

Finding Grace by Engaging with Jesus Related to Our Future

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. ***Premise:*** the issues that determine who we are and how we live are found in how we relate to Jesus in our past, present and future. All three provide keys that shape us and unlock our heart.
- B. Jesus desires to unlock our heart that we might be fully alive. We encounter Him in issues related to our past as we understand past disappointments and blessings in the light God's revelation. We encounter Jesus in the present as we grow in intimacy with God. We encounter Jesus related to our future as we believe right things about our future and then make godly commitments to it.

II. ENCOUNTERING JESUS RELATED TO OUR PAST

- A. ***Our past can affect us negatively*** – it is often emphasized that what we are today is a result of how we have been conditioned by our past. Many focus on how our past experiences have shaped and molded us to be who we are today. Some conclude that we are trapped by the past.
- B. We are partially the product of what has happened to us. Taken to an extreme, this relieves us of the responsibility of our negative responses. We are both victims who have been mistreated and agents who have contributed to our bondage by wrong responses.
- C. We encounter Jesus in issues related to our past as we discern the bitterness and wrong paradigms that result from our negative experiences in our past. The Spirit will reveal to us the places we are chained to the past by wrong responses such as bitterness and shame. The Holy Spirit wants to reveal to us our wrong paradigms of God, ourselves and others (significant to us).
- D. We also encounter Jesus in issues related to our past as we discern the measure of God's blessings (God's forgiveness, direction, provision, etc.) that have come to us producing gratitude.

III. ENCOUNTERING JESUS IN THE PRESENT: ACTIVE INTIMACY WITH GOD

- A. God invites us to enjoy active intimacy with Him which includes understanding and feeling the deep things of His heart for us (1 Cor. 2:10-12).
- B. As we encounter God in the present tense, our heart is protected from increased spiritual dullness and defilement. Intimacy with God is not an optional luxury that merely enhances our spiritual experience. It is an issue of life and death to engage with Jesus in a deep way as a lifestyle.
- C. Intimacy begins in seeing our identity in Jesus. Our identity is the way we define ourselves or the way we measure our value, importance and success. We are valuable because God has passion for us. Our life is successful because God esteems even the small things in our lives.

¹⁷ *Well done...you were faithful in a very little, have authority over 10 cities. (Lk. 19:17)*

IV. ENCOUNTERING JESUS RELATED TO OUR FUTURE

- A. We encounter Jesus related to our future as we believe right things about our future and then make godly commitments to it. What we believe about our future dynamically influences our present. What we believe about where we are going forms how we live today.
- ⁹ *She (Israel) did not consider her destiny; therefore her collapse was awesome. (Lam. 1:9)*
- B. Our vision for the future must include what we will **BE in our hearts** (inner man/spiritual reality) and what we will **DO in our function/impact** (outer man/life circumstances) both in this age and in the age to come. In other words, it involves our *spiritual development* as well as our *occupational development* (career/ministry). Our spiritual development includes experiencing grace in our hearts in four ways:
1. To walk out loving God with all our heart (and thus to overflow in love for others) that is expressed by a resolve to live in 100-fold obedience so that we live with a bright spirit.
³⁷ *Love the LORD...with all your heart.... 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 The second is like it...love your neighbor as yourself. (Mt. 22:37-39)*
²¹ *He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. (Jn. 14:21)*
 2. To walk in meekness as the way to be great in God's sight (Mt. 18:4; 20:26)
¹¹ *He who is greatest among you shall be your servant. (Mt. 23:11)*
 3. To have authority in prayer to move angels and demons (Dan. 10:12-14)
²¹ *However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting. (Mt. 17:21)*
 4. To cultivate deep understanding of God and His Word (to be an End-Time messenger)
⁸ *I count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ...10 that I may know Him... (Phil. 3:8-10)*
¹⁰ *The Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God...12 .that we might know (experience) the things that have been freely given to us by God. (1 Cor. 2:10-12)*
- C. In my early years with the Lord I read many biographies of people that walked closely with God. One day, I determined that I wanted to know God like those in the biographies. I cried out, "Why not me, Lord?" I determined to be a person who walked closely with God.
- D. In those early days, I knew several people who walked closely with God. I would tell others about their unusual devotion and obedience. Then again, I cried out, "Why not me, Lord?" I renewed by determination to be a person who walked closely with God. It was no longer good enough for me to know people who knew God. I wanted to personally know God in a deep way.

