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Trying to Understand God's Ways

God has given us a brain and a mind - they are not the same thing - and He wants us to use them in His service. (I believe the brain is the physical structure in our head; while the mind is the same as the heart in Scripture; the mind and heart are the spirit of a man. What do you think?) We may feel inadequate in many ways - I certainly do - but our Creator equipped us with exactly the talents and innate abilities that we need to fulfill His purpose for our lives.

One of my favorite quotes is from Mother Teresa who said, **"God will judge each of us on whether we were faithful, not whether we were successful."** Stop and think about that sentence . . . and stop judging and condemning yourself because you haven't had a huge ministry. We can't redo the past, but are you being faithful today? Jesus said that the Great Commandment was *"To love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength"*...

But Jesus said there were two parts to the Great Commandment- - - the first part was to Love God and the second part was *"To love your neighbor as yourself."* Andy Stanley has some deep insights about this subject in his book, "Irresistible."

One of his insights: **"The way we demonstrate our faith and love for God is by the way we treat people."** This statement is true not because Andy said it but because Jesus said it in many ways.

Jesus told a parable (Matt. 5:23) to illustrate this point: Imagine you are kneeling at the altar of your church, praying and weeping and telling God how much you love Him. But then you think about a guy in your church that is angry at you because of a misunderstanding. He thinks you did something - which you did not do - and he is so upset that he is talking about you to other people in the church. What should you do?

That guy has a problem, but it's not your problem. He is believing a lie. He is angry. He is talking about you, defaming your character. He needs to repent. You should go and confront him and tell him off. "No!" Jesus said. Jesus said you should

stop praying, get up from the altar, go and find that guy, and in a loving way listen to him and explain the facts of the situation so that hopefully he will move past his anger to a place of peace. Don't blame him. Don't accuse or threaten him. Treat him with kindness and love. And don't be coming to church praying and telling Me how much you love Me when there is an unresolved issue between you and someone in the fellowship. You get that matter straightened out and then I will hear your prayers.

When you and I are involved in relationships - in our family, school, job, church - there will always be misunderstandings and problems. Jesus' solution to those problems is counter-intuitive - - it is the way of humility and love. Jesus said to His disciples: *"I am giving you a new commandment: **Love one another!** And the world will know you are my disciples by your love."* Does everyone in your family, school, workplace know you are a Jesus follower because of your love?

The Apostle Paul said in Galatians 5:6 that there is only one thing that counts in the Christian life. What was that?

"The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love!"

Hey, Mr. or Ms. Christian. You claim to love God more than anything. How are you treating your wife or husband, your kids? How are you treating other people in your church, in the church down the street? How are you treating people with purple hair and weird tattoos? John said, *"If you don't love your neighbor whom you have seen, how can you claim to love God whom you have not seen? If you claim to be walking in the light but you are not a loving person, you are deceived! You are walking around in the darkness."* (I John, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5)

Let's all take a little test this morning, the love test. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a grade today. Do you pass or fail?

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THE ATTACK OF THE MOTHS!

I don't know what happened to my body. The Bible says that moths silently invade and destroy our beauty. Just a few years ago I was a beautiful

young man in my opinion, but while I was distracted some doggone moths were chewing away and now I look like Frankenstein's monster. (Unfortunately, I don't have the monster's charismatic personality.) I turned 95 last month, could that have anything to do with it?

Of course I'm having some physical problems. You are too. But I am incredibly blessed. In fact, I am very rich. One time about 50 years ago I had an experience that I have never shared before. I was in a church praying for someone and had a vision - just a flash - that appeared in my mind. I saw a small room full of incredible valuables - diamonds, rubies, pearls, gold and silver. I wondered at the time, "What in the world is God saying to me?" Later I studied the verse in 1 Cor. 3:12 that tells us that our service to the Lord in this life will either be judged by Him to be "*gold, silver and precious stones....or wood, hay, and straw.*"

Although my "faith, love and works" have fallen far short, God has always been faithful to me and has blessed me with riches and wealth. First, all of my children and grandchildren love and respect me, and I have a relationship with each of them. I wouldn't trade that for all of the stocks, bonds, and mansions of Bill Gates and Warren Buffet combined. (I know that some of you have children that have turned their backs on you, and I'm so sorry. Just keep loving them and praying for them.)

