



FOCUS

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inspiration***

Why, Who, And What I Am

Now working on Ebook #81, I thought a little insight into the person you've been reading would be a good, although slightly over-due, idea. I often refer to you all as my

friends and in my heart this is your sacred status. A status I take very seriously. I am of the mind-set that friends should know each other as best they can. “Transparency” is the one and only tool at my disposal to be “known”, so I use it liberally. Interestingly, I never feel like I’m communicating with strangers so there is a built-in, tangible, sense of connectiveness present while banging on my keyboard.

I am not a “writing machine” as in trained professional. To be polite, my grammar is “uniquely original” and if spell-check were ever to break down my true illiteracy would be unflatteringly exposed.

I have a heart that cares deeply for my readers. Therefore, I do not write to pass the time or for notoriety or for profit or for entertainment. But make no mistake, it is not as sacrificial as it may sound. There is a profoundly “self-satisfying” motivation that propels me to my laptop daily. To freely give as I have freely received and hopefully, by the gracious enablement of Jesus, to be a sincere, edifying, voice in other’s lives through the written word. Towards that end God’s been very faithful for which I’m thankful.

As a non-fiction “writer” there is an ever present dilemma that exists in the atmosphere of my daily life. My sole inspiration is derived from one source: “Real Life”, as perceived through the lens of Jesus, absent of pretense. At the same time I’m admittedly very far from being a perfect man. A statement of absolute truth with no need of internal debate or substantiating evidence to legitimize my confession. It’s just true!

That having been said but equally true: I am a man after God’s heart. I am totally real. I have never pursued anything but “the narrow road”. I have no appetite for the wider variety. My love for Jesus supersedes all others in its veracity. I can state that without the slightest concern of contradiction.

So, put all that information in a package, shake it up, and that is me. I have a very complicated “triune” lifestyle to navigate around. “Triune” in that it is triple faceted:

Firstly, I'm not perfect. Secondly and as an obsessive by nature observer of life, I notice everything for better or worse. Thirdly, I serve a God who is perfect and refuses to be censored. What breaks His heart breaks mine. It's just the way it is and I write about it. The bad and the good. I don't really know how to ignore either and maintain a clear conscience. In short: It's challenging but well worth it. But, as you might imagine, it can be tricky!

Negatives And Positives

Based on the level of my care for God and people, if it's the negative I'm writing into, I can be quite easily, but incorrectly, perceived as "judgemental" at first glance. The truth of the matter is: I actually hate judgementalism. I don't believe we should purposely shop for negatives but when they find us through their "bold as brass" public portrayals, we should at least be free to talk about them. As I see it, to be utterly dismissive of the negatives when eternal souls are at stake, would be uncaringly disingenuous and cowardly to be honest. Let's face it: How caring would I actually be if I viewed a child playing with a book of matches but didn't mention it for fear of hurting the child's feelings or even more self-serving, risk my popularity with the child? As the child goes up in flames do I not own some of the responsibility for his ragging infernoed state. Will it suffice to sooth my heart's guilt that my silence was based on not wanting to be negative? I'm sure you get my point. Sometimes you just have to say "it's bad", if you care!

There's a balance to be found thus "integrity of heart" is a necessity in finding it. Extremes from both sides of the equation are likely wrong.

We might as well embrace this historied fact: Both the negative and positive have always been our reality as followers of Jesus. We have always had spiritual strangeness, not to be mistaken with true spirituality, attached to our faith for the world to shake their heads at. I do honestly attempt to give equal time to both in that both are

relevant and it is within that context I write imperfectly from my daily musings of thought and encounters with those who God so loves. If my writings help just one single soul, God calls that great value, thus so do I!

To truly honor those reality laden twin dynamics of the negative and the positive in my writing can create a unique conundrum at times. You see, I don't like writing in the negative but I must follow my heart because it is there I find my voice of authority on all matters pertaining to life which would include writing. There is no doubt that God has birthed in me a "writing style" and "lifestyle" that's always interesting but not always pleasant, as is so true with life itself.

For better or worse I naturally notice things. I observe without trying to. There are many days when I'd prefer to simply stare into the clouds and dream dreams. For some reason, that's not within my portfolio of expertise.

It would seem that I am a sponge as it pertains to the information that intersects with my life. My life is my school where I do most of my meaningful learning so I embrace it as a gift. A gift that has its positive and negative aspects, both needing to be "thankful for" and expressed as such, if a non-fiction writer is going to be my destiny! Well sponges need to be rung out, thus today's book for your consideration.

Needed Filter

There's much that the Christ following person needs to filter through in order to accommodate their heart's selective content of importance. It goes far beyond writing as a dynamic of reality. Its importance profoundly affects every step we take in our sojourn with Christ. Therefore, we need a spiritual filter perpetually activated. Not one of paranoia, but rather "simplified clarity". A heavenly device that disposes of toxic clutter and foolishness as soon as it presents itself.