- E. I get asked often if the establishing and growth of IHOP is the fulfillment of my biggest dream. I greatly rejoice in the reality of IHOP, but my primary life dream concerns the size and quality of what is happening in my heart, not my ministry. IHOP is my divine assignment.
- F. My biggest dream is to develop love, meekness, authority and revelation that I might present to God a heart of worship and wisdom when I stand before Him on the last day (Ps. 90:12).
- G. Without a clear picture of what we want to be and do tomorrow, we live careless with our time and money. Without a clear vision and plan, God's people live undisciplined or without restraint (*the people perish; KJV*) in their passions, time and money. We must connect our present lack of discipline to our lack of a clear vision for the future.
Where there is no revelation (life vision), the people cast off restraint (discipline). (Prov. 29:18)
- H. The lack of commitment to the future brings an identity crisis in the present. Our commitments define who we are. The way to get young people disciplined and focused is to help them establish a clear picture of what their future can be in God. Most live fully focused on the present tense pressures and people that resist them (block their goals) without much regard for the future.
- I. We are concerned not only with where we have been, but where we are going. To have hope is to have assurance or confidence about the future. Hope transforms us. Hope is to be anchored in the future. The power of hope is neglected by many. What we commit ourselves to in the future dynamically effects who we are now.
¹³ Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 15:13)
² We know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him... 3 And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. (1 Jn. 3:2-3)
- J. Viktor Frankl (1905-1997), a Vienna born psychologist rejected Freud's over-emphasis on the past as being the primary force that formed us in the present. He was a survivor of several Nazi concentration camps (Theresienstadt and Auschwitz). After the war, he analyzed holocaust survivors, categorizing them into two broad categories: those who were emotionally stable and those who were not. The predominant factor was not what they experienced before or during the concentration camps, but rather what they believed about their future.
- K. People with a vision or goal to grow spiritually, use their time and money very differently than those without such vision. The lack of clear vision for our future spiritual development is detrimental to our present spiritual condition. To be ambivalent about this has negative effects that lead us to passivity and lethargy. Without clear commitments, the only alternative is bitterness or self-centeredness. Indecision in this, causes us great hindrances today.

- L. **What are your future goals for your spiritual development?** Most usually have no concrete goals. Without a vision any road will get you there. Many cannot form a picture in their minds of what they want to be spiritually in the future. Those without a vision for their future spiritually are stifled in their present spiritually. What are you determined to be in God, in this age and in eternity? What are your desires? What do you believe about what you can be spiritually? What are you committed to being? What do you want to be a part of in the future?
- M. I regularly ask young adults what their vision for the future is. Most do not have one. The few that do usually limit it to their life circumstances in three main areas: romance, finance or impact (career/ministry).
- N. Paul prayed that the saints would be filled with the knowledge of God's will for their life. God's will in our life is not limited to the activities in our ministries, but includes the development of our heart in God. The will of God is to live in purity with a bright spirit (sanctification).
⁹ ***We do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding... (Col. 1:9)***
³ ***For this is the will of God, your sanctification (to be pure in heart)... (1 Thes. 4:3)***
¹ ***I (the Lord) will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness. (Isa. 62:1)***
- O. Our specific action plan to attain these spiritual goals includes time in the Word and prayer with regular fasting. I recommend reading 10 chapters of the NT everyday (thus, completing the NT once a month), praying in the Spirit one hour a day, and fasting two days a week.
- P. Many dream of their future as if eternity is not a reality. In their future plans, they replace reality with their fantasies of life in this age that consist mostly of honor and comfort without pressure.
¹² ***Hope deferred (shattered dreams) makes the heart sick.... (Prov. 13:12)***
- Q. This common false thinking leads people to inevitable disappointment as their misguided dreams and expectations are shattered. One of the biggest setbacks in our lives comes when we mishandle our disappointments. We make decisions now that affect our eternal destiny.
¹⁷ ***For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. (2 Cor. 4:17-18)***
- R. In Stephen Covey's book, the Seven Habits of Highly Effective Leaders, one habit he highlights is to the need to have a clear picture of the end product before we begin to act. According to this, Jesus is the ultimate highly effective leader with a purpose driven life as He planned the New Jerusalem as well as the End-Time scenario. As a boy in Nazareth, Jesus looked over the area of Armageddon with understanding that He would rule Israel after the conflict that started there.