

Monday, JANUARY 25, 2010

The crisis in Haiti is now nearly two weeks old. We will never know the full extent of the impact of those few seconds “when the earth shook”. Far beyond the debris piles, the mass graves, the huge international relief aid response, there is a spiritual work happening...have you noticed? Journalists can't help speaking about the singing in the face of despair, the prayer vigils, the deep faith Haitians have in God. Many survivors are telling the story of how their relationship with God sustained them while submerged under the rubble for days, or losing everything including their family, or facing a future with nothing.

It's a “survival” fight now in Haiti, as those with nothing scramble to find a way to exist. Food and water is critical for 2 million people...just like those Hebrew slaves who escaped Egypt. Read Exodus 16 & 17, it's remarkably like Haiti today. There is a direct relationship between “need” and “knees”, do you agree? The greater the felt need, the greater a person's focus on prayer. Yet, prayer is only viable if you are confident Someone is listening...a God who cares and Who will respond! Do you see how God developed a “survival” plan for His people, not just for a day or a week, but for 40 years, as they lived in the parched desert, unable to grow any food for themselves? What does that tell you about our great God? Do you have a relationship with Him? How would you describe it and how well is it working?

You'll recall our journey began with “Discovering God” and then “Discovering God is Real”, and this week “Discovering God is Relational”. Grab this...long before there was anything, God existed (He has no beginning), and He existed in relationship with Himself...John 1:1! When God designed the first “human”, God said “Let Us make man in Our image” (Gen. 1:26,27). God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, enjoying relationship together as three Persons yet one God! Adam was not needed because God was lonely, rather he was created as a display of God's glory. Yet it's clear God delights in relationship with His human creations. Have you memorized our theme verse yet? (Isaiah 48:17) It celebrates the personal relationship God has designed you and me to have with Him!

Tuesday, JANUARY 26, 2010

As you've watched the remarkable inflow of people and supplies to Haiti in response to one of the largest disasters our modern world has ever known, do you see communication and understanding are two central and fundamental needs? It is critical those ready to help understand the need and can communicate with each other to coordinate response, right? Is it the same with God? For our planet to function, our human race to survive, God (who created it all) needs to understand our needs, hear the communication of peoples from all over our world, and interact with us according to His Sovereign solutions to our needs as we rely upon Him for our existence. Right?

Look at John 14:16-18 “*I (Jesus) will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever – the Spirit of Truth. The world cannot accept Him for it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him for He will live with you and will be in you.*”

In the upper room, His final night with His friends, Jesus explained the dynamic function of God...three Persons in one God, all working together in distinctly separate functions or roles, as three separate Persons, yet one divine God who is deeply interested in humanity and gets personally involved with us! Read John 13 and 14. You'll get a great sense of the deep relationship between these men and Jesus, God Incarnate. You'll also see Jesus was explaining a way their close relationship would not end with His death, but His Holy Spirit would make it possible for their relationship to actually expand in its vitality as EACH of them, regardless of where their future paths would take them, could live in that vital relationship with Jesus even though He would not be present physically...through His Spirit!

It's important for us to understand God designed our DNA as a human species, to NEED relationships! Gen. 2:18 “*it is not good for man to be alone*” is true!! God made you this way. “*Children's children are a crown to the aged, and parents are the pride of their children*”. (Prov. 17:6) Yes, family touches the deepest human need...to be loved, accepted, affirmed...relationships! God made you that way because HE IS THAT WAY! God is relational and made us ‘in His image’ so we too crave relationships. Thank Him right now, and consider the power of your relationships.

Wednesday, JANUARY 27, 2010

Throughout the Haiti crisis, you've had opportunity to watch the power of relationships in keeping people alive, especially those who have strong relationships with God, right? A 70 year old woman was pulled from the rubble of the Catholic Cathedral alive after 7 days! Men, women and children are discovered ‘buried alive’ after so many days without food, water or sound... how did they survive? Many told reports, they had a strong sense of God's presence and love for them in their desperate, dark place. Have we seen some of the great Scriptures lived out before our eyes?

