

General Topics :: I'm a Christian on purpose

I'm a Christian on purpose - posted by mguldner (), on: 2012/7/19 8:35

I have always struggled with the relationship part of Christianity, the idea that our Father and Saviour wishes to be active in our lives and talk with us etc. It's not that I don't believe it but I am pretty lousy at relationship in general. The head knowledge part always kind of came natural to me while the relationship part was like a sinking ship.

I recently been doing something that has helped me remember that God wants a relationship with me and it presses me even more into devotion and prayer. I have been writing the word "Intentional" on the outside of my hand. Anytime I look at it I remember a Relationship with Christ Jesus has to be an Intentional relationship. Basically someone can't accidentally be a Christian, it's hard work but a labor of love getting to know the Lord.

Anyone else have this problem? and if so what did you do to help remind you of that relationship? Or maybe you have the opposite problem? I would appreciate some feedback either way :) Thanks!

Re: I'm a Christian on purpose - posted by learn (), on: 2012/7/19 10:21

Thank you for sharing. You are not exactly alone. I believe its work you have to put in to get to know the Lord. For me its making me read the bible more than I ever did (not that I was ever good). Previously I prefer to listen to sermons, books etc but now I am not much interested in those. I'm just sticking to the bible. That's where you get to know Jesus.

Re: I'm a Christian on purpose - posted by Blayne, on: 2012/7/19 11:41

Hi! 'Mguldner'

I guess yuh already know that there are two probable views from which to answer your question: theological and personal. I suspect you wish to hear from personal experience. So, I'll throw in my own about how I dealt with this issue.

I was born into a less than model home; both my mother and father were exceedingly ill equipped to function as loving caring parents. Well, to be entirely honest: I recognized long afterwards that my parents were mentally ill ... or as my Christian knowing would say: "bound by powers of darkness".

What else could explain my having to heap books atop my bedroom door to hopefully awaken me before my father would fulfill his near daily promise to shoot me dead in the dark of night? What else can explain the scars which are still visible on my hands after my mother thought it best to hold them inside the coal furnace for some childhood wrong I had done?

So, enough said about that.

Well, maybe not so quick; a word of explanation:

My father had tumbled down an underground mine shaft while working and he never fully recovered. Shortly afterwards, he mind began to push itself into a never-never land. The accident greatly affected my mother and she too gradually fell under his insane spell. (I was about 4 years old at the time).

Throughout my growing up years, I never knew parental hugs and affection. I never questioned anything at the time because I believed that every neighboring family endured the same fractured intimacy as our own; I believed that the devilish cloud which I lived beneath was quite normal.

Yet, I still felt an emotional attachment to my parents. Even during the later years when I was living independently, I would occasionally return home and shake my father's hand with polite greeting and nod a kind recognition glance to my mother. I thought that this minimalist crude family behavior was the norm.

When I was first introduced to the gospel, I thought that God desired a relationship which was similar to what I had with my parents. I thought that all that was needed was to remain piously polite and courteous because of Who He was. I made sure to remember and greet Him when awakening in the morning and before attending night a prayerful sentence.

ever two. On some especially good days, I would feel it necessary to intentionally read the Psalms knowing full well that it would bring me to open tears. I thought that was what God wanted from me as something of a 'special gift'; just like I would occasionally bring home a gift for my parents.

As you can well imagine, such minimal understanding about God and His love didn't help my Christian experience progress so well. Actually, regardless how much I wanted to follow Jesus, things and events in my life began to drop off a cliff rather quickly after my 'getting saved'.

The basic problem I came to realize many years later was my inability to carry on any kind of genuine relationship with anyone... much less God. All I knew was how to conduct an polite and courteous attachment with people. That's why I rarely returned home to visit my parents; attachments are formed more out of duty and obligation than anything else. And, one can rapidly become very tired of keeping up with dry attachments.

During some of the most morbid behavior of my father, I remember my mother (at that time) insisting that I had to love my father because of who he was and not for what he was doing. And, that's how I learned to think of my heavenly Father too.

As unbelievable as it might seem to some "normal" Christians, I more than once found myself driving my car to a building with intent to commit a burglary while at the same time tearfully looking out the windshield and saying: "God, I'm miserable both with You and without You! But even though I cannot follow You nor serve You, I will praise you because you are God... the all-powerful... the almighty. If I don't praise You, the very stones will rise up and praise you! " And I would then continue on and commit the break and enter crime.

