

## **Experiencing God** by Durk Meijer, March 31, 2016

What is the essence of our being? God's love for us, God's promises to us, God's gift to us, our need for God, all noble and good answers, but all inadequate to describe the essence of Christian life. There could be many more excellent answers, but ultimately it is all about God and him being glorified. He deserves the praise, honor and glory of his creation. We're created for his pleasure. Thus his primary work is simply in each of our individual lives. The foundation to that is the restored relationship God offers through sacrificing his Son. It is a relationship of love and full of promise. A relationship that demands our abandonment to God, resulting in experiencing an oneness with Him, reflecting a fuller aspect of our love relationship with Him.

For example, my wife and I were going for lunch one day. After we were seated in the restaurant, a young lady came to serve us. She didn't act in any special way or used any special words that made us suppose that she might belong to Jesus, but there was something special about her. No, she was not any more attractive than any of the other waitresses, neither did she have better manners, or a sweeter smile. I told Sandy that I felt that there was something different about her and she, being even more sensitive than I, whole heartedly agreed. I suggested that we ask the waitress if she minded us asking her a personal question. We then simply asked her if she loved Jesus. Her response was enthusiastic and at the same time mystified -- 'Oh yes, I do! But why are you asking? How did you know?' When we explained how we sensed her radiating the simple unmistakable beauty of God, she was amazed!

So, that oneness is then reflected in God's ongoing deep work in our lives as each unique individual, culminating in His work through us in ways that will help other people see and experience the beauty of the God of creation. That beauty will be as different as each person, yet the focus won't be on the individual but on God. One of my pastor friends often said that the greatest testimony for God is not necessarily being an evangelist like Billy Graham, or like any other celebrity obeying God, or even a world leader choosing to follow Jesus. It will likely be the testimony of a humble caring garbage collector picking up trash all his life or a loving mother faithfully nurturing her children. Gods' beauty is simple faithfulness in God working through us regardless of who we are or what we do.

When I was newly born again, I understood that the second birth provided salvation. I couldn't buy it, I couldn't earn it and I definitely didn't deserve it. It was a gracious gift from a loving and merciful God. He forgave me for the actions of my selfishness, a selfishness which separated me from my creator. I did understand that I became a new creation in Christ. This was evidenced by God's Spirit living in me. To me this is still the miracle of all miracles. Now I was His servant, His child, His heir, and as such it would be my joy and delight to love Him and serve Him. I wanted to serve Him and love Him, but I lacked knowledge and wisdom. Now, there were many books, sermons, programs, and people to help me learn what I should do to show that I love Him. Some urged me to respond to higher callings, others to make sacrifices or to commitments of time and resources. Then there were those telling me not to drink wine, not to smoke tobacco, not to listen to certain kinds of music, to listen to other kinds of music, to keep the Sabbath holy (well... the first day of the week in most cases, not the seventh day). Others told me which way I should be baptized and when to get baptized. I was also advised how often and when I should go to church services, to have a daily Bible reading, to have a daily quiet time and some insisted it had to be the first thing in the morning. Others told me to pray more, to pray in a certain way or to find a discipleship group. Still others told me how often to celebrate 'the Lord's Supper' or have 'Holy Communion'. Again others talked about which Bible translation I should use and that I should memorize

Bible verses. I also should tithe of my income (and I thought it all belonged to God). And then my new life is supposed to be about fulfilling the 'Great Commission'. Many people may consider these things virtues and if so, these things can draw us closer to God, but for me they started to define what the meaning of loving and serving God was. The more I made these things the focus of my life, the further I strayed from my intimacy with God. Guidelines on how to live my life became like a measuring stick of God's approval of me. Yes, it will be wonderful to be able to stand before God in Heaven and hear Him say to me: 'Well done, you true and faithful servant.' Yet, that isn't about works for Him but the progression of His work in me. Some of you will tell me, 'But doesn't it say in James that a person's faith is measured by his works? ...Or does it really say that? That passage is about real faith being evident by the testimony of our lives, which shows our hearts and is way more than works. If it is all about an external appearance of works, no wonder the saying that Christians can be so holy that they are good for nothing.

When I started to realize that there is no such thing as being so holy that one is good for nothing, I began to delight in God's love for me and the joy of an intimate relationship with Him. Even though there are many other definitions to what 'being holy' really means, I am using it in the sense of being consecrated, dedicated to God... of making myself pliant, so that the Creator of the universe can infuse His beauty in me. Then God's beauty will flow through me in such a way that I will be good for everything. It is a mystery, but can you imagine the impact it would be in our world if all of us would live this way? Instead, it seems that many of us make religion our business. There are some of us who squabble and even kill people over doctrinal differences. Then there are those who mandate to others how they should express their faith in God. Some others propagate religion, while clouding the potential restored relationship God offers. There is a danger that we might pursue our work with such zeal, that we suppose that we should replace a people's culture with our perceived religious 'Christian' culture commanding many do's and don'ts. Worse, we judge, where God wants us to love them.

If we want God to show himself to others as we serve Him, we must allow him to work in us and through us, instead of us working for him. It really is exciting just to be abandoned to God and abide in Him... there is an oneness, a peace, a joy, a freedom indescribable. Our abandonment to God is not as if we become a robot that is controlled in every move, but rather it is an exquisite harmony resulting from the creator's oneness with you and me. Of course, such harmony can only be a reality when the broken relationship with the Creator has been restored with each of us. Since there are many things that can block us from experiencing the oneness that each of us receive with new birth in Jesus, it is urgent that each of us abandon all else. What a fantastic experience it is when we start to experience the richness and fullness of the creator. This kind of relationship with God works out a passion that is of unsurpassable repute and splendor. The important thing is not that we can describe God, but rather that we experience the reality of God. It is a faith that comes to fruition by an evidence of the unseen. To others it might be only a 'faith' without evidence, but for us that are born again it is true life.