

The Pastor's Pages



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The third issue comes from a request to elaborate on part of a sermon from June 7th and asks, “**How do you begin to step back and let the Lord work in your life?**” You will notice that I rephrased this question to how we begin for this is not a onetime thing that is suddenly accomplished and we never have to address it again, but it is a process in intentional spiritual growth with God.

First let me say how encouraging to receive questions such as this for they show a genuine desire to grow closer to God.

Getting out of God’s way in what God wishes to do in our lives in the kingdom that Christ announced has to do with we, as humans, diminishing or becoming less. A Biblical way of looking at this would be found when John the Baptizer says, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30 NRSV).

This concept is very important for it points to the first time that humanity pushed the boundaries against God’s sovereignty and made the choice to eat the forbidden fruit in the garden. Ever since that time, again and again, humanity seeks to “call the shots” or rule in their own lives rather than letting God rule. Is it any wonder that our world suffers with the many bad choices we as humans make?

So, is there a way to break this cycle of being misled by our own selves? Fortunately, there is and it is with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, we might say that what we are speaking of is the difference we witness in the lives of what we consider “very holy” followers of Christ or Saints, compared with others. I am not only speaking of “proper” Saints of the Church, but also those we have known in our lives. It could be friends, grandparents, mothers, fathers, etc., but each of these would stand out in your mind as having an unusual quality and faith that spoke of a closeness to God. We can learn from these people and how they lived their lives and how they lived into the faith that God gives.

The first steps come with the idea of being intentional about our relationship with God. We already do these things with others in our lives. When we desire the attention of others we spend time with them, lavish them with gifts and favors. So we must lavish ourselves with a conscious awareness of the presence of God.

Ask yourself, how much time do I spend every day in prayer or in silence while thinking about God? How many times do I just be still and sit in God's presence alone, not allowing myself to think of the other things in life but only to think of God? The Psalmist tells us from God's perspective, "Be still and know that I am God." At first this might seem strange to think about, being totally still in silence, closing your eyes so that you are not distracted by things you see, clearing your mind and asking God, "Father, reveal yourself to your servant. Show me your grace and love. Let me know your ways and teach me to walk in them." And then, to be silent and listen. However, why would God desire for us to be still and if we are never still, do we know on the level that God intends for us to know?

If you simply begin by trying this it may seem awkward at first, but realize that you are making space in your life, taking time to do nothing else but be with the one who created you and all things. What at first seems awkward will begin to grow, for in doing this you will begin to experience peace in a new way. This is a peace that cannot be compared to other times in your life for this is the peace of God.

Another focus that we can become intentional about is how we relate and respond to the world we live in. Part of being a Christian is following the way of Christ and that way always sought the Father's will.

When you make decisions or face things in your life, do you base your choices on your own experience or on what God wishes? If we always make these choices based upon our desires then are we listening to God? We must begin to be honest with ourselves and acknowledge spiritual strengths and weaknesses. If we are quick to criticize others or things, then we can be intentional about stepping back in those situations, to take a deep breath and pray there in the moment. It doesn't have to be an elaborate prayer, something as simple as, "Jesus, show me your way" or "Jesus, help me hold my tongue and withhold judgement, help me to forgive."

As you can see, this is a process and in the discipline of intentionality, of working at this a little at a time, of carving out part of our day to be alone with the Lord and completely still, we will begin to notice something. You will begin to see changes in yourself. You may not be as anxious about things as you once were, you may not be quick to judge, and the idea of being alone with God in the peace that surrounds you may begin to come more naturally. In this, the Spirit is working within you and changing you into that new creature that our Bible speaks of. The peace that comes from your time alone with God is brought into the rest of the hours of your days and suddenly, the way you look at your world and life has changed.

It is certainly an exciting journey and with all journeys it begins with a single step in faith. I wish for you the blessings that come in intentionally walking with the Lord, coming to a conscious awareness of the God that is always with you. And as always, should you wish to discuss this and other ways that we can grow closer to God, I, as your pastor, am always willing to listen and discuss this with you.

God's Peace,

Pastor Faron