

GOD THE MOST VITAL ASPECT OF MY LIFE

This past week I took a trip to see my kids and their families up in New York. It was great to see them all and especially all the grandkids. Thank God they are all doing well. I also got a chance to get around my “ole neighborhood.” I visited around the town where I raised my kids, had a house and was in ministry. I did visit my old house and went to other areas around town. I ran into a few people and to my surprise, they did recognize me. We caught up on the past twenty or twenty five years. It was very, very nice.

I also visited some friends that I haven’t seen in 20 some odd years. I went to their home. It was great. We talked about things from the past when we were in ministry together. We spoke about some of, or should I say the many, of the good times and some of the difficulties there were in ministry “back in the day.” We caught up on what everyone was doing now. Yes, we even caught up on each of our health issues that we have each encountered. Hey, I guess that is something you do as you get to “my age.” Thank God, each of us has passed those issues with “flying colors.”

However, after we met it got me thinking about a lot of things; especially about things in the past. Even though many of those memories were very good, some were not the best. Some memories were difficult but some were also very laughable. It got me thinking about life in general.

Life is just that – a bunch of different events and situations that we each encounter throughout our lives. As we are going through those times we may feel that they will never end and that they are so very, very difficult. In view of all those memories – the good, the bad and the ugly, there was one thing that I could look back as being the source of my life through it all. That was God – the Father, Jesus, the Son and the Holy Spirit. And ... He still is!!!

That is the primary aspect of our lives – God - that we all could say to one another which was the most important part of each of our lives. Yes, my wife is so very important to me. The children and grandchildren and even in some cases the great grandchildren are all very, very important to our lives. Friendships are very important. However, what I have realized throughout these past few years is that the most important thing to me has been my relationship with my God.

That has been what has kept me in sync. That is what has gotten me through many of the difficult times throughout my life. It has also been my God who has given me the best times in my life. Yes, God is ultimately, my source of life, period. He may not be that in other people’s lives but as for me, I know without a shadow of a doubt that it has been God that has gotten me through all the good and all the bad.

It has been God, through the power of the Holy Spirit that has enabled me and has gotten me through my life. And ... He continues to do so. It is God who can do the same for each one of us - only if we choose to let Him. I am one of those people that recently, over the past ten years, have truly found that out. It comes from a true relationship with the Living God. It does not come from somebody else telling me about God and then me changing my life to that person’s concept of what God, the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit is.

No, it simply comes from a true personal intimate relationship and friendship with the Living God. I do not mean a relationship built on someone else’s relationship or concept of what it should be but rather it is built on a true fundamental relationship with my God. I guess what I am saying is that a true relationship with God must be built on just that – a true relationship. Sometimes that is very difficult to describe or even understand. To be honest, I don’t have that down pat yet - even for myself. But, let’s discuss it a little.

So what does it truly mean to have your own true personal relationship with the Living God? Well, obviously it begins with first recognizing, understanding and then believing in and accepting the only one who can truly bring anyone back into establishing a true relationship with the Living God – that would be Jesus, the Son of God. Yes, it all starts with Jesus. An individual must believe that Jesus is who He says He is and that He did what the Bible tells us that He did for each one of us.

We must believe that Jesus was and is and always will be God along with the Father and the Holy Spirit and that Jesus came to earth through the womb of a natural woman. That is fundamental. Jesus came to earth through a woman. However, the seed was planted by the Holy Spirit into Mary by the Father through His Word. For some, they refer to it as the “Immaculate Conception.”

I really do not care what you call it. The fact of the matter is that there was a virgin – Mary - who became impregnated by the Word of God. The seed was of God and the child that came forth was both - 100% God and 100% man. That is a fact. I can't fully explain it but it is a fact and it is the truth.

That is where our faith in Jesus must begin. It must begin with believing that God had made a plan of salvation for man back in Genesis 3. The birth of Jesus, by and through Mary, is where that “plan” first began and became real upon this earth. The seed was spoken of by God, the Father and placed into Mary through the Holy Spirit. She conceived and gave birth to the Son of Man, the Son of God, the Lord and Savior that was to become available to all people. His name is Jesus.

Jesus then grew and at age 30 began His public ministry. He ministered for 3½ years. He then was crucified, died and then took the punishment for the sins of the entire world in a place called “hell” for three days. On that third day, however, Jesus rose from the grave. He defeated satan and the forces of darkness by taking the keys of death and life away from satan. He then ascended into Heaven and presented the Father with the sacrifice that was to be presented on the Feast of Bikurum (Resurrection Sunday) during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. He then returned to this earth and appeared to many of those who believed in Him. He returned to heaven on the 40th day after His death.

However, on the fiftieth day after His death, ten days later on the Feast of Pentecost, the Father gave the Holy Spirit to dwell in and fill those who believed in Jesus so that they could go forth and tell the world about the Good News. The Good News was, and still is, that a person's salvation was now made available to anyone who would believe in what Jesus did.

Jesus died and took the punishment for all our sins and now He is alive, waiting for the Father's appointed time for Him to return back to this earth. Now, anyone who truly believes in that can be restored and be brought back into relationship with the Living God. How - by believing and accepting Jesus as your own personal, Lord and Savior.

From that starting point, a true relationship is born. Our spirit is renewed, born again, and the availability of having a true relationship is established. Yes, that relationship is established. However, even though the relationship has been established it is up to every “born again child of God” to continue in that relationship and, yes, I am going to say it, it is up to that individual to continually see to it that the relationship grows.

