

2014-12-27

Spiritual Butterflies #1

Hi all,

In my e-newsletter of the 16th I shared a recent visitation with the Lord in which He talked about His people chasing 'spiritual butterflies'. (If you did not receive the e-newsletter please go to cwowi.org and click 'articles', and in the drop down menu click 'newsletter')

A recap

The Lord came to me and said this: "Many are wondering about the coming year, but I am working in hearts to the degree that many have determined they will no longer chase spiritual butterflies, but will center in on the core of who they are in Me and what they believe, and seek out those who have the same spiritual priorities."

Then we were standing next to a field with children chasing butterflies. But some stopped chasing butterflies and sat down on the edge of the field, facing out, and gave water and food to those outside the field. Again, follow the above instructions if you haven't read it yet.

What did He mean by 'spiritual butterflies?'

When the Lord returns He tells us in Matthew 25:34-40 of those righteous in His eyes:

"The King will say to those on His right 'Come, you who have gained my Father's blessing! Take your inheritance - the kingdom reserved for you since the foundation of the world! For I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was lonely and you made me welcome. I was naked and you clothed me. I was ill and you came and looked after me. I was in prison and you came to see me there.

Then the true men (righteous) will answer Him saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry/fed...thirsty/gave drink...lonely/visited...sick or in prison/visited?' And the Kind will reply; I assure you that whatever you did for the humblest of my brothers you did for me." (JB Phillips Translation)

Those words will happen exactly as He stated. If we believe that, and if we believe we are in the end times, shouldn't we be able to read the above passage with assurance and say, "Yes Lord, that is my life, that is what I do, those are my priorities too!"

What if He came right now to those who think the height of spiritual experience is getting 'slain in the spirit' or 'drunk in the spirit' or feeling 'spiritual goose bumps'? What if He came right now to those who think having some minister lay hands on them for a fresh anointing is the highest and best God has? What if a person was so focused on personal prophecy - or deliverance - or going to the 3rd heaven - they think these types of things are the highest and best God has and is doing right now?

If Jesus came back right now could each one of us say what is most important to Him is also most important to us? Is his idea of the work of the ministry also our idea of the work of the ministry?

At the start

The apostles heard Jesus tell them directly what He is looking for at His return, and they imparted that priority and lifestyle to others, for in Acts 2 through 6 the people are going so far as to sell excess resources to help care for the physical needs in their midst.

"And the multitude of believers were of one heart and soul. No one said anything they had was their own...neither was there any among them that lacked; for as many as were possessors of lands or houses (people who owned multiple homes and lands) sold them and brought the prices of those things sold and laid them at the apostles' feet for distribution." (4:32-34)

That doesn't mean they lived in a big commune, no, they retained their own homes to live in, but their hearts were devoted to helping others in their midst, and if there were needs people were willing to take from their savings and investments even, to help meet the needs around them. (They didn't have banks in those days, so all cash investment was tied up in homes, lands, livestock and such)

All these resources were going to provide water, food, clothing, shelter and more to those in need, consistent with Jesus' priorities. Over the next 30 years that Acts and most of the New Testament

cover we see the work of the ministry continue to be defined this way, with the body of Christ having Jesus' same priorities. In Antioch when Agabus prophesies about a coming famine in Judea, the body (who met in homes) gathers an offering to send to Judea for famine relief. (Acts 11:28-30)

Paul receives offerings for the poor in Jerusalem in I Corinthians 16, II Corinthians 8&9, Romans 15:25-26.

James says this: "True (pure) religion and undefiled before God the Father is this; To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep yourself unspotted from the world." (James 1:27)

How do you spell religion?

So we consistency through all the leaders and people, and through all the New Testament that the body of Christ' priorities were consistent with Jesus' priorities at His return. Shouldn't our priorities be the same?

Do we define pure religion that same way? To keep ourselves unspotted from the world? To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction?

