

2014-03-08

Like Kids at Christmas #1

Hi all,

I grew up in a big house with a long hall going back to 4 bedrooms and 1 bathroom. At the other end of the house was what we called the family room, or den as it is known in Texas and much of the American south. (And by transplanted southerners or their descendants scattered around the USA)

The family room was where we spent our time watching TV and hanging out. It was also where mom and dad would assemble Christmas presents for we 4 children in the pre-dawn darkness of Christmas morning, spread out in 4 distinct piles with enough separation the presents wouldn't get mixed up.

Dad had one of those very modern then but now very ancient, home movie cameras with a 3' (1m) long light bar on which were 4 spot lights that lit up the family room like a nuclear blast. It was the first time I ever heard the phrase, 'Don't look into the light'.

We would line up at the end of the hall like Olympic sprinters waiting for the signal to run out into the family room to claim our presents. We knew we were getting close when dad's spotlights went on because that end of the house suddenly became brighter than daylight.

The little bell and what came next

Mom and dad spent their first 2 years of marriage near Stuttgart, Germany, as back then every male in the US served 2 years in the military, and that is where he was stationed. Somewhere in those 2 years they visited Oberamgau and bought a Nativity Scene, carved by local woodcarvers with figures of Joseph and Mary, shepherds and animals, Wise Men, angel on top, and baby Jesus in a manger.

Mom had also bought a delicate little porcelain bell Christmas tree ornament that was the last thing to go on our tree. We had strict warnings not to touch it as it was very special to her - she alone had the authority to ring the bell, and she only rang it once a year. In her mind, when she rang the bell it signified Christ had come as the Father's greatest gift to mankind ever, and Christmas had officially begun.

But it served a dual purpose; To 4 young children waiting at the end of the hall, the ringing of that bell was the equivalent of a starter's pistol at a track and field event - GO! We would race down the hall, well, they raced, being the oldest I was too cool to show excitement like my little brothers and sister.

Having said that I suspect when I get to heaven and ask to see those scenes again, I might find I showed a little more excitement and speed down the hall than I recollect here. And I'm sure the house will seem smaller than I remember it as well.

As we burst into the lit up family room, dad standing to the side recording it all, mom would make us pause and look to the Nativity Scene. That Nativity scene had stood in the weeks before Christmas complete, but for one item. Baby Jesus was nowhere to be found in the weeks before Christmas, hidden from view as mom explained, hidden from mankind until His birth.

On Christmas morning, before we were allowed to open our presents, all attention turned to mom who presented the carved figure of baby Jesus, and delicately placed Him in the manger - signaling He had now come and is the reason we give presents to one another. With Him placed, we tore into the presents.

Respect, honor, reverence

Many Christians take whatever is labeled the 'new thing' God is doing, and play with it like a child on Christmas morning without pausing to reverence what we've been given. As you can tell by me writing about this, mom's annual pause to honor the Greatest Gift is with me today. I inherited that Nativity Scene and bell, and continue the tradition.

Even when we 4 young children tore into our presents, our amazement was founded upon a profound respect and honoring of the True Gift. Where is that foundation among believers today? There can be a balanced mix of awe and respect for God **and** child-like excitement for what God is doing, just as we held that bell and the placement of baby Jesus in the manger as holy in the midst of a 4-child home on Christmas morning.

When I study my New Testament and their home and relationship-based faith, and compare it to the Institutional Church of today, I find in the early house church of the New Testament, the things of God held a

place of respect and esteem, and I see that same reverence for Him in house church today, at least in CWOWI. I can only speak of the grace given to me so I can't say that about all house churches, nor the different but related 'simple church' stream.

Paul wrote NOT to be like children who are tossed to and fro by 'every wind of teaching' that comes along. He wrote of order in marriage 'because of the angels' who are assigned to guard the couple and an out-of-order marriage hinders their work. He wrote about walking out our salvation with fear and trembling, and of our gatherings together as holy and with purpose. Though others in his time (as ours) handle the Word of God deceitfully. (Ephesians 4:14, I Corinthians 11:10, Philippians 4:12, II Corinthians 4:2)

Fad based-faith

The word 'fad' showed up in America in the early 1800's and meant a 'trivial pursuit'. By 1881 it was used to describe the newest fashions. It can be traced to the French, 'fadaise', meaning 'nonsense' or 'trivial', and further back to the Latin 'fatus' meaning 'stupid.'

Today a fad is a passing fancy, a momentary focus groups of people place on something that soon fades into memory. There have been many in Christian circles, always proclaimed to be the cutting edge of what God is doing, yet the Lord must change His mind frequently - a couple years later a new fad emerges and THAT is now proclaimed to be the new and cutting edge of what God is doing, and the previous is forgotten.