My friends, whether we like it or not, we exist in an unparalleled time when being bombarded with “new movements” is our everyday reality. They bash at our souls like a relentless Tsunami that demands our attention with candy coated promises it can’t keep. Thus “simplified clarity” is now gold, to the true believer’s spiritual equilibrium! Many will be swept away by the storm for one reason only. Losing their FOCUS on Christ and affixing it to a person who claims things they have no authority to claim. That’s spiritually irresponsible and in fact, dangerously deadly! I know people who were left utterly destroyed in a “new movements” wake!

It is JESUS we must FOCUS our eyes on. It is only HE who can dissect the information and direct us to fertile places that are truly ripe for fruit bearing. Christ does not want us mired in wasted time trying to talk the flaky out of being flaky.

Maybe it’s just time to put the truth on the table in full view for all to see. Jesus has a bride that is truly beautiful. It is not reflective of the numbers we boast in our surveys. It’s a remnant. It is HIS church that the gates of hell, nor a “new” Tsunami, will prevail against! It is solely upheld by the sovereignty of God and thoroughly authorized and purchased through the cross of Christ. It is HE and only HE who we owe our devoted allegiance to. Folks, that’s about as “new” as I can present the gospel to be. But it really isn’t new is it? It’s been the gold standard for 2,00 years.

New?

So what is “new” that will further enhance that as our standard? Absolutely nothing! Consider this: The “new” of today will be replaced by the “next new” which means our present “new” is already being updated by someone or some group to be shared at a later date. Do you see how we create problematic, confusing, scenarios for ourselves when we tinker with Christ’s words of perfect clarity. Jesus said: “Pick up your cross, deny yourself, and follow Me”. That message has gone the way of the Dinosaur folks. It’s almost extinct! But why? If it was right when Jesus said it, what changed to dismiss

it into oblivion? Well, it's not popular for starters. It's not very sexy and we like sexy! It isn't entertaining and we like to be entertained. It calls for a death of "self" and we like to exalt "self". It calls for a picking up of one's cross but we prefer to simply sit back and enjoy the benefits of Christ's cross.

Being a disciple of Jesus isn't a flaky weird game nor is it a free-for-all. Sorry to those who are surprised by that news, but it just isn't! It's never been so. Many have literally sacrificed their lives to follow this altogether lovely One. We only shame their legacy when we chase the "new thing" like frantic school children searching for candy on Halloween.

Different gospels were commented on by Paul the Apostle so it stands to reason that they are not new. Very old in fact. Their numbers over the past 2,000 years would be truly uncountable. All with an easier version of what was initially preached by Christ. I believe we will always have them periodically popping up trying to procure our attention.

The only antidote for the insanity? FOCUS on the One who hung on a cross! He will never lead you to "anywhere" that will not feed you appropriately and no, you cannot live on emotionally charged sugary treats without dying from malnutrition. No doubt, it's fun for a while until you become spiritually anorexic! Then it's not so funny as you're left hanging on by the thinnest of threads and highly disposable if you should mention it! It's interestingly revealing how quickly you can lose your standing with the "in crowd" with a single word of biblically discerned dissent. That is cult behavior at its most insidious my friends.

Getting To The heart Of The Matter

Sometimes you just have to stop beating around the bush and simply tell it like it is and let the proverbial chips fall where they may. With that in mind, let's just be totally honest in a way that is scripturally indisputable.

Let's get to the heart of the matter because the matter, matters. What we are experiencing on a massive world-wide scale today is by no means trivial, so let's speak clarity into the main issue of our time as Christians in history. Alternative gospels-new movements!

Question: Do we honestly hunger for Christ and His directives or alternatives to Christ, thus other directives from other sources? Keep in mind that the "alternatives" for the most part, sprinkle a little Jesus into their mix.

For instance: Joel Osteen goes on national television with Opra, who is now a huge fan of Joel's, with his new revelation. "Jesus isn't the "only way" but he is "my way", but I believe there are other ways". Help me folks, what does that even mean! "I follow Jesus but I don't believe what Jesus said in regards to him being the only way. ??????.

Now, you would think that comment would cause those who attend his huge building to run for the exits. If that's what you would think, you'd be wrong! They supported his insanity! And now we have Opra preaching the same distorted gospel to all her fans. Thank you for your integrity Joel!

Friends, alternatives are void of integrity! Integrity, in today's Christian landscape doesn't pay the bills nor does it inflate bank accounts to bulging proportions. Joel Osteen's net worth as of 2017? Forty Million U.S. His co-conspirator Kenneth Copeland tops the list, with a whopping net worth of three hundred million U.S. as of 2017. Those numbers are more than likely higher, but with a little creative accounting applied, that's all we get to know.

And shockingly to me, their adherents don't blink an eye! Money in itself isn't evil folks, but the love of it is, as is so unapologetically flaunted through these ministries.

Do their followers care? No, not at all! How is that possible?, you might ask. I have no idea but I do know how to protect yourselves from it. FOCUS!

