

Why Did Joshua Harris Fall Away From Christ?

I did not know Joshua Harris and never read any of his books. I only knew his name and had friends who promoted his book *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*.

Nonetheless, as I have read articles about his apostasy, it seems clear that at a relatively young age he took on a noble cause for sexual purity in the church. He became very successful in this cause, with the above book selling almost a million copies; but herein lies the potential danger.

His story reminded me of how God spoke to my wife, Dr. Susan Hyatt, at the time of the publication of her groundbreaking book, *In the Spirit We're Equal*. He said to her, "The cause is not the call."

It happened on a weekend in December 1998 while we were ministering at Resurrection Church in Trafford, Pennsylvania, pastored by Bill and Melinda Fish. It was a powerful and lively service, and toward the end, Sue was sitting on the floor with her back leaning against the wall, quietly enjoying God's presence.

Her new book, which challenges the church's traditional views about women, was at the printer. It was an assignment she knew God had given her and a very noble "cause."

But as she sat on the floor in that peaceful atmosphere, she heard the Holy Spirit say, "The cause is not the call!" She intuitively knew that God was telling her that she must never become so absorbed with her assignment as to allow it to take the place of Himself in her life.

She was reminded that our call as Christians is to *know Him* as Paul declared in Philippians 3:8-10. Jesus Himself said the

same thing in his high priestly prayer recorded in John 17. "This is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent" (John 17:3).

This same truth is conveyed in the story of God calling Abraham to offer up his son Isaac as a burnt offering. Isaac was a gift from God, but Isaac must never become the primary object of Abraham's love and affection—that place reserved for God alone.

Our Isaacs—those God-given blessings and assignments—must never become idols. A just cause must never become the primary object of our attention and affection. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind," Jesus said in Matthew 22:37.

Have you made an idol out of your Isaac? Have you fallen into the trap of allowing a God-given assignment to become the central, consuming obsession of your life? Has a noble "cause" replaced God in your life?

It is probably time for all of us to bring our Isaacs to the altar. It is probably time to offer our ministries, our building projects, and our causes back to Him. The beautiful poem by A.B. Simpson entitled "Himself" can be helpful in this regard. The first stanza reads:

*Once it was the blessing, now it is the Lord/
Once it was the feeling, now it is His Word/
Once His gifts I wanted, now the Giver own/
Once I sought for healing, now Himself alone.*

Is this what happened to Joshua Harris? Did he become so consumed with the cause that he neglected the call to know Christ Himself. Only God knows, but his sad situation should be a reminder to us all that "The cause is not the call."
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