Some people focus so much on a fad they stay there, making a little spiritual and mental home in their mind, and keep that pet project the focus of their life. Often, one day they wake up, realize the glitter has faded, and wonder where everyone went. When that happens confusion and questioning often happens, coupled with self-doubt and a sense of either missing it or being deceived. They realize they placed their faith in a person or a movement, rather than the Father and our Lord.

I'm not as old as dirt, but I am old enough to remember adults playing with personal prophecy in the mid-1970's like children at Christmas, complete with 'prophets' eager to sit people in the 'hot seat' and give extensive personal prophecies that rambled on but rarely said anything. Some 25 years later the new and modern version of personal prophecy became the latest thing God was doing once again, only to fade from view as it did in the 70's. Though as with any fad, pockets of people will remain holding on to it for years.

Did the Father use our child-like immaturity, playing with Him as a toy at Christmas? Sure He did, He is the Master at taking anything to turn it to His glory. Were people hurt by the personal prophecy movement? Sure they were, as assuredly as the shiny Christmas toy will be dented and broken by New Year's Day.

The things of God in vain

The first 2 commands God gave were to honor Him alone as God, and not to use His name in vain. The word 'vain' is used for instance, when we work hard for something and nothing comes of it. "It was all in vain.". We also use it to describe a person so caught up in themselves they become irrelevant and useless. They are vain, or pointless and irrelevant to the real things of life. 'Vain' means 'without purpose' or 'pointless'.

A vain use of his name ranges from an exclamation like, 'Oh my God!' to saying 'Praise the Lord' with no true praise behind it, but just as an empty exclamation. There is a Texas TV teacher I stopped listening to decades ago because of his frequent exclamations of 'OH MY GOD!' when he taught - it grieved my spirit so much I just couldn't continue.

Sometimes when I hear believers use His name in vain or play with the things of Him like a child with new toys at Christmas, I want to shout; "Stop before you open His presents and put Jesus in His rightful place!" How did we get to our current condition of no respect and honor for God in the body of Christ? That's next week...until then, blessings,

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2014-03-15

Like Kids at Christmas #2

Hi all,

A friend of mine once had an appointment with the President of an African nation. He was trying to bring Christian educational materials and a Bible school to the people of the nation, and the request went up the chain of command until the President decided he would hear these plans himself.

Their conversation was polite, but concluded with no indication he would receive permission. The President rose, indicating the meeting was over, but paused at the door, asking: "Would you like to take pictures with me now? I know American ministers use pictures like this to help their ministry raise money."

My friend responded: "No, thank you Mr. President. I will never use our relationship for gain, nor will I publicize our meeting today. I honor you and thank you for taking time from your schedule to visit with me. Please let me know when you've made your decision." or words to that effect.

The President was astounded. He paused to consider the integrity of my friend, then turned to an aide and told him to give my friend whatever he needed to help him in his work. He had an open door to the nation for years after, and the knowledge of God and His ways spread to tens of thousands of people as a result.

My friend respected and honored both the office of President and the man, and because of that he had the integrity to refuse to boast of his meeting or use the President for personal or ministry gain.

180 degree difference

This story illustrates the stark differences in the body of Christ concerning my subject today - we see some use God for personal gain or playing with the gifts of the Spirit like kids playing with presents at Christmas because they don't respect and honor the Father and Lord Jesus as God.

They don't have a revelation that God is God and the things of the kingdom are not toys. God's gifts are given to bring abundant life to mankind, transforming us into all God intends, which results in Christ-like character and holy lives. He wants to walk with us along a highway of holiness. Do we want to walk with Him?

We see pastors taking the influence God gave them to build up the body of Christ, used instead to manipulate congregations to join him in multi-level marketing ventures or business investments to pile up earthly riches for themselves, even manipulating by their influence, the vulnerable into illicit affairs.

Others so love and honor and respect the Father and Lord Jesus and the things of the Spirit, they only want to be more like Him and serve others, seeking only to be known of God, not of man. They want to be in meetings where the Spirit flows until the Holy Spirit brings it to an end. They truly love Him and long to be in His presence! They wouldn't dream of using God for personal gain, for theirs is a pure love based on a revelation of what they've been saved from, and who He is. What a stark contrast between the two sets of populations in the body of Christ!

Paul said, "We have this treasure (Christ in us) in earthen vessels." Treasures are highly valued, protected, given a safe place, and provide a sure foundation for life. How many today value Christ in us as a treasure?

