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Days *of* Hope

March 2014

Passionately communicating the love of God to hurting kids in a gentle way

Here We Grow!

I am excited to announce that Days of Hope was recently invited to partner with a second agency in our community! Pathways Behavioral Health offers an array of mental health services to both adults and children in Rolla. Among those services is a residential program, NAVIG8, that serves 12-17 year olds, providing substance abuse treatment and rehabilitation for kids who find themselves in the clutches of addiction at an early age.

The NAVIG8 program will be providing residential care, outpatient, as well as early intervention classes for these youth, and we now have an opportunity to provide pastoral care to them as well!

Pathways recently constructed an amazing facility to house this program, a building that includes bedrooms, a fully furnished commercial kitchen, living areas, classrooms, and office space. We are currently working with the staff at Pathways to arrange for a time when our Chaplains can visit each week and provide small group worship experiences as well as one-on-one pastoral care. We are so excited to see new doors open as we expand our staff. This open door gives Days of Hope a chance to serve a whole different group of hurting kids right here in our own community.

We will still be providing weekly services and pastoral care to the many

children and teens out at Boys and Girls Town in St. James. In fact, we are preparing for the summer season, when we are able to bring an additional church service to those kids from all across the state who participate every week in the School in the Wilderness programming at the ranch in Steelville. This is going to be one busy summer!

Special thanks to those of you who have been praying for us as we navigate this season of growth. Please continue to lift us up in prayer, as we explore the possibility of partnering with additional agencies. Finally, pray for Aaron Jeffers, as he raises the remainder of his monthly support so that he is able to transition to full time status.

Questions Kids Ask

This column is inspired by the questions we encounter every week as we minister to hurting

“Can You Save Me?”

By Aaron Jeffers

Please take time to chew on this scripture before you read the rest of the article. We know the answer is, “No, I can’t save you, but let me introduce you to the one who can...his name is Jesus.”

A good place to start is to understand how God saves us. First of all, our salvation isn’t dependent on our human effort, will-power, or performance. If it was, we’d all go to hell. The moment you anchor even one little shred of your mind, will, and/or emotions to human performance and perfectionism for salvation, get ready for an emotional roller coaster ride. Self reliance is not putting your faith in Christ for salvation; it’s putting faith in yourself for salvation. The quicker you recognize this, the more peace and joy of God you will walk in.

To understand how God saves us, let’s look at the role of an Old Testament High Priest and sacrifice. Jesus is the complete fulfillment of both of these roles.

First, a High Priest would be the mediator between God and man. If the High Priest did his job properly, the camp of Israel would be atoned, but if he didn’t, they were up the spiritual creek. To “atone” means to mercifully reconcile. So Jesus our High Priest gives us mercy and total reconciliation (Reconcile = to cover, cancel, placate, and atone for) for our sin. Nice trade, eh?

Now here’s where the good news gets really good. If a person needed atonement for sin, they would present the proper sacrifice required by God to the High Priest. Never once do I read where the High Priest would look over the person or nation that sinned and ask for a record of their performance or perfectionism. This burden of judgment would always fall on the innocent lamb of sacrifice chosen to bear all the brunt and punishment deserved by the offender.

The lamb would be scrutinized, not the one who sinned! If the lamb had a mole, a spot, or a wrinkle, it was not worthy to take the punishment. Because of Jesus’ perfect performance, he’s able to completely save the package deal of our lives and make us whole.

Hebrews 7:25 says, “Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.”

Remember, Jesus sat down at the right hand of God because he completely finished the work of your salvation. If you feel weighed down by guilt or shame from failure or messing up, stop looking at the sin, and look at the Lamb. John said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

Behold your lamb and your High Priest, his name is Jesus!

