

## **How are you affirmed? #1 - 20190831**

Hi all,

My mother loved the Lord, and she was one of the first in her church to be born again and Spirit-filled during the charismatic renewal of the early 1970's. But no matter how the charismatic movement and the freedom of the Spirit meant to her, wild horses could not have dragged her from membership of St. Andrews Episcopal Church of Kokomo, Indiana.

She loved the Processional. She loved the wood work, the stained glass, the liturgy and the routine of the Sunday morning service. She loved the old hymns. All those things 'affirmed' her as a person and affirmed her in her faith.

### **Definition: Affirm**

The word 'affirm' means 'to state something as true' or 'to publicly show your support for an opinion or idea'. It can also be used in a legal sense in which a higher court affirms a lower court's ruling as correct. In our context it means the spiritual things you do confirm who you are and what you believe to be true, which leads us to be affirmed as individuals.

My question is; How are you, individually and as a Christian, affirmed? How are you affirmed as it relates to 'church' or the body of Christ?

Are you affirmed by the auditorium church and all the sense-related trappings? Is a coffee shop in the foyer part of that? Is it the carpet, the woodwork, the sounds system? Or perhaps it is the people in the building? If your church 'worship' resembles a rock concert, if the ushers hand out ear plugs as you enter, if the worship is presented with laser and other lights, smoke and a performance oriented band, does that affirm you in your faith and confirm what you believe to be true? Or does your church sing traditional hymns and do those contribute to affirming you as a Christian.

Are you affirmed by a cell/small group within the auditorium church? Is it the men's group, the women's group, the intercessory prayer group that affirms you? Are you affirmed in knowing your children are enjoying a good youth group or Sunday school or nursery?

Don't misunderstand; This is not about why you go to that church, or why you don't go to a church. This has to do with what in your spiritual life affirms you as a Christian. What confirms all you believe? Is it something, or someone(s)?

### **Some Christians...**

When we meet someone new to us, one of the first questions asked is, "So what do you do for a living?" This is because when we hear what someone does for a living we form an immediate opinion of that person. That opinion is based on previous understandings with people in that line of work.

If you experienced a dishonest lawyer in the past and a new person tells you they are a lawyer, you either think they may be corrupt, or are at least suspect until they prove themselves. One of the quickest way to kill a conversation is when I tell people I'm in the ministry. They either run for cover for fear I may try to convert them, or nullify their revulsion by telling me someone they knew once a long time ago was a nice country preacher.

If someone identifies themselves as a 'Messianic Christian', doesn't that immediately form an image in your mind? But to them, that (at least for the moment) affirms them. By digging into Jewish roots they find affirmation in their faith and as a person, quite often.

If someone identifies themselves with say, Bethel church in Redding, California, doesn't that present an image? Or IHOP in Kansas City, or Brownsville or TACF for those of us who have been around awhile. Why do people go to 'revival centers'? They affirm them both in their faith and as individuals.

Some are focused on ministries that meet together for one purpose - to go out and 'witness' to strangers. They find purpose and affirmation in 'witnessing' for the Lord, and the Lord does some amazing things. There are few things as affirming as walking up to a stranger sitting at coffee, asking if they needed healing for anything, and watching them get instantly healed.

### **Other Christians...**

Others may find their affirmation in a more 'fringe' belief, like flat earth or cessationists (believing tongues/healing died with the original apostles), or focusing on specific doctrine like deliverance, inner healing, or physical healing.

### **Examine your own heart, and scripture for balance**

When Paul told the Corinthians that he was afraid they would leave the simplicity of faith in Christ for 'another Jesus, another spirit, another gospel', he did so stating if they did so, it would be because Satan has beguiled them - deceived them - into leaving balanced, simple faith in Christ, for a more complicate life of faith.

Whatever you find that affirms your faith and affirms you as a Christian, imagine that is all stripped away, out of reach, gone, taken away from you. Would you life in the Lord change in any way?

When Jim and Tammy Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart fell from grace in the early 1980's, thousands upon thousands walked away from the Lord - proving their faith was in man, committing idolatry, and when their 'man' fell, so did they.

If everything in your Christian life other than simply knowing the Father and the Lord Jesus were taken away, would you just keep walking with them and be otherwise unaffected? We'll pick it up there next week.

