

Loved Us First

Sunday, 01 July 2007

By the time you read this letter we will have broadcast the messages found in Contemporary Christian Music for 17 years, 181 days and a few hours. As you have listened, I trust your confidence and understanding of the Love of God has increased over that period of time. If you have listened to us for very long, you know that's our ultimate goal at the station. Our message has not changed over the years, nor have we wavered from the original 'vision' for this radio station. We just feel that discovering God's amazing Grace is enough to set men and women free from just a simple religious experience. We know it can encourage them on to an intimate daily experience with God. Over the years, we have come to know that the Gospel of Christ is more than an ethic or moral system. It is more that just spending a couple days a week in a formal ceremony to honor some long ago philosopher type that dispensed good ideas. More than just a wise man passing out his hope designed to make the world a better place. No. It's more than all those things.

On January 8th, 1990, we broadcast for the first time. Our broadcasts have turned into 'singing' the message of Christ for just over 9 million minutes. We are here to encourage believers that this can be a 7-day a week, 24-hour a day relationship with God. While most of us waver in and out of that intimacy, we never really lose the relationship He has freely given to us.

If you've listened for very long, you know we have broadcast a program called Grace Walk twice each weekday for almost 10 years. Steve McVey is the program's host. Even though it has been broadcast over and over again, and in spite of having been out of production for almost 8 years now, it is still a refreshing look at the Gospel of Grace taught by the apostle Paul. Each month we receive Steve's newsletter. This month I wanted to share with you the 'gracevine' note Steve sent.

His teachings are generally pretty close to our expression and vision for WBVN. His June newsletter is an expression of what we feel it will take for any of us to go further into the intimacy that God has 'cheered' us on to. I hope Steve's simple message is an encouragement for you to consider.

How To Love Jesus More?

For years I prayed, asking the Lord to help me love Him more. Have you ever prayed something like that? As I grew in my own grace walk, I began to understand the key to loving Him more. The answer is so different from what I used to believe.

In the past I would have said that to love Him more we needed to spend more time with the Lord in prayer and in the Bible. I would have said that we needed to spend time with other people who love Him to increase our love for Him. (I even used the illustration of how one piece of charcoal will grow cold if it is set off by itself, but in a pile it will stay red hot.) I spoke of how our love for Jesus grows through serving Him. I argued that the 'service approach' to

loving Jesus wasn't a fake-it-'til-you-make-it approach, but instead was a faith-it-'til-you-make-it approach.

It all sounded so good, so right, but I couldn't have been more wrong. Of course, we can experience a sense of intimacy as we pray and read the Bible. We are able to be encouraged by the company of other Christians and we may find fulfillment as we serve Jesus. However, these things aren't the key to experiencing intimacy with God. In fact, you can do all of these things with great commitment and still be spiritually cold. I'm not minimizing the value of the actions mentioned above, but I'm simply pointing out that 'doing all the right things' won't necessarily generate intimacy. What then, is the key to loving our Father more? It is so simple that it's hard to believe that I missed it for so long. What is the key to loving God more? It is to grow in our understanding of how much He loves us. That's it – growing in our understanding of how much He loves us will cause us to love Him more. 1 John 4:19 says that 'we love Him because He first loved us.' Do you want to grow in your love for Christ? Then grow in accepting His love for you. Nurture yourself in the realization of His passionate and lavish grace. See Him holding you, hugging you, kissing you. Accept the reality that He is proud of you, that He adores you.

'But it isn't about me!' one person recently protested when he heard me share this truth. 'No', I answered, 'it isn't about you and to think that the key to your relationship to God is for you to love Him more puts the burden of intimacy on you, not Him. You're right. It's about Him.' The essence of the gospel is that God so loved us that He gave His only begotten Son. That's the gospel. He loves you. Stop trying to love Him more and simply accept His acceptance of you and watch what happens. You'll be amazed at how much your love for Him will increase.

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I remember a story Steve tells about a little boy, who was asked if he had found God. The boy's reply was 'I didn't know He was lost.' It's so important that we realize that we do not seek God, but that God came looking for us! That's one of the real differences between our Faith and all the other religious groups worldwide. In our Faith, God is seeking us out, seeking us for the object of His amazing Grace. That's part of what makes it amazing. We've learned over the years that the thing that brings us nearer to God, the thing that draws us closer to the heart of God, is not a revelation of the 'sorry' condition we find ourselves in, rather it's in the revelation of Him. Who He is, what He has done about us, that's the thing that causes us to be changed from 'glory to glory'. We can 'work on us' from now through all eternity and still not get to the place that we are justified or feel we are good enough to stand before God. However, understanding we can stand before God 'just as we are' is the thing that originally made us new Creatures. A revelation of His acceptance is the thing that refreshes us each day.

Ephesians 3: 17-18; '...that you, being rooted and grounded in His love may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and the length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ which surpasses

knowledge that you might be filled up to all the fullness of God. To understand all the dimensions of God, to know the fullness of Him, to know Him in all the ways possible, we will have to be rooted and stabilized in His love. We might understand some things about Him but we will never understand the fullness of Him without a foundation of the Love of God for us. It must be our first and foremost understanding or we will never understand the completeness of God. Jesus wisely warned us that if we did not come to understand the depth of his forgiveness for the whole world we could never understand the fullness of his passion for us. If we get that wrong, we will become insecure and double-minded in the very relationship He has paid such a high price for. The Father's cry is not so much "stop your trespassing" as much as it is "come unto Me". God's passion for us is as Rich Mullins described a "reckless raging fury that they call the love of God".