Or do we now, or have some of us in the past, defined pure religion as learning to give personal prophecy, or going out on the street to talk to strangers and see the Lord give us words, or to yell and scream at God to open heaven to us, or to be drunk in the spirit and wobble around like a child's spinning top?

Why do people get distracted with spiritual butterflies?

From the start Christians have met in homes as their primary gathering place to be the church. Being in a living room every week with roughly the same people means you get to know one another and the needs in the midst, and everyone takes personal responsibility out of a heart of love to care for everyone. Things naturally flow therefore to how a person can be helped; money, skills, time, wisdom and other resources are used to help meet the needs.

In the auditorium church it is all about the program that does the work of the ministry, it is not based on individual responsibility. There is a Friday night outreach to the apartment complex, a food and clothing drive in which all that is required is to bring a can of soup and a coat you don't want any more to put in a large box as you walk into the auditorium. There are prison ministries that you can give money to, a bus program to bring underprivileged children to church, and more, all funded by your tithes and offerings.

But you don't have to do anything. That gives Christians in the auditorium church the luxury of chasing spiritual butterflies for themselves. They have no other responsibility to anyone once they give their tithe, offering, can of soup or spare coat. Relieved of responsibility, they can chase butterflies!

"Have you been to _____? I got so drunk in the spirit, I have a whole new level of anointing in my life now! We prayed down heaven I tell you, we yelled and screamed for God to open heaven and some said they were caught up to the 3rd heaven, wow, one lady was rolling and screaming the Lord was on her so mightily! I even heard a demon talk to someone before it was cast out, wow what a powerful time of ministry we had."

No matter how much I look at Jesus' words in Matthew 25 I can't imagine Him saying something like:

"Come and inherit the kingdom that has been prepared for you. For I was the needy family next to you in church, but you didn't want to associate with people dressed as they were. I was the single mom who needed a little cash for some clothes for her children, but you felt giving your old worn out coat into the box in the foyer was the extent of your duty - good for you!"

"I was your neighbor struggling in their marriage and rather than reach out to them you ignored them on your way to church. Great! Come inherit your kingdom! For you ignored those around you though by your own words I gave you increased anointing (what did you think that was for, yourself?). Enter into your kingdom with those goose bumps! Come and prophesy all you who think you are prophets because you are a little experienced in personal prophets!"

Hmmmm....spiritual butterflies, or having Jesus' priorities? And what does that look like if we want to change - until next week! Blessings,

John Fenn

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2015-01-03

Spiritual butterflies #2

Hi all,

Barb and I have iPhones which include the computerized software assistant with the female voice known as Siri. For those who aren't familiar with Siri, if you press and hold the round button on the phone a female voice, Siri, will ask "What can I help you with? You can ask Siri everything from the latest sports score to directions to the closest gas station to the weather forecast and most anything else.

Barb and I were deep in conversation when she started digging around her purse looking for something, and accidentally pressed her iPhone's round button. Immediately Siri asked, "What can I help you with?" and Barb, who was in the middle of a sentence said to Siri without thinking, "Oh be quiet, I wasn't talking to you", to which Siri immediately responded from the depths of the purse, "That isn't very nice!" We burst out laughing at the idea a phone spoke to and responded to Barb in such a way.

I feel a little like that when talking about the visitation with the Lord where He shared about His people chasing spiritual butterflies. In my digging around the 'purse' of Christendom to find definition and solution I don't want to accidentally touch a hot button and someone think 'That isn't very nice'.

I've chased a few spiritual butterflies

When Barb and I were teenagers there was a time in our teen prayer meetings it seemed nearly everyone had a demon or a demon was to blame for all life's ills. Talk of having a 'deliverance ministry' went around.

Some in our teen group certainly did have demons that manifest and were cast out. There were also those who didn't have demons but wanted the attention they received if they said they had a demon, so they put up a great show of writhing and moaning worthy of an Academy Award nomination.

The Lord used those experiences to help us find balance, to experience the real and fake and work through it. It was for a season, and we came away thankful for having experience with the demonic and the fake, and focused once again on Jesus and the Father instead of 'the dark side'.

