

“Walking With God in Integrity:
The Historical Witness” Part III

In our last session, I attempted, to extend our discussion of the assumptions that under gird the biblical teaching on the spiritual life. The discussion was not idle, because a correct framework or foundation helps us erect a building that will last. I sought to raise and answer five questions.

1. What does it mean to glorify God? God is glorified in his creation when it reflects His character. We are to be mirrors of what God has granted to us of Himself by the Spirit.
2. What is the point of the Bible? The focus of the Bible is the glorification of God; the Bible begins and ends with divine and creaturely harmony. The fall brought disharmony, but God is sovereign and patiently bringing a restoration when creation will glorify Him fully once again. Christ, the anticipated lamb, came in the incarnation, and purchased a people for God by paying the debt that prevented their assimilation into God’s family and God declared them righteousness in Christ. God, by His Holy Spirit, is drawing the redeemed family together. When complete the “garden” will be perfectly restored. God will be eternally glorified in his creatures.
3. What is the experience of redemption? The experience of redemption is an affectionate embrace of the beauty of Christ, a life of transforming delight in God as revealed in Christ.
4. What is the nature of the indwelling of the Spirit? The Spirit resides within us morally. Indwelling is in the nature of the nine fruit of Spirit (e.g., love, joy, etc).
5. What is the practical import of all this? The Bible reveals Christ who makes the spiritual life possible through His death for us. The experience of redemption is a sense of awe in the wonder of divine forgiveness and the beauty of a wonderful savior. Salvation is the life of God, the Spirit, within us. The indwelling Spirit is the basis of glorifying God because God beholds the Spirit in us in His glorification. It is the life of the Spirit’s moral character that we are to reflect.

With all the aforementioned in place we can more clearly define our task and pursue it. How do I arrange my life so as to reflect to a greater degree the character of God in every circumstance?

I. What does God do to cause us to glorify Him more?

- A. God graciously redeems us from sin's condemning power and grants us the Holy Spirit. He provides the basis for spiritual growth (John 3:6).
- B. God provides His children with protective mercies and preservation.
- C. God chastises us to curb our dangerous tendencies and humble us. This is often expressed in the consequences of moral failure. For the child of God, this action is always remedial in nature, never punitive (Heb.12: 5-6).
- D. God brings disappointments into our lives to shape us spiritually in that the design is that through them we depend on the Lord more (John 9:1-3).
- E. God uses the evil actions of others upon our lives to shape us to reflect His glory (Genesis 50:20).
- F. God helps us to understand that this world is but a shadow of a world yet to come. This gives us perspective of the things we see. Like Abraham, we "seek after a city whose builder and maker is God".

II. What should we do to cause ourselves to glorify God more?

Radiating the character of God involves positive action and negative action. There are old, "ten gallon" words for this dual action on our part, Vivification and Mortification, the positive increase of spiritual strength and dying progressively to sin.

Said J.I Packer, "**Sanctification has a double aspect. Its positive side is vivification, the growing and maturing of the new man; its negative side is mortification, the weakening and killing of the old man**" (*A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* [1990]).

Observations:

1. The spiritual life requires discipline; it is hard work and is a produce of time and repetition. The spiritual person is described in Hebrews 5:13 as one whose “sense are trained to discern good and evil”. Habits are routines that are not easy, but over time become a delight. What you are doing is replacing one set of routines for another. Love makes the burdens of habit building less a burden.
2. We are individuals, so remember that we connect with the spiritual disciplines in different ways, proportions, and times in our lives.
3. By personality and spiritual giftedness, we are naturally given to some disciplines more than others.
4. The goal of our lives should be to incorporate those disciplines we find helpful and needed at different times in our lives.
5. Length of time in devotional exercises not an issue and often detrimental, particularly if we do not progress slowly. What we most value is not what we most invest time in doing; it is what we think about and most frequently return to.
6. Remember, generally, we are better at doing than being. However, it is dangerous to confuse the two. Doing is important because it is evidence of a spiritual reality in our lives, but it must grow out of a relationship that is rooted in a love relationship.
7. Do not be discouraged by the fact that you simply cannot do one or another of the disciplines no matter how hard you try. Some cannot memorize Scripture; some find fasting unimportant; some find it hard to pray; some find it hard to read the Bible daily.
8. The important thing is to find something that you can start doing; the spiritual life is a process (what you can manage at 25 is surely not the same as 65!).
9. Do not get discouraged by your lack of doing it right; it is more important to be doing.
10. No one has their act together; we all have areas of spiritual success, areas needing improved discipline, and areas of failure. Join the “club” of fallen, redeemed

humanity!

11. Discipline is a fruit of a love relationship; the deepest issue is that love. It is not about how well we are doing; it is all about loving. Love is not merely an emotion; it is a state of being. That state for us is the presence of the life of God, the Holy Spirit, in our very beings.
12. Do not become discouraged by what you cannot do; delight in what you can and in the progress you see over time. This is not “bead counting;” it is a love relationship.

How do you get good thoughts into your mind? How do I determine what is right to think about since the spiritual life is so connected to mental activity? This is vivification, doing those things that promote help. A healthy spiritual life is the result of health thoughts. But, how do I get healthy thoughts in a God-opposing world? As a controlling verse of the Bible, I often think of Philippians 4:8. “...whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, what ever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worth y of praise, let your mind on these things.”

A. Right thoughts require virtuous input: The place of the Bible.

If you desire to think correct thoughts, you must good ideas in your mind. You simply cannot avail yourself to what is not there.

- 1) It not about the length of time in reading daily; it is about frequency.
- 2) It is not about remembering what you read. Remember that growth is only seen over time with time-lapse photography.
- 3) Slowly and carefully reading a verse or paragraph, but read daily until it becomes a habit.
- 4) If reading is hard, get tapes or a CD and listen. Most drive to work; use the time to think good thoughts.

B. Right thoughts require the mental expression of good ideas; good ideas come from good input.

- 1) Meditation, thinking about God intentionally. Try to think about the passage of Scripture you read for the day.
- 2) Memorize Scripture.
- 3) Prayer, verbalizing your thoughts to God.
 - a) Make a list of prayer needs.
 - b) Pray through portions of Scripture (the phrases of Psalm 23 or Matthew 6, the Lord's model prayer).
 - c) The posture of prayer is not important.
 - d) The place of prayer is at your discretion.
 - e) The length of prayer is not the point. Is it sincere and God-focused.
 - f) Some people pray best with another or others. Join a prayer group.
- 4) Hearing, listening to thoughts about God.
 - a) Regularly attend to the preaching and teaching of the Bible.
 - b) Reading good books; listen to tapes or CDs.
Donald Whitney, *Simplify Your Spiritual Life* (NavPress, 2003)
Ken Gire, *The Reflective Life* (Chariot Victor Publications, 1998).
Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness* (NavPress, 1978).
 - c) Get into a Bible study.
 - d) Attend the Lord Supper meeting regularly.

- 5) Right Thoughts require good company.
 - a) Engage with Christian friends and fellowship.
 - b) Make a friend so that you can share your thoughts.
 - c) Become active in your church.
 - d) Experience the Lord's Day as a time of rest and refreshment.

- 6) Right activities promote right thoughts.
 - a) Consider assisting a teacher in a Sunday School class.
 - b) Think about a short-term missions trip.
 - c) Engage in a serious class at church.
 - d) Find a widow or orphan to help, become a surrogate parent.

Concluding Thoughts:

- 1. Growth is a process; a tree does not become mature in a day.
- 2. None of us can do all these things.
- 3. Remember the goal is progress, not perfection.
- 4. When you stop doing what you should, start over again.