I guess I might have been asking God to please try and love me for who I was to Him... one of His creatures... and not for what I was doing. So it was that, during the initial years of my Salvation journey, I was only capable of loving God for WHO He was and nothing more.

To put the mess into a capsule: a genuine love relationship demands something much more than the recognition of being "attached" to someone. A loving relationship requires trust in one another and I remained lost to that possibility for many years.

I was born with a hare lip and cleft palate. My father had warned me more than once that when a calf is born deformed, you kill both the calf and the cow.

I had no inkling how to trust a God Who had so cruelly marked my face with a birth deformity. In my heart and mind, God had behaved in the same manner as my mother. One day she would happily shine my shoes before my attending school and the next day would have her grabbing my hands and placing them into the raging heat of the coal furnace... only to return an hour later sobbing and wrapping my blistered flesh in bandages.

Even while imprisoned many times and for multiple years, I remained thinking that my heavenly Father behaved similar to my earthly parents. I believed that God had placed me in prison to punish me and that I was not permitted to speak to Him directly until the duration of my punishment had expired. (That's exactly how my earthly parents behaved). In my mind, I was being put in a corner for punishment like a child and was not entitled to speak to my heavenly Father. The only saving grace (so to speak) was that I was allowed to read about Him in the Bible and maybe pray in some stumbling manner during this time of punishment.

One day I was sitting on my prison bed and becoming increasingly agitated by the prospect of returning to prison time and time again. Jail had become a revolving door. For the very first time, I began to feel a suffocating loss of hope.

Suddenly, an image of a man playing Russian Roulette appeared in the air before me. A voice asked: "What do you think this man's last words were?"

I answered, "Wow! I've got such bad luck!"

Again the same image appeared. But this occasion the voice said: "What do you think his last words should have been?"

I had to think about that for a minute or so before volunteering: "What a stupid man I am!"

Then the voice said: "As long as you insist on blaming your parents your upbringing your cleft palate and whatever else for your failures, nothing will change. You have to begin to take responsibility for your actions before anything can change."

It was only then that I realized that my entire life was a narrative of victimization and self-pity. I had not perceived it that way before.

Now I had something to work with; to wrestle to the ground and deal with. I was no longer having to bat in the air (as Apostle Paul might say).

The second thing I learned was that God was not punishing me. I wasn't in prison because God had somehow arranged to put me there to draw His last ounce of vengeance. No, on the contrary! My own behavior had put me in prison.

But the most important thing I learned was that God is ONLY and perfectly Good. This meant that It wasn't God who marked me with the deformity. So, this knowledge placed me in a much better place to begin to trust Him and the learning to build a relationship with Him. I was like Jonah and angry with God for far too long and for all the wrong reasons.

During that time I also came to understand that the dark powers which were influencing me were not instigated by God. One night I was sitting there in my prison cell and my mind captured the image of a child hiding fearfully under a bed. A voice said: "And this is when the spirit of fear entered".

So, 'Mguldner', that's how I learned to move beyond the minimal of attachment to God towards being able to start and build a meaningful relationship with Him.

I've met a lot of Christians who claim to have a 'personal relationship' with Jesus but, when they spoke to me about it, they didn't seem to have more than what I had with my disjointed parents ... an attachment ... as a creature to its Creator. Sometimes I suspect that there are some people who have a closer affinity with their family dog than with God and yet they still insist to name Him as their Heavenly Father.

Here's an illustration of what I mean:

There are several roaming squirrels in my neighborhood. Sometime ago, a friend dropped in from the United States and he had brought with him several large bags of Pistachio nuts because he had known that I really like them a lot. Unfortunately, they were very stale and inedible. So, when my friend returned to the USA, I decided to feed the pistachios to the squirrels and threw an entire bag of them out into the yard.

The next day, the neighbor commented that there seemed to be an unusual amount of squirrels on the street. So, I told her about the Pistachio Lottery that the squirrels had won. Later, I imagined the squirrels looking up at the sky with puzzled faces asking if it was going to again rain pistachios today. But secretly, I was hoping for the imagined possibility that maybe some weird squirrel might have enough sense to look into the sky and thank God for His provisions.

So, that's an illustration of how the first several years of my Christian journey had me behaving like the squirrels; thinking that eternal life is similar to winning a divine lottery 'er sumthin' like that. But with that kind of shallow knowing or even wanting to know God, there isn't much of a chance of nurturing a genuine relationship.

