

Can't improve on this! #1. I had her heart

Hi all,

I had Barb's heart on our first date. And truth be told, she had mine. She was 15, I was 16, and I owned a 1965 GTO. She liked that I was tall, had my own car, and played basketball - not necessarily in that order. I did as I was trained and still do to this day, opened the car and other doors for her, and focused on her; she was both fascinating and scary to me (still is).

I had been working up the courage all summer to ask her on a date and finally worked up the nerve, and she accepted! We went to see a movie and had the usual popcorn and soft drink. But on the drive back to take her home I became totally embarrassed when a leaking gasket caused oil to drip onto the hot engine.

On that windless evening at each stop light a blue smoke would rise from under the hood that smelled like burning oil, and drift into our open windows...Why do you always hit red lights when you need to hit all greens? I didn't want to send my date home smelling like burned engine oil!

Even with all those stop lights it seemed the night was ending all too soon. As we drove along I saw a donut shop and asked if she would like to stop for a donut - and she said yes to my great relief. We sat for a long time eating donuts and drinking milk and talking, getting to know each other, before we rolled into her driveway sometime later.

She got out and I walked her to her door. I am 6'6" tall (1.98m) and she is 5' 3 3/4" (1.6m) - that 3/4" (1.9cm) is very important to her, lol). She stood on the top step, I stood one step down, and we kissed gently goodnight. She said she floated into her house and knew at that point she was going to marry me. For me, I knew there would never be anyone else. Period. Paragraph. Over and out.

When you have His heart...

Once I had her heart, I didn't need to put on a 'show' to win her over like a strutting peacock trying to win a hen. That would have been pointless: I already had her, and she had me. Of course we do things for each other out of kindness and love, and we respect and honor each other, now 'going steady' this fall for 45 years (married 41). But I don't have to do anything to win her heart, I had it long ago, hold it in trust, and understand that to be a sacred trust. Anything we do now for each other flows from that; we aren't trying to win each other over all the time - we have each other's heart.

Most of our early dates were talking through life as I led her to the Lord. We talked of her home life and mine. Before she was born again she had to work through all the questions and injustices of life and more - it was a process for her.

What I just described above is like our walk with the Lord. He has our heart, we have His, for we have Christ in us. The rest is a process of 'accepting Him' into our lives, reasoning things out, comparing life with our faith, and walking it out. We already have His heart, so anything we do is merely a response to that, not trying to make that happen. It's a done deal.

Paul asks in Romans 8: 32: "He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also along with His Son, freely give us all things?"

His point is that the Father did the absolute maximum He could do for us by sending His only Son. If He gave us a galaxy, it is nothing compared to the giving of His Son. If He gave us all the gold on 1,000 planets, it doesn't come close to the giving of His Son. We have His heart, we don't need to strut around like a peacock trying to win Him over or get His attention - no religious formula or gyration can add to or subtract from Christ in us. He has us, and we Him. That we have Christ in us, ends any effort on our part to win Him over, to impress Him, to get more from Him.

His Son was everything to Him - That He sacrificed Him for us means He has given us Him and all things relating to Him.

Now compare that with...

Church culture which is all about 'doing' something to reach the Lord. The rituals keep the need for the building and programs and all going, but that structure then naturally creates the culture of formulas to

try to touch God because the pastor/priest stands between the congregation and God. Therefore church becomes a church encounter rather than a God encounter.

Think through your life: How many formulas have you seen or been part of that have no basis in the New Testament truth that you have Christ in you?

Jesus told Peter he had to crucify his thoughts of Jesus not going to the cross - that is how we crucify our flesh, we change our thoughts and motives from what we want to what He wants. But that isn't about winning God over to us.

The rest of the NT is all about the fruit of the Spirit flowing from us in Galatians 5: 22-23 and character from II Peter 1: 5-8: Love, joy, peace, gentleness, kindness, faithfulness, meekness, moral excellence, self control, consistency, godliness, brotherly love, unconditional love. Walking in love and doing good and living honest upright lives.

There are no formulas in the NT, just teachings and exhortations to walk in the new man, to live in the new life in Christ.

Paul said in Romans 10: 6-10 tells us that faith doesn't try to go to heaven, nor does faith try to pull Jesus down from heaven, but rather faith is in our hearts already. Christ in us, the hope of glory. So stop the games!

You have all you ever need right in your spirit - need wisdom? You have the mind of Christ. Need strength? You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you. Need something in this life? All things that pertain to life and godliness have been provided through the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Christ is in you, so you have enough of everything you need to get through today, this week, this month, this year, this life.

How Paul dealt with religious systems next week: The Messianic movement
Until then, blessings,
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We can't improve on this! #2, Messianic movement 1 - how far is too far?

