

What is Jesus Doing?

A THREE-STRANDED CORD FOR DISCIPLES

As we continue our series on discipleship, I felt led today to share some of the tools that I have used on my journey with Jesus Christ.

There are three scriptures that specifically have shaped my understanding of God's nature and my calling and have helped me to focus on being the best disciple I can be.

The number three appears often in the Bible. The number three is often said to represent divine completion, perfection and wholeness.

In God's eternal form before the world began, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit coexisted, three-in-one, in perfect harmony and love with one another.

- These three were all present and participant in the Creation.
- There are three parts to a human being – body, soul and spirit.
- There are also three parts to the nature of our soul. - mind, emotions and will.
- Three Angels visited Abraham at Sodom and Gomorrah.
- Noah had three sons... Shem, Ham and Japheth representing all of mankind.
- There were three notable forefathers of God's chosen people Israel. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
- Jesus was tempted three times in the desert by Satan right after He was baptized by John.

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- Jesus ministry on Earth lasted 3 years.
- Jesus took three witnesses up with him to the Mount of transfiguration. John, James and Peter.
- ...until the Father spoke on the Mount of transfiguration, there were three there. Moses, Elijah and Jesus.
- In the Garden of Gethsemene, Jesus prayed three times that the cup of God's wrath might be taken from Him yet he took it in full measure.
- Peter denied Jesus three times just before he was crucified.
- Jesus restored Peter three times and each time reiterated to him his purpose to feed the flock.
- There were three on the Mount of crucifixion... two others crucified with Jesus; the one who said yes and was with Jesus in Paradise immediately, Jesus, and the one who scorned Jesus and said no to eternal life.
- Jesus resurrection happened 3 days after his death on the Cross.

Because His very nature is Triune, in many of the moments where He wants to communicate something about Himself, God works in threes.

Although not one of the three that I am going to present to you as primary tools I've always liked this scripture to describe the power of three...

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A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.

- Ecclesiastes 4:12

The three scriptures that I'm going to present to you today work together as a three stranded cord in my faith walk. I believe if you meditate upon them and apply them in your life, you will find it easier to hear from the Holy Spirit and walk out your heavenly Father's will.

Meditating on how these three scriptures work together has allowed the Holy Spirit...

- To strengthen me in time of trouble,
- To comfort me in times of stress,
- To help me to bring peace in love when those around me are spewing hatred,
- And to provide direction for the way ahead as I take up my cross daily and follow Jesus.

I share these with you as part of our discipleship series because I believe that they will do the same for you if you allow them to really sink deeply into your inner person.

The first is one that many people overlook and that is in Proverbs.

Commit thy works unto the Lord and thy thoughts shall be established.

- Proverbs 16:3

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When I first came to know the Lord and began to swim in the river of his word daily, I had been given an Old King James version family Bible, which I read diligently from front to back two times a year for 10 years along with other focused Bible studies. If you've never read the Old King James or at least looked at your favorite scriptures in the old English vernacular you should try it.

For me, whose only experience with God up to the point of my rebirth in Christ was sitting in synagogue when I was young in the rare times when there was a bar mitzvah or a wedding... or later in my life, after my mother had passed on when I would go say Kaddish (The Jewish prayer for the dead) on Yom Kippur.

Although I had not yet met my savior I did feel the presence of God in synagogue. So When I first came to know Jesus and study his word, there was something especially comforting about the old English that reminded me of the stained glass, the altar and strangely of the rabbi and cantor's voices uttering the rich sounds of Hebrew.

When I received Christ I immediately knew that I was all in, and that all I wanted was for Him to be Lord of my life as I had made a shambles of my own life for 43 years. The idea of committing my works which I read to mean everything "unto" the Lord...

...and that He would then establish my thinking was not only attractive but seemed crucial to me if I was going to do what I told Jesus I was going to do and that was to follow Him.

There's something about the word "unto" that has particular meaning to me and I'm not even sure why but every time I see it in this scripture it gives me peace. Many other translations say things like "commit your works to the Lord and your plans will succeed... somehow that doesn't work for me.

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I suspect that etymologically (and that means according to the most precise literal translation of Greek Hebrew and Aramaic), this may be accurate. But the Bible is a living word, sharper than any two-edged sword and it divides soul and spirit. Amen?

I am more interested in what the Holy Spirit wants to communicate to me through his word than I am with the accuracy of men's linguistic interpretations. Suffice it to say that when I commit my works to the Lord or as Old King James puts it, unto the Lord, I truly want Him to establish my thoughts.

I have no doubt that when the Lord, who knows the way ahead, as well as being the One who gifted me with the talents and abilities that He gave me to accomplish any given task establishes my thoughts that my plans will succeed but that is only because (in my mind at least) they are His plans.

Therefore, if for no other reason than because the Bible is only cause and effect if it is God's cause and God's effect... I prefer from my limited perspective to commit my works unto Him so that he can indeed establish my thoughts.

I don't need to know the end game.

I don't need to know the final purposes...

and i certainly don't need to know that my plans are going to succeed.

There is something very "God is my co-pilot" about saying that if I commit my works to the Lord, my plans will succeed. It's almost like "yeah if I tell him I'm doing it all for Him then He's going to give me a big thumbs up and help me to do what I have already decided I want to do" (*Buzzer sound*).

He is not my copilot, doing my bidding like a genie in a bottle... I am His servant, here for one purpose, and that is to do the will of my Father who sent me, my Lord who saved me and my Counselor who leads me.

