

WHO DOES YOUR LIFE REVOLVE AROUND?

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As followers of Jesus it is important that we recognize the difference between **religiosity** and **fellowship with God**.

Religiosity means living by rules, regulations, outward expectations (you must pray a certain amount, fast a certain amount, dress in a certain manner, go to a building called “church” every Sunday at 11am, be good, be nice, be generous, be humble, etc) and in this manner you will manage to please God and live the Christian life.

Fellowship is entirely different. The Father gives His divine Life to you; He comes to dwell in you.

He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. (1 John 5:12)

You live by means of that divine Life.

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me (Galatians 2:20)

Your Father loves you. You receive His love and you love Him back with the same love He has given you.

We love him, because he first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

He speaks to you and you listen; you speak to Him and He listens.

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. (John 14:26)

You behold Him, gazing on who He is. He beholds you, as one who knows you deeply and is deeply involved in your life.

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Corinthians 3:18)

How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee. (Psalm 139 especially verses 17-18)

There is interchange. There is dependence. There is intimate, daily, practical, real relationship. From this fellowship, flow the good works that God prepared in advance for you to do.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10)

You are not striving to be accepted by God, because He has already accepted you.

To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. (Ephesians 1:6)

You are not trying to persuade Him to be pleased with you because He is pleased with Jesus and you are in Jesus.

But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30).

You are not trying to scrape together the ability to do the things God wants you to do because the Spirit of God lives in you and you live by means of Him. In fact, He lives the Christian life in you- He is the only being who has the capacity to live the Christian life – and for Him it is not difficult.

Jesus talked about how important it is to build our lives on the right foundations. We can build on the foundation of religiosity- and we are destined to failure. That failure can take two forms:

1) We fail to live up to the Christian standards we have set for ourselves and so we become discouraged and either give up altogether or begin to live a half life, in our hearts wistfully longing to experience more of God but feeling we are inadequate, so just resigning ourselves to going through the motions of church attendance etc while feeling empty inside.

Or, 2) We think we are succeeding in living up to these standards, so we become incredibly proud and begin to look down on others who struggle more than we do. Never forget that it was the religious who arranged Jesus' death. It was the religious who stood and mocked Him as He hung on the cross in agony. These people who were full of greed, envy and sadism, took great care to perform the outward rituals that they thought God wanted them to do; they thought they were doing God a favor by killing Jesus. **Religion blinds us because it cleans the outside of the cup but never the inside; it never deals with our HEART.** God forbid that we build our lives on that foundation.

Or, we can build our lives on the foundation of fellowship. How do we receive the Divine Life of God? By simply asking. And in the moment we ask and believe, we are born again and God places His Divine Life within us. We begin to experience His love for us daily, and we learn to receive that Love. We learn to love Him back. Spontaneously. Naturally. Simply. Just like a child. We begin to hear Him speak to us in our spirit in a million different ways. Through the words of another believer. Through His Holy written Word. Through a circumstance. Through a movie. Through nature. In a million different ways. And we learn to listen. At times we close our ears and He corrects us, again in His love. We learn to behold Him as we contemplate His word, His nature, His expressions of love to us. We get to know Him, what He loves, what He hates, who He is, who we are in Him. **Our hearts are changed by His spirit and from this, our outward actions can change. The inside of the cup is clean and therefore the outside can be cleaned also.** The relationship is intimate, it is real, it is relevant, it is powerful, and it is constant. God is manifest in us.

Maybe you have made the decision to build your life on fellowship rather than religiosity. If you have not made that decision you need to make it. Don't live a lie. Don't spend your life keeping up appearances. Man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. (1 Sam 16:7) In Jesus, and in relationship with Him is everything you need. But, you say, I don't know how. Do you have the life of God in you? Then He will teach you, do not worry. Do you not yet have the life of God in you? Now is the time to ask and He will come.

For those of us who have decided to build our life on fellowship, **God goes to great pains to change our thinking so that it reflects fellowship and not religiosity. As our thinking is changed, our lives are changed.** This message is part of that process of changing our thinking from religiosity to fellowship.

In much of Christendom, what is taught is a Christianity that is centered on you. "I" am at the center of the Christian life. Everything revolves around me. "How can I experience God?" "What can God do for me?" "What is in this for me?" **We think that God revolves around us, that He exists to supply our needs, to meet our desires, to make us feel good, to sort out our problems.** We plan our lives and then we call on Him to bless them. The word for this lifestyle is Selfishness. Independence. If we base our lives on religiosity, we are being equally selfish.