- “*Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations.*” (Psalm 46:10)
- “*Listen...you whom I have upheld since you were conceived and carried since your birth. Even to your old age and grey hairs, I am God who will sustain you...*” (Is. 46:3,4)
- “*Where can I go from Your Spirit, where can I flee from Your Presence...if I make my bed in the depths, You are there. If I settle on the far side of the sea, even there Your hand will guide me, Your right hand will hold me fast.*” (Psalm 139)

This week I'm trying to help us understand God designed us with a deep need for love, acceptance... relationships. He did it in part because we are made in “His image” and God enjoys wonderful relationship with Himself. “*The world must learn that I (Jesus) love the Father and do exactly what My Father has commanded Me.*” (John 14:31) Jesus, of course, had been commanded by the Father to go all the way to the cross so you and I could be forgiven of our sin! It was the love between Father and Son, and their love for humanity which compelled Jesus to complete His mission of sacrifice for us!

I urge you to read Romans 5 & 6 today, looking carefully at the relationship possibilities Jesus has purchased for you and me through His atonement death. “*God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us...*” As you read, I think you'll be overwhelmed again, at the extreme love relationship God desires with you...and the price paid for it!

Thursday, JANUARY 28, 2010

Yesterday I asked you to consider Romans 5 & 6 as an explanation of the unconditional love God has for you and the extreme to which Jesus Christ went to earn the unhindered love relationship God has designed for you and Him! Are you living it? Do you understand and value it?

Today please read Romans 8, and look carefully at how that love relationship works...designed by God the Father, earned by God the Son, empowered by God the Spirit in you! Go slow... Romans isn't ever a fast read. Consider this...in your Salvation experience, God the Father has forgiven your sin and extended Justification to you (Rom. 4:25; 5:19). It means you are fully forgiven, and declared 'not guilty' of your sin! Further, God 'imputes' (transfers) to you the purity of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21) so you are declared 'holy' before God! Then God the Father adopts you into His family (Rom. 8:16,17) as His son or daughter!!

God the Son (Jesus Christ) earns this, of course, through His death and resurrection which pays the full atonement price (1 John 4:9,10) as He 'reconciles' us back to Holy God from whom our sin separated us (Rom. 5:11; 2 Cor. 5:18)! Jesus rescues (redeems) us from bondage to the dark kingdom and brings us into His kingdom (Col. 1:13,14,21,22) and restored relationship with Himself as our Savior and King.

The Holy Spirit 'regenerates' us, birthing in us a new spiritual nature (born again, John 3:3-7), seals us (Eph. 1:13) and begins living within us (John 14:16,17) as He teaches us truth, guides us, and empowers us to live as God's people (John 16:5-15). Do you see the miracle of this, friends? No other religion in the world suggests you can live in dynamic relationship with God! A vibrant, authentic, genuine, life giving, life transforming relationship with God that will meet the deepest relational need God wove into your DNA! This powerful relationship is what you see on TV reports coming from the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, now nearly destroyed by an earthquake, yet the people remain confident Jesus Christ is with them and somehow they will survive for His glory! Can we have that same vibrant relationship with Jesus, my friends?

Friday, JANUARY 29, 2010

We live in a part of the world which before too long will see the vibrancy of new life peaking through the snow. In the middle of His time with His friends in the upper room, Jesus spoke to them about a life sustaining relationship with Him. He used the picture of a vine and branches...John 15. Read it all my friends, and watch for this: Jesus' description of the intimacy and 'life support system' of this relationship, for apart from it we are as good as dead! Consider our inability to do anything of value apart from this vibrant relationship with Jesus.

Consider the privileges which Jesus promises to those living in this vibrant relationship with Him. Do you see our lives will "be" for the Father's glory when we live fully satisfied in this relationship, in fact we should have the joy of Jesus in us!

Jesus spoke about "love" a great deal that night in the upper room. In fact, John tells us He showed them "*the full extent of His love*" (13:1). In the middle of His discussion about a living, fulfilling relationship between Jesus and any person who trusts Him, Jesus talked about the ultimate evidence of love: "*greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends...*" (John 15:13). Can you handle being considered a "friend of God"? Can you allow Jesus' Hebrews 12:1,2 sacrificial love compel you to love others sacrificially and unconditionally? How is that seen in your life, especially your marriage if you are married?

Finally, John 15:16 is very powerful as we recognize this "vine - branches" relationship we can have with God is His idea not ours, His design, and especially His accomplishment. We are recipients who live in the luxury of a living relationship with God! We should be the most joyful, thankful, gracious, generous, loving people on the planet! Are we?



Pastor Doug Anderson

JANUARY 25 - 29, 2010

Discovering God is Relational



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