

A “Light Bulb” Moment

I love those moments when the complicated becomes simple. It happened last night as a gifted Bible teacher made a comment that grabbed my full attention. After a few moments a big 150 watt light bulb illuminated above my head. My Spirit recognized a profound truth. This truth touched one of my favorite teachings of Jesus and a question that regularly irritates my consciousness.

My nagging question has been “Why is the Body of Christ so ineffective?” We seem barely alive. A recent magazine article predicted the demise of all evangelical influence within ten years. That distresses me not because I care about evangelical influence. It is distressing because Jesus loves His Bride, but the Church does not seem to love Jesus. That will offend some readers, but help me here. Why is there no power in the Body? Why is the world not hearing about Christ? Why are joy and righteousness rare traits among Believers? Why are families in freefall with children permanently leaving faith? Why are we more like butter knives instead of broadswords?

These questions may seem like accusations. I’m sorry; they bring pain to my heart. Much more pleasant is this favorite scene found in Mt 22:34-40. Jesus had just answered the Sadducees’ question which was designed to embarrass Him. Instead of stumping our Lord, He answered with authority that astonished the crowd and silenced the Sadducees. The Pharisees saw this and ill-advisably devised their own trick question. They hoped Jesus would take a controversial position they could discredit Him. So they asked “*Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?*”

They did not take into account that Jesus created the Law. Nor did they realize that He had watched as they had added burdensome rules that weighed down His people. At that moment Jesus (with the authority that comes from authorship) condensed the Law and centuries of onerous religious interpretation into two basic concepts. He said “*‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.*”

Jesus silenced the Pharisees by quoting the Law and by revealing the very foundation of the Old Testament. The people were amazed and I am sure amused at the discomfort of these religious leaders. However, the reason I love this passage is that Jesus shows me clearly what is important to Him. Love God and Love others like you love yourself. That seems incredibly reasonable.

I have heard a great deal of Bible teaching. The volume of that teaching has at times been overwhelming. All those good words left me not always knowing where exactly to start. It has been like having 1,000 engine parts and no idea how to build the engine. But learning that Jesus condensed the instructions down to two steps gave me hope. Love God and love people like yourself. I should be able to do that.

So what was the “light bulb” moment? It came when our Bible teacher stated “You cannot love others like yourself if you do not love yourself.” The logic of that statement was crystal clear. **If I do not love myself, I will not have any love to give others.** That means: if I do not love myself, I cannot love others and **I am unable to do what is most important to Jesus.** Wow! It is no wonder we are dull knives.

Self-loathing is an epidemic among Believers. It is a virulent sickness whose symptoms include negativity, striving, isolation, broken relationships, despair, defeat, and a little voice that constantly says: “you’ll never please God”. It is caught from parents, friends, pastors, teachers, bosses, society, and Satan. This disease originates in the Accuser. We have believed his lie that we are unlovely, loathsome creatures undeserving of God’s love. Believing this, we guarantee that will never love others because we cannot even love ourselves. We doom ourselves to an existence that never truly glories in the love of Abba Father and never is able to share God’s love with others.

God’s truth to you is very different from the Accuser. God’s truth reveals that He delights in you (SS 4:10), His thoughts about you are constant and countless (Ps 139:17), He calls you friend (Jn 15:15), you are His treasured possession (Ex 19:5), He has given you the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16), He sees you as beautiful and takes great pleasure in you (Ps 149:4), and you are so fully forgiven that He remembers your sin no more (Jer 31:34). God’s truth to you declares you are loved.

How much does God love you? How much does He esteem you? Consider Jesus’ words recorded in John 17:23: “I in them and you in me. **May they be brought in complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.**” Father God loves you in the same way and in the same amount that He loves Jesus. Will your heart grasp the truth of that? You are the cherished child of the Daddy God and He is crazy in love with you.

It is time to realize who you are in Christ. You possess power, authority, and the ability to love (Mt 10:1; 2 Tim 1:7). You are a joint heir with Jesus Christ, possessing His mind and His Spirit. It is time to put aside the rags of self-hate and wear the fine robes of your royal family. It is time to curl up in the arms of your Abba Father and feel His lavish affection for you! A few minutes of that will change your opinion of yourself forever.

From this foundation you will be able to love others as you love yourself. As you see yourself as God sees you, you will become the effective, powerful Children of the King that your heritage demands. Break all agreements with the Deceiver and come into agreement with God. Very soon “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind,*” and “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*”

It is God’s desire that all His children know Him personally. Taste and see. He is very good! If I can encourage you or pray with you to truly experience Him, please contact me at jeffdean@iggm.org