

2016-10-29

How NOT to be a legalistic believer #1

Hi all,

"One day I opened the door to find a strange dog with our daily newspaper in its mouth. Delighted by this unexpected delivery service, I gave him some treats. The next morning I was horrified to see the same dog wagging his tail, sitting there surrounded by 8 newspapers. I spent the rest of the morning returning the papers to their owners." Story from Reader's Digest magazine

Religion tends to think like that dog, that God is behind a big door and will reward us with a predictable response to a specific thing we do, thereby gaining us answered prayer, healing, that job interviewed for, the sale to finalize, etc. Then like that dog, when the treat doesn't come you think you must have done something wrong, though with good intention, and you sit in confusion trying to figure out what God wants. Add in a heaping helping of condemnation and you have a Christian who acts like that cowering dog convinced he did something wrong but clueless as to what it was.

Steps towards becoming a non-legalistic believer

We aren't that dog. God is not the person behind the big door from whom you beg for treats and favors.

The first and greatest point to understand is that Christ is already in you, and there is nothing you can do to improve upon that fact. That truth must really become part of your first nature, to realize God isn't 'out there', but rather 'in there', in your spirit. He already died and rose for you, and caused you to be born again by His Spirit - you can't bring Him enough 'spiritual newspapers' to improve upon Christ in you, nor impress Him beyond what He thinks of you already!

He thinks of you so highly He gave His only Son, Christ Jesus, to you - and beyond that, decided to live inside you. He likes us THAT much. You can't do anything to get Him more on 'your side' or liking you more. Grace is totally dependent on the giver of that grace, and that means He loves you and did that for you and there isn't a single thing you can do about it - it's all on Him and in Him to love us, and like us - which He surely does for we are born of Him and have His gifts and His personality traits as part of our being.

If this is true...

...and it certainly is, that means God the Father is beyond being manipulated. You can't do something to make him un-like you and you can't do something to make Him like you more. He is love - it's just how He is!

That makes Him unpredictable in many ways, or appears so with our limited understanding. You don't always know what He has in mind. You also can't buy answered prayer, you can't impress Him by doing x deed, you can't offer Him anything that will corrupt Him to manipulate things to your liking over and above what someone else needs. He is God and He alone is sovereign.

In the same way I knew my grandfather and what he liked and didn't like, he was to me unpredictable in many situations, and certainly beyond manipulation. He was grandpa and his ways were set. What I tried to do as a boy was to be around my grandfather to get to know him as best as I could, and learn his ways and his thoughts.

He was an eye, ear, nose, and throat doctor, and back in the 1960's when I was a boy, after Sunday dinner at my grandparent's house, he would take me along to the hospital to visit his patients. Each patient was different and each had a different ailment and there was no way I could know what my grandfather would do at each stop on his rounds.

But I knew him, I knew his character, his demeanor, his heart, because I'd been around him so much, so I knew that though he was unpredictable in exactly how he would handle each patient, I knew the love and intent and manners of my grandfather, so I knew whatever the solution for each would be, it would be flowing from those good things in his heart. Our heavenly Father is like that. He is unpredictable, yet entirely predictable.

You don't start your day in sin and then work your way into fellowship and peace

Your spirit man never sleeps and is in constant communion and one with Christ in you. You don't open your eyes in the morning and are immediately guilty of being a sinner. You open your eyes to become aware once again, of Christ in you and you are still in fellowship and know Almighty God.

Just getting out of bed and ready for your day is not a sin. Neither are necessary thoughts and conversations about your day a sin. Eating breakfast isn't a sin. Being a human being isn't a sin. Sin is an offense against God. You don't offend Him by going about your routine. Legalism focuses on self and causes a person to be continually second guessing themselves, worrying they have offended God or done something wrong. If you sin He is fully capable of letting you know in your spirit that you missed it...more on that next week because...

I've run out of room for today. "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God." 1 John 3:1 Amazing grace indeed! Until next week, blessings,

John Fenn

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2016-11-05

How NOT to be a legalistic believer #2

Hi all,

First 2 points about my Facebook videos - the first is make sure if searching on Facebook for me you are searching for John C Fenn and not John Fenn (there are several I've found out), and secondly, they are now also posted on YouTube.com so if you are't on Facebook, just go to www.youtube.com and enter a search for John C Fenn and my videos from Facebook and other teaching and interview videos I've done will come up.

How not to be a legalistic believer...

Those in a relationship founded upon performance don't know the one they think demands such performance.

