

They Can Tell You've Been With Jesus

☒ Years ago while speaking to a group of new Christians, I noticed a beautiful, young, blonde girl across the room. I flipped out! I had never felt such intense emotions as those that filled me when I gazed across the room at Diane, the girl who was to become my wife. On our first date I was amazed that she seemed to share my feelings, and we became engaged after just one date.

My deep love for Diane and my desire to be with her helped me understand the love Christ feels for His bride. The prayer He prayed just before His death, recorded in John 17, is especially revealing. He said, "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am" (v. 24, NKJV). Here was my Lord, only hours before His agonizing death on Calvary, crying out to the Father with intense cravings for His bride—for me!

He was consumed with love for His bride and longed to have her with Him for eternity.

Toward the end of the prayer the focus changes from the first generation of Christians to the church throughout history (see v. 20). Jesus intercedes for all future believers who will come to know Him and gives prophetic promises for the church (see vv. 21-26). One of these promises provides a picture of the powerful and passionate church He intends to build: "And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them" (v. 26).

In this verse we find four key phrases that describe Christ's ministry and show us the pattern for His glorious, end-times church.

1. “I have declared to them Your name.” This was Jesus’ consuming purpose during His 3-1/2 years of earthly ministry. At the end of His life, He summed up the entire ministry by saying to His Father, “I have made Your name known to them.”

Jesus had given the people a revelation of the knowledge of God and let them know what His Father was like. When people heard Jesus’ words, observed His lifestyle and beheld His flawless character, they received a glimpse of the Father Himself.

We sometimes talk about the ministry of Jesus only in terms of physical and emotional healing or the preaching and teaching of the gospel. But it was not confined just to miracles and doctrine. Both of these categories of Christ’s ministry support the greater element of His mission on this earth—to reflect the infinite glory and splendor of His Father.

You and I have the same privilege and responsibility Jesus did to reveal the Father to others. Paul reminds us that God “always leads us in His triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place” (2 Cor. 2:14, NASB).

God desires that we be transformed—led into victory from the inside out—a victory touching our hearts, minds and emotions. Then we will manifest the sweet fragrance of the knowledge of God in private, in public and in all our casual interactions. That’s what Jesus did.

Jesus described His ministry as making His Father’s name known to others. To understand this, we have to think of *ministry* as more than something that happens in meetings or when we serve, counsel or pray for others. We have to see it as the manifestation of the knowledge of God through our lives.

The invisible aroma of the knowledge of God that the apostle Paul talked about has power. It lifts us from one degree of

life to another. We grow more compassionate, patient, loving and forgiving. We are more like Jesus.

In order to grow into maturity, we must know God the Father more intimately. Each one of us must have a secret life in God hidden from the eyes of others. Our most vital ministry is revealing the beauty and splendor of God's personality to others.

It's easy to read a book or listen to a tape, memorizing new truths to talk about. It's easy to be an echo instead of a voice. But there is a certain quality of ministry that comes only as you and I touch God in reality in our secret lives.

As we commune with Him in prayer, meditate on His Word and behold His glory in the secret place, a beautiful and unique expression of Christ is developed in us.

A more mature ministry is birthed out of a greater prayer life. It's more than having longer prayer times. It's possessing that quality of heart that responds to God in a greater way, a heart that yearns and reaches for Him, just as the face of a flower turns toward the sun.

The church desperately needs to recapture this focus of Christ's ministry if we are to reveal the nature of God to His creation as He intended us to.

2. "And [I] will declare it." Jesus knew that even when He was seated at His Father's right hand, He would continue to reveal the majestic heart of the Father through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. One of His priorities would be to unveil and reveal the passions, desires and pleasures of the Father to His church.

Before Jesus comes *for* the church, He's going to come *to* the church. His majestic splendor and indescribable loveliness will be revealed to His people.

The name of God will be made known in the nations. The church will be filled with the intimate knowledge of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Thus the church will be matured and perfected (see Eph. 4:13).

Christ's greatest passion is to continue to reveal the Father. That is what He will be doing through all eternity. The church today must not be out of harmony with the present ministry of Jesus—revealing the Father to people's hearts. When others come in touch with the resurrected Jesus they will be captured by the loveliness, beauty and splendor of God's personality.

3. "That the love with which You loved Me may be in them."

When Jesus introduces us to the depths of His Father's heart we "see God" in a greater way. Seeing God's splendor affects our emotions and awakens passionate love for His Son.

Jesus is praying that the body of Christ will love Him the way the Father loves Him. That's a pretty awesome prayer. But Jesus is going to reveal the Father, and, in turn, the Father is going to capture our hearts for the Son.

Here we see a significant dynamic at work within the Godhead. God the Father desires a people who are awakened in their affections and passions for Jesus—a people who see and feel what God sees and feels when He looks at His beloved Son. God is going to have a *passionate church* that loves Jesus as God loves Him.

The Father exercised infinite wisdom, power and goodness when He chose the Son's bride for Him and ordained that she have extravagant passion for His Son.

Yes, the church will be filled with activities and ministries, but the single most distinctive issue in God's heart is to capture the church with passionate affections for His dear Son. The Holy Spirit is zealous to accomplish that purpose in this hour.

It's easy to lose perspective in today's fast-lane living—to become a “doer” instead of a lover. I have to remind myself that I am called to be a man filled with holy passion and extravagant affection for Jesus. That is what I want to minister to people. That is what I have chosen to make the determining purpose of my life: knowing the Father's name and making it known, loving Jesus as the Father loves Him and inspiring others into intimacy with Him.

4. “And I in them.” As the riches of the knowledge of God are revealed, the quality of love the Father has for the Son will be in the church. Jesus will dwell in His people, manifesting His overflowing life through them.

When Jesus manifests His life's ministry through us, we declare God's name and make Him known to others. Then they, in turn, are awakened with passion when they see God, and they fall in love with Him.

Every prayer of Jesus was a prophetic promise. Every time He prayed it was according to the will of His Father. This prayer of Jesus will be answered. It's a wonderful, prophetic promise for the church!

A Revival of Intimacy and Passion

The church *is* going to be filled with the knowledge of God. The Holy Spirit will use the release of this knowledge to awaken a sense of deep urgency for intimacy with Jesus.

A revival of the intimate knowledge of God is coming, and as a result the church will be filled with holy passion for His Son. Divinely inspired intimacy and passion are on the Holy Spirit's agenda because they are the prayer of Jesus.

Obviously, this prophetic prayer for the church has never been fulfilled. It is sadly apparent that today's church does not love Jesus as the Father does.

But the Father Himself is committed to answering this prayer. The name of the Lord will be known intimately by His people, and the church will love Jesus as God the Father loves His Son.

The same flaming zeal in the heart of God that compelled Him to send Jesus the first time will accomplish His divine purposes in a compromising generation and a complacent and passionless church. The zeal of the Lord of hosts shall perform it.

Passionate affection for Jesus comes from seeing God's glorious personality and His work on the cross. It comes from encountering even just a brief, dim glimpse of who God is and what He did.

Jesus Christ longs for a bride who will participate in the passions and purposes of His heart forever. He is going to have an eternal companion filled with holy, passionate affections for Him.

Oh, how I want to be a part of a glorious, spotless church in our generation—a church filled with the knowledge of God, reflecting His glory and consumed with passion for Jesus!

Mike Bickle is senior pastor of Metro Christian Fellowship and the author of Passion for Jesus (Creation House). His life message emphasizes prayer and personal communion with Jesus. Mike and his wife, Diane, live in Kansas City, Missouri, with their two sons.