

October 2008

Dear Friends,

I was flipping through my journal this morning, looking back over some of the things God has been teaching me this year. (I was doing this in hopes of staying with the lessons, and not losing them as I *so* often do). I stopped on a page where I had quoted this passage from George MacDonald (C.S. Lewis confessed that he thought he had probably quoted MacDonald in everything he ever wrote, so I feel in good company):

To be a child is not necessarily to be a son or daughter. The childship is the lower condition of the upward process towards the sonship, the soil out of which the true sonship shall grow, the former without which the latter were impossible. God can no more than an earthly parent be content to have only children: he must have sons and daughters—children of his soul, of his spirit, of his love—not merely in the sense that he loves them, or even that they love him, but in the sense that they love like him, love as he loves. For this he does not adopt them; he dies to give them himself, thereby to raise his own to his heart; he gives them a birth from above; they are born again out of himself and into himself—for he is the one and the all. His children are not his real, true sons and daughters until they think like him, feel with him, judge as he judges, are at home with him, and without fear before him because he and they mean the same thing, love the same things, seek the same ends. For this are we created; it is the one end of our being, and includes all other ends whatever.

This text is from a book called *Unspoken Sermons*, the chapter entitled, “Abba Father!” I love what he conveys here – that we are in the *process* of becoming the sons and daughters of God, and that the goal of this process is to “think like him, feel with him, judge as he judges,” to “mean the same thing, love the same things, seek the same ends.” After I transcribed the quote into my journal, I wrote beneath it,

Yes, Lord. This is what I want. This is what I ask of you.

It seems that until we align ourselves with what God is up to in our lives, we are forever straining at the leash, unsettled, restless, sometimes feeling as though God is not helping us, at other times feeling like we are fighting him. All the plans we make, the desires we hold, all that we spend our energy on is headed in some direction or other; we have something in mind. Sometimes I just want relief; sometimes I am angling for a happy life; sometimes I am simply trying to survive. It all seems amiss, and this passage explains why. I may be a son, but I am not living like it.

When I wrote *Walking with God*, one of the things I was hoping to make clear is the difference between being a believer and a follower of Jesus Christ. The follower is actually asking God what he is up to, where he is leading, inviting God into the details of life in order to align with his heart, his will. But more than drawing the distinction, I was hoping to make it *inviting*, show how richer and fuller the life of the follower can be.

But I like the way MacDonald describes it here better – that while we are, on one hand, the children of God, we have not really *become* the children of God until we are one heart and one mind with him.

It helps me to make sense of good people I know who say they believe in God, or even love Jesus, but they don't really seem to be changing in any noticeable way. Their personalities are pretty much the same as they were ten years ago; their lives look pretty much the same. They have not abandoned God. But they have not really pursued their own transformation, either. They don't seem to be any closer to loving what he loves, meaning what he means, don't seem to be seeking the same ends. I fear a great deal of the church is here, and I'm not quite sure why. Is it because we don't want this life? Or because we think it impossible to attain?

But this is the invitation.

This is what we were created for. This *is* life at its very best. And God has made it possible by giving us himself. We have his life in us, his Spirit dwelling in us. We actually have the *option* now of choosing this life, which is the highest form of living – to share the heart and mind of God in all things.

Everything that is happening in us and around us is a context and an opportunity for this re-alignment. Stasi says something that tweaks me. I could blast by, or, I could pause and ask, *Father, what's going on here? Why am I tweaked? What are you after?* Or something disappointing happens, and again I could just pass by, or I could stop and ask, *Jesus, what are you after in my heart in this? What does this reveal? What is your heart, your mind in this?* I could seek to embrace his view of things, yearn to desire what he desires.

It seems this is the basic difference in the way people live – we are either seeking this sort of alignment, this genuine companionship with God, or, we are just living our lives as it seems best to us. One group may find it best to indulge flagrantly; another might be trying to master religious principles. But this sort of intimacy with God is unmistakable, because it is so utterly alluring and so rare. It sort of makes things simple again. I at least know that whatever is going on, I always have one option. I can seek to be aligned with the heart and mind of God. I can become more his son.

Thought you'd find the passage and the category of thought to be helpful,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name 'John' written in a cursive, flowing style.

John

PS You might have missed the email announcements about Gary Barkalow's new venture so thought I'd better mention it here. Gary is teaching Calling full time, and he's launched a new ministry and website at www.thenobleheart.com. You can hear the story of this adventure on our website at <http://www.ransomedheart.com/ministry/gary.aspx>