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Spiritual Formation

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Outrageous Love Transforming Power

By: Terry Wardle

Recently I read for Spiritual Formation class on Outrageous Love Transforming Power written by Terry Wardle. In his approach to sharing his thoughts and strong beliefs the narrative states in his opening that North American Christians are caught up in a crisis of immaturity. Wardle explains that this immaturity is a reality he himself experienced. He speaks on the quality and characteristics essential to christ-likeness. He spoke on Jesus Identity in his position as God's beloved son, his intimacy with the heavenly father, and his prioritized character above behavior. Although he mentioned eight qualities and characteristics, only three of those qualities and characteristics hit home run within me. I agree with the Author Terry Wardle. It helped me understand that what I was experiencing was a crisis of immaturity.

As I went on reading on page thirteen when Wardle spoke about the characteristics of Christ my heart immediately connected when I read the word Identity. Identity of who I am in Christ is something that I have struggled with for a long time. I have failed to believe I am who God says I am in him. God has been telling me to believe for 7 years. I would read his word and hear the sermons but my belief system was not allowing me to understand who I am in christ. I always felt inadequate and heard God say to me, "I will take the foolish things to confine the wise." Yet with so much in his word speaking to me I still was not accepting his true Identity in

Christ. He says, “Jesus rooted his Identity in his position as God’s beloved Son.” Jesus' dependency was not on man but on his beloved father. I realized reading this book that I stopped believing who God says I am and that I am his beloved daughter. I want to learn to be rooted in who Christ says I am in my new Identity. I have been very much involved in ministries. However, I did not sit to think that perhaps the reason why I lost this Joy is because I stopped believing who I am in Christ.

Another Characteristic of Christ is Intimacy. Jesus experienced intimacy with the Heavenly father. Again this spoke to my soul because in my beginning walk with Christ I was in love with Jesus. When I started this relationship with Jesus I had blindfolds on and nothing mattered to me but Jesus. I would wake up to talk with him, walk out my home with him, go to work with him, minister to many with him by my side speaking through me. I felt free for the first time in my life. Everything I did was God moving me and with me. I would pray day and night. My heart would be ebullient. I never stopped to seek God until 7 years ago. A sister said, “You do not always have to pray for everything.” I allowed that to enter, and since then I have struggled to sit and be intimate with God. I thank the lord he never leaves us nor forsakes us. Before starting this class the lord asked me to pick up the book call, “Having a Mary Spirit in a Martha world.” God is teaching me to come sit and experience that intimacy with him again. I did ministry for seven years not knowing I was an immature christian just as Wardle explained it in the opening of chapter one. However, I believe this intimacy will not be how I thought I had it before but a deeper understanding as Jesus experienced with his Heavenly Father.

Last but not least, prioritized character above behavior hit home run for me. I struggled with masking on how I truly felt inside. I thought I needed to behave a certain way because I am a believer in christ. So I would make sure I do good all the time. In Matthew 7:15, God says,

“You will know them by their fruits.” I started to keep inside frustration, anger, annoyed, jealousy and say yes to everything rather than asking the lord if it was what he wanted me to do. I became a people pleaser rather than prioritized character above behavior in christ. Again an immature christian. I was at war within. I stopped praying, nurturing, learning, and experienced followers of Jesus. However, God in his mercy was telling me, “ Come away with me my beloved.”

I agree with Wardle. I would not have known after reading his book that I was struggling with a crisis of spiritual immaturity. The state I was in for 7 years has been devastating, and it did affect my life in the ministry of the gospel to this broken world. I have only read chapter 1-8 but the first chapter has influenced me the most. Why? Because I have been crying to God for a long time. I have been an immature christian for 7 years not knowing. However, I did know something was wrong. I could not fathom what it was but reading this first chapter gave me understanding. I feel the lord finally answered me.

In conclusion, Wardle strongly believed that christians struggling with a crisis of spiritual immaturity is a reality that he himself experienced. Although he spoke on eight characteristics of Christ, three really hit home runs within my soul. I never would have thought that is what I was experiencing over the 7 years, which was a crisis of spiritual immaturity.