Cherish what we have

I remember when the Lord appeared to me in February of 2001 during a worship service just before I was to speak. My eyes were open, but suddenly I was in the Spirit, able to see Him as well as everything around me, though when looking into those eyes all else faded from view. He walked over to me and He said;

"See what I see: People running to and fro to this meeting and that, looking for the spectacular, thinking THAT is supernatural; While they miss the supernatural work in their midst, even in their heart, for the process of discipleship IS supernatural...As it was in the beginning, so it must be now: I am moving in relationships."

This is why we have our web site as www.supernaturalhousechurch.org - The 'supernatural' part has nothing to do with the many miracles we've seen in healings and lives changed, it is about the process of discipleship being supernatural, and healings and wholeness are simply the result of making disciples.

This is what stayed with me

His opening words have stayed with me: "See what I see." I understand "See what I see" as an ongoing command and way of life, not a suggestion for a one time visitation. I've purposed to see **what** He sees, **as** He sees it, ever since. He said, 'I only do what I see the Father doing' in John 5:19 - I want to be like that!

In Acts, they saw life as Jesus saw it, which means they chose the culture of the kingdom rather than the culture of the Empire. "See what I see" first means making a choice in the heart to see what Jesus sees, which is based on revelation from the Father.

Once a person does "See what I see", it means making a break from the Institutional Church (IC) that affirms a person by outward senses like sight and sound. It means making a decision not to be impressed by the 'big name' speaker, the 'worship team', the marble floor, the coffee bar in the outer hall. It means making a decision in the heart to reject the 'Hollywood Jesus' culture that has exchanged meetings for relationships and emotion for anointing.

It means an honest assessment

We must make an honest assessment of life and culture around us, in comparison to the Father's life and culture within us. Then we must act on what we discover. (My series 'I've Been Ruined' covers 10 differences between Christ-in-us culture versus present day church culture)

He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, so it means looking for Him in the same places He was found in the gospels. Thus, 'See what I see' can be discovered by Jesus' life in the gospels.

He turned water into wine at a wedding then deflected glory from Himself and allowed the credit to go to the host. He healed people and then told them not to tell anyone. He 'went about doing good'. He said He is meek and lowly in heart, and we are to yoked with Him in that, so we may learn from Him.

How many today, and how much of the Institutional Church culture today, seek meekness and lowliness, seek to give a cup of water to a child, to visit the sick and imprisoned, to care for widows and orphans who have no other means of support? "See what I see." Can we lay aside natural senses to become focused on, no, overwhelmed and humbled by, seeing what He sees, as He sees life?

The whole kingdom works by...

The people said Jesus was reincarnated John the Baptist or Jeremiah. Peter saw through the natural happenings like a man with x-ray vision, because he had received revelation from the Father. Revelation from the Father causes us to see what is really happening, what is really important, to see what Jesus sees.

Peter exclaimed; "You are the Christ! The Son of the living God!" in Matthew 16:17 because the Father had revealed that to him. Jesus then said upon that rock of revelation He would build His gathering of believers so they may conduct the business of the kingdom.

My friend had a revelation about the importance of meeting the President of that nation. He did not allow himself to be caught up in the luxury of Presidential office, the armed guards at the door, the high officials waiting to the side - he saw through all that which allowed him to retain that sense of honor and respect throughout their meeting. Because of that he would not use the President nor share the details of the conversation for personal gain. He treasured the privilege of time with the President.

Living in revelation from and of the Father, walking with Him through life, keeps us humble, knowing Who we are dealing with, and causes us to see as He sees...and those who walk with Him hold what they have as a treasure in their earthen vessel.

The reason much of church culture uses God for personal gain or plays with Him like children at Christmas, is they have no revelation of Him nor from Him. They have notebooks about Him, they read about Him, but they don't know Him, for to know Him is to receive revelation from Him, and be in humble awe that God now lives inside of earthen vessels.

More next week...Until then, blessings,
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2014-03-22

Like Kids at Christmas #3

Hi all,
I'm the oldest of 4 children, and we were ages 11, 9, 7 and 5 when dad left our family.
One kind of respect

Because I am the oldest I have memories of my dad that my brothers and sister don't. Their memories are few and far between, fuzzy with just a few clear moments burned into their memory.

That's how many view the Father God - fuzzy with just a few details. Their respect for Him is more from the fact He is God, than based on remembering how He walked through life with them.

I remember wrestling with dad, our dog 'Patch', and my brothers, all in a mass of turning, grabbing, laughing action until we were sweaty and the dog was so wound up he would run around the house from one end to the other. They recall those times only vaguely, if at all.

