

Spiritual Growth Lessons from Christian Ambassadors

Lesson 45

Partnership – God’s Part and Our Part

By Sharon K. Griffiee

To lead into our lesson, I will begin with a brief review of our last Spiritual Growth Lesson (#44). In that lesson, I introduced the subject, “*God Is Not Holding People Hostage To His Will*”. We learned that God is not controlling everything that happens in our life. We are not simply pawns in the game of life that God uses and manipulates to fulfill his purposes, to ensure that everything comes out the way he wants. The truth is, everything doesn’t come out the way God wants. If God had his way, everyone would be saved and live happily ever after in His Kingdom. Yet we know from scripture (**John 3:16-18**), many people will not be saved and will in fact perish.

This may be a surprise to some, but though God is Sovereign, having supreme rank and power, that does not mean he exercises his power to control our every action. God has chosen not to control us. By doing so, he limits his activity in our lives according to the degree of response we make to him.

Hebrews 11:6 (KJV) – *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

We are either rewarded by our response, or denied rewards by our lack of response. Observe how Jesus could do little in his hometown of Nazareth because of their unbelief and lack of response to him.

Matthew 13:57-58 (KJV) – *And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, “A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.” And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.*

Everywhere Jesus went he looked for, as well as longed for, the positive response of the people to his goodness. However, righteousness cannot be forced upon anyone. It must be built upon man’s own free choice. Recall the words of Jesus as he stood over Jerusalem,

Matthew 23:37 (KJV) – *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have*

gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!”

Notice the phrase, “*Ye would not*”! That means they could have made a different choice – a better choice with better results. God is not indifferent to what we choose to do. He truly cares about our choices and how those choices affect the quality of our lives. Jesus wept over Jerusalem because of the choice the people made. The nation, unlike chicks that naturally run to their mother hen in times of danger, willfully refused to turn to the Lord. As a result Jerusalem’s house (city) was left desolate (**Matthew 23:38**). Forty years later in A.D. 70, Jerusalem was a heap of ruins.

What does this have to do with our life? God wants the good life, the abundant life for each of us (**see: John 10:10**). He wants it more than any of us can fathom. But He will not bring it to pass without our cooperation. If we do not want our life to end in ruins, it is important to understand that God considers our relationship with him to be a partnership. God has a part to play in the relationship and we have a part to play in the relationship. Jesus said,

John 15:5 (NIV) – *“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”*

“*Apart from me you can do nothing.*” Jesus made it very clear that we cannot skip what our part is in the relationship. If we are to bear fruit – even *much* fruit – we are to remain in Him as He remains in us!

God is always faithful. He is never the problem. The problem comes when we refuse to do our part. We are told frequently by fellow Christians to get out of the way and let God have control. So what do we do? We allow the adversary to *distort* the message. How? We literally sit back and expect that because God is Sovereign and all-powerful, he will do it all for us. We are led to believe that as new creatures in Christ, He will make all things new automatically, without any effort from us. **See: II Corinthians 5:17b**

A while back I read a devotion from a woman who stated that tiny hummingbirds hitch rides on the backs of Canadian geese to accomplish their migration. The first thought that crossed my mind was, *that is really cool!* I could envision these large powerful geese bringing the tiniest of birds to their destination. Yet in the back of my mind I wondered if this were really true.

Several months later I was sitting in a waiting room and there on the magazine rack was a magazine about birds. Not only that, but on the cover was a beautiful humming bird. This really caught my interest, because underneath the picture was the caption, *myths about humming birds*. Eagerly turning to the article, there in front of my eyes was a colorful picture of a large Canadian goose in flight. You guessed it! On his back was a caricature drawing of a family of humming birds, hitching a ride. There they were, lounging on deck chairs with their dark shades on, sitting back and thoroughly enjoying the ride. The truth? Hummingbirds do their own migration; they do not hitch a ride on the back of a goose.

If we are of the mindset that God is going to carry us into a new life and completely transform us without any involvement on our part, we are relying on a *myth* to put us over. It is a very dangerous position to be in. Why? If we are expecting God to do it all for us, what does it do to our faith when he doesn't come through the way we want? We would end up blaming God, getting mad at him and even resenting him. We would eventually lose faith in him altogether.

Bottom Line: God doesn't want us to get out of the way, so he can control our life. Quite the opposite, Jesus considers our relationship with him to be a *partnership*. Jesus reveals in scripture that he is the vine; we are the branches (**John 15:5**). His part is to be our Lord and Savior, spiritual teacher and guide. Our part is to take heed – listen, learn, and become transformed into the image of Christ; to bear fruit.

Whatever has been poisoning our lives, whether it is anger, fear, jealousy, an unforgiving heart, or whatever, Jesus needs our cooperation to get it out! He has a lot to teach, which means we have a lot to learn. If we don't learn from our mistakes, we will keep repeating them. We will get further and further away from the good life Jesus desires for us to have. Jesus is ready and waiting. Will we accept His invitation to partner with Him? Will we yoke up with Him?

Matthew 11:28-30 (KJV) – “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Questions for personal or group study:

1. Though God is Sovereign, having supreme rank and power, He has chosen not to use that power to control our every action. By doing so, God limits his activity in our lives, according to what...?
2. What gauge does God use to determine if He will reward or deny rewards to us? (**Hebrews 11:6**)
3. Why did people get offended at Jesus in his home town of Nazareth, and for what reason did their offense stop his mighty works? (**Matthew 13:57-58**)
4. Jesus wept over Jerusalem because of the choice they made. By willfully refusing to turn to the Lord, what became of Jerusalem's house (city) in A.D. 70?
5. Just as Jerusalem was left in ruins, God doesn't want our lives to end in ruins. What kind of relationship does God want to have with us to prevent that from happening? (**John 15:5**)
6. What reward does Jesus promise us if we remain in Him, as He remains in us?
7. We are told frequently by fellow Christians to get out of the way and let God have control. How do we allow the adversary to *distort* that message?
8. If we believe God is going to carry us into a new life and completely transform us without any involvement on our part – what are we relying on to put us over?
9. Jesus said, he is the vine and we are the branches. He considers our relationship with him to be a partnership. What is his part and what is our part?
10. If we don't learn from our mistakes we will keep repeating them. Where do we go to find rest for our souls and at the same time learn where we made our mistakes? (**Matthew 11:28-30**)