Until then, blessings,  
John Fenn

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### **How are you affirmed #2, All the eggs in 1 basket - 20190907**

Hi all,

When I was a little boy we had a neighbor named Mrs. McCoy. Her farm land was rented out to other farmers except for the chickens she kept, and she rarely left her house because she couldn't walk well at that late stage of her life. But she loved her chickens. So she allowed us to 'help' her gather the eggs when we visited, and she would give each of the 3 or 4 of us our own personal basket to put eggs in. She said, "I don't want you to put all the eggs in one basket."

Of course we all know that boys ages 4 through 8 are especially careful and gentle with fragile things and therefore make perfect egg gatherers, lol. Mrs. McCoy was wise to spread the risk around between several baskets!

### **All the eggs in 1 basket?**

I've been asking what affirms us as Christians? What confirms us in our faith, and as individuals in Christ? Do you know Christians who put all their spiritual 'eggs' in one basket? Is their spiritual life totally in the basket of one church, teaching, person or ministry? Have they taken their faith in Jesus from Him directly to put it in Him through a stream of the faith?

Have you seen that 'basket' taken away, corrupted, or fall from grace which caused that person a massive crisis of faith? If they did have a crisis of faith when that happened, it is because they put all their spiritual eggs in one basket.

They said they believed in the Lord, but that believing was filtered through those ministers and their ministries.

They were affirmed not by the Lord, but by those ministries. They did not know the Lord directly, but knew of Him through those ministries. They were believers, but not knowers. Their faith was confirmed by man, not by the Lord in their own walk with Him.

There's nothing wrong with being involved in the various streams of faith, but they are not our salvation. We should be affirmed by the Father Himself and Lord Himself. Not by the 'stream of faith' in which we are involved. Those may contribute to affirming us as Christians and people, but they are not our spiritual core.

**Consider this statement from Jesus in John 17: 3:**

"This is life eternal; That they may know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."

That statement does not nullify the rest of scripture which says if we believe in our heart that Jesus was raised from the dead and that He is Lord we will be saved. It merely points out the deeper knowing of eternal life. To truly know the Father is deep Life. In the Greek the word 'know' is the word 'ginoskoin', which means 'to come to know'. Deep eternal life is a path in which we come to know the Father and His Son whom He has sent.

There is a difference between believing in Jesus, and knowing Jesus. There is a difference between believing in the Father God, and knowing the Father God. When we believe, we are born again and saved, but deep faith is knowing.

When each of us was first born again we were believers, not knowers. We believed in Jesus, said a prayer, stated our faith, 'asked Jesus into our heart', or something like that. We believed. We were born again, some even baptized with the Holy Spirit. We were and are believers. We became identified as being a Christian.

**Path to knowing**

We set about finding things which affirmed our faith. Ministries and churches, friends and media, small groups and special speakers, all of which affirmed our faith and confirmed what we believed to be true, is true. But we didn't immediately know the Father or Lord. We believed. We were using the various ministries and media to help us get to know the Father and Lord, but many have never made it past believing, to actually knowing the Father. Knowing Jesus.

Even decades in the faith later, because they've always sought affirmation in ministries and ministers, teachings and revival centers in a misplacement of faith rather than taking the time and effort to know the Father, they remain believers, not knowers.

C. S. Lewis observed: "It is Christ Himself, not the Bible, who is the true Word of God. The Bible, read in the right spirit and with the guidance of good teachers, will bring us to Him."

Is your faith in the written Word, or the Person Who IS the Word? Is your faith merely in chapter and verse, or the One from Whom those verses flowed? When you 'stand' on the Word, are you standing on chapter and verse or the Person of the Word? Is your faith 'all in' the basket of Jesus, or the basket of Jesus with lots of little baskets attached?

We will pick it up there next week, until then, blessings,  
John Fenn  
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**How are you affirmed? #3, Aye, there's the rub**

Hi all,

One day I was reading a news report of an executive who stepped down from leading a large international company due to a 'personal crisis'. In later reports the executive told the interviewer that he reached a point in his life when he realized he had been driven in business for one core reason - ever since he was 12 years old he had been trying to please his father, chasing something to which he could never attain. When he realized that, the all-powerful drive to succeed disappeared, and he quit.

