

I am not a televangelist or similar large-scale personal worker. I am not very good at even the simplest of door-to-door or office-to-office campaigning for Christ. But I do talk to people about the glory of God's grace and try to encourage those that know me and trust me that the story of Christ is in fact the greatest story ever told. I have my own failings, and I need God to help me in my lack of faith. But I find it very frustrating to have so little success in changing people who are discouraged. It seems that they 'play along' with me when I speak of God's strength, but when they fall into a spiritual hole they have no concept of the help that they can receive from Him. Somehow my encouragement has no staying power; it just doesn't last when things get tough.

I feel very strongly about this. Remember the story in 2 Chronicles 1:7-12 where God said to Solomon, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you"? What would you wish for? Would it be money, fame, or wisdom? Recently it occurred to me that if I were given the same choice, I might just ask for the ability to truly inspire others. It is not as if this were some unique gift that no one else would be able to have. I read great books and even see great television shows that make my heart expand with the glory of God and His Goodness. I just wish that I could be a part of this.

The motivation of others is a very interesting work. It is much harder to bring about permanent change than to just sweep someone away for a moment or two. You have to shake someone to the very core of their being for the change to be meaningful. I remember that my son used to take apart entire packs of firecrackers to make larger and larger fireshows each year for the fourth of July. I find myself similarly wanting to be able to create greater and greater impact on people when I tell them the Good News.

But I know that it is not my own ability, but the power of the greatest story on earth. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 that he did not come with "eloquence or superior wisdom", he just proclaimed nothing except "Jesus Christ and him crucified." He admitted his own weakness, and I have felt the same trembling pain. But his message had its basis in God's power.

I just want to have it work in me so that the people I try to encourage are actually strengthened. I used to be very much like Moses (Exodus 4:10-16), who tried to excuse himself by claiming that he was not eloquent, but slow of tongue. "Send someone else", he pleaded with God. I remember after taking the required speech class (with a very compassionate teacher), I proclaimed that wild horses would never be able to drag me in front of a group of people for a speech again. But at another time I was touched as though with a live coal and like Isaiah (Isaiah 6:5-8) volunteered my unworthy services to God.

The problem is that no matter what my enthusiasm, I still need to know how to inspire people. As I thought about it, I realized that God has the exact same problem. I can envision Him saying, "I know! What if I send my own Son..." And we know the rest of the story. Or rather, we should. Perhaps this is really the missing ingredient; how deep this knowledge is really planted in our hearts. Jeremiah spoke of a new law that was written on our hearts (Jeremiah 31:31), but earlier he said that God's word was in his heart and bones like a fire that he simply could not hold it in (Jeremiah 20:9). The message just blazed forth from him.

Having such a power source within us reminds me of the prophetic 'call' of Ezekiel and the apostle John. Both were given a scroll to eat (Ezekiel 3:1-4, Revelation 10:8-11) which was sweet as honey in their mouth. For Ezekiel it fill his stomach so that he could speak to the house of Israel; for John it turned sour in his stomach so that he would have the drive to preach to the nations. I must be able to pour the Goodness of God into my soul so that I truly feel it with every fiber of my being. In a sense, I must be able to drink the cup of Christ (Matthew 20:20-23).

I need to refresh myself continually with this message so that I feel it more intensely every day. I must feel it more to become more inspired, and thus be more inspiring. I must keep telling the story of God's grace from the bottom of my heart, and hope that those around me respond to it. It, like experience, cannot be simply transferred; it must take up root in the heart and grow. God may not give us any special power to inspire, but we must do what we can to encourage others. And then we must pray that God will give the increase in their hearts.

© Copyright 1999, Heard Lowry