

Spirit-Filled Pastor: You Can't Borrow Someone Else's Walk with God

We all have probably played the child's game of Hide and Seek. Someone closes his eyes while the others hide, and then the "it" player counts to 20 and says, "Ready or not, here I come!"

In a sense, that is what Jesus was saying in a parable He told about a Jewish wedding. In our time and culture, this story in Matthew's Gospel doesn't necessarily make sense to us. But it was a common experience in the culture of Jesus' day.

A Jewish wedding was a major social event that consisted of three major components. The first was the engagement, which the parents of the bride and the groom arranged when their children were rather young.

Next was the betrothal, a ceremony in which the bride and groom exchanged vows in the presence of their family and friends. At this point, they were considered married and the relationship only could be broken by a formal divorce.

However, the couple wouldn't consummate their marriage or live together. This betrothal period lasted for months and during this time, the groom established himself in a trade.

Finally, there was the wedding feast, which would last up to a week. The fun element was that no one knew when the actual ceremony would take place. Therefore, the bride and the bridesmaids would be ready. Then, at one point during the week, a cry would go out that the bridegroom was coming.

Everyone went into the place where the event would be held and then the door was closed. And if you happened to be asleep at

the time, you would miss the wedding feast.

Learning from the Bridesmaids

In His parable, Jesus went on to say that while all 10 bridesmaids at this Jewish wedding had lamps, only five had oil in them. As a result, the Bible says the five bridesmaids without oil went to the others and asked for some of theirs.

But they replied, "We don't have enough for all of us. Go to a shop and buy some for yourselves" (Matt. 25:9, NLT).

So, while the five bridesmaids went out to buy more oil, the bridegroom arrived, the wedding feast began and the doors were shut.

In Scripture, a lamp or a light is a symbol of our lights shining. Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16, NKJV). Meanwhile, oil in Scripture is a symbol of the Holy Spirit.

As we look at the 10 bridesmaids in Jesus's parable, we find they had many things in common but there were differences as well. All of them had lamps. All of them were invited to the wedding. And all had access to the oil. However, only half of them used it.

Jesus was pointing out that two people can sit side by side, hear the same truth and be affected differently.

The Thief on the Cross

For example, at the crucifixion, there were two men on each side of Jesus who were being put to death for their crimes. One Gospel account tells us they joined the crowds in mocking Him.

But then, according to Luke's Gospel, Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (23:34). And

instantaneously, one of those non-believing men came to his senses and realized that Jesus was indeed the very Son of God.

So, he turned to Jesus and said, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom" (23:42).

Jesus answered, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise" (23:43). That's how conversion is; it happens instantaneously.

But why did the other man not react in the same way? They both heard that incredible prayer of Jesus in which He asked the Father to forgive the very men who had pounded the spikes into His hands and feet. Yet only one believed.

That's the way it is. Two people can hear the same message and one will be profoundly moved while the other will become more hardened in his or her sin.

Cain and Abel both were the sons of Adam and Eve. Their parents exposed them both to the same spiritual truths. Yet time revealed that one was jealous and bitter, and he murdered his brother.

Being Honest with Yourself

People can go through the motions and appear to be Christians but have no relationship with God. As the Scripture says, "They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly" (2 Tim. 3:5, NLT). It's all show and no go.

I have more respect for the person who would say, "I am not a believer, I have no interest in God or the Bible or spiritual things and I am living for myself" than someone who sits in church and listens to a sermon with no intention of applying what God's Word says in their lives.

Why?

It's because the unbeliever is honest about his or her condition.

The problem with people who sit in church, go through the motions and have no real interest in the things of God is they're only fooling themselves. In their minds, they have done their religious duty. They have gone through their little ritual or whatever it is that motivates them, and then they'll simply go and live as they please, with no interest whatsoever in God.

It's a worse deception.

The problem with the five bridesmaids who didn't have oil in their lamps was they heard but did not heed. Sadly, there are so many people like them today who try to ride the spiritual coattails of someone else. However, there is no spiritual fervor in their lives. They aren't developing their own relationship with God.

You can't let your walk with God be contingent on how your parents are doing or how your husband or wife is doing or how your best friend is doing. You cannot borrow someone else's walk with God. You must have your own. And you need to get it for yourself before it's too late. {eo}

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