

Let's Fall in Love with God
Chapter 8: Currency of the Exchanged Life
(John Henry Alan, edited by Bob Clarkson)
{ Absorb! }

"What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless. And I count all things but loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" Philippians 3:7-8. When God calls a man to follow Him, He calls that man to follow Him, regardless of the cost. The challenge is simply, this. What are we willing to pay, sacrifice or surrender in order to increase our intimacy with God?"

Martyrs

The first thing to come to your mind may be the word martyr. Even Jesus might have been considered a martyr for the cause of saving our lives. And the cost for some, many through the ages actually, of intimacy with God, the exchanged life, was their very lives. And for some, becoming a martyr might be appealing as an heroic thing to do for God. Yet, martyrdom takes on new meaning in the context of our current culture. Few these days are called to give up their physical lives. But, any who truly desire to live abandoned to intimacy with God, will suffer death of an entirely different nature.

The Other-Preferring Choice

Now some of the martyrs in recorded history also suffered this same death which I am about to describe. However, very few Christians these days in particular have ever considered the full cost of intimacy. We have some notions about the cost. And we have some examples of the cost like the sacrifices necessary to have an intimate marital relationship. But one thing is consistent about intimacy either with another human or with the Divine. This one thing is a change of motives from self-preferring to other-preferring. Our marriage vows usually express this.

Radiant Death

The one human relationship which is worth dying for is a deeply, passionately, mutually desiring, marital one. Stephen's death made a great impression upon all who observed the glow on His face as his spirit left his body and joined Jesus at the right hand of God. Few, if any, would deny that they greatly desire to be desired by another. But, to be sure, if any relationship is truly worth dying for, it would be one with honeymoon love.

Selfish Love

Since God has offered the hand of His Son, Jesus, in marriage to each of us, why do we not immediately abandon ourselves to intimacy with God. Why do we insist that our lover, Jesus, must cater to our whims instead of us to His? Marriages in which each person remains selfish are doomed to failure. This is made evident by the high percentage of marriages, even Christian ones, ending in divorce.

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Misinformation

Can it be, that the deep desire of God is obscured from our view? Have we been misinformed about our marital partner, Jesus? Or have we just never been told that He loves us unconditionally and will never leave us regardless of our infidelity to Him. As the perfect groom, He will do for us what the Prophet Hosea did for his bride, Gomer. If only we could believe this, it would heal the wounds of our souls that cause us to wander in the first place.

Certainly Uncertain

Theologically, we know for certain that Christ made full atonement for us. So there is nothing between a Christian and God. Christ's atonement was so perfect and complete that it turns all that is against us into something that is for us. But emotionally and logically we cower and cringe at every moral failure and hide from Him instead of running into His arms of love.

Control Issues

We run and hide partly because we do not believe that He can love us in spite of our selfish indulgences, demands for applause and insistence on being in charge. Yet this need to be in charge, when the groom's role is to be in charge, is the very crux of the conflict in our marriage to Him. Control issues are at the heart of every human conflict as well. Unfortunately, we have come to believe, incorrectly I might add, that when adversities and calamities come into our lives, that God is angry and punishing us. But nothing, I mean nothing, could be farther from the truth.

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Guilt Free — Shame Free

Our adversities can be joyous when we see them as God's way to bring us closer to Him. Our calamities can make us stronger and more mature spouses. Jesus was punished enough for every one of our sins, past, present and future. And His Father imputed (applied to us) the very perfection of Jesus' entire life, when He placed our sins on Him. So why do we hide? Jesus may grieve when we wander off into our sordid forays. But His love never falters. It is because of this unfaltering, unfailing, unconditional love He has for us, that we can live guilt-free and shame-free lives as His significant other!

