

Private Lessons With God

✖ On a Sunday morning, several years ago, I walked into the sanctuary at my local church during the praise and worship portion of our service. As I made my way to the balcony, I noticed the worshipers all around me up on their feet leaping, shouting in acclamation, and clapping their hands in seemingly sincere celebration.

But as others stood around me in exuberant corporate participation, I took my seat.

Consumed with the frustration I had brought to church with me that day, I sat and observed while pondering the questions that ran rapidly through my mind. “God, why am I here? What is all the hoopla about? How long is all this going to take? How much of this is really necessary anyway?”

As my eyes filled with tears, I could not understand why during a time when I should have felt the most enthused, energetic, and demonstrative about my spiritual walk, I sat lethargically discouraged with a deep sense of dissatisfaction and hopelessly questioning my salvation and my purpose. I had been a Christian for years. I had worked and held leadership positions in ministry. And, up until this point in my life, I really believed that I had a strong relationship with the Lord.

However, now I felt more agitated, aggravated, and discombobulated than I had ever felt in my entire life, and I was wondering how I had gotten to this place. To make matters worse, I felt as though I was invisible, like nobody else could really see me. I also felt as if I was the only one who was going through (or who had ever gone through) this experience. Here I sat, a single mother of two, working two part-time jobs, going to school to earn my bachelor’s degree in the evenings, and now back at home living with my mother.

My marriage had failed and my father had gone on to be with the Lord. I had been scrutinized and judged by others. And at this point, my whole soul had been shaken by the grief associated with the many, many losses I had encountered in my life. It seemed that everything in me hurt. Inhaling and exhaling no longer felt like a normal body function for me. Instead it had become an agonizing, laborious act of survival.

I never imagined that life could wound me to the extent that I could literally take it or leave it. But the vicissitudes of living had beaten up on my will to the degree that there seemed to be no recovery from the trauma. I felt as though Jesus himself had given Satan permission to sift me as wheat, but I was not sure if anyone was praying that my faith would not fail me.

Therefore, in the midst of this huge congregation of people, I felt more alone than I had ever felt before, and I was angry. As a matter of fact, at that very moment, I felt as though I could have stood up in the middle of the service, walked down to the front of the sanctuary, asked the worship leader to hand me the microphone, and screamed at the top of my lungs, "Shut up! Everybody just shut up and sit down right now."

But instead, in that service, in the midst of my personal despair, in a last act of desperation, I asked God to help me. And, during my deepest lamentation, I heard this message in my spirit. "Now that I finally have your attention, let me teach you something." At that very moment, I realized God had orchestrated that place of emptiness and despondency because He had something He wanted me to learn. My private inner turmoil was directly related to the private lessons He desired to teach me.

This Is for You: Consider the definition of a "private lesson." It is "A course of instruction that is unique to the student that he or she can only learn through study or experience, and takes place separate from the company or

observation of others.” A description of a private lesson for a student of dance stated, “Taking dance lessons is a good way to learn choreography of a form, but individualized instruction is necessary if a student wishes to advance to higher levels. A private session with a perceptive teacher is one of the best ways to accelerate your personal progress.”

And so it is with God. When He knows our sincere desire to go to next level, He does not leave us as we are. As our perceptive teacher, He moves us out of the status quo and He leads us into wilderness experiences that are unique to us, so He can teach us lessons that will accelerate our personal progress.

Why? The reasons are simple. He wants us to demonstrate what He has accomplished in us as a result of His individualized instruction in our lives. He wants our lives to manifest the excellence that is only obtained through one-on-one sessions.

In other words, it is extremely important to Him that we learn private lessons so that He can trust us in our public performance. Our response should simply be, “Where do I sign up?” God’s Word to You: “And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not” (Deuteronomy 8:2).

Today’s Journal Discovery

1. In what way(s) do you believe God has tried to get your attention so He can teach you something?
2. How has your “public performance” been affected because of your avoidance of your personal private lessons? What adjustments do you need to make in an effort to use your lessons to the purpose for which they were given to you?
3. How will you use the lessons in your life to move you

closer to living on purpose?

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