

A: Response

So many times when I experience stories of true love or heroism or Goodness I find myself profoundly moved with emotion. I may get goose bumps or I may get choked up but I somehow feel a power surge in my soul. And in this thrill I recognize that I have simply brushed by the Goodness of God.

This can happen to any of us, unless we have allowed our heart to totally decay and die. I know that most other people are influenced in this way as well; as bad as you think television may be there are many shows that work on this common love of Good. When I see one, I think I would love to be able to write the ultimate motivational story, but then I realize that there are so many being written every day. There is really just one theme, but thousands of ways to describe it in action.

How can there be so many good stories? I think that we each have an almost infinite capacity to be inspired. But like an old basketball that we must keep pumping with air, we must be led through the basic story again and again in different ways to remind us of God's Goodness. We get to the point that while we can hardly read a great story without a shedding a tear for the actions of the hero, we can read the old, old story of Christ's sacrifice for us without it impacting us very much. There is something sadly wrong with us.

Perhaps the greatest problems is that though we all respond to stories of Good, it never really changes us inside. I can picture so many people being moved and inspired, but then the moment passes and they go about their lives conducting business as usual. But think what we could accomplish if we could keep the feeling of inspiration! What force would be powerful enough to stop us from changing the world?

B: Instrument

I see our heart as an instrument that responds to Goodness. When we are inspired, it is as though it were a stringed instrument that is strummed as we are stirred. We might think of it as a guitar or a harp or a piano, where the strings resonate as they are driven by some force. This may give us a new look at the idea of making melody in our hearts.

But we cannot seem to sustain the music. Our heart may be touched, and cause a fantastic symphony to play there, but after a short while the sounds die away and there is only silence. The strings are plucked from time to time as the waves of emotion wash over us, but since this is not generated from within it cannot keep going by itself.

The piano has a pedal called the sustain pedal. I know just a little bit playing the piano, but I never could get the grasp of how that pedal was supposed to be used. I know that it takes the dampers off the strings, but even when it is used, the sound doesn't continue forever. I kept thinking of how true sustainment could be achieved and I finally realized that in this universe there has to be something that feeds energy into this system. The same is true for our hearts. To sustain our intensity we must receive continually the Spirit of God.

We must develop further the response of our heart to the Goodness that inspires it. If you take a string and stretch it over a block of wood, the quality of the sound won't be very good. But if you begin to hollow out the block, you begin to obtain a richer, fuller, more beautiful sound. We can make ourselves more resonant to God's love if we remove much of our self. This involves crucifying ourselves (Galatians 2:20, Colossians 3:5) and writing the law of God on our heart (Jeremiah 31:31). With God's help we can produce a steady hum, like the music we sometimes get in our head that just keeps going on and on. Ultimately we will find ourselves involved in the eternal worship that the Bible describes in Revelation.

C: A voice, not an echo

To paraphrase the words of Kahlil Gibran, We must be a voice, not an echo. This means that we fully agree and appreciate the Goodness that God communicates through us. We must be tuned into, or be resonant with, the love of God. An echo just passes back in an external sense what it heard, like bending to the peer pressure of the crowd. But that which is written on our hearts becomes a voice that glorifies God. Barclay writes that no teacher would wish to get back from his students a mere echo of what he has said. Sheep do not regurgitate grass to show the

shepherd how much they have eaten. They turn it into wool and milk. So the aim of God's Spirit is not to produce an echo, but to enable a man to be a sustained voice for Good.

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