

The Subtle Shift

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Do you remember when, having known ABOUT Jesus, you, at some point, whether suddenly, or by a gradual quickening, came to know Him as the wholeness-imparting, life-altering Presence in your life? What a difference between accumulating some facts about Him---and even possibly giving lip service to an orthodox view of Him---and having Him step into the path of your life, force aside every other infinitely inferior priority you had previously held, and vitalize your very spirit by His Spirit.

Almost certainly, though---and I'm not aware of any exceptions to this syndrome---adversarial influences from your past and present began to corrupt that initial pristine experience of Him so that, though you sought to deny that it was happening, the relationship began to sour. Toxic elements of mostly religious, ethnic and cultural origins joined to create a misunderstanding and misrepresentation of His character.

Then He began to renew your mind and you found yourself having the courage to question what others said was true of Him. Elements of the recollection of what you had immediately and intuitively known in that moment of the pristine experience of His love and grace began to surface and you knew that something had gone wrong.

Now, we cannot presently experience Jesus Christ in a way so mystical that the experience involves no development of ideas about Him. He is God's Ideal spoken forth from the Father's heart embodying all that delights His Father and our Father. Our ideas of Him must necessarily undergo intensive, purgative correction. We must come to know Him as He is, and a certain conceptualizing of Him is normal while we still "know in part."

Enters then, that vulnerability to the subtle shift; the shift from being centered in a personal, vital relationship with Him that carries with it some measure of the need for a cognitive structure of understanding and explanation of who He really is, and what He's all about, to merely seeking to improve our idea of Him. It is extremely subtle and extremely seductive.

You might even come to be known as an expert on the correct idea of Jesus, the Christ, but you will have left your first love in favor of a better idea about love, while Jesus is standing in the shadows waiting for you to realize that your spiritual diet is no longer His flesh and His blood, but mere sawdust over which religion and/or highly-stylized metaphysical sources have poured their condiments to deceive your palate.

The human mind can have an insatiable thirst for correct ideas while the human spirit thirsts for Christ, the living water. I remember once during my gospel singer-evangelist days, someone commenting how shallow were the words to the, then, very popular hymn, "In the Garden." My spirit and heart were offended by such an arrogant and ignorant evaluation. Give me, any day, what the hymn writer expressed in contrast to some of the high-falootin' frothy stuff being peddled today as deep truth:

"I come to the garden alone, while the dew is still on the roses. And the voice I hear, falling on my ear, the Son of God discloses.

He speaks and the sound of His voice is so sweet the birds hush their singing. And the melody, that He gave to me within my heart is ringing.

And He walks with me, and He talks with me. And He tells me I am His own.

And the joy we share as we tarry there
None other has ever known."