

What is Jesus Doing?

IS THERE A KINK IN YOUR FAITH HOSE

(part 2)

Last week we began a series called “Is There a Kink In Your Faith Hose?”

Beginning with the supposition that as a new creation in Christ you are actually like a garden hose, plugged in to Jesus, the Source of all Life, Love and Blessing. Once in Christ, you become a conduit of Living Water which flows to you and through you to those God puts in your life.

The kinks in your faith hose to which this series refers, are any hardened bits of your own will that impede the flow of that grace that you received and the life, love and blessing that you are now intended to have and to be in Christ Jesus.

Even as Abraham was blessed to be a blessing to the nations, when you are in sync with what the Holy Spirit is doing and wants to do in you with you and through you, you will be a blessing to all who are around you.

In so doing, you will bless the Lord. Here is a Psalm of David that describes God’s blessings to us, and our appropriate response, which is to bless Him.

Bless the Lord, O my soul;

And all that is within me, bless His holy name!

*Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And forget not all His benefits:*

*Who forgives all your iniquities,
Who heals all your diseases,*

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*Who redeems your life from destruction,
Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,
Who satisfies your mouth with good things,
So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.*
- Psalm 103:1-5

The psalm ends with an exhortation to those who have received God's blessings to bless God by blessing others.

*Bless the Lord, you His angels,
Who excel in strength, who do His word,
Heeding the voice of His word.*
*Bless the Lord, all you His hosts,
You ministers of His, who do His pleasure.*
*Bless the Lord, all His works,
In all places of His dominion.*
Bless the Lord, O my soul!
- Psalm 103:20-22

What do you suppose is God's pleasure that he wants you and me, His ministers, to do? How can we bless the Lord for and most importantly WITH all of the blessings we've received?

Jesus said the first and greatest commandment is to Love the Lord your God with all your soul, all your mind and all your strength, and the second is equal to it and that is to love your neighbor as you love yourself (Matthew 22:37-39).

If you think about it, why would God not want to bless you, knowing that you are going to use those blessings to bless others?

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Last week we talked about one kink in our faith hose as being the fear of not having enough money and likewise the love of money as really being just a preoccupation with self. If that is a kink in your hose, it means that instead of making God #1 in your life you have decided to make yourself number one and this has impeded the flow of blessing to you and through you.

Now let's talk about another, although related potential kink in your faith hose...

What if you really are just satisfied with God's Grace and blessing to you, and you really **aren't much interested in other people**. Maybe you are clenching your hose of blessings so tightly it has become a kink.

In fact, maybe that kink is many kinks in the conduit of blessings that God sends to you from the Throne of grace. Or worse... Maybe the part of your hose that is supposed to extend blessing to others is completely unused.

I once knew a pastor who gave a sermon about how to make your vessel bigger to hold more blessings. As I recall him, he was a pretty self-absorbed guy. I suppose that what he ascribed to was part of the so-called prosperity gospel.

I have observed that when believers put themselves in the middle of the blessing equation, they do tend to become self-absorbed instead of God-directed. I think it's a way of misunderstanding God's incredible love for humanity which is completely undeserved.

I have often said that just because for God it's all about you, doesn't mean that for you it should be all about you. I do believe that it is God's desire to bless those who have received Jesus as Lord. However, let's be clear about this... God does not want to prosper you so that you can acquire a lot of stuff that you want just because you have faith in Jesus and you want to be rich in stuff.

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He did after all, extend the offer of salvation to you. He gave you grace to forgive your sins. But receiving eternal salvation and hearing “well done, good and faithful servant” at the end of your days are likely two different things.

God desires His people to be willing to extend the same grace they’ve received to others and to be open to blessing others in the measure that they themselves are being blessed. That is why loving our neighbors as ourselves is part of the greatest commandment. It is how we show our faith is real.

It’s easy to say that you “love God with all your heart mind and strength,” but if you are not willing to give grace to others as grace has been given to you, then you’re using neither your heart, your mind, nor your strength for the Kingdom of God. Jesus talked about this often and He wasn’t kidding.

