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Getting on Father's Page

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He was used to people clearing their schedule for him. After all, he was a writer for Time Magazine, and who wouldn't be flattered enough by his request for an interview that they wouldn't drop everything to meet with him?

One day he found someone who wouldn't, and told the story on himself. He had been trying to arrange an interview with Mother Theresa for some time but could not get her to make an appointment with him. She said she had too many important things to do and didn't know when she could stop for an interview. He persisted. Finally she offered him a solution. If he wanted to come to India he could follow her around for a few days and she would answer questions when she had the time. So he boarded a plane for Calcutta and did exactly that. In the article he wrote from that experience, he said that watching her in action was far more valuable to his story than getting his questions answered.

He was trying to get her on his page, and her simple genuineness ended up inviting him onto hers. Don't you think that's what Father might be up to with you?

When we first learned to walk with him, we were overawed by this powerful God who said he loves us completely. We found out he wanted to answer our prayers, so we brought our desires to him. But all the while we were centered on our own needs and our own wants. We were trying to get God on our page.

He is marvelously patient through such times, especially with young believers. Some things he even answered just to let you know how much he cared for you. But it doesn't take honest believers very long to realize that God answers far less prayers in the affirmative than they hoped he would. Even things we think would obviously be his will, don't seem to move him at all.

But the true lessons of spirituality begin when we come to understand that it is not for us to get God on our page, but to let his love lure us onto his. Instead of trying to get him to go where we want to go, he's invited us to come where he already is.

What Is God Up To?

As I travel around the world one of the most-asked questions I get is what I think about the future. Some well-known Christian leaders are predicting an incredible revival ahead; others a time of judgment and scarcity. People are curious if I have any special insight into such things.

I always deflect such questions. If I've learned anything from 2000 years of Christian history it is that

people who try to figure out what God is doing and set dates and times are always wrong. Why? Because people who are preoccupied with such things are looking in the wrong place. God does not measure his work on the earth today primarily in such macro terms. We always want to understand the big picture, knowing God holds the unfolding story of history in his hands.

But how God works that out is on a micro level revealing his will and his glory to every individual who has their eye on him. What he's doing today has less to do with governments and more to do with changing you to be more like him, so that you can truly be free and so that he can reveal himself more clearly to people around you.

Isn't that what Jesus demonstrated? He brought a kingdom that he did not implement through Jerusalem's religious leaders or Rome's political ones. He offered it to farmers and tax-collectors, rebels and fishermen, harlots and homemakers. "The kingdom has come near you." As they learned to get on God's page instead of trying to get God on theirs, the kingdom that came to them and functioned through them upset almost all of the known world of their day.

When our prayers center around our own ambitions and needs, asking God to bless our plans and help us get what we want, we can know that we're missing the heart of his kingdom. As we grow to know him better our prayers become less, "God, do this; God, bless that; God, fix this;" and instead become, "God, open my eyes to see what you're doing; God, fulfill the desires of your heart in me; God, help me love others the way you are today."

"My Father Is Always Working"

I love to ask people what they see Father doing in their life. There's nothing more exciting than knowing on any given day what God is doing in you and how he is using your circumstances to teach you more about him and make his life available through you to others. Unfortunately, most people answer with a shrug of the shoulders or a quiet "I don't know."

Some will even wonder aloud whether he is doing anything at all. I've been there. I've called out to God earnestly only to watch my words bounce alone in the silence. Does he even know what I'm going through? Is he even there?

I've learned better. In John 5:17 Jesus said, "My Father is always at work, to this very day and I, too, am working." They are always working, not only in the whole of the world, but specifically in your life and mine as well. When I'm not seeing that, it's because I'm looking in the wrong places.

When Jesus spoke those words, it was after he had just healed a lame man on the Sabbath. The Pharisees were angry because they thought he had violated God's law. This can't be God, or so they thought. I wonder how often we do that. When God invites us outside the lines of our habits and customs, even

those things that mark his past revelation to us, do we recognize him? The Pharisees would say God was doing nothing that day. Jesus knew better. So did the lame man. So can we.

The Father is always working. If I don't see him moving in my life, it's not because he isn't, it's because I'm not seeing him. Jesus lived his whole life with his eyes on his Father, never doing anything on his own. He invited us to live exactly the same way. There is never a moment when God doesn't want you to be aware of him and his work in you and around you.

We won't know everything we would like to know, but he wants to show us enough so that we can cooperate with his purpose in us as it unfolds in the circumstances and opportunities that surround us every moment on the job or in school, at home or during recreation, in trouble and in joy. He wants us to live the same way his Son did, looking for God's work every day and hanging out where he is.

That doesn't just happen. To get on God's page we have to make a choice to move from where we are to be just where he is in every circumstance of our lives. Certainly that is easier said than done, but this is the essence of what it means to live in God. Every day we can behold him, engage what he has engaged in our lives, and leave alone that which he is not touching.

Trust Is Not Passive

Whenever I talk about trust with people, invariably the frustrated question emerges, "So I'm just supposed to sit around and DO nothing?" I find it interesting that we associate trust with inactivity. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Trust is not staring at the walls hoping God will do something. Of course, for those of us who have learned to trust our own efforts far more than God's, learning to trust him often means we have to stop the fruitless activity that we engage on our own behalf. It does mean we wait until God begins to make things clear. But I've never found such waiting to be passive. In fact, waiting on God will be one of the most difficult things you will ever learn to do.

But trust does not end in waiting. Notice the words Paul uses in Scripture for his participation in the gospel. He talks about labor and striving with all diligence. That doesn't sound passive to me. But neither is it the frenetic activity of one who fears God will not be there for him, working on his behalf.

Trusting Jesus means that I am so confident in his love for me and his work in me that I can completely abandon my own agenda and embrace his especially when I think he is leading me where I don't prefer to go. Trust is seeing what God is doing and being with him all day, every day just like our reporter with Mother Theresa.

But too many of us are so busy trying to get God to bless what we're doing and to help us get our needs

met that we miss out on this greatest portion of being God's children. We no longer have to fight for our own way. We no longer have to wonder whether he is at work in us. He is always at work. He's always got something going on. He wants to show us what that is so we can be intentional in our cooperation with him.

You Know the Way

The disciples must have thought Jesus had lost it. He was telling them not to be afraid, that he was leaving them, but that he would come again to them. Then, almost as a throw off he tells them, "You know the way where I am going."

Thomas jumps in, "We don't even know where you are going, how can we know the way?" Thomas was right, you know. The disciples had no idea what Jesus was up to. He talked about his Father's house, about leaving them to go to his Father, and they didn't know what he meant at all.

But you've got to love Jesus' answer, "I am the way."

If you are with the guide, you don't have to know the route. They had no idea the plans Jesus had for them, but they did know him and that would be enough. He himself was the way. Knowing him and hanging out with him was all they had to do. That alone would take them into the fullness of God's life.

The same is true for us. You may not yet have learned to recognize God's voice and work in your life every day. But you do know Jesus. Make the intentional choice to hang out with him every day. Ask him to remake you so you can recognize his working in your daily life and not have to grope about confused when things don't turn out the way you expect.

He's the way. Follow him and everything that needs to work out in your life will.

He will help you to see his Father.

He will teach you to trust.

He will lure you to jump off your own page and onto his.

And there is nothing better than to be where he is!

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