

HI SHARYN

BY: BRAD CULLEN – JUNE 7, 2003

Hi Sharyn...

You wrote, "Share with me how you got over your 'religious nonsense' as you mentioned in your article, "Taking The First Step."

Okay. First of all, I began to tell my one and only perfect Dad that I wanted to get rid of all my preconceived ideas that were not of Him. That seemed to be a word FROM Him that grew and grew in my innermost being.

I was preparing to speak to a small group of pastors from a denomination known as, "Disciples of Christ," at a weekend retreat in South Carolina. It was a rather amazing invitation in that the fellow that called me said, "We want to be challenged as we've never been challenged before – something we can take back to our churches with which to kindle revival."

As I was praying about it, my own words came back to me, i.e., "Dad, I want to be rid of all my preconceived ideas that are not of You."

Then I stumbled across Luke 14:26 – "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple."

My mind immediately went to a number of traditional "Christian" value programs that centered around marriage and family issues of which I was aware. The title of one was Dr. James Dobson's "Focus on the Family." All of them sound good... until you stack their premise against the foregoing quote. I also thought of the many excuses I had heard (and made) relative to the word "hate" in this passage – surely He couldn't have meant that!

Jesus was saying, in the original language, "Unless anyone is willing to turn their back not only on their own family members, including wife and children, but on their own goals and ambitions as well – they can forget about being a disciple."

But wait a minute... I had just been charged by the spokesman for a group of church leaders that calls itself, "Disciples of Christ," to share with them something over a Friday night and all day Saturday session that would challenge them.

I knew enough about this organization to know that they, as all church groups... at least with which I am acquainted, played at rituals they considered were "Having church." Being "disciples" in any real sense (in my view) was out of the question, let alone what I felt was represented by Jesus' words in the original language.

Challenge THEM!!!!?? I had just been challenged to the core of MY being!

What I was being faced with so abruptly was that before I could challenge anybody else I had better settle some of my own issues. For example what was my goal in being with this group of men over a period of some thirty hours?

It became crystal clear to me that my goal was for them to think of me as a great speaker and a sharer of truth – dynamic to the point that I would be invited to speak at several if not all of their churches. I wanted them to go away from our time together remembering me as the greatest retreat speaker that they had ever heard.

"Wow, Father, What do I do with that? I asked.

Almost immediately I heard, "Turn your back as if in hatred!"

I had an internal struggle that was almost violent. I'd been invited to be, for all intents and purposes, a "motivational speaker" ...to fire up a bunch of preachers to in turn go back to their churches to fire up their congregations. Wasn't that a worthwhile goal?

Then I saw it clearly – I had been asking our Father to remove all of my preconceived notions... and here I was struggling almost desperately to hang onto a preconceived idea and justify something that was detrimental to my own spiritual growth.

I was on the verge of calling the man back to tell him that I was unfit (certainly revealed as the truth) to be the speaker for their retreat... and that he probably should make other arrangements. I started walking into my office to make the call... and the thought hit me: "Go to the retreat and tell all of them how unworthy you really are and why. Be completely open about what is going on inside."

"How can I do that?" I asked out loud.

The answer that came back changed my life forever. "By being My disciple... Turn your back on all of your ego-driven goals and follow me!

Again I asked, "How? I immediately knew. I was to go and be with them and empty myself of every preconceived notion I had about anything. Including every preconceived idea I had about what it meant to be a disciple. I was to go without any plan or goal. Just go... without any plan or goal. Just go... with a determination that I would say nothing that He did not specifically give me to say.

There you have it, Sharyn. Basically I got rid of my religious nonsense by asking Him to take it away from me. Once I did that I began to clearly understand Jesus' words:

"My yoke is easy... my burden is light."

It is only easy and light when I give it all up to Him. The only real struggle to be a disciple is to give struggling up. End of struggle... end of religious nonsense.

His words aren't all that hard when I get away from man's interpretation... including my own. If I don't sense His leading I just follow His simple instructions to knock, demand and keep looking UNTIL I know I have it.

Thanks for asking, Sharyn, it was a good reminder.

Brad

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