And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

-Hebrews 10:11-14 ESV

*I am coming to see that following
Jesus is not an invitation
to replace Him . . .*

Godless Faith

By Jon Wells

As much as I would rather not admit it, there are deep parts of me that want to somehow live out a Godless faith. It is easy to follow the proper doctrine; say “yes” and “amen” at all the right times. I have learned through much rehearsal to conform to the practices and expectations of the religious elite. Truth be told, there are times that I want to practice a faith-walk that goes through all of these motions but does not include God. Admitting such a thing sounds heretical, I know. But deep down, there are so many ways that I would just as soon not be in need of the involvement of an active, personal God.

Provision

Scripture portrays God is a loving Father, a provider who gives good things to His children. He is Jehovah Jireh, my Provider! A fair reading of the Bible would reveal that God’s heart is full of generosity, pouring out gifts on those whom He loves. In fact, we are told that the rain falls on both the just and the unjust alike! God is a good provider to all of us.

Yet deep down, I want to be my own provider. I want to have everything in hand, I want to follow my own plan. There are parts of me that don’t want to relax and freely receive good things from my Heavenly Father. For some reason, I prefer to strive, to plot, to plod along. I keep looking to the future, expecting finances to come together because of my careful thought, my good planning, and my ability to earn. I hide these rebellious thoughts, I label them as “good stewardship”. Perhaps from the outside looking in, they would appear to be just that. Only God knows, the difference is in the heart, between one who is stewarding the good gifts given by God, and one who is striving to collect ‘gifts’ of his own making.

So many of my decisions in life are strategically made to keep me from being exposed to unmet needs. I do not want to find myself in a place where I

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven

-Matthew 5:3

'Godless Faith' continued



require the intervention of Providence. I much prefer to be comfortable and thank God for all of my hard-earned 'blessings.'

Conviction

Jesus told his disciples that he would send the Holy Spirit; the Comforter. The Spirit is that part of the Trinity that is present with us in real time. The Spirit brings comfort, connection, and a real sense of the presence of God to believers. Scripture goes as far to state that a Christian is the temple— the dwelling place— of God's Spirit! Paul tells us in Galatians about the gifts of the Spirit.

Jesus also tells us in John 16 that the Spirit comes to convict us of sin. That is, the Holy Spirit makes me aware of my shortcomings, my brokenness, and encourages me to embrace repentance.

I know this may step on some toes, but it must be said. Many of us who profess faith would just as soon replace the Spirit in this role. We are not patient enough to allow God to work with a sinner, convince them of brokenness, and motivate them to turn away from sin. There is no need for the intricate, patient work of the Spirit when I can just bluntly tell people what to do and why. Although we may not want to admit it, we often act as if we would prefer to replace the Holy Spirit and take care of this whole 'conviction' thing ourselves.

Salvation

Scripture tells me that Jesus' sinless life, death, and resurrection are the central events that open the door for my own salvation. My right standing with God is found in Christ. 'In Christ.' That phrase litters the epistles of the New Testament. My peace, my joy, my healthy thinking, and the strength to live an abundant life are all found 'in Christ.' Yet there are rebellious parts of me that secretly would rather not really need Jesus;

Deep yearnings to establish a separate peace of my own. I do not want to be comforted by the Spirit of God through my crisis; I would just as soon avoid the crisis altogether. I want to live in the strength that comes from me. I desire wisdom and foresight that allow me to follow my own plans. I don't want to need forgiveness anymore, I don't want to require grace or restoration.

I don't want to need Jesus, I think I want to replace Him!

Somewhere along the way I learned a false view of Christianity that goes like this: Johnny repents, Johnny gets saved, Johnny lives happily ever after without a mistake or a shortcoming. Johnny's salvation is his big *second chance*; a chance to do everything right, and now he has everything figured out. No more problems, no more need for grace. *What a fairy tale!*

It is true that before I accepted Christ, I was in desperate need of Jesus. Now that I am a person of faith, I think I need Him all the more! As alluring as the myth of a Godless faith is, I am coming to see that following Jesus is not an invitation to replace Him. Rather, the closer I grow to Christ, the clearer I come to see my constant need for His presence, His direction, His forgiveness, His grace.

