

How to Love God With Complete Abandon

Like the woman with the alabaster jar, I want to be extravagant with Jesus.

As Christians we're not in a contest with others to see who loves God more, but if you're like me you want to learn from those who love Him more than you do. Where do you find them? Who are the great giants of faith in whose footsteps we need to follow? Look no farther than the gutter.

At an urban church plant in Paterson, New Jersey, called Frontlines, I met a man in a drug-rehabilitation program named Mark. Mark is 51 years old and has been homeless and a heroin addict for 20 years. He found Jesus in this Christian rehab and was radically changed.

While in the program he trained as a chef at a cooking school. Now he uses his skills to cook for the homeless in a soup kitchen that serves breakfast seven days a week.

The former drug addict finished at the top of his class in cooking school and was recruited by numerous prestigious restaurants. Mark prayed about how he should respond to these job offers and ultimately felt that he should stay at the mission and continue serving God there.

He's staying because he loves it and he loves God. This man has a peace and joy I truly envy. Materially he has nothing and yet in the things that matter most he has everything.

Once when Jesus was invited to dine at a man's house, He was criticized for allowing a sinful woman to touch Him. In reply He said to Simon, His host: "There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he

freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?’

“Simon answered and said, ‘I suppose the one whom he forgave more.’

“And He said to him, ‘You have rightly judged.’

“Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, ‘Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little’” (Luke 7:41-47, NKJV).

Jesus used the woman as an example to teach the “more respectable” people who were hosting him. She loved Him more. I think Jesus still uses sinners today to try to get through to Christians.

So many of our hang-ups, anxieties and worries would be molehills instead of mountains if we would get the proper perspective on our position in the kingdom of God. We have been forgiven much but don’t fully comprehend how blessed we are.

The mentally ill, the addicted, the poor and the oppressed are faced with the stark realities of their lives every day and are acutely aware of the amazing grace of God. We must humble ourselves and learn from them.

Living in the richest country on earth has a strange effect on us. We have more than we need and are still dissatisfied. We look at those who have failed to achieve and tend to despise them. Yet these broken people who love God so much are the

ones He hears when they cry out (see Ps. 51:17; 55:17). I suggest you spend time with some of them.

I have been fortunate to make many friends on the streets. I have learned lessons from prostitutes about faith. I have been given powerful words from people who are homeless and mentally ill. I have cried out with those who are brokenhearted and experienced God's presence. I have been touched by Jesus in surprising ways.

Like the woman with the alabaster jar who poured out everything she had on His feet, I want to be extravagant with Jesus. I want to thank Him for the undeserved mercy He lavishes on me. I just want to love Him more.

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