

IT ALL COMES DOWN TO THIS

I have a friend who recently lost an elderly parent. This mother had lived a very long and productive life; loving and serving the Lord faithfully. As I spent time one morning in prayer for this family, my mind went to what it must be like to draw that last breath. I began thinking about that brief time of transition when we are still occupying our earthly bodies but just about to be with the Lord...when our whole journey on this earth is being wrapped up. I couldn't help but think, "What will all the things I've done in my life mean at this point? What things will matter then? How trivial will so many of my activities be?" It's a sobering thought. What does really matter? How much of what we do is unnecessary and meaningless? I'm not talking just about the bad things we've done or the mistakes we have made. I'm speaking more about the busyness...the day to day activities.

As I pondered this, the Lord spoke to my heart two very familiar phrases in scripture. One was 'song of songs' and the other was 'vanity of vanities'. He showed me how these phrases are representative of two ways of life for all people. He reminded me that the Song of Songs is all about *knowing Him*...intimacy with our God. This book was written by King Solomon and it is evident by his writing that he understood intimacy. However, he is also credited with writing the book of Ecclesiastes in his latter years. In this book we see the phrase 'vanity of vanities' over and over again. You see, life became vanity of vanities when King Solomon lost intimacy with the Lord. He says about himself that he had done everything under the sun to find pleasures. He had wealth, he had women, he had houses and land; he had everything money could possibly buy and yet, in the end it was all vanity....worth nothing. My heart stayed on that for a long time and it caused me to look deeply into my own life. Song of Solomon (or Song of Songs) is so sweet...so gentle...so beautiful. It is a picture of what our lives should look like every day. Compare that to the book of Ecclesiastes where everything is without purpose. What is the difference? The intimacy. We were created to experience intimacy with the Godhead. That is ALL that matters. When we draw our last breath and come face to face with the Living Lord, our *knowing Him* will be all that counts. Anything other than that is vanity.

Several weeks prior to this the Spirit had been speaking to me about 'purpose' and 'assignment'. He is in the process of showing me that I can be involved in lots of things that are good but they aren't necessarily the things He has purposed for me to do. Too often we overlook the fact (or perhaps we've never been taught) that we are on 'special assignment from heaven' all the days of our lives. He has a specific purpose for each of us individually. The only way we will know that purpose is to *know Him*...to go to that secret place and abide with Him there. You may say, "I can't spend all my time in the secret place. I have to get out and do things." And you would be right. However, it is in that secret place of communion with the Father that we begin to *know His heart*. It is from that place that He tells us what our assignment is and it is where we get the strategy from heaven that we need to carry it out. Being in His presence is also where we obtain mercy, grace and strength to fulfill that purpose daily. You see, the Father has a perfect plan for us each day and we would be so much better off physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually if we would seek out what that assignment is and obediently walk in it. I believe our calendars would clear out and our stress levels would drastically decrease. We have all been guilty of being

overly involved in things because ‘somebody’s got to do it’. My friend, if God did not say that somebody is you...you need to say no. Anything outside of the calling God has for you...that assignment...is vanity no matter how good it is. I think about church committees. I can remember seasons in my life where I would serve on a committee that I had no call on my life to do. I did it simply because I was asked and because it was a small church where we all did many things. I thought I was doing right because I was ‘working for the Lord’. While the activities weren’t bad, they were outside of the Father’s assignment for me so they really fell into the category of ‘vanity of vanities’. This happens not only in churches, but in our jobs, with our kids, serving on committees and many other areas.

I was listening to a sermon the other day and the teacher said something that rocked me. He said that many times good things become the enemy to God’s plan. WOW, think about that!!! So much of our time is spent being involved in good things that it keeps us from having time for the intimacy...the Song of Songs! This is a trap that the devil lays out for us and unfortunately we’ve walked right into it. You see, satan knows that when we *know Jesus* and walk only in what He’s called us to walk in, we’ll do it with power and authority and purpose...with all of heaven backing us up. Most of us do our best to avoid what we know is evil. Satan realizes that trap is too obvious so he deceives us into thinking that because we are doing what is good that it is ok. That is a lie and it keeps us distracted from the very purpose for our living and breathing...encountering Jesus.

I would encourage you to go to that secret place and ask Holy Spirit to show you first of all His love for you. Then ask Him what your assignment from heaven looks like. It is a daily assignment. Ask Him to reveal to you His purpose for your day. Also ask Him to show you the busyness that needs to be removed. He’s not a taskmaster. He’s a Father, a Friend, and a Bridegroom. He doesn’t put heavy loads on us...He removes them. His Word says in Matthew 11:30 that His yoke is easy and His burden is light. The Father never intended for us to be tired, worn out, over extended and burning the candle at both ends. God has a purpose for every step we take and not one step will be in vain when He ordains it. Once you know your assignment, walk there. Eliminate everything else. When something comes up, ask Holy Spirit, “Does this fit into my purpose for today?” If He says ‘no’, then immediately discard it.

As believers, we should always walk in obedience to the Father...not in obligation to man. When we walk in intimacy and with purpose, there won’t be any question when we reach that moment of transition from earth to glory if what we did mattered for the Kingdom. We won’t be in those final hours looking at a lifetime of regrets and ‘if only’. I want my life to count for all eternity. I want to eliminate everything that is considered vanity. When the Lord gave me those two phrases to think about, I wondered how a man could live at such extremes the way Solomon did. It happened when Solomon lost his focus and I’m afraid we’ve all been guilty. He looked to earthly things to satisfy and to bring pleasure and meaning to life. He ended the book of Ecclesiastes with this, “...here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole [duty] of man.” At the end of his days, he came back to the realization that it’s all about being in awe of the Living God. We all will stand before Him. Oh, that we would be able to say on that day, “Lord, this journey has been the song of songs” and to hear Him say, “Well done”.