

We Need Mary and Martha in the House

✖ *What is the proper balance between passion for God and compassion for His people?*

Although I hope every Christian experiences a genuine encounter with the manifested presence of God, I also realize that a supernatural encounter alone isn't enough to ignite true revival in a church, a city or a nation. Encounters with His presence change us, but there is a bigger picture and a greater purpose behind it all.

Our God, "who desires all men to be saved," wants more people to come to Him through Jesus Christ, and that brings us to the subject of revival (1 Tim. 2:4, NKJV). But what is true revival?

Some say all you need for revival is for God to show up. I've also heard revivalists say in previous years, "Give me a crowd of people, and I'll give you revival."

Real revival, however, is when both God and man show up at the same time in the same place. That can happen only when you have enough credibility in the human realm to make man feel comfortable and enough credibility in the divine realm to make God feel comfortable.

We know that Mary and Martha managed to make Jesus feel totally welcome in their house in Bethany. They did it by successfully

juggling two seemingly conflicting priorities: Mary entertained His divinity while Martha entertained His humanity.

It was through the careful accommodation of two realms that Mary and Martha made their house in Bethany a meeting place where God and man came together in an atmosphere of hospitality and worship.

As far as I know, it is the only house mentioned in the New Testament that became a habitual resting place of Jesus (see Luke 10:38-42; John 12:1-11).

There was “something right” about Mary and Martha’s place that drew God through the door. It seems the “Bethany” model for turning divine visitation into divine habitation is the only way to bring the humanity of your community into contact with the divinity in your house.

We must do whatever it takes to become a Bethany kind of church, a Bethany-hearted people, and a family marked by genuine love and hospitality. Each one must learn how to chase God while serving man—how to worship divinity while also serving humanity.

Striking a Balance

The church is usually a little unbalanced because it is constantly torn between the practical and the spiritual. Most local bodies are either socially active or spiritually passionate.

Very seldom do you find a church that manages to be both.

When you do, you have found a very unusual environment where both God and man are comfortable. It is the kind of place where true revival is most likely to break out.

If God is comfortable there, then that church has credibility in the heavens. If the church body is actively compassionate about humanity, then it enjoys credibility on Earth.

God is searching for modern “houses of Bethany” that have credibility in both realms. Christ’s cross depicts the divine balance we all seek, where compassion for humanity on the horizontal plane of our lives intersects with passion for divinity on the vertical plane of eternity.

I’ve been around some people who exhibit an unusual ability to perceive spiritual truth and reveal a deep understanding of God’s ways and nature. Yet the same people can hardly relate to “normal” people.

It is very difficult to be around “super-spiritual” people. The problem is that they don’t have credibility in the human realm because they seem to care little whether people live or die, prosper or perish. They see them as bothersome distractions from their personal pursuits.

The church has always wrestled with the extreme attraction of intimacy with God to the exclusion of everything

else. The
ascetic school of thought held that the highest service to God
was done
in total isolation from all worldly distractions.

But if you know Him, you should make Him known. If God put
something in you to pass on to others but you separate and
segment
yourself from society so that you never touch anybody, what
good are
you? (See Matt. 5:13.)

You can worship God all day long, but He may be trying to
tell you: "I would really like to see some of the glory I
poured into
you released and sprinkled over someone else. You are My hands
and feet
in the earth, so carry My presence with you into the world of
men."

You will know you have credibility with man when you can
call for humanity to come to your house for a visit, and the
response
is: "We can trust them. Why? Because they fed us when we were
hungry,
and they clothed us when we were cold. They sheltered us when
we were in
need, and they cared for us when we were sick. They even
visited us in
prison when no one else cared whether we lived or died" (see
Matt.
25:31-46).

Passion Should Beget Compassion

Some churches never affect their communities. They've
given the people who live in them a distinct impression that
says, in
effect: "That church couldn't care less about us. All they

care about is

God, and He doesn't seem to care about us, either, or the folks who claim to be His people would show it."

Churches that lack the basic fruit of God's love in action have no credibility with their communities because they have no works to back their words. Credibility really matters.