Second, I have a precious memory that God healed my marriage, that Doris and I forgave each other and loved each other for many years before her death 20 years ago. (We were married for 53 years and had three sons and a daughter.) That is worth more to me than Tiger Woods' \$73 million dollar mansion on Jupiter Island, Florida. (I saw it on TV.)

Third, God gave me a life of purpose and called me to be a part of His ministry to heal and rescue wounded and broken people. What an honor! I love the ministry that God gave me to assist men and women get on the "Pathway to Freedom." Golly! What wonderful memories I have of the ministry and the adventures the Lord led me on. That gift is priceless.

Fourth, God led me to be a part of His *ecclesia*, his fellowship, his church, and to work with some of the finest people in the world. Many of these great people became my friends. I wouldn't trade that for Mark Zuckerberg's yacht, currently valued at \$195 million dollars. (Wait a minute, that's a really nice yacht.)

Fifth, and this should be listed first for sure, I have had a relationship with God - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit....the Creator of the universe and the Redeemer of lost mankind! Wow! How do you put a price on that? As Paul said, I believe that my departure is at hand; in fact, I was really surprised to live to my 95th birthday. And while I don't want to leave my loved ones I know the time is coming when we will be together forever - - and I am so ready to go and see the Lord. Oh my! I get the tingles and tears in my eyes when I think about seeing Him face to face!

A reminder about this life: These bodies are temporary. Paul says that we live in a "tent" in this world (2 Cor. 5:1). My tent is just about worn out. But there is a part of us - the inner spiritual man - that will never die! *Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary afflictions are working for us a far more abundant weight of glory.*

What a God! And what amazing grace and love he has for us. Let's serve him faithfully in this brief life.

PS - GOD'S DEFINITION OF FINANCIAL ABUNDANCE, WEALTH, TRUE RICHES

God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. (2 Cor. 9:8)

Besides being blessed with the true riches of faith, love, joy and peace with God and with my family, God blessed me financially in 60 years of ministry. I never had a big income as a pastor, and at times I had to supplement my preacher income by working in a warehouse and another period as a filling station attendant; while Doris had jobs in a doctor's office, in a small hospital, and at a K-Mart, but our family always lived and ate well. (Remember that Paul worked as a tent-maker and never accepted money from the churches.) And I made ministry trips to Israel, Haiti, England, the Amazon, and I think 37 trips to Mexico. I didn't have the income to make those trips, but God always provided sufficiently, even abundantly, for every good work. What a faithful Father we have!

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PRAY FOR CHET AND TEAM

My son Chet is going on a seven day mission trip to South Sudan leaving March 19. He is going with Pastor Kirk Yamaguchi and nine leaders from

other Vineyard churches. They will be training and ministering to about 75 young men who have given their lives to pastor churches. South Sudan is a dangerous place, listed as Code Red on travel advisories because of ongoing civil war and health issues, including Yellow Fever, Malaria, Hepatitis, Monkey Pox (“Monkey Pox?”), etc. It is 102 degrees there now. Please put this notice on your desk or fridge and remember to pray for them every day. Pray for their anointing and protection. Chet is honored and thrilled to be asked to be a part of this team, and I am excited for him. Thank you.

THE CHOICE

I’m reading a book by Marion Bond West titled Praying for My Life. She went through some awful experiences, kind of like Job in the Old Testament, and I’m amazed at her faith and courage. Her husband died of a rare disease and left her a young widow with four children to raise. In desperation, she cried out to the Lord and received Him as Savior. Then disaster struck her twin boys when they were teen-agers. At the same time, one became bipolar and an out-of-control drug addict; while the other was stricken with flesh-eating disease and threatened with death or the loss of his right hand and arm. Marion had become an author and wrote for Guideposts and other Christian periodicals.

