

February 18, 2012

Christ-like Intervention

This passage in Matthew is familiar to you: "*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. **Going** [through life] therefore and **make disciples....**" With this one command He is directing all of His followers to *intervene* in the lives of others. To intervene is to alter someone's way of life. **Christ-like intervention** entails role *modeling, instructing* and *correcting* another person, including your children, in *the way* our Lord would have them live.*

It's a sad commentary that coming alongside to intervene in someone's life is now considered an intrusion. How many families, potential disciples, and followers of Jesus in need have suffered loss because Christ-like intervention has for the most part vanished, even within Christendom? That's why this nation is now described as "**Post-Christian,**" and biblical literacy has dropped from 65% to 4% in our lifetime. Christ-like intervention must be restored before another generation is lost to this world's ungodly way!

All Christ-like intervention that comes into a person's life will have some sort of outcome. If you intervene according to our Lord's way, that outcome will be *positive*. If you use some other method, you may find the intervention *neutral*, not helping them make any change at all. Or, your intervention can actually lead to *negative* consequences. The last two pages of the attached Teaching E-mail give you an opportunity to evaluate your own parenting, grandparenting, or discipleship. These two pages are intended for your *discussion with others*, so you can discern whether your intervention is leading to a positive, neutral, or negative outcome, and can help one another change.

***"A disciple is not above his teacher,
but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher"***
(Luke 6:40)

It was 35 years ago this month that we began to follow Jesus as our Lord and Savior. During these many years one of our greatest sorrows has come from recognizing how much Christian instruction is based on teaching the Bible like it's an *academic subject*. This method produces people who are more dedicated to their Bible knowledge than they are in their loving devotion to Jesus. And, they become more focused on comparing their "Christian behavior" to that of others rather than being resolute in acquiring the love-based, sacrificial motives of Jesus and living them out day by day for His glory.

The **academic method** of teaching God's Word begins in seminaries as students are

imbued with Bible knowledge but not required to live it out. This method is rooted in intellect-exalting Hellenism which has so heavily influenced this nation's educational institutions. The method by which you learn becomes the method by which you teach others; therefore the academic model passes along from seminary professor to seminarian to pulpit to pew. This method consists of lecture-based preaching, content-conveying Sunday school classes, and text-format Bible studies. **However, the academic method actively undermines people becoming like Jesus: unwavering in doing His Father's will out of love and obedient trust.** The academic method of Bible instruction produces passive learners who are unable to transition from head knowledge to *responsive heart obedience*—their *way of life* as Jesus would live it.

The academic method is impersonal, nullifying the need for both the personal relationship and the role modeling, instruction and correction that comprise Christ-like intervention. When the Bible is taught as an academic subject, the teacher has neither insight nor opportunity to know if or how his instruction is being applied in the learner's life. As with a math or chemistry lecture, the Bible taught as academic content is not aimed at developing a Godly way of life in the learner. Look at the difference this way: If you can determine what someone has learned by giving him a test rather than discerning what he has internalized and applied through observing his way of life, the academic model has triumphed.

Heed this axiom: Bible knowledge and a Christ-centered *way of life* are not synonymous! The Bible is a *means* to help someone develop a way of life like that of Jesus. For this to be done in the manner exemplified by Jesus:

- *The discipler/teacher must first be in a position to role model what he is instructing as did Jesus and Paul.*
- *The discipler/teacher can model for the disciple only to the degree that he himself lives a Christ-like way of life.*
- *The discipler/teacher must have the love of Jesus for his disciple, getting to know him so well that he uses God's Word to specifically guide the disciple's motives and behaviors for God's purposes for him.*
- *The discipler/teacher must be in a position, as with Jesus and Paul, to ensure that what has been taught is put into practice according to Father's will and design.*

A Contrast: Two Styles of Instruction:

Navy Flight Training: Using the Hebraic Method

When I (Mike) was in flight training years ago my instructors were *operationally experienced*. They had flown numerous missions out in the fleet BEFORE they were assigned to instruct student pilots. Although I was required to take certain academic courses like aerodynamics, meteorology, etc., I soon learned that the essence of being a pilot was what you did in the cockpit. The operationally experienced instructor pilot was focused on what the student pilot would ultimately be doing: flying operational missions in the fleet.