Nearly two decades ago, my good friends, Bart and Coralee Pierce, went to Baltimore to start a church. Bart said the Lord told them, "'If you will take care of the ones nobody wants, I will send you the ones everybody is after.'"

Pastor Pierce started ministering to the drug addicts, the gutter people and the down-and-outers whom nobody else wanted. Miracles soon followed, and things began to improve in the city. Before long the up-and-outers started coming too.

When people see that you are compassionate toward humanity, they quickly realize they can trust you because you have earned credibility in their realm by backing your words with works.

Until the church comes to the place where divine passion and human compassion meet, there will be a credibility erosion. Nothing is accomplished when we merely point out the problems of our communities without providing solid solutions. I've devoted most of my energies in the last few years to creating hun-ger for God's presence in

the church,
but I am painfully aware that we will fail if our in-creased
passion
for God does not produce increased compassion for man.

Jesus established a precedent for valuing godly action at
least as much as gatherings and principles of godly living.
Twice in the
Gospel of Luke, He answered rebukes from religious leaders for
healing
people on a religious day when they thought He should devote
Himself to
purely spiritual activities (see Luke 13:15-16).

In the sense that Mary and Martha are a team, it is true
that helping the hurting is as much an act of worship as
anything else.

How can we expect people to accept our offer to supply food
for their
souls if they can't trust us to provide food for their bodies?

If you lose your ability to be compassionate toward man,
your ability to be useful to God in the world is limited, no
matter how
passionate you become toward Him. Why? Because it takes both
Mary and
Martha to entertain divinity and humanity together under one
roof.

God wants to fellowship with humanity, and humanity
desperately needs to fellowship with divinity. Our lives and
our
churches become the meeting ground at the point where passion
and
compassion meet in God's name.

Humanity is blindly searching for its lost spiritual
heritage and home. Some churches have learned how to create a

place

where man can rest, and a few have even learned how to create
a place
where God can rest.

But God is looking for a place where divinity and humanity
can rest together. It's up to us to restore the Garden of Eden
and make
our churches a place where God and man can walk and talk
together.

Jesus Was Spiritual and Practical

We cannot overlook the human factor in our corporate
pursuit of God's presence. There are many Christian leaders
who have the
ability to lead people deeply into the realm of the Holy
Spirit.

The problem is that many of them fall into the disjointed
parade syndrome. They get so far out in front of the God-
chaser parade
that they leave the people behind.

Jesus was always aware of the practical needs of His
followers. He took it upon Himself to cook the disciples a
fish barbecue
on the shore (see John 21:3-13).

At least twice, Jesus' consideration for the humanity of
the crowds following Him into wilderness areas caused Him to
interrupt
His teaching to tend to their physical fatigue and hunger.
Each time He
had them sit down while He arranged a miracle to feed
thousands using
fish and a few loaves of bread (see Matt. 14:19-21; 15:35-39).
Jesus
understood that it takes Mary's passion for divinity and

Martha's

compassion for man to create the proper atmosphere where God and man can sit down together.

It is nearly impossible to take people into God's presence when their stomachs are growling and the temperature is 130 degrees.

Things will change quickly if you erect a shelter to block the sun, give them a place to sit and feed them.

I'm convinced God wants us to be normal and supernatural at the same time. In my opinion, the house of Mary and Martha presented a perfect blend of the two.

Together, the two sisters made Jesus feel perfectly comfortable under their roof. The blend was simple: Mary entertained His divinity while Martha entertained His humanity.

It is nearly impossible to tell a family about God's love when they are shivering in the cold without dry clothing or coats. The church is surrounded by hurting humanity, and every need is an opportunity for miraculous ministry.

We serve a Master who plainly said He did not come to cure the whole, feed the full or heal the healthy (see Matt. 9:12-13). If we make it our aim to accept and recruit only the whole, the full and the healthy, then we may miss the one visitor we need more than any other—Jesus Christ.

On the other hand, if we dare to chase God while, in practical ways, serving others, including the unlovely and

unwanted, we
are certain to see this one visitor enter our presence. He
will feel
comfortable in our midst because He is unashamedly attracted
to human
need and spiritual hunger.

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