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In keeping with our recent topic of discipleship and having said that we are able to access the mind of Christ only when we quiet the carnal mind that we all still have, it seems to me that committing my works unto the Lord is a pretty good place to start.

The next two scriptures that I'm going to show you will illuminate why having Jesus (the Lord) establish my thoughts is completely sufficient, but the bottom line is, boys and girls... I don't want Him to underwrite my plans. I want Him to establish my thoughts so that I know how to think about absolutely everything in my life, my relationships, my work, my hobbies, my resources, money, and possessions... everything.

He has put people in my life that have blessed me and that I've been allowed to bless. I want to know how to think about them.

He's given me talents and abilities that are unique and special to me, some of which I know, and some of which I have yet to discover, but they're all meant for His Glory; the more I commit these gifts back to him, the more he can show me what their use is in real time.

My resources.

I've often said that God is gracious and merciful, but He is also generous to His servants... and by servants, I mean disciples. The apostles that traveled with Jesus when he was on Earth never went hungry while they were with him and although Donna and I have seen our bank account dwindle and increase at various times in our journey with Jesus, the well has never run dry, sometimes miraculously...

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And so I commit my works unto the Lord and lo and behold through His Spirit, my thoughts are established and I know how to think. This sermon is probably a fair example...

The second scripture that impacted my life in an incredible way as many of you are aware is in Ephesians... When I discovered this scripture for its true impact, I was some years into my journey with Jesus and by then I was reading the New King James front to back twice a year for 10 years.

The new King James says ...

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. (NKJV)

- Ephesians 2:10

It's such a rich verse. I had heard pastors preach on it from various pulpits with other translations, that said instead of "we are His workmanship" it said "we are His masterpiece". It takes on a very different connotation to me when it says that.

For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. (NLT)

- Ephesians 2:10

I can understand that connotation and it certainly makes sense that we would also be His masterpiece in Christ... His crown of creation. And I kind of like the way it says that we were created anew in Christ Jesus so that we can do the good works He planned for us long ago.

That resonates with my perspective that I've been sharing lately that the "law of the spirit of life" as the Apostle Paul puts it, gives us the ability to do the good works prepared beforehand.

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The phrase 'workmanship' connotes that we are a work in progress even as born-again believers... 'created in Christ Jesus' has rich meaning to me because it indicates that sovereignty of God... that overall eternal understanding that only God possesses of who we were before we existed, who we are as we journey through this place, and who we are to become with Him in eternity.

It speaks of His knowledge that encompasses the entirety of our humanity and not just who we were once we said yes to Jesus. We were created in Christ Jesus!

Wow there's something just so rich about that...

It's a very different image to me, indicating that God who is the alpha and omega certainly knows what we're going to do and the things that he's prepared for us to do that we already did from his universal mind view... again, don't try to get your mind around that when it's a great mystery.

I also particularly like that the NKJV uses the phrase... 'for good works that God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them...' It's the word '*should*' that I really like because it gives credence to the choice that we have in this present physical reality that we find ourselves in...

It acknowledges our free will, both to accept Jesus and then to allow Him to establish our thoughts unto action! Even though God knows the beginning from the end and knows us before we existed, knows us right now, and knows us in eternity at the end of our time on Earth simultaneously, we only know the now that we're in currently... stuck in these bodies with that soul which has mind, emotions and will trying to gain control.

It is only when we choose to be led by His Spirit, that we can use our will to "walk out the good works prepared beforehand for us to do".

Anyway, that's why I like the word 'should' in there.

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So that's the second one of my life-changing scriptures... The third one is in Romans. The NKJV translation for this one is fine, but I particularly like the NLT...

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

- Romans 8:28

Paul the apostle wrote this epistle to the Roman Church to encourage them that no matter what they were going through...

...be it good, where numbers were being added to their church...

...bad where some were falling away from the faith or believing lying teachers and hypocrites who were filtering into their fellowship...

...or horrible where they were being persecuted for their faith...

God in his eternal wisdom was certainly working all things (and that means everything) together for the eternal good of those who love him and are the called according to His purpose (and as the NLT puts it, for them, meaning each one of His beloved children).

Again in this verse, we see the sovereignty, of the faithful, loving, trustworthy God who knew us before... is with us even right NOW... now I want you to think about these three scriptures and put them together...

Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established.

- Proverbs 16:3

In your morning meditations, this verse will show you how to start your day. By making that commitment to God to access His mind in your relationships, your schedule, your business

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For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

- Ephesians 2:10

This verse will focus you on what the Mind of Christ is showing you (since you have made that commitment). You will be sensitized to recognizing the good works throughout your day...

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

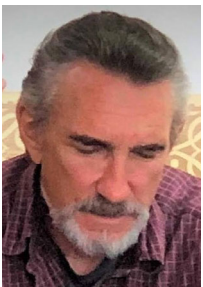
- Romans 8:28

And this verse will give you blessed assurance throughout the day that everything you face, your challenges, failures, as well as victories, will bring Glory to God and grow the Kingdom where you walk and He is working all of it together for His Glory and your eternal joy.

I know I mixed up the translations today which is unusual for me as New King James is my preference... But whichever translation you prefer is fine.

Meditate on these three scriptures and how they work together to provide a Kingdom reality whereby you can walk in the light of the living God intentionally. When the enemy seeks to confuse you or lie to you about God's nature or about who you are in Christ Jesus, you can fight back with these scriptures.

These 3 scriptures make a 3 stranded cord which is not easily broken.



Let's Pray,

- John Henry Raskin, Roadhouse Rabbi

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