

“THINGS ARE NOT ALWAYS AS THEY APPEAR (PART 2)”

REVIEW OF PART 1

In the previous posting, I shared how we can often make wrong judgments when we only look at the outward appearance of things, and these judgments are often made against God. I invited you to join with me and set aside some time to ask the Holy Spirit to bring to your mind if you have “wrongly judged” the Lord as a result of situations or circumstances that you have experienced. If you have not read Part 1 in this series, I strongly encourage you to do so before proceeding. It will make this current posting more meaningful.

REALIZING THAT YOU’VE WRONGLY JUDGED GOD—WHAT TO DO

As you’ve responded to my (actually, the Holy Spirit’s) invitation to allow Him to examine your heart, you may have realized that you have wrongly judged the Father’s heart. What do you do now? Being careful not to in any way trivialize this issue, I recommend that you respond to it in a manner similar to what you would do if you wrongly judged the heart of a dear friend. First, acknowledge to this “friend” what has happened, and ask him to forgive you. Let this “friend” know that you truly are sorry for what you have done, and reiterate to him what you do indeed know is true about him and his nature or character. Assuming that this “friend” communicates his forgiveness to you (this “true friend” always will!), go deeper in your discussion about what has happened to cause you to reach this wrong judgment. Pour out your heart to him. You may find it helpful to write this out in the form of a letter, and to read it aloud. As you recount the situation and how you felt as a result, you may find that a great deal of painful emotion rises to the surface. Let the tears come. Let the anger come. This “friend” can handle it and knows that it ultimately isn’t about him, but about the pain and grief that is underneath. When lies and accusations come up again concerning this “friend,” reject them (out loud if necessary) and again let him know (and remind yourself) what is true.

NO QUICK FIXES

It is important to understand that it may take some time to heal your heart from those times when you have felt abandoned by God, or couldn’t make sense of what He was (or is) doing in your life—and where you have wrongly judged His heart. There is often “stored grief” that needs to come forward. Remember; as we grieve losses we are then able to more effectively leave them behind. You may find it helpful (or necessary) to share your heart with someone who listens well and is able to grieve with you, pray with and for you, and “hold up your arms” during this season. For those who are married, sharing with your spouse is very important (if you can). If that isn’t possible or for those who are not married, sharing with a close friend (of the same sex) or in a small group can also be very helpful. In some cases, it may be necessary to spend some time with a biblically-based counselor to help sort things out. One additional point—as the Lord brings up “opportunities” to be set free from these times of wrongly judging His heart, the root of such issues will often relate to much earlier times in our lives that involve hurts (real or perceived) from our primary caregivers. These, too, must be dealt with—in much the same manner

that we have already discussed in dealing with God. We will look at these types of issues in the future—especially as it relates to how we view ourselves in our relationship with God—and offer some help. Keep in mind, everything we are addressing in this series of articles has one ultimate purpose—to allow God to remove the barriers that hinder us from loving Him with all of our hearts and to love others as we love ourselves.

FINDING GOD IN THE MIDST OF YOUR STRUGGLE

As I bring this series to a close, I want to share a bit more concerning the issue of sensing the Lord's presence in the midst of times of trial. There have been many times when my personal struggles have resulted in my relationship with the Lord going deeper and His presence being more real to me. However, this has not always been true, and it has particularly not been that way over the past 18 months or so. There are times when the Lord chooses to "hide Himself" for the purpose of refining and preparing us in ways that no other means will accomplish. As I counseled people in the past who were in the midst of much pain in their own healing process, my prayer would always be that they would sense the closeness of the Lord in it. But I recognized that sometimes the Lord was doing something else that was beyond what we could see or fully understand.

Remember also that although unconfessed sin can cause His manifest presence to leave us (there is a difference between His "omnipresence" and His "manifest presence"), it isn't only due to a sin issue. There are different points in Scripture when this situation occurred. James Dobson, in his book "When God Doesn't Make Sense," brings forth such an example in the story of Job. He emphasizes that although Job lost everything—his children, his wealth, his servants, his reputation, his friends and his health—as painful as these were, they did not overwhelm him. Quoting from Dobson . . . "Eventually, however, Job reached a point of despair. This man of towering strength who had coped with [these losses] soon faced a circumstance that threatened to overwhelm him. It emanated, strangely enough, from his inability to find God. He went through a time when the presence of the Almighty was hidden from view. More important, God wouldn't talk to him [see Job 23:2-9]." So as you allow the Lord to do His work in you, I pray that you hold on to the truth that no matter what you encounter or have to work through—even if you cannot hear Him or sense His presence—He IS good, and His mercy does endure forever! (1 Chron. 16:34)

From the Father's Heart,

Jerry Basel