In 1979 in our first year of marriage, we got into the '100 fold return' spiritual butterfly with my pay of \$110 per week - giving \$11 and expecting \$1100 to somehow be directed into our account. Barb brought us back to balance when she said, "This doesn't feel right and I know what changed. We used to give because we love God and His work, but now we give to get, and that's wrong and that's why this grieves our spirit when we give." A moment of repentance later and prayer to tell the Father we really don't care if we ever see that money again, we give because we love Him and His people, and we were back on balance.

Our church versus Peter and Paul's church

But the fact is, Christianity in the New Testament looked remarkably different than practiced today in the auditorium church. There were no spiritual butterflies to chase because their focus and time was all about what Jesus said in Matthew 25:40 about caring for the physical needs of the brethren.

"...if you have given (water/food/clothes/visit) even if to the least of my brethren, you have done it unto me."

This isn't works salvation because Jesus is talking to believers about caring for believers, so these works of ministry flow from us as a result of our salvation, not to attain it.

Care for those in the faith first, then outward to the unsaved

He said 'my brethren'. That means the focus of our giving is to the 'brethren', not the unsaved. Brethren is an old term used when addressing both men and women.

This focus on taking care of the body of Christ first rather than using the meeting of physical needs of the lost as an evangelistic tool may be a surprise, but the New Testament consistently shows they gave to other believers, not to the unsaved, remaining consistent with Jesus' command to care for His brethren.

This explains why throughout Acts the believers gave among themselves to be sure there were no needs in their midst - they didn't try to take care of the whole city. That is why when the famine in Judea was prophesied by Agabus in Acts 11, the church sent an offering to fellow believers in Judea, not the unsaved victims of the famine. And Paul's offerings for the poor saints in Jerusalem in Romans 15 and I Corinthians 16 and II Corinthians 8 & 9 was received by the churches for the church in Jerusalem - not for the poor sinners in Jerusalem. Money and resources in the body of Christ stayed in the body of Christ.

That isn't to say we completely ignore the unsaved, but they are to get the overflow, not the focus of our attention in giving. Paul said in Galatians 6:10 to do good to all men, but especially to the household of faith. The brethren are our first priority.

It also explains why so many people were added to the Lord in the first couple of years after Pentecost - the unsaved saw a group of people on fire for God, and loving one another to the extent there wasn't a single need in their midst. If you were on the outside looking in, and you lacked food or clothing, and you saw this group of happy people who had all needs met, wouldn't you want to see what it was all about? Some were afraid, some joined, some stood back and watched - but the net effect was people added to the Lord.

What has this to do with butterflies?

By contrast the auditorium church has programs for ministry work, meaning (statistically) 80% of the congregation has no expectations placed upon them other than attending church and giving when asked. So there are now a lot of Christians focused on self and what self needs from God, they feel they can chase every wind of doctrine and every 'hot' thing out there, making God in effect, their servant instead of them, His.

The programs and their need for infrastructure and money explain why the auditorium church is so willing to help the unsaved while church members who need help with a mortgage or car payment are turned away. Their priorities are exactly 180 degrees from what Jesus stated He is looking for at His return. If we gave to those brethren in our midst and were in relationship with each other, there wouldn't be time nor interest to chase the latest spiritual butterfly that crosses our line of sight.

James said "True religion and undefiled before God is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep yourself unspotted from the world." The context is CHRISTIAN fatherless and widows because he was writing to Christians, as also demonstrated in Acts 2-6 as they cared for the brethren. That is true religion. Look at your average church - do they look unspotted (untainted) from the world? Is their priority as a church to feed/water/clothe/visit those BELIEVERS in need in their pews? Can they say 'There are no needs among us because no one says anything he has is his own'?