You have died with Christ and become dead to those old ways. Then why do you follow the old ways of worship? Why do you obey man rules?²¹ These rules say, 'You must not put your hand on this.' 'Do not put this into your mouth.' 'You must not put your finger on that.'²² All these things come to an end when they are used. You are following only man rules.²³ It looks as if it is wise to follow these rules in an act of worship, because they are hard on the body. It looks as if they are done without pride, but they are worth nothing. They do not take away a man's desire to sin. (Colossians 2:20-23.NLV)

As these verses show us, religiosity is a form of selfishness that is immensely subtle. "What can I do to please God? What can I sacrifice? What rules must I keep?" It sounds so good, so holy, so humble. But it is all based on "I", "I", "I". Everything depends on me (With a little help from God when I ask for it).

Most of our struggles come from this focus. **We either see God as a blessing-machine who exists to make our lives easier and happier; or we see Him as a demanding, cold authoritarian who we must please through our miserable efforts.** In both cases where is our focus? It is on "Me". "I". Who are we depending on? "Me". "I". Sooner or later we find out that God is not going to adapt Himself to our wants and lusts, or that our efforts to please Him do not seem to be working. Why? Because this is not who God is and it is the wrong foundation. God does not revolve around us.

I thank God for the explosion of Christian literature that we have seen penned and made available in the last few decades. But take a good look at the focus of many of the titles that you can purchase off the shelf:

"How to be a happy Christian"
"How to experience God's blessing"
"How to prosper"

“How to pray”
“How to fast”
“How to have a big church”
“How to be a successful Christian”

Do you see a common denominator here? Everything is focused on “I”. What “I” have to do to get God to bless me or to make Him happy. Everything is focused back on me: my desires, my efforts. And all the time, who is in control of my life? “I”. I can do all these things and seem to be blessed and seem to be holy and good and religious- but I have left God outside.

We need to realize that EVERYTHING REVOLVES AROUND GOD. I am not talking about “putting God first”. He is not number one on a list of our priorities. This implies that we can “do the God bit” in our lives and then move on to other things. No. HE IS EVERYTHING. EVERYTHING REVOLVES AROUND HIM.

Instead of living on the basis of “How can I get God to bless me”, we need to build our lives on the basis of “What does God want me to do so that He will be blessed”. Instead of asking “what are all the things I need to do to keep God happy”, we should live on this basis –“the work is done and God is already satisfied, now what does He want me to do?” Instead of struggling to find the ability to do what we think God wants us to do, we need to recognize that He is our life, and He lives inside us. Everything we need we already have in Him and as we take a hold of that divine life within us, He lives the Christian life in our lives!

According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue (2 Peter 1:3)

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

Do you see the difference? Now everything revolves around Him. I am no longer independent. I am no longer in control. No, he is not controlling me like a puppet-master controls his puppet, but my life is revolving around Him, His provision, His desires, and I am simply choosing to let this happen. He is my life source. He loves me and meets my needs. And I adapt to His will and His desires. At times adapting to His will is painful. But I know that I exist for His pleasure and that He loves me and will enable me to carry out His will. Then I will be blessed. Then I will walk in real holiness. Then the glory will go to Him (where it belongs) and not to me.

Do you want your life to continue revolving around you? Do you want to continue struggling to depend on your own meager internal resources to get you through? Do you want your life to continue to be dictated by your own wants and desires? Or do you want your life to revolve around God? Do you want to know what it is to live by His divine Life? Do you want to discover His great will for your life? Do you want to bring pleasure to the One who loves you so much that He sent His only Son to die for you?

I tell you, the day that you relax and let God be the center, great burdens will lift from your shoulders. It is not your responsibility to make everything in your life work. Even the faith that lives in your heart is a gift from Him.

*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:
Not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)*

Let Him be center and He will provide for you, He will speak to you and guide you, He will be everything to you.

How do you let Him be center? Just choose. And then day by day, month by month, year by year, here a little, there a little, line upon line, precept upon precept, He will bring you into all the glorious significance of what it means that God is at the center of everything in your life!

For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little (Isaiah 28:10)

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