

RANSOMED HEART

LOVE GOD. LIVE FREE.

October 2010

“She is one of the most beautiful people I’ve ever met. She is genuinely holy.”

A friend said this the other day, describing someone we both know. Now, I’m very, very curious... what comes to your mind when someone is described like this? Not *who*, but *what sort of person* do you imagine?

Is it someone you can trust with your wallet? Someone who has a deep spiritual life and prays a lot? Someone who lives for justice, sold her condo, her car and moved to Calcutta to serve the poor? Our definition of holiness says a lot about us, actually. What makes a good person? A good life?

The way you relate to others.

Seriously.

Why does that strike us as kind of an odd answer? Sort of anti-climactic? Not really true but maybe true and why didn’t we think of that? How come this isn’t the most common way Christians answer the question?

The *way we relate* to others speaks volumes about our character, our motives, our basic life ambitions. In other words, it reveals the kind of person we are. Here’s why:

God is love. Therefore, love is the highest mark in the ethics of the Scriptures.

God is Trinity. God is relational to the very core. And we are, too, because we bear his image.

I’m really struck by this because for the most part this isn’t high on the list when we choose our leaders. We pick a pastor because they are an amazing teacher, or a “great leader,” but those qualities fall way down the list when it comes to genuine holiness. It isn’t high on the list when we teach morality, on what makes for the Christian life.

Here’s another way to get at this – is learning to love the thing that grabs your priorities on any given day? Not me. I have my “to do” list, and learning to love isn’t even on it. I’m embarrassed to admit it, but it’s true. I have to be reminded that this whole story is about love. Then I go, *Oh yeah. I do believe that*. It’s just not what I’m after on a daily basis. Which is my point about our daily motives.

Now, God knows this is true for most of us, so you know what he does? He gives us...annoying people. Isn’t it true? I have a pretty decent view of myself as a person when I’m by myself. But put me in a context with other people – especially people who are really bugging me – and my need for deeper transformation is quickly revealed. I love Chesterton on this. He says it’s why the family and the church is so key to God’s program, because you can pick your friends, you can pick your colleagues, but you sort of get thrown into a family and it is there you begin your training in learning to love. Then you become part of the church and encounter all sorts of people who rub you the wrong way, and thus your training continues.

You and I have a way we relate to others. It was formed out of our childhood, mostly, and it weaves together what we do to avoid rejection, and what we do to get a little praise. Dan never speaks up because he's afraid he'll say something stupid; Susan can't shut up because she's desperate to be liked. Matt talks about his job because he's trying to impress you and Jan refuses to talk about what she does for fear of embarrassment. Amy dresses really nice because she wants to be noticed and Susan "dresses down" because she fears the attention of men. On and on it goes.

And none of it is motivated by love. It's motivated by all sorts of other things, like fear, compulsion, narcissism, pride and mostly self-protection. But not love.

And so it's godless.

That is why the way we relate to others is high on God's list for the transformation of our character. It opens up a door to a whole world of joy and integrity and discovering we can live a very powerful life wherever we are. We have a style of relating, it's motivated by all sorts of things that aren't so pretty, but God wants to free us of all that and help us learn to relate like he does. Wow. How hopeful.

Think of what a relief it would be if the people who bug you most deeply told you they had enrolled in a class showing them how the way they relate is driving people nuts. Now, think of the joy the people you live and work with will feel when they hear you have. (That class, by the way, is Christianity.)

On November 6, Stasi and I are trying out a "first" for us. We're giving a day-long workshop on learning to love, and we're doing it by "simulcast." The live event is here in Colorado Springs (at New Life Church) but the event will be broadcast live to churches all across the U.S. The context is our newest book, *Love and War*, which talks about love in marriage. But the bottom line is how men and women learn to love.

Pray for us! It's kinda scary to try something new like this but it's really important that we get our message out to a larger group of people. I had a heartbreaking event last weekend. I spoke at a major conference with thousands of people in attendance, spoke on the heart of God and our hearts and the core of the Ransomed Heart message. Afterwards, a seventy-five year old woman came up to me, tears in her eyes, and said, "I'd like to hear you more. I've never heard this. For the first time my life makes sense to me." Seventy-five years without clarity, without a true picture of the heart of God or the battle we are in, or how crucial her own heart is? That's why we ache to spread the message.

Second, bring someone. You can find out what churches near you are hosting the simulcast by stopping by our website at ransomedheart.com. Ask someone to come. Better still, ask a couple you know to come.

From your fellow student, or, reluctant disciple in the school of love,



John

PS – With Christmas coming, and love in mind, think of giving gifts that give your loved ones a deeper life in God. Give them something from our resources library! Much more redemptive than a crockpot or a wii.