Many Christians and pastors are like the executive, trying to be personally affirmed, loved, accepted within and by that structure called 'church'. They chase what they think is God or what God wants, rather than actually knowing Him. We are to follow His voice and respond to that, not blindly chase what we think might be Him and hope He is pleased.

Some Christians never become a 'knower'. They are affirmed by keeping busy rather than knowing. They are affirmed in the chase, not having attained knowing the Father and Lord. They equate busy-

ness with being righteous. Emotion has replaced the anointing so that many Christians can't perceive the Holy Spirit in their spirit. They are chasers in their believing, not knowers.

"This is eternal life: That they may know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." John 17:3

### **And this is the rub, as they say**

We should move from believing to knowing, which leads us to be affirmed by the Father Himself and by the Lord Himself because we know them. "Knowers" know that they know one day Jesus will stand up next to them and tell the Father, "I know them and they know me."

Hamlet said in his famous 'To be or not to be' soliloquy: "To die, to sleep, perchance to Dream; aye, there's the rub."

The 'rub' was a reference to a game we might today call 'lawn bowling' in which an unevenness in the ground would alter or interfere with the path of the ball. That unevenness in the path was the 'rub'.

Today we think of 'the rub' as an irritant, but in context it meant altering the path of the ball.

In this use, a believer starts along the path to becoming a knower, but something interferes with that path which takes them in a slightly new direction. But the action is so slow they never perceive they are going in another direction until the gap between 'believing' and 'knowing' is startlingly clear.

One day they wake up, years down the road, and realize they don't truly know the Father. They don't truly know the Lord Jesus. And they wonder, why? They wonder how they got there and are horrified at that truth.

Knowing the Father 'and Jesus Christ whom you have sent' is an individual effort, not a group event. It doesn't even involve a book, recording, web site, ministry or teaching. It doesn't involve a pastor, a teacher, a prophet or your best friend who led you to believing in the Lord. It is an individual effort, an individual walk. Anything that takes you from that instead of contributing to that, is 'the rub'.

### **The good, the bad, and the ugly of affirming someone**

It was a Wednesday night service with about 1500 people in attendance, and I had a word (of knowledge) from the Lord for a woman (I didn't know who) in the congregation thinking about committing suicide that night. The Father was very specific, and I shared with the congregation what I heard Him by the Holy Spirit say:

"You were told by your mother when you were young that you weren't very pretty, and you weren't very smart, so you were going to have to work hard all your life. You took that statement to mean you were ugly, and that robbed you of hope. You became discouraged and angry at yourself, hating yourself. Discouragement led to despondency - a complete lack of hope. That led to depression and thoughts of hurting yourself. That has led to several suicide attempts. The Father and the Lord Jesus want you to know that was a lie, and the Father does have a plan for you...." and so on, as I repeated what I was hearing from Him that night.

The next week before the Wednesday night service I was walking in the hall and a woman stopped me and told me she was the one the Lord was talking about. She had gone to the service that night saying "Lord, if you don't have a word for me tonight I'm going to go home and kill myself once and for all."

She showed me the scars on her wrists from years of cutting and suicide attempts. She said since I prayed (after giving that word) she had no more thoughts of suicide, knew she was loved by the Lord, actually knew Him, and was at peace for the first time since she was young. About 3 months later I saw her again, and she was still doing well.

She was affirmed in the negative as a child. With every look in the mirror, she believed it confirmed what her mother told her. She believed therefore that she was ugly. With every low grade in school, she was affirmed as not being very smart. With every party she wasn't invited to, with every club she wasn't asked to join, with everything she did or didn't do, it all conspired together to confirm she wasn't pretty nor smart - she was affirmed as an ugly girl with no future. So why not end it all and be done with it?

For her, 'coming to Jesus' and every teaching, every stream of the faith, every movement called God, was an effort to be healed, and that night she made the switch from being a believer to being a knower. 'Knowing' healed her.

When you were young, how were you affirmed? Have you similarly experienced 'the rub' of chasing movements of God or teachings or streams of the faith, but never truly being healed of those childhood hurts? Knowing the Father and Lord WILL heal those hurts. How to do that?

Paul prayed we would know the love that is beyond knowing, and I'll close the series starting there next week.