I appreciated the wisdom of the Navy in its approach. There was a continuity of relationship; I had the same instructor pilot throughout each phase of the curriculum.

Because of this continuity, he as my instructor got to know the idiosyncrasies of me as a student pilot. This enhanced his ability to match the instruction to my specific needs and strengths, and to determine whether I could even become a fleet-ready pilot.

There's a particular pattern in which the instruction takes place as well. At first, the instructor pilot flies with the student to **demonstrate** how to perform a particular maneuver. Then the instructor makes sure the student pilot can **perform** the maneuver under his watchful eye. Finally, the student has to show he can safely perform the maneuver **solo**, fully trained in that specific task.

After every flight there was follow-up, a debriefing in which *feedback and constructive criticism* was given. Everything in the curriculum provided the student pilot with a personalized, step-by-step process that led to him being operationally qualified as his instructor had been. In essence, the student pilot was being prepared to live *the way* of an operational pilot.

Seminary Training: Using the Greek Method

After I left the Navy, I found that seminary was a complete reversal from what I'd experienced both in flight training and later as an instructor pilot myself. With few exceptions, the seminary relied heavily on the **academic method**. Only a few of the professors had any occupational experience beyond lecturing from podium or pulpit. And even fewer took the time to concern themselves with their students' personal and family lives, or including them in his.

One of my older professors was concerned about the true fruit of seminary education after his many years of teaching there. So he asked me to write a paper on how pastoral graduates in the area were doing in the "real world." My research revealed that most were only repeating the **academic method** within their congregations; they explained the Bible through in-depth sermons but pretty much stayed uninvolved in the lives of others beyond counseling. You can read about the "interesting" effect my paper had on the seminary staff in Chapter 6 of our book, **Restoring the Early Church**, *"Greek Philosophy in the Church: How Did Plato Displace God?"* (a free download at our website.)

It seems that few within Christendom are aware that the Christian publishing industry pushes the **academic method** in the materials it accepts for congregational use. In the early 1980s, certain writers who produced materials that focused on **relationship-based, Christ-like intervention** were actually denied further publication. We experienced similar pressure from the Christian publishing industry when we started writing about the *relational priorities* of the early Church in the mid-90s. In order to distribute what our Father had given us to share, we had to self-publish.

The *for profit* Christian publishing industry now focuses its appeal to women, their number one purchasing audience. In our series *Discussing How to Restore the Early Church*, Lesson 20, *"Hellenism and Romanism Today: The Impact of Hellenist Seminaries,"* we cite how *women* can be changed through education, while *men* aren't

changed at all through that method. That's why far more women than men buy Christian books, and why 8 out of 10 adults in "academic-method" congregations are women. While the academic method suits the learning style of women, few men are impacted by it.

Not only are men disadvantaged by the academic method used throughout most of Christendom, it's also why it's been deemed "**totally effeminate.**" That's also why boys are doing far worse in public education than girls are. The National Education Association has deemed public education to be "**totally effeminate.**" Both organized Christianity and public education are poised to destroy responsible manhood!

We're concerned that the influence of the academic method on your own life may cause you to perceive the materials our Lord has given us to share as only adding to your knowledge. We're uneasy that you may view our materials as individual topics that add to your knowledge rather than as interconnected truths that equip you in a *way of life as Jesus would live it*. We see our materials as **God-given interventions** when you discuss them with others who hold the same goal of a Christ-like way of life as you do. From a Hebraic perspective, if you can't use *direct experience* to role model a way of life for others, you use *simulations*. We simulated our way of life in our series, **Kingdom Living Today: Illustrating the WAY of God's Kingdom for a Modern World**, by putting ourselves into the characters of Jack and Dee.