What is the ministry the "5-fold" is to equip His people for? Ephesians 4:11-16

To be consistent with what Jesus said about the work of ministry He is looking for at His return, to be consistent with the rest of the New Testament's description of the work of the ministry FIRST being to care for the physical needs of the brethren, we must conclude the core 'work of the ministry' the 5-fold is to equip people for, is to water/feed/clothe/ and visit the sick and in prison. The core mission of the 5-fold is therefore first to empower individuals to make sure there are no physical needs lacking among the brethren.

This is why when the first staff was added to the church in Jerusalem it was 7 men to help manage the care and feeding of widows. Not a clothing program to the unsaved in the city. Not a food program for unsaved in the ghettos. Their focus was caring for the needs in their midst. Food, water, clothing, housing. (Acts 6)

Ephesians 4:15 continues by saying if we do the work of the ministry (water/feed/clothe/visit the brethren) we won't be like children tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine that comes along, but will in fact grow up in Him in all things as the sinews of the body connect all of us together. Read Ephesians 4:11-16 with the understanding that the core work of the ministry is founded and flows from Jesus' priority to make sure all His brethren's needs are met, and you will see amazing things that are 100% consistent Matthew through The Revelation.

To start thinking like Jesus taught and Acts and the apostles demonstrated, will rock your brain and turn all you thought you knew about priorities and relationships in church upside down, and you will be

able to spot wasn't isn't scriptural - and you'll never be the same. And THAT is where the body of Christ is headed.

Remember this visitation about spiritual butterflies was a prophetic word about what the Spirit is saying to the church - I'll pick it up next week with how this rearrangement of priorities is going to come about, until then, blessings!

John Fenn

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2015-01-10

Spiritual butterflies #3

Hi all,

I've been sharing about chasing spiritual butterflies, from a visitation and vision with the Lord depicting many believers distracted by the unimportant, but Him sharing about a coming shift in the body of Christ to His priorities.

I'm just telling you what He said - in the next 3 years in the west especially, many will not have the luxury of having butterflies to chase. Don't get me wrong - times are coming that believers walking with the Lord will find their needs met and some exceedingly so, but there will be many believers who thought it too difficult in these times to pay the price of getting to know people, of going to someone's home for a meal, or to invest in a new way of doing 'church' like home and relationship based church.

They have no network of support though they are active Christians, no one to 'watch their back' so to speak - these spiritual islands can afford the luxury of being islands as long as their life sails along under good weather, but if a storm in life comes, to whom do they turn?

Recognize the season

In Luke 19:41-44 Jesus approached Jerusalem on His way to the cross that would happen just 3 days later, He wept over it saying: "If you, even you, had you only known on this day what would bring you peace, but now it is hidden from your eyes....because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."

Now is the time to turn our attention as a body away from child-like chasing of every newest teaching, and just grow up in character. So many times I've talked to women who spend thousands of dollars going to conferences to pray for the nation, and pray for their family's salvation, while their own husband and children want their wife and mom home to have time together as a family - but she is too spiritual to be practical, self-deceived thinking what she is doing is God, when in fact staying home and growing in character and as a person, present with her family is what He would ask of her.

And I've spoken to many men who work hard for their family and long to be with them, but think the God thing to do is work themselves into the ground to provide the luxuries he thinks they want and deserve, self-deceived and blinded, not realizing they just want dad home.

Often times the most spiritual of decisions is nothing more than rearranging our priorities to do a difficult thing, something out of our comfort zone, yet the wise perceive it to be God's path.

People are going to begin meeting in homes for fellowship, prayer, worship just out of a desire to have someone real in their lives and have the Holy Spirit free to flow in worship and the gifts of the Spirit, with real relationships, whether they call it house church or not - they just want the real and genuine. These are the ones who have others to watch out for them, who will care for those in their midst, while others will attempt to turn to their auditorium church, but discover they have no one to help.

That isn't scare tactics, that's just what's coming down the road. The Holy Spirit continues to move now as He did then, within those priorities of Jesus and the writers of the NT - feed/water/clothe/visit those in need in the body of Christ first. That's what the body of Christ looked like at the start, that's what Jesus said it will look like at His return - "...if you have fed/watered/clothed/visited even the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me." Mundane, normal, not glamorous, but ever so spiritual.