If we want to hear “well done, good and faithful servant” at the end of our days on Earth, then we will have to use those days on Earth well, redeeming the time for the glory of God, blessing our neighbors and finding joy in the giving and not just the taking of His blessings and grace.

Withholding Grace from other people takes many forms and all of them will kink up your faith hose. Here is a big one... **unforgiveness**. Now you may say there’s nobody with whom you are currently angry. ...that there’s nobody that you’ve stayed angry at and after all, that person or those people who hurt you did it a long time ago and you’ve pretty much forgotten about it.

You may be thinking of someone right now... Maybe you are thinking that you aren’t sure if you have really forgiven them or not. You may be thinking, “well I just don’t deal with that person anymore, so I guess I’ve forgiven them.

But here is the thing... One of the most beautiful aspects of God’s Grace to us is that once we received His forgiveness by Grace through faith in Jesus, our fellowship with Him was completely restored. How else could it then be possible for us to enter His very Holy of Holies without fear...

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The writer of Hebrews illuminates this...

Let us therefore come boldly before the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace in time of need.

- Hebrews 4:16

So my point is..., if you had something against someone with whom you had been close and you think you have forgiven them, but no longer have a relationship, is that even really forgiveness? Is that a kink in your faith hose and if so, what can you do about it?

Once again, the best solution in this case is for you to go to your Heavenly Father in prayer and ask Him to give you a heart of forgiveness and love for that person. This is one of those things that God will certainly grant you if you ask for it. Again... why would he not?

When you have received a heart of forgiveness in response to this request, pick up the phone and just tell your old friend, or relative or brother or sister or parent that you love them and want to know how they are doing. Then just stand back and be prepared to see what the Lord will do.

It has been my experience that everyone I know who has tried this has seen a relationship restored. That's it. Communication and the love that only God supplies is the kink-buster here. Communicate honestly with God and then communicate openly and lovingly with your now forgiven friend.

What about your spouse? Is there a kink in your faith hose in regards to your spouse? Is it possible that you have withheld affection for weeks, months, perhaps years, because of some slight aggravation that got under your skin so deeply and so insidiously that you don't even know it's there?

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You only know that for some reason you act cold and uncommunicative when you are together, like you'd rather be somewhere else or with someone else than the person that you took as your husband or wife to be your partner, your soul's mate, the one who is supposed to be the closest friend you have in life.

Maybe in your marriage you're just going through the motions and being nice, but you're not laying down your life for your wife if you're a husband or respecting your husband if you're a wife.

If that's the case... and please be honest, first you have to discover what and where that kink is. It could be so ingrained in your behavior by now that you don't even know it exists. It could be something so small and so simple that formed that kink that you have not thought of it in years, but still it has affected and is still affecting your behavior towards that person that you're supposed to give 100% to all the time. Maybe you feel your spouse deserves your neglect...

This form of unforgiveness, the withholding of affection, is particularly cruel and infects every area of your life. Now perhaps that isn't you, but if you suspect that it is, then you desperately need to discover the source of your passive aggressive anger. You know something is seething down there. It may be something you don't even know or remember, or it may be something you do know and are afraid to address with your spouse. You just know that you are resentful.

I'm not talking about what your marriage looks like on the outside, even to you. I'm talking about the real relationship that you have with your spouse. Maybe the blockage is some old pain from your childhood that keeps rearing it's ugly head, or it's something about your relationship with yourself that is so old and dark and deep that you are afraid to discuss it and never have discussed it no matter how many years you've been married.

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Maybe it's something from your past that you just can't get up the courage to reveal or something in your present that you want, and are resentful that you don't have, but you just have never asked your spouse and you're resentful because you only know that you are not getting what you need or worse, feel that you deserve. But let's be real, how would he or she even know what you want or feel you need if you never asked or if you never discussed it?

Is it even something that you should discuss with them or would that just be selfishness on your part? There's only One that can answer that question for you.