After dealing with these issues for several years, Marion wrote a little statement called “The Choice” describing her inner struggle:

THE CHOICE

“We have to make a choice - To live in despair or joy; To walk in fear or faith; To dwell under the shadow of the Almighty or reside in self-effort. There’s no in-between place, no half-way house. It’s one way or the other: pity for ourselves or compassion for others; loneliness or reaching out.

“Joy and happiness are not the same. Happiness comes from without through things, people, desires fulfilled. Joy springs from deep within and comes because of our love and trust of the Lord. .”

Marion’s prayer:

“Father, I have a choice to make tonight. As tired as I am, and with fear running through me, I still have a choice. I don’t feel like I do; I feel backed into a corner, and I’d like to sit down in that corner and feel sorry for myself. Instead, I’m going to choose to look to You alone. Tonight, right now, I

again choose to reject despair and self-pity and fear. With Habakkuk, I will fix my heart on You.”

FACEBOOK VIDEOS

I’m posting 3 or 4 videos per week on Facebook of my Pathway to Freedom series. They are about 15 minutes in length. Pray that they will touch the people who need them.

A VISIT BY ANGELS! REALLY?

Forty years ago there was a pastor named Roland Buck who stirred up a lot of controversy with his book, Angels on Assignment. He claimed that he had been visited by the Angel Gabriel and other angels and they had been revealing to him important insights about God.

Some time back I bought this old book at a garage sale, but I laid it aside because I remembered the controversy and assumed that Pastor Buck was a heretic and a nut case. I finally read his book and on the basis of the beautiful insights he shared I asked myself, “Is it possible that the angel Gabriel actually visited this guy and revealed things to him? Good heavens, one night many years ago when I was sitting in my church office in the depths of depression, Jesus came and visited me and lifted me right out of that depression. If I can believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of God - through whom the Father created the universe - came in person to visit me, why should I doubt that God could send one of his messengers?”

Pastor Buck doesn’t come across like an attention seeking heretic but as a humble, Bible-centered pastor who had some far-out experiences. But again and again the Bible tells about people having far-out experiences. Why do we try to put God in a box?

The focus of the book is on the character of God, especially as His character is displayed in the life and sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. Following are a few of the revelations that really spoke to me, and I will let you decide if you think that maybe angels were sent by God to speak to this man.

FIRST - The angels spoke to Pastor Buck about saving the families of faithful Christians.

Pastor Buck said the angels emphasized: If somebody in your family loves Jesus and has been asking God to save you, then you are on God’s special list. There are angels working to bring you out of the enemy camp into God’s safety.

"If you have been praying for a family member who does not know the Lord and have sincerely laid them on the altar, stop pestering them! Quit preaching at them! The Holy Spirit is already working on them. There's an army at work right now. Wherever men and women lay their loved ones before the Lord, those names are written on a very special list.

"In Psalm 89:32-37 we read that God said he would make an everlasting covenant with us, '*even the sure mercies of David*' - - - that if your children are living in disobedience to God they will be visited with trouble, '*Then will I visit their transgressions with the rod and their iniquity with stripes.*' They will have a rough time, but because I made a promise to you, '*My loving kindness I will not utterly take from them nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.*' God promises that He will stay right on them, encouraging them to come to His family.

Pastor Buck gave some personal examples that confirmed this assurance:

"My phone rang in the middle of the night. A man was calling from Wyoming. He said, 'I feel like an idiot. I don't know why I'm calling you.' Then he told me that he heard a voice telling him to 'Call Pastor Buck in Boise, Idaho.' He felt so much pressure that he finally got an operator to find the number. I told him I knew why he called....and I led him to the Lord. Then I asked him if there was someone in his family that knew God. He said, 'I have a nutty sister who says she knows God....but I didn't believe her.'

