

~Other Speakers S-Z: K.P. Yohannan:

A good portion of my time is often spent with younger leaders who are experiencing some sort of difficult situation in their life or ministry. I try to help these brothers grow through the adverse circumstances of life to become more effective in their work for the Lord and to become even better leaders. The only way I can do this, though, is by showing them Jesus.

For example, several months ago one of our leaders called to tell me about a problem with which he was dealing. This particular leader had spent several years training two brothers, discipling and entrusting them with a great amount of responsibility in the work. One day, unexpectedly, they walked away from the work and joined another organization.

Not only was he upset over the situation, but also very discouraged, having lost two people he deeply cared about. As I spoke with him over the phone he said, "I wish they at least would have told me a few weeks earlier, so that I could have made arrangements for others to take over their responsibilities." He continued to express his disappointment with a saddened heart. I asked him if he knew the reason why these brothers left. He said, "The truth of the matter is the other organization offered them a lot of money and material benefits, and that became the reason for their leaving."

Of course, the whole reason this leader called me in the first place was to hear what I thought his next step should be. Instead of telling him "do this" or "do that," I asked him to think with me about how Jesus would respond had He been in this situation. Together we recalled certain passages of Scripture, remembering that it was Jesus who said, "Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back" (Luke 6:28-30, NIV).

It was soon clear how Jesus would respond. This leader decided to write a letter to the head of the organization the men had joined and say all the good things he could about the two brothers who had left him. He blessed that ministry and the two brothers, promising to pray for them as they continued to serve the Lord.

It is in responding like this, in a way that mirrors Christ, that lives are built.

We all desire to become mature Christians and to be used by God. And we all have difficulties in our life as well. What we must see is that maturity often comes only through difficulty—it does not occur in a vacuum or a totally sterile and completely peaceful and happy environment in which we always get what we want. No. Christian maturity—Christlikeness—happens only as we live like Him in this fallen world. Through difficulties, God works maturity into our lives, producing good in us, to the praise of the Father!

As Jesus' ministry on this earth was soon coming to an end, He prayed for the disciples and for all those who would come to believe on His name some day. It is interesting what He prayed: "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one" (John 17:15). Jesus left us in the world, not to become a part of it but to learn more of Him through each trial and tribulation. As we see Jesus in the midst of our days, just as the disciples did, our lives are shaped and we are made into His image.

We are in the world to be changed into His likeness and to reflect His character and glory in every situation. Hebrews 5:8 says that Jesus "learned obedience by the things which He suffered." If the Son of God learned obedience through the things He experienced on the earth, then the same should be true for us.

Think about Abraham, Moses, Daniel, Gideon, Peter or Paul. Read about the lives of modern-day saints like Sadhu Sundar Singh, Pandita Ramabai, John Hyde, George Muller or Gladys Aylward. These people were made and shaped into those whom we esteem today by the difficulties and hardships they endured. They allowed themselves to be taught by God in each situation.

We must keep in mind, though, that this is a continual, daily process; none of us is fashioned into the image of Christ overnight. It takes years and many situations, but as you continue to choose to reflect Jesus in every situation, He will transform you to live this life pleasing to Him, bringing Him glory. And in each event we face, we can have the confident hope that "all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:28-29).

It is His grace that allows us to respond in this life as He would. It is His strength that carries us along this journey to learn from Him and become like Him. Jesus still calls to us today saying, "Come to Me . . . and learn from Me . . ." (Matthew 11:28-29, emphasis mine). Please, I urge you, open your Bible and step into your own journey with Jesus. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you see Jesus through the pages of Scripture and to show you how to imitate Him in your life situations today. Just like the disciples, it is only as we see Jesus that we become like Him and make a difference in our generation.