It not just simply saying a prayer and then that is it for the rest of your life. No, there is much more to it than that. I think that is where many people lose focus and possibly their salvation. I know that was where I was. Not that I totally lost relationship with my God but rather I sought that relationship with my God through other people, Pastors and friends. I learned about God from them without truly having a true relationship with God. I learned what others told me about what the relationship should be and what I should do with that relationship with God. Yes, I found out what others thought or said my relationship with the Living God should be.

Well, I may have been having a relationship with someone – but it wasn't a true relationship with my God. The relationship was built upon someone else telling me how or what I should do or not do. It was not really my relationship but rather it was a relationship based on what I had heard about the One I loved but it really was not with Him. It was a relationship based on other people's thoughts and ideas.

I think that is where most of us who have made Jesus our Lord and Savior and who have turned to our God have failed or should I say, have lacked in our relationship with our God. We have relied on people and the things we are told to do by others which, I believe, has really hindered each of us from having a true personal, intimate and real relationship with our God.

Oh, I am not saying that all of us do not have a true relationship with our God. And I am not saying that we cannot help each other in that relationship. However, what I am saying is that some of us may not really have a true intimate and true personal relationship with our God. Our relationship has been built on other people's relationship and sometimes we may "copy" that relationship thereby not having or should I say, not allowing ourselves to enter into a true intimate relationship with the "lover of our soul."

Let me put it this way. When two people are truly in love and decide to get married, a true relationship is formed. Their entire lives are based on and are formed around each other. I understand that some may need some counseling but that counseling should be for the purpose of the two individuals deciding to truly put their own interests aside for the needs, wants and desires of the other. It is the same with our God. Although it is not God that needs the counseling – it is us!!!

When we are in a relationship with God, we should all recognize that the main problem that we may have is not with God but rather it is that each of us has the problem. God is perfect and He knows exactly what each of us need; what each of us truly needs in this life. He is the one who has made each of us and He knows exactly how, why and what each of us needs to truly make us have true joy within our lives. The problem is that we may think we know what is good for us – how wrong is that kind of thinking. We must never forget that God KNOWS EXACTLY what each of us needs – not want or desire but truly needs.

What I am saying is that each of us must "*...trust in the Lord with all of our heart and lean not upon our own understanding.*" We must know that only He is the absolute, "Lover of my soul." How many of us truly have that close intimate relationship with our God. Or... is it just based on us going to church and really having a good relationship with the pastor and with others in the Body. Yes, we are to have a true relationship with others but is that taking the place of having a true relationship with your God. Hmmm.....

The time will be coming soon when "stuff will hit the fan." It is in the beginning stages now. Actually, I believe, we are on the very cusp of the final 7 years. It is not happening yet but I believe it will be starting in a few short years. That will be the time when the true believers will be revealed and the "not so true believers" also will be revealed and exposed.

Everything will be revealed through the decisions and the choices that we will be forced to make. We will truly be forced to either bend our knee to the forces that will be prevailing upon the earth or we will choose to serve God fully and take the consequences of a lost world but ultimately end up with our God.

It will seem that the world and its ways are prevailing. However, it is God who will be prevailing. The question is, will those who say they are believers today decide to stay the course with our God and take the consequences or will we yield to the forces of darkness tomorrow? We must take note that it will be a gradual decline. We are seeing the beginning stages even in this hour. Yes, it will be gradual but it has truly begun.

We know that the first 3½ years of the rule of the anti-Christ would seem to be wonderful. It would seem that things would be getting better for everyone - including the believers. All the believers need to do would be to make some “adjustments.” They may need to take a little mark so that their needs, wants and desires would be taken care of. That is where it truly begins... the beginning of the end.

No, we must all stay fully alert beginning right now. It begins with those who say that Jesus is their Lord and Savior. It begins with those who have a **true, personal, intimate, one on one, real relationship with our Father God** through a true belief in Jesus and in the power and understanding of the Holy Spirit. We must never forget or lose focus on that. That is where our true salvation begins and remains.

I know that this little essay may seem very basic. Well, that is what a true relationship with the Living God is – it is very basic. It begins with turning to God, the Father and admitting my need for Him. When I do that, I repent and recognize that the Father has made a very clear way for me to get back into relationship with Him. It comes through the cross and what Jesus did on that cross. It begins by understanding that Jesus paid the punishment for all my sins by not just dying on the cross but also going to hell on my behalf because He took all of my sin upon Himself.

But... There is more!!! Jesus rose from the grave and hell and He defeated satan and took the “keys of death and life” away from him. Then Jesus went to the Father and presented to the Father the gifts of renewal on that first Resurrection Sunday. Jesus not only provided the only way to be forgiven of all our sins by His death but now, through Him, He made the way for us to have “new life,” a born again spirit, by raising from the dead and going to the Father. However, we must truly believe in Jesus and all that He did to be able to enter into that new life that the Father has now provided.

Yes, I know that this has been a simple discussion. I know I started out with a simply thought on my past trip and that I saw my family and many old but so good, good friends. My life has changed over the past ten years. I may have gotten older but I think that my relationship with my God has gotten “real.” It has gotten closer and more intimate. I realized that God had always wanted that with and for me but I was the one who was hindering that relationship. I love my God – the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Most of all, He loves me.

I am very thankful for all that the Lord has done in my life – the good, the bad and the ugly because I know He had and still has a perfect plan for my life. I am so very thankful that He has given me – my wife, my children, my grandchildren, my sister and my brother along with my many very good friends. However, most of all I am very thankful to and for the Living God, the God of my salvation, the Lover of my soul, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace and the Holy Spirit who is my Comforter and who lives within me. I am so thankful for my salvation. Thank you Lord for allowing me to live in the power of your might and thank you that one day I and all your people will live forever in your presence.

Yes, God is the most vital aspect of my life... because **HE** is my life!!!