The Holy Spirit.

- So, once again, get on your knees and just talk to your Heavenly Father.
- Ask Him to reveal the blockage.
- ask Him to give you wisdom to know what the problem is, and how YOU can be the peacemaker.
- Ask for the courage and strength to do whatever it takes to straighten out that kink in your hose.

But be aware... The devil is going to try to drag your mind off into thinking that your unforgiveness and anger is justified. That it must be something that your spouse has done wrong, and that's what started this whole thing to begin with. So, just ignore him, meaning the devil.

A scripture that I really can't stress enough that is crucial to overcoming almost every dysfunctional problem that is caused by our carnal mind is found in James 4. It relates particularly to unforgiveness and especially in a marital relationship.

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Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously”? But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

- James 4:5-7

Let's unravel this scripture. James says the scripture proclaims that the Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously. What do you suppose the Spirit of God is yearning jealously for?

I maintain that the Spirit who dwells in us, the Spirit of Christ, is yearning jealously to be given an active place in us, replacing our human nature which is basically pride. Here is our opportunity to use Grace in our own marriages.

If we humble ourselves and realize that it is not our spouse's fault that we have fallen into this habitual coldness, even if it is something that he or she has done to us that we felt was undeserved, but take responsibility for the fact that we have allowed this to affect us to the point of no return (except in Christ), it is only when we accept this personal responsibility that we can truly ask Holy Spirit not only to reveal the source of the problem but to give us grace as we give grace to our spouses.

This is where we can effectively resist the devil because we have truly submitted to God and His Spirit that yearns in us to be shown to our spouses in grace. This will unkink that part of the hose that makes you feel uncomfortable or act distantly with your spouse.

As a man who loves his wife, I know that I have been guilty of this very thing. It is only when I realize that my job is to lay down my life for my wife as Christ did for the church (*which means forgiving whatever I may feel has been done to me or not done for me*),

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and take that seriously, as my reasonable service, to accept my hurt feelings in love and return it to my wife with grace, that I find that my wife's natural response (or should I say supernatural response) is to respect me and repent of whatever it is that has caused the initial slight that may exist on her part.

And on my part, whenever I have acted or re-acted in an unkind manner, I have found that it behooves me to realize that it is my responsibility to humble myself in sincere apology and that then my wife will be able to respond respectfully.

While we are at it, let's talk a bit about other resentments that are kinking up our faith hose. Maybe there is resentment towards others in your life that you don't even recognize as unforgiveness, for the way they've treated you or the way they're treating you right now. Maybe it's your Boss who seems unable or unwilling to understand the simple things that you need to find satisfaction in your job. Maybe you feel that you're being under-compensated or given short shrift for the contribution that you've made for the company that you've worked at for a very long time.

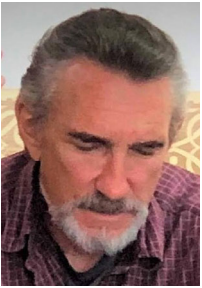
It may be if you seek the Lord in prayer that He will give you the answer and maybe it's one that you've known all along, that it's just time to move on; or maybe it's just time to humble yourself and realize that you could do your job better if you cared more. I would suggest that you simply ask God for the courage to ask your boss for what you feel you need. That puts the compassion ball in the other person's court, but sometimes that's just what it takes for you to know exactly what to do.

Once you've unkinked that hose that goes from the throne of grace to you by seeking the Lord in prayer, wisdom will come to you to know what to do, although sometimes acting or walking in that wisdom will still be difficult.

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But asking your Father in Heaven for wisdom AND the courage and strength to walk it out is where faith comes in. It's also where your faith grows to become just as you see the deliverance of the Lord is directly tied to your submission and obedience. After all, that's where the rubber meets the road.

That's where the kinks in your faith hose get unkinked and you will become ever more able to let the Living Water of Christ's blessings flow freely through you.



Let's Pray,

- John Henry Raskin, Roadhouse Rabbi