



Healing Realities: Celebrating His Glory and Our Smallness

BY Andrew Comiskey

(This article was written by Andrew almost fifteen years ago.)

Relationship with Jesus makes us real. We can only know who we really are in union with who He really is. As I, for example, deepen in devotion to Jesus, that which is false and deceptive falls away and the real me comes forth. Ongoing reliance upon Him assures me that the unaffirmed, underdeveloped parts of myself will be blessed and strengthened. Vulnerabilities remain, but in His presence, alive to the creative love that birthed the universe and raised Jesus from the dead, I become all that He desires.

The truth frees us (Jn. 8:36). He "transforms us into His likeness with ever increasing glory" (2 Cor. 3:18). On the eve of Desert Stream's tenth anniversary, I am assured of one thing --Jesus restores His creation. He can't help it; His very essence intermingles with ours and awakens the soul slumbering in sin and brokenness. This awakening will appear a little different in each, but one thing has become absolutely clear: every broken heart that yields to His glory will be changed. To all who seek our help at Desert Stream, we offer the assurance proclaimed by the prophet Isaiah, "Arise, shine, for your light has come and the glory of the Lord rises upon you." (60:1)

Jesus requires one thing of us -smallness. In order for Him to raise up the real self, we must first confess the way in which we have tried to raise ourselves up. Our attempts at controlling how others see us, how we get our needs met, and how we try to distance ourselves from our worst fears and pain are three domains over which the old man or woman reigns supreme. Pride empowers that conniving part of us; Jesus demands its death in order for our true selves to live.

Humble Hearts

I remember vividly Jesus' words to me in the midst of my interacting in a prideful and controlling fashion with some people with whom I didn't yet feel secure (thus prompting some false posturing on my part). He said simply and clearly, "Unless you humble yourself before me I cannot use you." Scripture says it best. "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble"; "Humble yourselves before the Lord and He will lift you up." (James 4:6, 10).

Throughout the many Living Waters groups I've led, one factor has become clear - a humble-hearted participant will press into Jesus and find a depth of healing that will elude the proud. (S) He freely yields up to Him the gay self. Instead of defending the right to eroticize the same-sex or hiding the fact that (s) he is doing just that (a more cowardly form of pride), (s) he names and renounces that form of controlling inner need.

The truly humble heart will invite Jesus to effect a deeper work of healing as well. Instead of defending one's self or one's family from the inevitable patterns of sin and dysfunction, (s) he welcomes the cross into each memory that contains the sinful action and reaction. The pain involved is faced with Jesus. In this way, the many defenses against the pain of one's own failures and the failures of others toward him or her can begin to be laid down. The real man or woman begins to emerge. Alive to Jesus and dead to false ways of preserving the self, the humble of heart go forth from Living Waters forever changed.

But the need for humility extends beyond that of the person seeking healing. It applies even more pointedly to those leading healing ministries. I refer to myself and to the other leaders at Desert Stream. In our prayer times together, we often ask God to keep us humble in light of our growing

success as a ministry over the last ten years. But only of late have those prayers elicited genuine repentance on my part.

Defensiveness and Pride

The Lord revealed to me how the ongoing adversity to our ministry - antagonism from the world, the church and disgruntled former members of Desert Stream - had helped birth a false defensiveness toward my adversaries. Too often I fought in my own strength; this led to a prideful posture toward the ministry and her accomplishments. Fueling this tendency were jagged expressions of my newfound masculine authority. As is often the case for men emerging out of ambivalence toward the good of the masculine, I swung from fearful passivity to unbridled strength. Some have been hurt needlessly by my extreme actions and reactions, for which I am truly sorry.

Joyfully Small

The Lord birthed true repentance. He is freeing me to be small before Him - a joyfully inadequate part of His Creation. Instead of being self-conscious and mercilessly bent toward my weaknesses (and alternately defensive toward anyone pointing them out), I am learning to listen and weigh criticism carefully. I am also learning to discern the heart of the "truth-bearer", whether love and wholeness is motivating him or her, or vindication issuing out of the false self. I am learning to accept myself as a small and imperfect but profoundly loved object of God's desire. And He is teaching me to face false forms of self-protection so that He can nourish and empower the real me.

At once small and inspired, I find joy in all that is real. My appetites are increasingly clear. No longer motivated by that masculine drive for power and control, nor compelled by the desire to secure the masculine in other men, I rest in His radiance. Within Jesus dwells my primary security and the truth and beauty for which my soul has always yearned. I can heartily agree with David in Psalm 63:1-3:

O, God, you are my God,
earnestly I seek you;
my soul thirsts for you,
my body longs for you
in a dry and weary land
where there is no water.
I have seen you in the sanctuary,
and beheld your power and glory. Because your love is better than life,
my lips will glorify you.

The real me emerges in His love. Unfettered by others' judgement and rightly humbled by loving concern, I celebrate my smallness. A marvelous thing occurs. The various aspects of my personhood become one, melding harmoniously in the catalyst that is Christ. In 1 Col. 1:15-20, Paul describes Jesus as He in whom God's fullness dwells (v. 19), He who holds all things together (v. 17), and He who reconciles all things to himself (v. 20). I interpret that to include the way in which Jesus indwells us through His Spirit. As His essence intermingles with our humanity, He awakens that which slumbers, purifies that which is false, and coordinates all aspects of the personality that are real and necessary to reflecting Him in the fullness of our humanity.

In Him, I become more real. The feminine, receptive part of me yields to Him - watching and waiting for His healing word or glance; the child marvels at every reality He conveys. The man awakens and roars. At home with Him, at peace with my emerging humanity, I am free to carry out His will.

Real Ministry

I rejoice in all the ways that He has revealed Himself through us. I ask for His mercy where we have obscured Him through our ignorance or rebellion. Most importantly, I rejoice in the increasingly heartfelt truth that real ministry flows out of intimacy with Him. For in Him, we at Desert Stream are

becoming who we really are. Enabled by grace, we are freed to authentically serve others. Jesus has established in our hearts a deep wellspring of living water which continuously nourishes and rounds out our souls (Jn. 4:13,14). Out of these wellsprings, we extend a cup of cold water to those who thirst for Jesus in the desert of sexual brokenness and AIDS. Our theme verse takes on fresh meaning as we embrace a new decade of ministry:

Remember not the former things nor consider the things of old.
Behold I shall do a new thing; now it shall spring forth, shall ye not know it?
I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.
Isaiah 43:18,19