Until then, blessings,  
John Fenn

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### **How are you affirmed? #4, Knowing what is beyond knowing - 20190928**

Hi all,

The body of Christ at Ephesus began with about a dozen men in Acts 19 but some estimate that within 10 years there were about 25,000 believers, out of a total population of 250,000 in the city. Roughly 10% had become believers, helped by Paul's daily teaching for 2 years in the school of Tyrannus, and the 'special miracles' the Lord did. The move of God was so strong it affected the economy, causing idol makers to see a decrease in their sales.

Many new believers burned their books on the occult in repentance, and the knowledge of the Lord spread throughout that state called Asia - a relatively small area on the coast of what is modern day Turkey. Out of Ephesus, 6 other major cities in the state of Asia soon had a strong base of believers as well, mentioned in The Revelation chapters 2 & 3: Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodécia.

They all met in homes following the practice of the original synagogue movement which had developed in homes around 200-100BC, and then continued by disciples of Jesus after Pentecost. 25,000 people rotating homes, rotating who leads/hosts, keeping it simple in accordance with Acts 2: 42: Teaching, food, fellowship, prayer.

But when you read the book of Ephesians it is clear there were issues of immaturity. Paul told them in chapter 4 that thieves were to stop stealing and get a job so they would have money to give to those in need. In the same chapter he told them to not let the sun go down on their anger, but to love one another and make allowances for one another. In 4:19 he told them to stop committing sexual sin like they did before they became believers, and he also told them to stop cursing and gossiping.

#### **Doing versus knowing**

They believed in the Lord, but Paul told them to stop sinning in 4: 20, because 'you have not learned this of Christ'. He told them to 'put off' the old man and 'put on' the new man in v24, and several other 'do this and don't do that' commands. That they were believers is clear. That they had moral and spiritual issues is also clear.

But they were strong 'doers' of the faith. In The Revelation 2: 1-7 the Lord commends them for their 'perseverance, endurance, good works', and their rejection of evil and false teachers, and staying strong in the faith under life-threatening conditions. But He said in 2: 4, they had left their first love.

I was visiting a missionary who asked me to pray about some things on a list and tell him anything the Father or Lord told me. I told him he needed to pray, not me. His response was: "I'm too busy doing the work of the ministry to pray."

That was the church at Ephesus - full of 'doing' but short on 'knowing'. They had left their first love - knowing Jesus.

**Evidently they were so busy doing, they had left 'knowing'.**

Paul didn't tell them to rebuke the devil nor to cast out spirits from their former lives in the occult and idolatry. He didn't blame their issues on demonic spirits that came to them down through the generations. In fact he put the blame and responsibility squarely on them - you were sinners in the past, now you are new creations in Christ - act like it!

BUT...he actually preceded his commands to 'do this and don't do that' with a prayer that they would know the love that is beyond knowing. It is from knowing that we live our lives in and for the Lord. It is in knowing that we do 'good things' and it is in knowing that cause the temptations of this world to fade into nothingness.

"I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...that He according to the riches of His glory, would strengthen you with might by His Spirit in your inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, and that you would grasp (comprehend) that which is beyond knowing, *being rooted and grounded in unconditional love*, knowing the length and depth and height and width of the love of Christ, so that you will be filled with the fullness of the Father God." Ephesians 3: 14-19

**Knowing what is beyond knowing**

Most prayers are for something that can immediately be known and seen. But Paul prayed here that they would comprehend that which is beyond knowing.

The Greek word translated 'comprehend' here is 'katalabesthai'. It means to lay hold of, to seize. But the word used for 'behind knowing' is 'gnoseos' which means 'head knowledge' or reasoning. What Paul was praying was that 'you may take hold of and receive that which is beyond knowing something with your mind' - to know the love of Christ.

Paul makes it clear knowing that which is beyond head knowledge is his prayer for them - it is very similar to his prayer in 1: 17-19 that they be given the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him that the eyes of their understanding would be opened.

It all revolves around personal revelation that comes through knowing Him. Paul never encourages in any of his writings for the disciples to become involved in any 'stream' of the faith.

He emphasizes knowing the Father, knowing the Lord, knowing and seeing inside ourselves that which is beyond knowing - that is the point of the faith: "This is eternal life, to know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."

THAT is the point of our faith. THAT is our goal - as Paul told the Philippians: To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings. THAT is the point. Anything beyond that is fluff. Know Him!

New subject next week, until then, blessings,

John Fenn

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