Case in point: When I was growing up my dad had very strict rules, and it was through obeying those rules we were allowed to know him, which meant we knew the rules more than we knew him. He was like a building with a scaffolding covering it. To get to him I had to get through the scaffolding of rules and regulations, which was never allowed, so I could only know the scaffolding he erected.

One of the most regimented times was at dinner, where we were instructed as future young men of society. It was required we sit up straight, keeping one hand gently in our lap, never an elbow on the table, and speak only when spoken to. Dad would quiz us about our day one by one. When dad was finished he would announce we may now talk freely, so that even our 'free talk' time was regulated with a distinct start and distinct end.

The routine of a service in the auditorium church is like a scaffolding erected by man around the heart of the Father God and Lord Jesus - to get to them you have to get through the scaffolding - but it is designed so that can never happen. The only way knowing God as presented in the auditorium church is through the structure of the church, leaving people with a church experience more than a God experience.

In a church culture that has substituted emotion for the presence of God, a schedule for the move of the Spirit, and fleshly or demonic manifestations taken for 'God being all over them', how does a person escape religiosity?

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

"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me." John 14:6

These 2 verses show Jesus is the way but the Father is the destination, and knowing the Father is in fact the point.

I'm not suggesting anyone reading this who realizes they know Jesus but don't know the Father well, which often happens when a person transfers a horrible or non-existing relationship with an earth-father to their heavenly Father, isn't born again - not at all. I am saying if you only know the Lord Jesus but don't feel you know the Father as well or equal to how you know the Lord, there is room for growth. Jesus' prayer in John 17 was that we would know the Father - He is always moving in that direction in a life-long process.

How to not be legalistic - know the Father

Some may recall this that I've shared before: While watching a rerun of a TV show I had seen many times before it occurred to me the Father knows everything, and therefore like me watching that rerun I knew so well, He must lead a boring life. So I asked Him, 'Father, where do you find fulfillment?' Immediately He responded, 'I enjoy the process.' The Father is a Spirit, but He created a physical world. By living in us by His Spirit He experiences the limitations of human life in the physical world, and He enjoys the process we call discipleship.

Legalism cuts off process. Legalism constrains an individual within a well defined or understood framework that removes individual personality and gifts. A person cannot grow as a human being nor as a Christian if constrained by legalism. Legalism is not flexible. Legalism is all about performance, not relationship.

The Father enjoys the process. You may also recall this that I've shared many times:

One comment Jesus made during a visitation: "You know, people get saved for Ephesians 2:6." (Our Father...has raised us up together and made us sit together with Him in heavenly places in Christ) When I asked what He meant He said v6 represented who we are in Him, our righteousness, our authority, and people come to the Father because He is drawing them as they seek truth, or are in a tragic situation and turn to Him, and so on. But then with a tilt of His head and big smile He said, "But the Father and I saved you for verse 7!"

Verse 7 says: "So that in the ages to come He (Father) might continue to show forth the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

Our Father and Lord are already thinking about the ages to come and what kindnesses and exceeding grace they will show us - they are not dreaming up rules and regulations by which they may make us perform for them in ages yet to be seen.

What I do is when I first wake up, I greet the Father and ask Him if there is anyone He wants me to pray for

I'll lay there from a few moments to 30 minutes or more, praying in the spirit as people come to mind, floating across my mind up from my spirit - not me thinking them up - but floating up from my spirit is the best way I know to describe it, like a quiet suggestion that has the presence of the Father attached to their name...and I pray for them until the next person's name floats up...

Have you noticed not a single prayer in the epistles is to Jesus nor to the Holy Spirit*, but only to the Father? (*He only repeats what He hears and searches for what the Father has for us, so requests are never made to Him, John 16:13, I Cor 2:9-12)

Did you notice Jesus' instructions in the Lord's prayer of Luke 11 is to address the Father: Our Father in heaven, holy is your name...

I suggest if you don't know the Father, you start talking to Him, including Him in your life first as your Creator. Demonstrate a core thankfulness for nature, for Him thinking you up, for Him causing you to be born at this time in history, for the natural world around you whenever you notice beauty, order, and design. Just say, 'Beautiful sunrise Father' and things like 'Wow, look at the tree Father, amazing design to make a leaf dying for the season turn so colorful' and when you do things like that, revelation starts to flow.

The most basic form of knowing the Father according to Romans 1: 20-21, Acts 14:17 and others, is from creation. In the above example of thanking Him for the colorful leaves as they die for the season, you will find revelation flowing about life and death and His processes - if you will continue to focus down in your spirit, in your deepest parts of your knowing.

Start there...just talk to the Father, He loves the process. He is already planning the ages to come. Be relationship based in your faith, not structure based. New subject next week, until then, blessings,
John Fenn

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