During this half-hazard relationship phase, I bumped into a lot of Christians who boasted of how they seemed to talk to Jesus like He was some kinna' dear friend. I could never really fathom that concept. Most times, I shrugged it off as some pious exaggeration. There were some female Christians I met who seemed to be overly passionate about their supposed relationship with Jesus and I almost began to wish that Jesus was a woman instead of a man so I could perhaps too grasp Him emotionally.

Then one day I received a letter in the mail from a Christian pastor who was living in Europe. I still have that letter today ... I cherish it! He boldly claimed that God had told him to write me the words therein. To be honest, I began to read it with much skepticism ... "Oh no! Not another Christian weirdo!", I whispered to myself.

The letter began by telling me about how God desired me. Not that he merely loved me ... no, much more than that! ... that God earnestly DESIRED me; CHERISHED me. That I was a treasure to Him!

The words of the letter jumped off the letter page and immediately into my heart. They rang so true and carried such marvelous healing.

For the very first time in my entire life, I began to comprehend the profound meaning of love ... and how it was that this love was how God Himself thought about and towards me. I could hardly take the full measure of the letter's words into myself; love was something far greater than an emotion ... it was a yearning DESIRE ... God had a consuming urge to possess me ... to hold my hand ... to sit me on His lap and whisper about the Name that He gave me and which He alone knows.

During the reading of the letter, I saw an image of a man and his wife appear before my eyes and I heard them call each

other by their intimate 'names' which they alone knew affectionately among themselves. And that's how my coming to a relationship with God began to unfold to me.

Later, I began to understand some other matters about how God's desire to relate to us. He is Spirit. Because of that, he wishes to unite with our own human spirit. It isn't our earthly body that God clings to; it's our spiritual body. By 'spiritual body', I mean the invisible part of us ... our soul and heart and mind ... that which comprises our "hidden man of the heart" ... our 'spiritual existence and being'.

That's why I have repeatedly mentioned here in different Threads about our having a spiritual body; because that is what God desires and yearns jealously over. But I'll spare you the repeat of those ideas/thoughts at this point.

So, 'Mguldner' after that long story, what thoughts do I hope to have given you?

Well, about a relationship born of desire. I would almost say a compelling desire; an all consuming affection ... a love which causes one's heart to palpitate ... something so tremendously overwhelming that it stills every fear except that of being alone. That's how God desires us! That's how He so eagerly seeks and yearns for us.

When I discovered that about God, it was not difficult to throw myself into his open arms and enjoy myself with Him. He is indeed a wonderful loving parent!

EDITED BELOW: (Added)

Oh, I would like to leave you with this one final thought:

Sometime ago, I was asked to create a Flash presentation for an Audio Teaching. As I was reading the teaching transcript, I was struck to the core by these words which I then included in the Presentation:

"The only thing that God's power cannot command is love. And that is the very thing that God desires; that a person comes to Him out of love for Him."

The Flash Presentation can be viewed here:

SOUND ON please

<http://www.tolovejesus.com/index.php/flash-presentations/how-is-god-great-flash>

Re: - posted by mguldner (), on: 2012/7/19 16:38

Wow, that is an awesome testimony brother! I don't know exactly where I am at, I want a relationship that is intimate and real but I struggle with it still. Again head knowledge tells me He is jealous for me, that He loves me passionately. But I'm uncertain that has made its connection to my heart. I remember Leonard Ravenhill once say millions of people are going to miss heaven by eighteen inches because they have a knowledge of God but that knowledge fails to connect to the heart.

My personality is on that detaches in times of stress or struggle and I emotionally shut down from a situation. This makes it definitely difficult to go beyond head knowledge to an all consuming passionate love and affectionate relationship.

Thanks for your words that have helped me and encouraged me. :)

Re: - posted by pilgrim777, on: 2012/7/19 17:10

Matt,

If you have the Holy Spirit you have an intimate relationship with the Lord.

When He leads you follow and in so doing you will be abiding intimately in Him.

Don't make it difficult by resisting the Spirit. It is the "simplicity of Christ", "sheep and Shepherd".

Pilgrim

Re: - posted by Blayne, on: 2012/7/19 18:08

Hil! 'Mguldner'

Ummm, I don't wanna' sound too religious 'er anything but the story of my finding Jesus rightfully belongs as HIS testimony. I'm jus' hangin' on for the exciting ride sorta' thing ... no longer who I was and not yet who I am to become.

Yuh know what, 'Mguldner'? You can always detect those who have indulged in far too many teachings and sermons. Yuh know why that is? Well, because they begin to minimize their inner treasures ... devalue their inner worth. Now, you might ask me, "Well, what does that mean to say?"

