

Respond to God's Call by Calling Upon Him

As I tell my students often, "those things you do in life are those things you've truly learned." To be sure, knowledge and good doctrine are nothing without good living and practice. What we really know...we do.

I've got to begin there as I reflect upon what communion with God is, and what it can be about. I'm starting over the Bible in a Year plan (gonna try to do it in 6 months this time) and my favorite part, of course, are those stories in Genesis.

Reading about Abraham this morning, I was struck by his calling by God to be a father of a great people, and almost immediately Abraham responds by "calling on the name of the Lord." This struck me because we don't really know Abraham just yet in this passage. We just know he's some old man who got called by God.

Abraham doesn't know what's ahead either. He has no idea he's about to wander all over the place, seemingly in no real direction. He has no idea he's about to sojourn in Egypt, lie about his wife being his sister, wage war with his enemies, witness the destruction of two of the greatest cities in the world, go through perennial ups and downs in his family life, and yet—through it all—fall deeper in love with (and in awe of) God. Yet he responds to God's call by calling upon God.

We see it again in Genesis 13:4. A few more events take place and this man Abraham responds again by calling upon the name of the Lord. And in one of his most awesome moments, in Genesis 15:6, the Scriptures say of Abraham, "... he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness" (NKJV).

My point in all this is that there is a thread of consistent

calling upon or devoting his heart to God. Abraham experienced an inherent desperation for communion and friendship with his Maker. And as I sit here, I want this thread to be woven in my own life as well.

I'm not good at it. There are seasons when I and my Bible are inseparable. And to be honest, there are seasons when the only 'real' time I'm in the Word is because I'm preparing a sermon. There are journal entries of mine that show a consistency in my walk that are compelling, deep and vulnerable. There are also empty pages that show a confidence in my own strength and a lack of desperation.

I'm not writing to say "get in the Word every day at 5 a.m." or "read at least 30 minutes a day" or "take a prayer retreat every two months." That's never worked well with me and I don't think it will with you either.

However, I will say that I am praying that this thread of calling upon God might be a visible one in my heart and life. It didn't produce perfection for Abraham. He was a sinner, who showed wins and losses in his spiritual life. So perfection can't be our goal. But it did produce a growing wisdom, a growing affection, a growing smile and contentment, and a growing 'acceptance' of God's will for his life. And at the end of his story, we still say... Abraham was a great man.

Remember brothers, when we are not calling upon God, when we're not praying, when we're not seeking, it's undeniable evidence that we are trusting in ourselves, content with our own strength, and completely void of a Spirit-compelled desperation that all of us need in order to navigate life God's way.

Even when prayer, devotion, communion—whatever you want to call it—is not exactly your "heart's desire," use those red flags as opportunities to cry out, "God, create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me."

Because of the Spirit's presence in us, we will accomplish what God wants us to do. Philippians 1:6 reminds us of that. But my fear for me—my fear for us—is that while *doing* what God wants us to do, we'll fail to *enjoy* what God is doing. We'll get to our destination, but we won't remember the ride along the way. We'll climb the mountain, but we won't be sensitive to what it took to get there.

So call upon God. Find that prayer closet that you steal away to from time to time. Find that nook in your favorite coffee shop. Find that sacred rhythm of connecting to him. Ask other men how they do it. Seek God's wisdom for how you're supposed to do it. Call upon God.

God, I pray that a continual rhythm of calling upon you would be true of all of our lives. Give us, I pray, this burning desire to sup with you and do life *with you* instead of *for you* alone. Teach us the way. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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