

Kid Stuff

I'm always *with* somebody. Focusing on somebody. Usually it's me. Thinking about myself. What I want. What I want to get done. But sometimes I'm focusing on somebody else -- the person who hurt me or disappointed me, or the person I'm trying to impress. Usually I'm not physically with that person, but that doesn't matter. I'm thinking about him, giving him my attention, trying to measure up for him. So, to borrow words from centuries past, I'm always practicing *somebody's* presence. Mine. Or that other person's. Or God's.

It's my choice. Every day, it's my choice. Today, I can make myself miserable by practicing the wrong person's presence. Or I can live a taste of heaven. It's my choice.

I started thinking about this last Friday morning. Basically, I figured, it boils down to this: today, I can remember that God is with me, or I can forget Him and go it alone. I got excited about the idea of remembering, moment by moment, that He is with me. Knowing my every thought. Seeing through everything that's so murky to me. Holding every outcome of every business deal and every friendship and every dream. Seeing all the junk I try to hide from everyone else -- and seeing it with compassion instead of disgust. Whew. I'd be safe. The pressure would be off. I wouldn't have to wrangle the right results. I wouldn't have to scramble for approval. I wouldn't be alone. It sounded so inviting.

So off I went to my desk. By noon, I was like a freight train. Speeding from one thing to another. Checking things off my list. Getting all my ducks in a row. Being productive. When I saw friends' names on caller ID, I ignored them. I couldn't be interrupted. I had things to do. I had an agenda, and I was sticking to it. By day's end, I was tight, exhausted, frustrated. Sure, I'd made a big dent in my to-do list, but that didn't seem to make much difference. I'd spent the day in the land of me-myself-and-I, and, frankly, I was miserable.

But Saturday was a new day. I sipped my morning coffee and wondered again. What would it look like to remember, all day long, that I'm not alone? That I'm not in control? One thing was crystal clear - I had zero interest in repeating Friday. Practicing my own presence is a miserable affair.

So off I went to my desk. Again. The same business was waiting for me. The same hours of work lay ahead. But Saturday was a breath of fresh air, because I remembered. Over and over again, I choose to remember that He was with me. *Choose* to remember. Whenever I'd start to slip back into freight-train mode, I'd choose not to. Not to be in control. Not to decide for myself what I would and wouldn't do. Not to drive myself to produce. Not to take the credit (or the blame) for outcomes. Just, over and over, choosing to remember that God was there.

This isn't a mind game. It's not playing make-believe. He *is* there. Whether you like it or not. He's with the staunchest atheist. He gives Richard Dawkins the breath to argue that He doesn't exist. And when I'm at my desk being a practical atheist - handling my day on my own - He's with me, too. That never changes.

What changes is my attitude. I can ignore His presence and wear myself out trying to accomplish and impress and get to the end of my endless to-do list. Or I can work with my Friend. Same work. Same number of hours at my desk. But inside it's a whole new world.

For one thing, I'm content. All I have to do is the work of the moment. Do it for Him and with Him, and then move on to the next moment. Sounds like kid stuff, right? Right. I'm doing what my Father says to do, and I'm doing it as a gift to Him, and I'm leaving the results in His hands. Kids don't get many chest pains and migraines from their to-do lists.

I guess that's the bottom line. Being a kid. That's the invitation - to remember that I'm a child. My Father is with me, so I don't have to worry. My Father is with me, so I don't have to figure everything out on my own. My Father is with me, so I'm never alone. No matter who rejects me. No matter who abandons me. No matter who says I'm not quite enough.

A funny thing happens when you choose to live this way. Other people want to be around you. They can relax, too. They don't have to compete. They don't have to measure up. They feel at home. They might not know why, but *you* do. It's because they're with the Father. Warming themselves at His fire, even if they'd swear up and down with Richard Dawkins that He doesn't exist.

"I am alone. . . . I am a rock. I am an island."

Simon and Garfunkel

"I am not alone, because the Father is with me."

John 16:32