Ummm, the answer is a simple one: most teachings and sermons are deliberately formulated in a negative manner. By that I mean: most teachings/sermons are intended to solicit or prompt a self-examination ... re-assessment.

So? What should we expect to feel and think after placing ourselves repeatedly under pointing fingers and accusatory stares day after day ... week after week?

So, to use Leonard Ravenhill's observation, there are only 24 hours in a day and if you spend 6 of those pondering within yourself about the latest pointing fingers and accusatory stares you just volunteered for, yep! ... you'd have only about 18 hours of recuperation time until another preachy-gladiator enters the ring to slay your confidence and faithful walk on once again.

If you don't mind me saying so, I think all this talk about head-knowledge and heart-knowledge ... and rhema this and rhema that is a lot to do about nothing. It serves no profitable purpose. Rather, it risks causing one to fall under the spell of evaluating and re-evaluating even what's truly genuine about themselves.

Wanna' know something? We can mistakenly dismiss knowledge as something injurious; wrongly re-invent it as a giant to be avoided.

But knowledge is a necessary part of the ingestion cycle of the human spirit. Knowledge is something that grows and develops after its initial planting/hearing. Sometimes knowledge can require an extended time to mature and manifest itself as genuine life. Otherwise, we are seeking a magic wand and not the divine Word.

So, you shouldn't be so harsh on yourself.
At least, that's my opinion.

Frankly, I have a question for you:

OK, let's pretend and say that no one should ingest the message of the gospel by mental assent (knowledge) alone.

So? What's the alternative?

Possess it emotionally?

Hardly likely!

Oh, maybe possess it spiritually?

Well, that's fine ... but how does that come about?

You see? It can quickly become a vicious circle of chasing the tail of the dragon.

My advice is that yuh gotta' decide to quit trying so hard to be who God wants you to become.

The seed (Word) is planted ... all you need to do is to busy yourself with cultivating the land of your inner being ... keeping it refreshed and free from threatening weeds. You don't have to go out every day and tear your garden apart to examine if the seeds are genuine or not. After all, it's HIS seed and it will accomplish everything it is purposed to do. Jus' decide to remain as an obedient gardner and work on keeping the soil fertile and inviting for the nourishing living waters of the Spirit.

Blayne: a "Christian...on purpose", on: 2012/7/19 18:15

I do not want to sully something so anointed and beautiful as your testimony. We could have found this scrawled in the front of John Bunyan's bible, or Timothy's, the Apostle.; it is so powerful, I cannot give it due description with my ideas.

Redeemer!...Redeemer!...Redeemer! along with cries of Grace! Grace! in your helpless life. Blayne: you have been captured by a Savior! and yet you chose. On the bottom, now, even reluctantly, ruling on the top.

"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the Lord of hosts.

What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain; and he will bring forth the top stone with

h shouts of "Grace, grace to it!"

You have humbled me.

You are a stone, that the builders rejected.

Once, a few years ago, as I was sitting in front of my Bible, and the Lord gave me a choice, from a question he proposed to me, speaking in a soft and gentle, but ever-clear voice:

"DO YOU REALLY WANT ME?" This is a lifetime word for me, and will be every day I awake. Do I really want you Jesus?...This word means to carry Jesus, for Him to possess me, and own me, and even pour Himself out from me like water, I must choose His ways over mine.

I must forgive all trespasses, and offenses, and become the blessedness of one unoffended. I must want him, and desire him, more than any other and as you say; "on Purpose".

Clean and Empty; This is what my vessel must be, as I am willing to be owned.

Re: Blayne: a "Christian...on purpose" - posted by Blayne, on: 2012/7/20 7:33

Hi! 'Brothertom'

Thank you for your very kind words. But the truth is that Jesus did it all! Honestly.

I would like to add something to your comments.

I first heard the gospel in 1969. By 1975, my mother had been diagnosed with terminal cancer and was laying in a hospital bed wasting away. And, I would like to tell you something wonderful about that time and circumstance.

I was working as an underground miner at the time and living about 40 miles away from my family home. I would drop in to visit my sick mother every two weeks 'er so. The marked deterioration of her health was becoming excruciatingly difficult to observe.

My siblings and I had been advised not to tell our mother how seriously ill she was. She was a 'real fighter', as they say, and no one wanted to risk tearing the wind out from her sails by announcing the truth about her devouring disease.

One day when I was alone in the hospital room with her, my mother asked me directly, "Am I gonna' die?". I wasn't prepared for the question; I fumbled every which way to avoid her pleading. She asked again, this time more insistent. At that point, my eyes welled with tears and I said, "Mom, unless some kinna' miracle happens, you're not going to walk out of this hospital alive".