You see, **real intimacy with God often takes the form of rescue.** God desires to be my provider, my comforter, my peace. He arrives in my life and makes His presence known through these interventions. My yearnings to live a crisis free, plentiful, and comfortable life eliminate so many opportunities for me to depend on Him. And all such striving is in vain; there is no real protection from crisis in this life; not insulation that separates me from pain or loss.

So I am learning to stop striving; to cease my attempts to eliminate all of my need of God. Instead, I desire to rest secure in a deep trust that He is who He says He is, and I am safe in Him.

²⁶ Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are? ²⁷ Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

²⁸ "And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, ²⁹ yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. ³⁰ And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?"

³¹ "So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?'" ³² These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. ³³ Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

- Matthew 6, NLT

This poem was recently given to me by a resident, and is reprinted here anonymously with her permission. I do not include this as an example of perfect theology or even great poetry. Rather, this poem illustrates so well many of the tangled questions and emotions that the youth we serve struggle with.

*Myself within
is someone
who never
shows . . .*



Within

Myself within is someone who never shows
There are things that torture me but my heart continues to glow
There are cries with no sound, and a smile to hide the frown
A scream fighting to come, but can't find its way out
My broken heart is glowing, trying to reach for God to hold
To take, to comfort, to fix; to help it begin a new road
There have been people with no sound and no words for them to say
When it comes to seeing me down, and trying hard to hide the pain
Yet there have been some that have asked if I'm okay
And asked me if I have anything to let out, just to get through the day
Though I never open to let out how I feel
I find other things to talk about and keep the main things sealed
The things I'm now letting out will no longer be sealed.
I hope you take this poem to heart, because this is how I really think and feel.

I wonder if I promised the Lord before he sent me down to earth
I wonder what I promised Him before I was ever given birth
Growing up did I lose my faith in my Father himself?
Did I break the promise I made? Is He going to send me to hell?
Yet He still chose me, knowing what I would go through
Knowing darkness would try to take over, and leave me wondering what to do

Within I am broken, my spirit can't make a sound
She is trying her hardest to push all the darkness out
We both are trying to fight, to get where we belong
But we are both becoming weak and that means no longer strong
When the darkness covers the light, and nothing is clear
I freeze, but still able to breathe, I have hope that You are near
When the darkness comes over me, I begin to feel ashamed
And I fall to my knees and lift my hands to pray

*I was created
by light,
not created
by dark . . .*



Days of Hope is a not for profit, inter-denominational Christian ministry that seeks to address the spiritual needs of children and teens who are receiving residential psychiatric care at institutions in central Missouri. We work alongside many dedicated professionals including educators, therapists, doctors and nurses, child care workers and so many more who strive to help these at-risk youth. The children we serve have been deeply scarred by every imaginable form of abuse, abandonment, neglect, and harm. We are supported by the prayer and gifts of individuals and churches in our community.

*Together we strive to
passionately communicate
the love of God to hurting
kids in a gentle way.*

Within continued

I was created by light, not created by dark
Father please fix my lonely broken heart
My spirit and I are fighting to grab Your hand
but wherever we go is where the evil stands
We run away from our fears and search for Your light,
but never can we find You right there in our sight
Father I feel weak and I need you by my side
Yes I know that I can run but I am never able to hide
My broken heart is glowing, as much as it can do
Yes I am running, but I'm trying to get to You.
The evil pulls me back, and then I have no strength to scream
But when I fall I always fall to my knees
I'm looking for You Father, I'm trying to be with You
But how can I do it when my heart is broke in two?
The dark is tearing me down and evil is pushing me around
I refuse to be with evil, because that's not what I am
From inside and out, I should be beautiful and strong
But as I say that to myself I get the feeling the answer is wrong
If promised a promise, that I did not keep,
Father I'm very sorry please forgive me
Did I ever exist; is this place even real?
Am I really a girl that does not feel real?
I don't want to be alone anymore, with darkness of fear
I want to live in peace and love and forever be full of cheer
There are many questions to ask, but some can wait
On the day of my judgment I will say the rest I need to say

This is Myself Within

-Contributed by an anonymous teen in residential care