I remember watching dad fix the riding lawn mower used to cut the grass on our nearly 3 acres, helping him as a young boy by holding a wrench, handing him pliers and the like. I was there when dad sliced open the little finger on his left hand and then watched him take a needle and thread and with one hand sew up the flesh without anything to deaden the pain. My brothers and sister don't remember any of that at all.

He taught me how to shake hands, shine shoes, tie a tie, look a person in the eye when greeting them, and more. My brothers and sister have none of those memories, so my respect for dad is different than their respect for him because they didn't walk through life with him while I did.

Enter the heavenly Father

With each life-lesson my love and respect for him grew. This is part of the difference between a child playing with the Father's gifts like a kid at Christmas, or honoring God for being God: A mature person remembers their Father's time with them, while a child doesn't remember either by choice or immaturity, or they haven't yet lived long enough to have a history with their Father.

Because my dad and I have that history of fixing lawn mowers and tying ties together and such, when he left and I got to know my heavenly Father at age 16, the Father picked up where my earth-dad had left off.

One day I was fixing that same lawn mower dad and I had worked on, but this time it was just me looking at it not knowing what to do, feeling the weight of the world for I had 3 acres to mow and mom depending on me. I started asking Father what was wrong, and for wisdom, and I distinctly heard, "Look a little closer, a little deeper. A bolt has come loose and you'll find it if you look harder."

So I did just that - I got dirty, scraped my knuckles, but with a twist of my head down into the bowels of the beast, I saw in the shadows a bolt whose nut had fallen off - a replacement was found and the lawn mower was fixed. I said 'Thank you Father' and started on the grass. He has rarely told me specifically what is wrong, but rather points me in the right direction and lets me figure it out from there. (Same in life I've learned)

Now I'm an adult and I still ask for His help fixing things or any decision in life. We have a history of walking through life together, and He has my respect and love and honor for walking so faithfully with me. Holding the memories of His activity in our lives with continual appreciation in our hearts, causes Him to respond to us just that much more again.

The grace given to you

I can only share the grace given to me, but you too have had times where you know the Father gave you wisdom, provided when there was no provision, walked with you through valleys. It is the act of calling to remembrance those events that form a foundation upon which a base of honor and respect for Him is built.

Consider your miracles

After Jesus had just fed 5,000 men plus women and children, then in the early morning walked on the water to the disciples and calmed the wind and the waves, Mark observes: "And they were astonished beyond measure, for their hearts were hardened because they did not consider the miracle of the loaves." Mark 6:52

Notice - their hearts became insensitive and dull to the things of the Spirit, which is to say hardened - "because they did not consider the miracle of the loaves." Do we stop to consider His miracles in our lives?

Just 2 chapters later the story is the same. In Mark 8:14-21 Jesus has just fed 4,000 people, but the Pharisee's demanded He do another miracle. When they were out on the lake Jesus began commanding them to watch out for the 'yeast' of the Pharisees and of Herod. The disciples, realizing they had forgotten to take bread, thought Jesus was upset because they had forgotten that little detail.

But Jesus asked: "Why do you discuss the fact we have no bread? Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a hardened (dull, insensitive) heart? When I broke 5 loaves for 5,000, how many baskets of broken pieces did you pick up?" They said, "Twelve." "When I broke the 7 for the 4,000, how many large baskets of broken pieces did you pick up?" And they said to Him, "Seven." And He said to them, "How is it you don't understand?" In the Greek it is literally, "**How is it you haven't put it together?**"

Notice in both cases how their hearts became hardened, how they became insensitive to the Spirit - **They witnessed miracles in their lives but never stopped to consider them.** They never took time to 'put it together.'

Growing up

Children see a miracle or other manifestation of the things of God and think 'a new thing to play with'. Spiritual adults stop to consider the miracle, consider the faithfulness of the Father, consider with awe the fact that the Creator and God of the universe lives in them, and walks with them through life.

A spiritually mature person purposely looks at how the Father has walked with them through life, even if some of those memories seem a bit fuzzy - still, they know He got them through. A spiritual child who could grow, chooses instead to stay a child by not stopping to consider the miracles.

So many people want to be sensitive to the things of the Spirit, yet they've never considered a key element to this maturity is to stop and consider the miracles He has done in their life. When we become sensitive to see and consider our own 'miracle of the loaves' in the past, it sensitizes us to miracles present.

A child receives the gift with no clue what that gift costs, while a mature person realizes there was sacrifice and expense in the providing of the gift and honors it and the Giver accordingly. May the body of Christ grow up into maturity.

Next week a new but related topic - **The body of Christ or the Bride of Christ?** Is there a difference?

Blessings,

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