A Good Reputation

We like ourselves too much. We are consumed with the opinions of other people. Their opinions of us are more important to us than God's opinion. Yet God's opinion is the only valid one as it is based on the truth and is therefore fact not just opinion. Concern for reputation drives us away from the greatest lover in the universe. Why is the enormous value God places on us, so hard for us to believe? For, God's sake man, He let His Son take a brutal beating and humiliating crucifixion *for you!*

Driven to Shine

We spend vast amounts of money and time and expend enormous amounts of energy to bolster our reputation. It is no wonder that so few Christians ever develop intimacy with God, when they place so little value

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in God's passionate desire for them. How can it be that we would rather impress (or at least try to) other people than live in the honeymoon suite with God? Satan appealed to the human nature in Jesus along this very line. Thank God, Jesus did not succumb to this temptation and walk away from the Cross.

In Whose Eyes

I gleaned in invaluable insight into this phenomenon one morning at breakfast with my men. As they were conversing with each other and God, I sat back and pondered before the Lord. He revealed to me, through recalling memories to mind that these men loved me enough to sacrifice greatly for me. At the same time, He flashed memories onto the video screen in my mind of many people who actually hate me. I realized in that moment that to these men, I was a man of great character. To the others in my replay, I had poor character. But I could only be one man. I was the same in either crowd.

Jesus' Tarnished Reputation

Jesus was considered a blasphemer and many other seedy things by the most powerful leaders of the right religion. But His Disciples and followers loved Him and gave their lives to Him. In this moment God revealed how foolish I had been in my pursuit of a good reputation in the eyes of man. From that day forward there was never even the slightest consideration of any opinion of myself other than God's, not even my own.

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A Little Glory

Another diversion from our quest for intimacy is the desire for at least a little recognition for what we do for others (or at least what we think we have done for others). We are willing to let God have most of it, but we want some too. I asked one of the men one morning as he was leaving the breakfast table, "If you worked hard on a service project for God and I took all the credit, would you be OK with that?" He instantly shot back, "Absolutely not!" My word for him was this, "In that case, what you did was not for God, it was to bolster your own image."

Our Glory or HIS

Are we not all a little bit like this. Don't we all want to be admired and worshipped by other human beings? God desires that you bring others into their own love affair with Him. His purpose for leaving you here on earth after you become a Christian is that you would be a reproductive, fruitful Christian. He wants your love for Him to compel others to desire such a love affair for themselves. God counts fruitfulness, not in terms of behavior, but in terms of relationship!

Self Defense

Other things we do that are purely selfish in nature are: defending ourselves (from harm or embarrassment), seeking positions of control or influence, avoiding pain and suffering, heaping pleasures upon ourselves, criticizing others so as to look better ourselves,

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and so the list could go on and on. Because of these things we end up wandering around as though we had not light or compass or map, when we have all of these. So unless and until we make use of the resource God has placed at our disposal, we will never find intimacy with Him.

Insatiable Hunger for Love

Most Christians are satisfied to follow the church crowd with little or no fruit on their branch of the vine. They never experience the richness of intimacy with God. Without a deep insatiable hunger for the love of God, there's nothing within them, prodding them to fall deeply, passionately in love with Him. This is the condition of today's Christian Church from leadership on down. Nothing will ever be more compelling, for us to put someone else's interests ahead of our own than a deep, genuine affection for them. And it is only the enormous love for God, through the Holy Spirit within us, that makes other-preferring love possible.

The Currency of Exchange

At salvation we make an exchange of all of our evil for all of Christ's good. We exchange our allegiance from ourselves to God. We exchange the control from us to Him. But what does this look like and how does it happen? In short, John the Baptist had it right when he said of Jesus, "He must increase, but I must decrease." John even sent his own disciples to Jesus. There are several things which concern us and are the currency of the

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exchange. We must exchange each of these by way of giving them to God instead of trying to accomplish them ourselves.

Safety. Those who insist on a safe environment are never going to move forward in their journey to intimacy with God. Your safety must be under God's control, not yours.

Convenience. Dying and personal sacrifice are not convenient. Medical malady and adversity are not convenient. Your convenience must be at God's direction not your own.

