

R.T. Kendall: How to Stop Missing God

How many times have you pushed ahead in your own strength?

One of the scariest moments in the Gospels comes when Joseph and Mary are returning from Jerusalem to Galilee. They think they have Jesus with them-but they don't. "Supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey" (Luke 2:44).

If I could see a video replay of my life when I get to heaven, I'll bet it would reveal many times when I too proceeded without Jesus, fully believing I had Him with me. I wish I could have that replay now. Perhaps it would enable me to avoid such mistakes in the future.

How do we make this serious error? I believe we make it in at least two ways.

First, we neglect to pray. After ancient Israel began to be victorious in the Promised Land they were totally deceived by the Gibeonites-and paid dearly for it for a long time. Joshua was a godly leader, no doubt led by the Spirit. And yet, unexpectedly, they succumbed to the Gibeonites. Why? The answer would appear to be in these words: "The men of Israel sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the Lord" (Josh.9:14, NIV).

When I was growing up in Kentucky we listened each morning to a radio program with a song that began, "Ere you left your room this morning, did you think to pray?"

Those words have governed me for years. Yet I have still proceeded repeatedly without inquiring of the Lord. I've let common sense or the advice of old friends dictate my direction before I prayed adequately about a matter. Common sense isn't

necessarily the will of God, and even the best friends can fail us.

Although there is safety in a multitude of counsel (see Prov. 11:14) our ultimate source of wisdom lies in seeking God's face. "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Prov. 3:6). As the old hymn puts it, "O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear; all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer."

Forgetting to pray is an easy thing to do, especially when the way forward seems obvious.

Second, I have gone on without Jesus by being out of touch with the Holy Spirit's immediate leadership. This happens when you think you know the ways of the Holy Spirit fairly well. I doubt any of us will get closer to Jesus than Joseph and Mary were. They assumed He would do nothing without them.

But He did.

You may think you are on such good terms with the Holy Spirit that if He decides to make a move, you will be notified in advance! In my life, I've been amazed by the sensitivity of the Holy Spirit. Grieving the Spirit is so easy to do. It can be done by holding the slightest bitterness, or even by making unguarded comments (see Eph. 4:30-32).

When we grieve the Spirit we forfeit the anointing of clear thinking. The Spirit lifts from us—much like Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem and let His parents carry on without Him.

When we realize we have grieved the Spirit, there is only one thing to do: find Him, no matter how humbling it is to do. Joseph and Mary had to go looking for Jesus. When we realize that we have left Him behind, we must too.

When the Spirit of God is in me not grieved, I will not run ahead of Him—at least not for long. When He's inside of me I

miss His company—should He move on—in a short period of time.

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