

Practicing the Presence

How to make our Heavenly Father real in the melee of everyday life

"The Joyous Discovery of the Omnipresence of God"—4

Dr. Desmond Ford

We look not on the things that are seen; they are transient. We look at the things that are not seen; they are eternal.

Paul expressed it another way in First Corinthians 7. He was dealing with people who wanted to marry, yet couldn't because of the persecution of Christians that was going on. Paul counseled:

I mean, brothers and sisters, the appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no possessions, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away. (1 Corinthians 7:29–31 NRSV)

The Greek word for "form" in the last verse ("fashion" in KJV) is a word that was used for a theater backdrop that was constantly being changed. Paul is saying, "All this splendid pageantry that you see around you is temporary, changing all the time." You know, that is the one thing that never changes—change. Take a look at some old photographs of yourself. Or me.

A drama in five acts

In these verses, Paul gives a drama in five acts.

Act One

New areas of life get us off to a great start. Paul says those that are married. . . . Ah! The wedding bells are ringing, there's music and song, there are lovely things to drink and to eat, there are congratulations and best wishes. There are flowers, there are presents—and the new married life is off with a roar. Most new areas of life begin like that—Bang! That bang can carry us quite some distance when the going gets rough later.

Act Two

Life has mourning, too. After talking about those that have married, he talks about those that weep. In John's Gospel, the first miracle gives us the good things of marriage. The second miracle gives us the things of marriage that are associated with tears. All the privileges of marriage and family are double-headers. There is mourning and weeping, too.

Act Three

Life has rejoicing. "Those who rejoice." The son has come to his majority, the daughter is having her public presentation. There are times in life for those who rejoice.

The apostle Paul (in 1 Corinthians 7:29–31) describes the drama of life in five acts. The drama teaches us that because life is constantly changing, we need not take it too seriously. We are to attend relatively to the relative and absolutely to the absolute.

Act Four

The serious business of existence. As we grow older, we become "those who buy." This is referring to the serious business of survival. I complained to my wife Gill the other day, "Gill, it takes a genius just to survive in this materialistic, sophisticated civilization. All the paperwork, all the planning, all the scheming—it takes a genius." Think of all the things you **must** do and all the things you **mustn't** do just to survive before you can do anything. Just surviving is the serious side of living.

Act Five

Life is constantly changing, so don't take it too seriously. Paul is telling us, "Listen, this world is not permanent." Those who deal with this world are to act as if they have no

dealings with it. When you retire, you're going to use up everything you have. (Use it up before your children or grandchildren get it!) Use it up. Don't take it too seriously. Life is constantly changing.

Attend absolutely to absolute

In essence, the Bible is telling us that if we are going to practice the Presence of God, we must attend "relatively to relative things and absolutely to absolute things."

Our greatest human stupidity lies in this: That we tend to attend absolutely to little things and 'little-y' to absolute things. There's our folly.

We are only here for a little time, but we worry and strive as though we were here forever. We are not here forever. One day we will be gone, and with us everything we own. Someone else will own it one day.

The Bible is saying that if you want to practice the Presence of God, you must attend only relatively to relative things. Give little attention to little things.

Small stuff

Greg Leis is our sound and multimedia man here at GNU. We were talking earlier this evening about something that might go wrong during our recording of this Bible School. Before I said it, Greg knew the old saying, "Don't sweat the small stuff. It's **all** small stuff!"

If it's not a matter of right and wrong, it's all small stuff. If it's just your comfort, or a few more dollars for the IRS, it's all small stuff. Don't sweat the small stuff.

But God is not small. You could toss a million earths into the sun, and there is room for 300,000 more. Let God be God! Give him his place—which is first place. First in your heart, first with your time, first with your money, first with your talents. Otherwise, you are not a Christian, even if you live and sleep in church. A Christian is a "God-intoxicated" person. Such a person is very rare.

