

40 Days of Prayer and Fasting

October 8th

Daily Devotional #8

Today and tomorrow I'll be sharing part of a term paper I wrote in grad school (at ACU) for the course, "Christian Ministry". This is the course where I first learned the deeper meanings and value of the spiritual disciplines and learned to exercise them in an intimate very small group format (a group of three of us from the same class) that met weekly and debriefed our experiences, struggles, blessings and questions. We encouraged one another, challenged one another, and periodically admonished one another (a correction borne out of love and respect with the goal of blessing at its heart/core). Throughout the course, Dr. David Wray pushed us to deepen our walk with Jesus and mature our core beliefs and values. The term paper was to be our "Life Rule" – the one undeniable, foundational, central truth in our life from which our ministry, our direction, our inspiration, our relationships, our meditations, our goals, and everything in our lives would stand upon and flow from. It became an all-consuming exercise – and something of a personal revival as well.

Today I share with you the introductory portion of that paper. It represents a joyful wrestling with GOD and my own ego. My prayer is for all of us to engage in that joyful wrestling again through this 40 Days of Prayer and Fasting – both on the personal level and as HIS Family. May we, together and individually, discover HIS rule in our life/lives!

When All Is Said and Done **Jesus Is the Ultimate Value**

Jesus is the Ultimate Value. This rule of life permeates every area of my life. It is so intrusive, that it is scary. As much as I love it, and in a way am proud of it, I must admit that it is not original. I first came across this phrase "Ultimate Value" while reading (of all things) a commentary on Philippians (see endnote). The specific passage it referred to is:

What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ Philippians 3:8 (NIV)

Now this rule, this passage, haunts me. It screams out to me, "There is nothing in this life so great, so wonderful, so gifted as a relationship with the All Mighty God. When all is said and done, nothing you (meaning I) have done or said warrants

forgiveness or salvation or the peace of Christ. Knowing Jesus...really knowing Jesus is all that matters. Period.”

My life starts and ends right there. Period. ...Except for one thing:

This rule is life.

It is the beginning of life. It is the completion of life. It is full and good life. And it positively and powerfully affects and effects every area of my life. This rule says to me that Jesus is the great value, the great asset on my spiritual general ledger sheet (this is what Paul was doing in Philippians 3... comparing the plusses and minuses of his life with GOD before and after Jesus). It is the bottom line. And as that bottom line it is my reason for living. So, not only is Jesus, knowing Him personally and intimately, the beginning and end of my life, it is also everything in between...

((Part 2, tomorrow, Thursday, October 9, 2014))

endnote:

I was first intrigued by this phrase/thought in the Spring of 1993. I was writing a paper for Dr. Wallace on Philippians 3:7-11. In the Word commentary on Philippians (by Hawthorne), the phrase “Ultimate Value” came up referring to how much Paul valued knowing Jesus. Hawthorne proceeds to comment on what Paul meant when he said “to know.” It is the Jewish sense of the word that Paul is using: Intimate. Personal. Full. This phrase has haunted me ever since.