"The Way." Do You Know What That Means?
"Teacher, we know that You speak and teach what is right,
and that You do not show partiality
but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth"
(Luke 20:21; see also John 14:6; Acts 16:17, 18:26, 24:14).

There's a very particular reason why our Lord proclaimed Himself the WAY to His disciples (John 14:6). The Greek word used here for "way", *hodos* [*hah-dahss*], implies the *revealed will of God* that is summed up in the Person of Jesus. He alone is the *way out of* our slavery to sin, and the *way into* a right relationship with our Father in heaven. The earliest followers of Jesus were also collectively referred to as the "Way": ***they lived in such loving union with Jesus through His indwelling Spirit that their very lives attested to His Presence in them.*** As trusting sheep led along by their Chief Shepherd, they were walking along a pathway on which only those who had turned away from the world's ways and come to the Father could press onward. Undeterred by threats, persecution, even death (see Acts 9:2; 24:14), they loved their Master with a willingness to walk in *His way of life*.

So many today have been duped into being satisfied with **biblical head knowledge**, something which the Hellenist "Church Fathers" exalted and perpetuated. By contrast, the "*knowledge of God*" from a Hebraic understanding—that which Jesus and His

disciples lived by—encompassed the intimacy of **experience** and a **life relationship**. That intimate *way of life* and response to Him is reflected by the union of a husband and wife in intercourse, or between a father and his beloved son. This kind of intimacy can't just be read about or heard in order to become the way Jesus intends for His own to live. It must be humbly appropriated through His Spirit in us, and through access to Christ-like interveners who would disciple us into living the way of our Lord.

***"The silver-haired head is a crown of glory,
if it is found in the way of righteousness"*** (Proverbs 16:31)

Our Father has a special call for you if you're a senior or closing in on it. Nowhere in Scripture is anyone given a free ride for leisure to indulge fleshly pursuits. In the Bible, the powerful or wealthy who lived that way reaped generational destruction or a boatload of trouble. (Even gray-haired King David had too much free time on his hands and used it to dally with Bathsheba!) So NOW is the time to reexamine your priorities. Are you being molded and poured out by the Spirit as a tool in Father's hands to show what the *way of righteousness* looks like by your example? And what better way to influence and nurture another generation than by intervening personally and holding someone's hand as you walk together on that way?

How *intentional* parents and grandparents, whether by blood or as spiritual family, have to be to lovingly present our Lord and His way of life as good and righteous expressions of His love for us! We're to prepare and disciple children and grandchildren who know they have been called out of the world's ways in order to fulfill a very great and precious life purpose for His glory (see 2 Peter 1:3,4).

As with a potter molding a lump of clay, each child needs the intervention of those who will help them both recognize the right responses that please God and turn away from the natural inclinations that oppose His will. And this loving intervention is meant by the Potter to continue as a *lifelong process* as each of His own vessels receives from others in the Body (see Isaiah 64:8; 1 Peter 4:10). All along the journey He intends that we "*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*" (2 Peter 3:18).

You are greatly deceived if you think that bringing your child to church services, involving him or her in youth activities, or even putting him or her in a Christian school will avert potential spiritual catastrophe! No one else loves your child as you do; no one else is as motivated (or held responsible by God) to train that child up in the way God has created him or her (Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4).

Just teaching children how to "be good" is woefully inadequate. Modifying behavior does nothing but brew inner rebellion if it's not accompanied by a heart motive to love and please their Lord—IF that's authentically your relationship with Him as well. Remember, God is looking for a *godly* generation that trusts in Him, not a "good" generation that judges others from proud hearts (Malachi 2:15).

Please, instill in your own heart that you're called by our Lord Jesus, whether parent, grandparent, or discipler, to live a *way of life* that pleases Him and from which others can learn how to live as you intervene in their lives.

Mike & Sue