Hi all,
We all agree with the statement that Christ is in us, but then we may wonder, "Can I enhance what I have in Him?"

Today, the Messianic movement: **How far can we go in learning about Jewish roots without getting into error?**

There was a man who was generous in all things, well-liked, never married, a business owner, and solid in character who loved the Lord very much. But having an interest in learning more about the Jewish Jesus, he went to a local 'messianic' congregation.

After his first visit 2 of the leaders made an appointment to visit him in his home, and in that visit and many, many, more visits, often 3-5 nights each week, they taught him. They told him he was incomplete in his faith, disobedient to the Lord for not observing the Mosaic law, and made him afraid he was missing God.

They taught him to ignore the book of Galatians, the letter of I John, and more. At first, he would frequently call and/or email me to get my opinion on what they taught him, but they were there and I am in another state...and he was won over by them, for they were relentless.

The result was he left his house church which his family also attended, choosing even to break all contact with his family. He became immersed in all things the leaders of his messianic congregation told him to do. Today, he has restored relationships with his family, but in a very limited way. His only fellowship is with members of his synagogue.

He hasn't corresponded with me since, not even when I've visited his family in their house next door - I am saddened by the loss of a friend, but it was his doing, not mine. And from what I hear, he is intellectually full, but spiritually empty and longing for more.

I could tell you dozens of stories of men and women who over the course of weeks and months, gradually followed the same path as my friend above, becoming immersed in the messianic to the exclusion of all else. Many of course maintain balance. But how does an earnest and godly desire to know more about the Jewishness of Jesus become an unhealthy obsession? (My series this month, 'Spiritual Addictions 2' covers the path to spiritual addictions in detail)

Paul wrote in Romans 10: 2-4:

"I know what enthusiasm (zeal) they have for the honor of God, but it is misdirected zeal. **3** For they don't understand that Christ has died to make them right with God. Instead they are trying to make themselves good enough to gain God's favor by keeping the Jewish laws and customs, but that is not God's way of salvation. **4** They don't understand that Christ gives to those who trust in him everything they are trying to get by keeping his laws. He ends all of that." (TLB)

Let's look at the progression a person takes down this path. The first thing Paul mentions is that they have a zeal for God. The Greek word is 'zelon' which can mean zeal, jealousy, even fury. The root word, 'zeo', means 'to bubble or boil over'. It means committed to something while also having a strong emotional desire for the object of their desire.

These people are zealous - boiling over in their desire for God and all things God. But he says, it is misdirected zeal. It is 'not according to (revealed) knowledge.'

The word he used to say it 'is not' according to knowledge, is the simple word 'kat'. 'Kat' is a negative, meaning 'against' - in this case 'against knowledge'. Their zeal is so overpowering they ignore what is revealed, in favor of a more complicated 'higher' knowledge - or at least their zeal tells them it is a more advanced knowledge.

Because of this misdirected zeal, ignoring what they have, which is Christ Himself in them, Paul says they go about trying to establish their own righteousness. Their messianic approach becomes a structure by which to approach God, or see Him through that structure; Not accepting Christ died for them to make them right with God, and Christ is already in them.

It is like the movement some years ago of the 'open heaven' meetings. Many a well meaning Christian went to a conference advertising they will have an open heaven, willingly ignoring that Christ is already in them and we can come boldly to the throne of grace. They were zealous but not according to revealed knowledge.

The reason many were willing to ignore what they knew to be true in favor of a 'fad' movement, is because they wanted short answers and a quick fix to their problems or situation. Christ in them would have them walk through the issues, growing in Him, and growing as a person - but that is hard, hard work. Unpleasant work. It is much easier in their zeal to run to an 'open heaven' meeting, which seems so spiritual, and hope a quick fix will come. It doesn't work that way.

People run to formulas and ritual because they don't know the Lord well enough. We are told the Christian faith is about walking in Christian character in II Peter 1: 5-8, and walking in the fruit of the Spirit/spirit in Galatians 5: 22-23, which cause us to live godly lives. We can do this because Christ is in us. Christ in us is everything!

There is nothing wrong with learning about our Jewish Jesus, the culture of the Bible, and the festivals and fasts - but if a person in their zeal leave the simplicity of Christ and revealed knowledge in favor of ritual and external laws which Christ already fulfilled, they fall into error. And that is what Paul was correcting in Galatians 3, which we will cover next week.

Next week - How Paul taught them to stay balanced in their knowledge of the Jewishness of Jesus
Until then, blessings,
John Fenn

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We can't improve on this! #3, Messianic movement 2

Hi all,

Today: The practice of non-Jewish (Gentile) believers going back into the Jewish roots of their faith - how far to go?

What is the point of learning the Jewish roots of the faith?