I told him, 'Because of your nutty sister you are highly favored of God....and God didn't let up until you were saved.'

"Another man stopped by who was very troubled about his sister who didn't know the Lord. When he heard about angels going out to bring pressure on these lost ones, he got down on his knees and said, 'Lord, I'm going to lay my sister and my family before you and praise you for what you are going to do.' That very week his sister found Jesus as her Savior and now God is working on the other members of the family.

As I (Glenn) read Pastor Buck's teaching, I remembered many examples over the years of family members coming to the Lord whose loved ones had been praying for them. Then I thought of some of the Scriptural examples and promises on this subject.

Do you remember when Rahab saved the spies who went into Jericho? The spies said to her, by

inspiration of God, "*Rahab, call your family here to this house and they will all be saved* (physically, and I believe spiritually).

And in Acts 16 when Paul and Silas were miraculously set free from their chains by an earthquake, the miracle scared their jailer so badly that he asked them, '*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*'" They replied, '*Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household.*'

Continuing with Pastor Buck: "Many Christians have been praying for their unsaved loved ones. When the angel brought me the message that their prayers had already been answered, I thought, "Does this mean they are already ALL saved?" The answer was: "No, God will not violate the right of free choice he has given, but it means that he is going to do everything necessary to bring people to the point where it will be easy for them to make the choice to surrender to him."

This is such an encouraging word, isn't it? I believe that every member of my family will be in heaven with me. I know that each of them has had or will have a personal decision, a personal surrender, to make, but this "angelic" word, which is Scriptural, gives me even more comfort.

Second - The angels pointed out that God does not record failures in heaven.

"God gave me a peek into Abraham's and Sarah's records. As I glanced through them, I saw things that I did not know. I saw records of their hospitality to strangers. They had real compassion on less fortunate people. They watered their camels, gave them a place to stay, shared their food with them. God noticed this and it is written down in Genesis, but I had never noticed it before.

"One thing I could not find was the places where Abraham stumbled. The time when Abraham lied to the king of Egypt and told him that his wife was his sister was not recorded there! The time his faith was weak and he laughed in unbelief at God's promise that at his age he would be a father was not recorded there.

"I asked: 'Lord, where is the other book?' He said, 'I have no other book for believers.'

"But where did you write about the failures of Abraham which I have read in the Bible?"

"God said, 'I have no other book. I DO NOT RECORD FAILURE IN HEAVEN!'

(From Glenn) Wow! I know this declaration by God is true because it confirms what we find in the Bible. In Hebrews Chapter 11, the famous "Hall of faith," God lists many of the mighty prophets of

old, bragging on them for their faith, obedience and suffering, but “forgetting” to mention their failures. He mentions Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, but He doesn’t say a word about their sins and failures which are recorded in the Bible. He brags on David but doesn’t say a word about his adultery with Bathsheba and murder of her husband. He mentions Samson but “forgets” to tell about Delilah. And so forth.

Listen, my friends, when you received Christ as your Savior, God promised, *“I will not remember your sins (past, present and future) against you ever again.”* This doesn’t mean that we can play games with God and continue sinning with impunity. Paul says, *“God forbid that we would continue to sin after God has graciously forgiven us.”* But we are not perfect, and when we slip and fall God forgives and reaches out a hand to help us up.

God has declared that *He would cast all our sins in the deepest part of the sea, that he would remove them from us as far as the east is from the west.* Friends, if you have repented of your sins and received Jesus as your Savior and Lord, then there is no more record of your sins in heaven. Stop beating yourself up. God loves you and is proud of you. Glory be to Him!

Pastor Buck has some other beautiful revelations - about the blood of Jesus, the atonement, the character and love of God, the Jewish festivals, and the second coming, but that is enough for now.