

## JACK'S CORNER

In lieu of my regular format....

In reading through the book of Zechariah, I found a poignant challenge to us suburban Christians. The Jews had returned from exile and were in the process of rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem. The "word of the Lord Almighty" came to the prophet Zechariah in Chapter 7, verses 5 and 6: "When you fasted and mourned...for the past seventy years, was it really for me (God) that you fasted? And when you were eating and drinking, were you not just feasting for yourselves?"

God's people were only "going through the motions" of worship and seeking Him; their motives were selfish. We do so many activities in the church; how many of them are really done for God? In this situation, the Israelites were not ministering to God; they were ministering to themselves.

As I pondered much of what passes as "Christian Counseling", and even what passes as worship and service in many churches these days, I noticed a disturbing shift.

...A shift from seeking to know God, to seeking to know ourselves. (A preoccupation with self.)

... A shift from finding God, to finding the good life. (A manipulation of God.)

...A shift from wanting forgiveness of sins, to wanting to feel better about ourselves. (A perversion of self-esteem.)

...A shift from eliminating the bad in us, to self-improvement. (A trivialization of the Cross.)

...A shift from living for others, to being healed from our wounds of the past. (An excuse to live for ourselves.)

...A shift from blessing God, to God blessing us. (A perversion of worship and service.)

God is often little more than the vehicle we use to try to get what we want out of life. Self-denial is lost; "taking up one's cross" is ignored. We want to know what God can do for US! OUR needs and wants become the point. Our motive for seeking God is that he might be "useful" in helping us live the kind of life we want.... successful, happy, guilt-free, and protected. Often we are seeking the right prayer to pray, the right Bible study to join, the right amount of money to give, and the right things to do, that will get God to cooperate with our objectives. How often are our motives to "get closer to God" basically selfish?

I recently spoke with someone who has been making a real effort to read the Bible more, pray more and tithe. Life got worse. Now, the person has doubts about God. Why?

God will not be used. When the people in Zechariah's day didn't listen to God, and their motives were selfish... "the Lord Almighty was very angry" (v. 12). God speaks in verse 13: "When I called, they did not listen; so when they called, I would not listen." These words are hard to hear, I know. God will not share the throne; he will not be used. He will not be placed in a box; he will not confirm to

what we believe he should be, or what we think he should do. He will be found, but on his terms. "I will be found by you." Says the Lord in Jeremiah 29:13,14. "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." Let us examine our motives for having a relationship with the Almighty.

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