Many have twisted Paul's words about making unbelievers jealous, and using those words to explain things like why x church needs \$2 million for a sound system, to make the unbelievers jealous, Or maybe giving to x Christian TV network to 'make unbelievers jealous' over the quality of programming, and things like that.

But go back to the first century, to a time when widows and the lame and the sick with no family were forced to beg and live on the street in lonely destitution, while all around them were Christians who had all needs met, whose lives were enriched with extended spiritual families, friends, neighbors and co-workers. Wouldn't you be curious and jealous as you observed they had strong relationships and so loved one another each made sure the other had his or her needs met?

Now I ask you - are we any different today? Isn't the proof of our discipleship our love for one another? (John 13:35: By this all men will know you are my disciples; if you have love one for another.") I'm not saying lets be like the 1st century church, I'm saying the 1st century church simply practiced what Jesus did and taught, and should we obey Jesus in this way too?

Where to start?

I was in a grocery store and as often happens, I was asked by a shorter woman to reach an item on a top shelf for her. (I'm 6'6"/1.9m) I recognized the spirit of depression on her and tried to continue the conversation past 'Excuse me sir, can you help me get this off the top shelf?', but she just said thank you and went on - and all I could say was 'You're welcome, bless you, have a good day.'

I prayed for her as I walked away and told the Father "I wish there was something more I could have done for her, like cast that spirit of depression off her." and He replied, "That's alright, you did what she could receive for now and what I had for you to do for her today."

I reflected on His patience and how He continues to go about doing good - Acts 10:38 says that of Jesus, and Jesus said He only did what He saw the Father do. (John 5:19) And not only that, but something as simple as getting an item off a top shelf for someone was so spiritual, so personally directed from heaven to do good to this lady.

The other day as I pulled up to a stop light upon leaving a store's parking lot, I glanced in my rearview mirror to see on the roof of the car behind me, a large soft drink with no lid - certain to spill when the light turned green and our line of cars entered traffic. I first rolled down my window and looked back at the man, and made motions pointing to the roof above him...but he didn't understand.

Finally giving up, and seeing the driver behind him burying his head in his steering wheel he was laughing so hard at my gyrations and the man's gyrations back at me, I got out of my truck and got the soft drink off the roof of his car. He rolled down the window upon seeing I had his drink in hand, and I said 'Here you are sir, you almost lost your drink.' to which he replied with a chuckle, 'You're a good man, thank you!'

As I got into my truck the light turned green and off we went, me thanking the Father for allowing me to 'go about doing good' in this little thing - and humbled and amazed at the Father's care for the man whether he recognized me as being an Ambassador for the King or not.

Jesus went about doing good

He turned water into wine, but never took credit for it. He healed Peter's mother-in-law, but only those in the house were aware. He multiplied a boy's lunch to feed thousands, but never advertised it nor sought a means to market Himself through His miracles - He just went about doing good.

In 2014 I saw the humility of the Lord more than ever before, and in turn have been humbled more than ever before as a result. When He said in Matthew 11: "Take my yoke (the Holy Spirit) upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart and you will find rest for your souls."

Note - He is truly meek and lowly of heart though He be King of all. His yoke teaches us humility, and that humility leads to rest for our souls - not spirit - souls; emotions, thoughts, minds.

Paul told the Corinthians* he was concerned they would be seduced away **from the simplicity in Jesus**, and the gospel message, and the Holy Spirit. If you have been seduced into a complicated faith filled with agendas and formulas and manipulation and performance based 'If I do this then God will do that', then repent and return to what Jesus said - do good to His brethren in practical ways, in

relationship with others in the faith, and simply find ways to demonstrate the love of God in your heart to others. (*II Corinthians 11:3-4)

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church - the season of chasing spiritual butterflies is over - time to be the church, not play church. Time to be a Christian, not play Christian.

New subject next week, blessings,

John Fenn

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