

Knowledge Ain't Relationship!!

by Paul D. Norcross

In all of Christianity, one of the slickest deceptions is the substitution of Bible knowledge for personal intimacy with Jesus Christ. It is a hallmark of our information age, and it has been a problem in the church since it began. Put simply, Bible knowledge is not relationship with Jesus Christ! Yet salvation hinges on a personal relationship with Jesus, not a fascination with all things new in Scripture. We are not to run after someone else's anointing or experience.

This is why the least Bible-educated among us may well be first, and the first may well be last in the Kingdom. You see, the Kingdom of God is not about knowledge. It is about the Presence of the King. Knowledge of Him is vital, but relationship with Him is the whole purpose of knowledge about Him.

A great deception of our age is that relationship-seekers may become distracted by glitz and glitter conferences, and razzle dazzle teachers, few of which improve one's personal fellowship with Jesus Christ. Much money is changing hands all across Western Christianity, and we are all inundated with Babylon marketing techniques in the midst of the Body of Christ. I see the same conference faces on nearly every flyer, yet attendees don't seem to get delivered from the problems they bring with them. You can imagine the judgment that will come to "the Money Changers" of our day. II Peter chapter 2 has much to say about this problem in the church.

Jesus and the Father are to receive all the glory. Therefore, a good indication of a false teacher, prophet, apostle, etc. is self-promotion. I am immediately suspect when a ministry is named after its founder, and every magazine and publication is plastered with his or her picture everywhere. Others develop financial partnership commitments, some of which subtly breed guilt for contributing to other ministries, or proclaim special blessings on one's finances if they will give a certain amount of money, sometimes under the urgency of a limited timeframe. Some money changers even go as far as developing status clubs, according special privileges at each level of giving.

But they do such good work, and there is an anointing on their ministry -- how can you say such people might be operating as a false teacher, prophet, or apostle? You decide after reading II Peter 2. You have Holy Spirit. Balaam still operated His gift of the Spirit of God accurately when He prophesied. But his heart was deceived. His character couldn't sustain his anointing. The deception of believers in the end times

will occur in similar ways through men and women with strong anointing's, but shallow or partially corrupted characters. My Bible declares that the pure in heart will see God (Matthew 5:8), and the meek will inherit the earth.

We are in the days wherein we need to pay attention to verses such as Matthew 24:

Matthew 24:4-5

*And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; **(in other words, "I am anointed!")** and shall deceive many.*

Matthew 24:24

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

We often figure that because we have so much Bible knowledge, how can we possibly get deceived? Easy. By the very Bible knowledge we clamor for. It becomes a substitute for a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I mean a walking, talking, two-way friendship that becomes more real and important to you than your Bible, your family, your job, your car and house, your reputation, or your favorite ministry. I'm referring to being so totally in love with Jesus that He truly is your first love (Revelation 2:1-7).

The only antidote against deception in the Body of Christ is to learn to clearly hear the voice of the Shepherd

There are Christians today who are going to walk away from Jesus because they invested their time in the peripherals of Christianity instead of its heart. These are the kind of Christians who would have walked away from Jesus due to the offense of His teaching them that they were to eat His flesh, drink His blood, and recognize that He is the bread from heaven (John 6:48-68). We are to live by every word (rhema -- word of revelation) that proceeds out of the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). This is what Jesus was trying to teach His disciples (yes, disciplined followers!) when they walked away from Him in John 6. It's not just a little significant that this is also the same message God tried to communicate to Moses' people for forty years in the desert (Deuteronomy 8:1-3, 20). They died. So will Christians today who will not heed this message.

There is a difference between disciples who get offended and walk away from Jesus, and those who dine at His table each day (Revelation 3:20-21). But there is also a

difference between those who sit across the table from Him, and those who lean against His breast. You have to decide what level of intimacy you hunger and thirst after. Are you a conference seeker who collects impartations from others? Are you a person who likes to get their ears tickled by an impressive speaker with a big name? Or are you one who chooses that better thing of Mary, and prefers to spend their time sitting at the Master's feet instead of busying themselves with peripheral Christian kitchen duties? I'm not knocking the necessary duties that you are led by the Holy Spirit to perform. I am knocking those "Christian" things we do, while neglecting the dinner conversations we are to be having with the Lord on a daily basis. He is still our bread from heaven.

What joy there is to sit at His feet, and come into the rest He promised (Hebrews 3 & 4)!! The words He will speak into your spirit are life and peace for our troubled times. What joy there is in setting aside the things of earth, and turning our eyes fully upon Jesus. The things of earth do indeed grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.

Christian circles today are awash in theories -- like the apostolic networking theory, or the spiritual mapping theory, and so on. I'm not saying these are all bad when led by the Holy Spirit, but quite frankly, some apostles of these ideas become money changers. They begin using them to build entire ministries, selling fads to the Body of Christ, or building ungodly controls over the Body, and declaring non-subscribers as rebellious.

Jesus is the Minister of the Sanctuary. He is awaiting us in the garden. He is knocking at our door, waiting for us to open the door and be invited to sit down at His table. He is the supplier of the most wonderful bread -- revelation that flows from His heart straight into hearts that are seeking a relationship with Him, who won't allow themselves to substitute Bible activities and theories for time alone in His presence. These are the ones who will keep their lamps full of their own anointing oil, rather than trying to get filled from the oil of others.

The Kingdom of God is His presence. Are you seeking this and His righteousness first? Then you can rest well assured that in the uncertain days ahead, all these things of supply of the Father shall be added unto you (Matthew 6:19-34; Psalm 91). This must be preeminent in your Y2K/Judgment preparations.

John 10:27-29

*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:
And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.*

My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

Those who seek the voice of their Shepherd need have no fear. May our glory be all from Him, as we earnestly seek a more personal and intimate relationship with our beloved Lord and Savior. Amen.

All our Love in Him,

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