paul stated in Philippians 2:13, "... but I follow after so that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Jesus Christ."

Tragically, many churches teach faith in Jesus, but little more. Relationships will ultimately fail unless the parties continue in hot pursuit of their mutual desire for each other. The primary objective for us and the purpose of God in creation is to develop an up close and personal relationship with Him.

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