

Quotes

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I like quotes. I guess I like them so much because I don't have to read a lot of material to get the meat. They provide the shortest distance between ignorance and wisdom. One of my favorite quotes is one we have on the wall at the station. It's from a Bible teacher by the name of E.W. Bullinger:

“What is prayer? Our hymn says truly, “Prayer is the Christian's vital breath.” Or, it may be more accurately expressed by saying “Prayer is the breath of the new nature.” Just as the natural breath is the sign and evidence of physical life, so prayer is the mark and sign of the possession of spiritual life... Natural life commences with breathing and the breathing produces a cry. It is so with the New Birth... From that moment, breathing continues as the spontaneous outcome of the New Life. No knowledge of Physiology is required for the one, and no knowledge of Theology is necessary for the other... The moment it becomes the subject of discussion—its essence is gone. We are such formalists by nature that we need nothing to encourage formalism in our prayers. The moment we reason about prayer we make it artificial. But true prayer is spontaneous. Our business in natural life is to breathe and not to think about it. Our business in spiritual life is to breathe (to pray) and not to think about it. The moment we begin to think about our prayer we are occupied with the means and lose the end...”

I have another on my desk that goes like this: “beginning empty handed and alone frightens the best of men. It also speaks volumes of just how sure they are that God is with them.” I like a quote once stated by Curly to Moe of the Three Stooges: “every time you think you weaken the nation.” I know many of you don't even know who the Three Stooges were. Let's just say that they were cultural philosophers and leave it at that.

Another quote that has caught my attention over the years was typically seen rather than heard. It was from someone I disagreed with some of the time but someone I also admired most of the time. Rich Mullins used to sign his compact disc and photos with a simple: “Be God's.” It's just two words long; six letters, but that was as effective as a 45 minute sermon. I have mentioned a story a few times years ago. I found myself in a glass elevator with Rich while on a trip to Nashville, Tn.

He and I were alone there. I watched the city of Nashville as it descended behind Rich as we were rising from the ground floor. Rich just stared at the floor much of the time without saying anything except a quick hello. As we continued on the ride he looked up at me and said "Well, I can't tell you what he said. You see what he said has always been the part of the story that I have not shared with people. It was so specific, so unique to my personality and life that I made a promise to keep it that way, very personal, very profound for me. My bad! It was so on target for why we started the station and why we lived our lives the way we have. The intimacy of the quote was just so right on. I'll save that quote for another time. But it illustrates the power of how just a few words can encourage and make such a difference in our lives.

"Be God's", if taken and thought about very much, sums up so much of the thousands of attempts we make to try and explain our Faith. Somehow those two words take up so much space in our hearts in spite of not taking up much room on the paper he used to write it on. They seem to encompass everything we need to know about the relationship between God and man. I'm not sure we do that all that well. Einstein once said that we use about 10% of our intellect leaving the other 90% never exercised. Our spiritual life resembles that, I think. But to "be God's" covers much more than 10% of our lives. To "be God's" is to listen, to follow, to learn of Him, to check our thoughts and intents through Him. It is patience, kindness, encouraging, gracious, and merciful and thinking on those things. Being God's has to do with what we do when people are around to watch and what we do when we are by ourselves and no one knows what we are doing. What do we hope for, how do we think before the day begins. Are we content or complaining? Do we do our work at work because others see us or do we do our work no matter whether we are being observed or not.

"Being God's" is more than one day a week; it's twenty-four seven. It produces a common bond between us even when our unique beliefs may be different. It affects our career, our relationship with friends, our marriage, neighbors and children. Being His can make obvious to us things that might be indistinguishable otherwise. It levels out the valleys and the mountain tops. It opens our eyes to appreciation of the smallest and the largest. It heals hurt feelings and permits successful relationships with people we may not agree with some of the time but find much in common to share and to be excited about.

Just to make us think a little more, here's another quote I've always liked, and one you might find interesting for this day and time:

"A democracy cannot exist as a permanent form of government. It can only exist until the voters discover that they can vote themselves largess (gifts) from the public treasury. From that time on the majority always votes for the candidates promising the most benefits from the public treasury, with the results that a democracy always collapses over loose fiscal policy, always followed by a dictatorship.

The average age of the world's great civilizations has been 200 years. These nations have progressed through this sequence:

from bondage to spiritual faith;

from spiritual faith to great courage;

from courage to liberty;

from liberty to abundance;

from abundance to selfishness;

from selfishness to complacency;

from complacency to apathy;

from apathy to dependency;

from dependency back again to bondage.”

That was not written yesterday, it was written by Sir Alex Fraser Tytler (1742-1813).