Discipleship calls for an honoring of the integrity demanded of a lifestyle in Jesus. It also calls for a voluntary disciplining of our fleshiness that so gingerly desires to chase the latest “sizzle” emulating from the BBQ of modern day Christianity. We are faced with a daunting challenge in the light of today’s multiple gospels. Gospels that suggest all manner of optional choices at our disposal. Avoiding them was Paul’s directional antidote of protectionism from their toxicity.

It’s Deadly Serious!

In closing, this one thing is a “for sure”. Following Jesus is as serious as it gets. To do so within that mindset, one must FOCUS, more so now than ever before! It’s not a game and the ensuing ramifications for considering it as such, are beyond my imaginations ability to document! It’s that serious!

“Alternatives” exist on the backs of our finances. Therefore we are complicit to their existence when we contribute. Can it be possible that being in the “right place” surrounded by the “right people”, is worth having one’s leader abuse them every time you write a cheque or buy a book. Could we be that pitiful? Good and fair questions to ask I think in the light of their “ivory tower” lifestyles that we support.

Furthermore, are we actually here to become dependent on a man or THE MAN? I admit, it’s easier for now to follow the crowds with their pied-pipers and far more entertaining, if being entertained is your thing.

But Jesus said the “wide road” leads to a place that no spiritually aware person should care to journey! He called it “Destruction”! Now, Joel will tell you that just because Jesus said it, does not mean you have to believe it or live it. And his followers respond: That’s a relief, seeing as “that” sounds: “Too Hard”. Those two words sound familiar as

my biblical memory races back 2,000 years to the crowd's response to Jesus. Friends, Jesus is still getting the same response today from many. Let's not be counted amongst them!

I mentioned Joel Osteen. He's merely one of the hundreds of spiritual parasites that now exist. But be sure, there are more to come! Their targeted demographic is "18 to 25" year olds. Those who can easily be manipulated with glitter. That's profoundly sadistic in itself but it gets worse. Those young people will be our leaders of tomorrow! Then what?

We all have a bible that we hopefully read. When we see and hear things that we can't confirm as being scriptural, we not only have the God given right, but equally the need, to stop and take stock in what we're ingesting.

I trust this will be my last book on the subject. It does have a way of contaminating one's soul. I'm thinking, that's the likely reason Paul said to avoid it. He exposed the profiteers but he did so quickly and moved on. So, I will take Paul's advice and move on to something more pleasant to write about. Following Jesus according to His instruction is a wonderful experience. It doesn't need enticements. Jesus is more than enough to satisfy one's soul. Next time we will chat about the good stuff and there's plenty of it.

If this book does nothing more than encourage its readers to FOCUS their attention on this one named Jesus, then it will have fulfilled its purposed intent and for that I will be forever thankful! It does break my heart to see what is happening today, but I serve a wonderful Savior who also had His heart broken. So, perhaps having a "broken heart" at times makes sense when you love Jesus as I do. Admittedly and as already mentioned: "Imperfectly".

I am of the opinion that writing on this subject is far more difficult than reading its content. I could be wrong about that but that is the way it feels. But what kind of a

friend would I be if I saw a Tsunami heading towards your house and didn't at least mention it?

The Lord does not look at things people look at. People look at the "outward appearance" but the Lord looks at the heart". Is it possible that we have been waylaid by outward appearances and in doing so, been blinded to the darkness of hearts? Blinded is a tragic condition.

As a word of hope: Jesus did heal blind people and still does! FOCUS on Him and you will be amazed how quickly your sight will return! His beauty has a way of piecing through darkness regardless of the layers.

My Ministry - Our Ministry

Mark 6 - 38 & 41: "How many loaves do you have He asked?" "Go and see". When they found out they said, "Five and two fish". Taking the five loaves and two fish and looking up to heaven He gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to His disciples to DISTRIBUTE to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all". (Five thousand plus, were fed that day!)

In the biblical story of the "fishes and loaves", I so clearly see three dynamics in play to achieve the desired completion of the heavenly orchestrated equation. The young boy GAVE what little he had, our Lord then MULTIPLIED it, and the disciples then DISTRIBUTED it.

It's interesting to note that Jesus, after the multiplying didn't say, "Come and get it". What He did say was, "Everyone find a place to sit on the grass and I'll bring it to you, through my own". Folks, He loves to involve us. He loves to make us matter! We are blessed beyond measure to be written into, His stories! Just imagine: Invited by Him to participate in His plans for others!

From the inception of the idea of writing books to be made available to “all freely”, there has never been a moment when I haven’t been aware of its ministry context. I could easily be seen as the “young boy” in the story. Jesus has most certainly multiplied my meager offering to Him.

So may I invite and encourage you to be a distributor of that which He has multiplied, thereby elevating “My Ministry” into “Our Ministry”, thus completing “His Ministry”. There’s something about that idea that sounds “perfect” to my heart!

We all have friends, family, work mates, school mates, etc. I’ve included a simple directional on “how to find” the “fishes and loaves”. Please feel free to share “what you eat” with others. You have no idea where it could lead to! That young boy’s mother could never have dreamed, what that little lunch she had prepared for her son on that fateful morning, would produce!

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