Pleasure. Pleasure seeking has been common to all human cultures. None of the martyrs in the church found it to be pleasurable. You can either hang on to your pleasure or exchange it for a passion for God. Let me qualify this. God wants us to enjoy pleasure, but never at the expense of the task He gives us to do. God is fine with me spending a week at Disney World with my family, unless He needs me to minister on His behalf somewhere else.

Popularity. Being popular is one of the three most common temptations of man. It leads us to do evil things, if necessary in order to be popular. Until popularity with God satisfies your soul, you cannot be intimate with Him.

Success. Are you willing to exchange your success in business, in sports, in your career in order to achieve a greater passion for God? From the world's perspective, Jesus' ministry was a terrible failure. Take heart. His failure achieved the greatest success in the universe!

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Obsession for Control

Control. We all want to be in control of one, or many, others. If you don't believe me, think about what you are doing when you scream at someone for not doing something in a manner you see fit. For example, you may have told someone that they should wear a mask to prevent the spread of a virus. Who's to say that your opinion on the matter is any better than theirs. Even doctors cannot agree on this. Unfortunately we not only want to be in control of our own lives, but also the lives of others. Being in control of our lives and our destinies is unfortunately taught widely, but has no place in the heart of a Christian. Yet, we are by nature control freaks.

It is when we are out of control that we get anxious and fearful. This leads to all sorts of expressions, bodily and verbally, which can be very destructive to those around us. Raging out of control is simply an extreme attempt to regain control. As long as we are in control, God is not. God controls everything in the universe except the one thing he delegated to each man. That is free will, personal sovereignty, self control or other expressions of personal independence from God and all other beings. The exchange of control from self, back to God, is an expression of true love. It is the essence of this journey. Remember this: "God will never ever be a co-pilot for anyone. He demands complete control, or He will sit back and watch you writhe in your self-induced anxiety and misery." — J. H. Alan

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Obsessed by Reputation

Reputation. Our reputation is often the cause of our disobedience to God, or failure to put His calendar of events as a higher priority than our own. One of Satan's most effective diversions from God's purposes is that we must respect others by way of promptness in our appointments with them. We are told to be on time for appointments and that is part of our Christian testimony. Yet, for 40 plus years, my appointments literally prevented me from being God's instrument of blessing to someone in need standing before me.

Schedule. Nearly every time someone sought my spiritual guidance, I told them that I had an appointment, but that I would get back to them later. But, by the time I contacted them, they had already crashed or had found help elsewhere. It was not important to anyone else that I missed an opportunity for personal blessing. But it sobered me to realize that God's purposes will never be thwarted by me, but the blessing of availability to God's calendar was truly missed by me. So unless and until you actually let God manage your calendar and every event on it, you will not be an *available* servant to whom He can entrust His work.

Clutching Reputation

The rich young ruler was unwilling to sell all that he had and follow Jesus. This was because he valued his reputation over becoming a disciple of Jesus. This one area is usually the last bastion of our independence to be dismantled. But God will never force a man into subjection. His subjects are only those who, in love,

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submit completely to His leadership. The man or woman who is willing to exchange all their currency, turn over to God's control and value only His opinion of them in all of these areas, is the one who is going to experience and enjoy intimacy with God.

Exchanging Appraisers

Christians are not supposed to be living *for* this world, its striving for prosperity, popularity and power, but rather *with* this world to come as their focus and pursuit. The economy in which we are bartering is spiritual not physical. To us everything is spiritual. The spiritual is the only eternally lasting thing. We have the awesome privilege of exchanging worldly success for favor, with our Father, which art in heaven.

Exchanged Emotions

Living abandoned to intimacy with God is an expensive proposition, that's why it is sometimes called *the crucified life*. However, once you are transformed by the renewing of your mind, which results in paying the price of absolute abandon to God, you will become so passionately in love with God that guilt, shame, anxiety and every other negative emotion will give way to a deeper love, joy and peace than one could ever imagine.

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Christ paid the price for our salvation. We now pay the price for our full identification with Him as our most significant other. In making this exchange, we become the most loving, encouraging, accepting and embracing people on earth. We actually **Love Like Jesus Loves!**

Insights, inspirations and revelations:

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