Paul told the Corinthians in I Corinthians 10: 1-11 that the things that happened to Israel were an example for us.

In Romans 3: 1-2 Paul asked what advantage is there of being Jewish? He said the answer was that to them had been entrusted the 'oracles (Words) of God'. So there is advantage in learning the Jewish roots and the examples from their lives (OT) good and bad from the history of Israel.

But that is as far as it goes.

Paul asked the Galatians in 3: 2-3 if they...."received the Holy Spirit by the preaching of faith in Christ, or by doing the Mosaic law? Does God do miracles among you by His Spirit, or by you obeying the the law's rules and regulations? (Therefore) having begun with the Spirit of God, how is it you think you can be brought to maturity by doing the rules and regulations of the law of Moses?..."

Paul's statement here draws the line for us. If you think you can be brought into maturity in Christ by obeying the laws of Moses, Paul says you are mistaken. It is by the Holy Spirit the Father brings us into maturity in Christ.

The Spirit of God and messages concerning our faith in Christ 'set the stage' for God to move in our midst, to do miracles among us. He isn't against learning about the Jewish roots, he is against people saying you have to, or need to, or it would be good for you, or you think it will bring you into maturity to obey the laws of Moses.

Will you learn more? Yes. Will you mature more? No. Maturity comes through character and the fruit of the Spirit lived out as we walk with Christ. (II Peter 1: 5-8 and Galatians 5: 22-23)

The law of Moses is not for you

"Knowing this, that the law of Moses is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for unholy and profane, for murders..." I Timothy 1: 9

The law is not for the righteous, but to point out the sinfulness of man. If you have Christ in you, the law is not for you.

Why then the laws of Moses?

Romans 3: 19 says the law was given 'that all the world might be found to be guilty by God'. In other words, man didn't know we were sinners until the Mosaic law. That law defined sin for man. It showed us God's holiness and our sinfulness.

Paul said in I Corinthians 15: 56b 'the strength of sin is the law'. That means obeying the Mosaic law leads to more sinning. As James the brother of Jesus said in James 2: 10, "Whoever lives by the Mosaic law, but is guilty of just one point, he is guilty of all."

In other words, sin is sin. If you are living by the Mosaic law but miss it in 1 single law, then you become guilty of all of it because sin is sin - to be guilty of 1 is to be guilty of all.

If you grew up in a strict household with its own rules and regulations you know this is true. If you as a kid cleaned your room and emptied the trash, but you missed the yard work - your strict parent disciplined you for missing that one point of the yard with barely an acknowledgement of the good you did. That is the law of Moses.

So why now having Christ, do Christians think they can be matured by going back under that law?

"If God could have given a law (rule) that would have given eternal life, righteousness would have come through the law."

Stop and consider that statement from Galatians 3: 21: "If God could have given a single rule, a single formula, a single thing we could do that could have given us eternal life, He would have done so."

"...therefore the law was a school teacher to bring us to Christ, so that we can be justified by faith (in Jesus). So after faith has come, you are no longer under the teacher (the law), because you're now a child of the (Father) God." v24-26

Know your heart

Think about your family when you were growing up if that was a happy time, or a family that you knew of that seemed to be the perfect family, or a perfect TV family, sitting around the dinner table talking about their day...imagine that.

Those children are part of the family. Mom and dad want to know what happened during school, and you also have the brothers and sisters sharing back and forth about events in their day to each other. It's loud, with conversations back and forth, kids taking over one another, maybe one trying to tell mom or dad what went on, a sibling making a sarcastic comment or two...Mom and dad inwardly enjoying every minute, every confused, loud, rambunctious minute.

That's us with the Father God. We are His children - He enjoys the process of life we are going through. He wants to know every detail of our day. He is totally involved with us because unlike mom and dad above, He actually lives in us. So that means we take Him everywhere - to every place, to everything we do, to all we talk to - He is totally in us and us in Him.

No rule can improve on that, no confession out your mouth, no amount of fasting or giving or good works. Rest. Jesus is our Sabbath rest, 24/7 - enter into His rest, you are peace with God and God is at peace with you, the evidence is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Learn of the Jewish roots in the faith if you wish, for their lives were examples for us Paul said. Partake in the festivals and learn about the culture and law if you wish, for to the Jews the Words of God were given. There is great value in all that.

But you have Christ in you now. Don't let anyone tell you that now you need to obey Moses, for you have Christ already. Learn, grow, but don't be brought under the bondage of any of the OT laws. As Paul concluded his teaching on this subject to the Galatians in 6: 15-16: "For in Christ being neither Jew nor Gentile means a thing, but only being a new creation in Christ. As many as live by that rule, then peace and mercy is upon them, and on the true Israel of God."

New subject next week. Until then, blessings,
John Fenn

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