The honesty of my answer visibly slammed into her. It drained the color from her cheeks and caused a trembling to wrap around her. I stood there bewildered for a minute and then turned and hurried out of the hospital room. While driving back to my home, I could hardly contain the belching dry heaves wrestling from within my soul.

A few days later, I again returned to visit her in the hospital. I was surprised to see my mother now sitting dazedly hunched over in a chair. Saliva was constantly forming between her clenched lips and lazily creating moist threads down her neck. It was increasingly evident that her end was coming near.

I awkwardly pulled up a chair alongside of her and fumbled for words. As my mother's eyes shifted to gaze upwards to me, she mumbled, "If I'm gonna' die, I want to die sitting down". Even as the disease was mercilessly devouring her body, she was insisting to dictate how she was to be snatched from the earth.

A few days later, I again visited her hospital room. But now she was laying propped up in bed. She greeted me with a stubborn creased smile and bitterly muttered, "If I can't die sitting down, then I'll die laying down with my eyes open". Clear

ly, the treachery of death can have many gruesome faces of denial.

As I was sitting at her bedside, my mother lifted her head and to stare directly at me. The cancer had now so severely masticated her throat and jaw she had great difficulty pronouncing words. So, it was with great effort that she tumbled out this question to me, "I know you know Jesus. Will I go to heaven when I die?".

Tears welled up in my eyes and I replied, "Mom, if you believe that Jesus died for all your sins and all your wrongs, and if you ask Him to forgive you, you can be sure about going to heaven".

She fell back to her pillows in deep thought.

A couple of days later, I returned once again to visit her bedside. She couldn't wait to tell me something that was obviously agonizing her. She mumbled, "I don't have a green light! I don't have a green light!".

I didn't know what she was meaning to say. So, I asked her what was the green light about. A desperate pleading ripped into her face and she gurgled, "I can't go to heaven. There's something wrong!".

"Did you ask God to forgive you all your sins?", I asked.

She hesitated and then nodded affirmatively.

So, I found a napkin on her desk and I penned the a Sinner's Prayer on it and gave it to my mother to read.

Minutes later, she urgently grabbed my hands saying, "Please help me pray to God!"

So, there in the hospital room my mother and I prayed the Sinner's Prayer together. At the end, she clasped the pen between her frail fingers and scribbled these words on the napkin, "With all my heart!".

The next day I visited my mother again. She was much more relaxed and at peace. She could hardly contain herself as she excitedly exclaimed, "I have a green light! I have a green light!".

A day or so later, the hospital phoned me and urgently suggested that I should visit my mother one last time as she was not expected to live through the night. I raced to the hospital and when I entered the room, the nurse was just then closing the curtains around her bed. She turned and shouted, "Are you her son?". I replied, "Yes". She said, "Your mother has been waiting to see you before she passes".

My mother was laying there very serene. She was still alive, but barely. I froze emotionally. I didn't know what to do or say.

Suddenly, the nurse shouted, "Tell her you love her! Go over to her ear and put those words into her ear. Hearing is the last thing that goes before passing".

So, that's what I did.

I leaned my head up to hers and said, "I love you, mom!"

She uttered an audible sigh and seconds later passed.

For the very first time in my life, I had told my mother that I loved her.

I wish that I could say that the heavens somehow opened and the inner damage and wounds suffered during my childhood had been wonderfully healed at that very moment. No, it didn't quite happen that way.

But years later, I realized how God had so marvelously planted the seeds for my eventual recovery through the events of that evening.

"Do not say, 'I'll pay you back for this wrong!' Wait for the Lord, and he will deliver you", (Prov 20:22).

(My father died suddenly ten days before my mother passed. No one in the family was able to attend at his death bed).

Re: - posted by learn (), on: 2012/7/20 8:20

Dear Blayne,

Thank you for sharing all this.

Re: - posted by mguldner (), on: 2012/7/20 8:31

Yes definitely thank you for sharing your powerful testimonies of God's goodness. I definitely don't doubt He is good, but I definitely feel left in the dark on a lot of things. And yes I know His thoughts are not mine and they are higher. Does a relationship with Christ or anyone require practice? I mean does it take time to learn His voice? I am really asking there have been times in my life where everything made sense even when it shouldn't have made sense and those times I really clung to God but right now it just feels dark, though I know He is with me.

Perhaps some people praying for me would help, I am walking through one of those Valley periods in my life.