

## The “unselfing” of us

If I had to distill my own journey with God as I am currently experiencing it as well as my observation of that which other believers close to me are experiencing at the moment, into one phrase, it will be this: “He is unselfing us.” His purpose is quite obviously for us to move the center of our life source away from ourselves and to Jesus in very practical ways. It is the process by which we will be able to join with Paul when he says:

*I have been crucified with Christ. My ego is no longer central. It is no longer important that I appear righteous before you or have your good opinion, and I am no longer driven to impress God. Christ lives in me. The life you see me living is not “mine”, but is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I am not going back on that.* (Galatians 2:20 – 21 –The Message)

I have never been as acutely aware of a permeating self centeredness, self righteousness and self sufficiency as God is revealing to me in, what I can only describe as, a season of His special grace. It is not a morbid self analysis or self absorption, but a joyous discovery of the depth of my daily need for all that Jesus is supposed to be for me. He really did mean it when He said that if we want to live from His life on a daily basis we will have to lay down the lives that we have built on a daily basis.

The way in which this seems to be happening can be traced back to a combination of the following principles:

- Eugene Peterson’s rendering of Hebrews 12:26-29 describes God’s intentions quite brilliantly. He says: *One last shaking, from top to bottom, stem to stern. The phrase “one last shaking” means a thorough housecleaning, getting rid of all the historical and religious junk so that the unshakeable essentials stand clear and uncluttered. Do you see what we’ve got? An unshakeable kingdom! And do you see how thankful we must be? Not only thankful, but brimming with worship, deeply reverent before God. For God is not an indifferent bystander. He’s actively cleaning house, touching all that needs to burn and He won’t quit until all is cleansed. God Himself is Fire!*

It is an act of His utmost love and grace whereby He is allowing us to experience the fallibility of our coping mechanisms and the ridiculousness of the images that we have built for ourselves. When we come face to face with ourselves and have exhausted our false repositories of hope we might just turn to Him with greater dignity and surrender, having met our own limitations.

- A willingness to call on the Holy Spirit to be a Spirit of sin conviction to us. There are so many other things that we are quite keen for the Holy Spirit to do for us, so why not also this one? If we don’t, we are in all likelihood already in the same category as the Laodicean church who were not willing to face their own true condition and need of God.

I know of no other way in which I can experience authentic love for God other than knowing how much I have been and am being forgiven. We have so many other

spiritual and charismatic ways of experiencing His love and care for us. I often wonder how legitimate they are if they have not been engendered by this fundamental principle that Jesus Himself expressed to Simon the Pharisee in Luke 7.

I also know of no other way in which I can become known to my fellow believers by having those with whom I feel safe pray with me as I confess my sins to God. It destroys all my pride and shame, taking thorough care of the Pharisaical image of righteousness that I would love others to have of me. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer says: *The cross of Jesus destroys all pride. We cannot find the cross of Jesus if we shrink from the place where it is to be found: the public death of the sinner. And we refuse to bear the cross when we are ashamed to take upon ourselves the shameful death of the sinner in confession.*

Someone once said that the controversy of the universe is “who shall have the authority”? Or, more significantly, who will be given the right to rule and establish his kingdom? It is quite an awesome question because it confronts us with the truth that our choices are the pivots upon which the outcome of this question depends. We very really have become the gods of our own lives and we must be on a journey of surrendering to His rule. It is after all true that in order for the kingdom of God (or the event of His rule) to come in the world, it has to come within us.

I did a very fruitful and eye opening exercise recently when I worked through the following questions and would like to challenge you to do the same. May I strongly suggest that you share the result of this with some people whom you can trust and who will be willing to not only pray with you, but also challenge you? **I am giving it to you in the exact format that I put it to the local group of believers that I am involved with:**

### *Surrendering to God*

*For those of us who are genuine about wanting to overcome self government and sin and live from the indwelling life of Jesus there must be a progressive realisation of our powerlessness over sin. It is the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus that sets us free from the law of sin and death, not our own efforts.*

*The following questions are designed to help us get in touch with areas of ongoing self sufficiency and sin in our lives as well as the reasons for their persisting presence.*

*Invest the time and energy by prayerfully considering them and responding to them. DON'T SPIRITUALISE YOUR TRUE CONDITION OUT OF THE WAY, FACE YOURSELF IN TRUTH.*

- 1) *List continual or excessive feelings over which you are powerless*
- 2) *List recurring fears*

- 3) *List recurring anger (list associated actions that accompany anger)*
- 4) *Describe guilt and shame regarding: any areas of not being perfect, your failures with God, or other people.*
- 5) *Describe your powerlessness regarding avoiding real intimate relationships (describe how loneliness feels)*
- 6) *List any food, drink or medicine that you keep eating or drinking even though you do not want to.*
- 7) *Name any compulsive actions that continue in your life.*
- 8) *How would you feel if you had to stop any of these actions immediately*
- 9) *List the people without whom you feel you will not be able to live.*
- 10) *Describe areas of your sexual life that are out of control*
- 11) *Describe your trust level with God. What hinders a complete surrender of your life to Him? (Give “gut” feelings as opposed to intellectual response)*
- 12) *What messages or “tapes” do you live by that empower your self sufficiency? Describe where they came from.*
- 13) *Fear of surrender may be rooted in your childhood. Describe any memories, events, interactions etc. that may have locked you into your present life or behaviour.*