

Table of Contents

Introduction

As our children were growing up in our home, I made it my habit to read the Bible to them after supper most every evening and to comment on the passage we read as they listened more or less attentively. Despite years of those nightly readings, one of our children, as an adult, once commented to me that it wasn't until she had gone off to college that she learned about God's grace.

I think I understand better now why grace was lacking in my teaching. In the last couple of years, I have noticed that, when I pray, my prayers have always been exclusively directed to God, whom I've too often seen as a frequently disappointed and disapproving Father. I've never prayed to Jesus, the Brother who was tempted in every way like us and who therefore understands the challenge of being human.

Frankly, I have confessed numerous times to God that I feel like I have scarcely known Jesus. That's a rather shocking statement for one who first believed in Him 60 years ago and who has been a seminary student, a Christian youth worker and a missionary, yet it is the truth. Though I believe in Him as the Son of God, I have thought of Him almost more as a historical figure. His death and resurrection opened the way to Heaven for me but, His mission having been completed 2,000 years ago, I have seen Him as simply having sat down at the right hand of the Father and, until He returns, having nothing more to do with my daily life.

Uncomfortable with that imbalance in my relationship to the Trinity, the past couple of years I've made a very simple and subtle change in reading the Bible, particularly the Gospels, in the hope of coming to know Jesus better. As you know, the Bible's books are divided into chapters and, within those chapters, events or topics are often subdivided by headings such as "The Transfiguration" or "Jesus Walks on Water". Previously, it was always my habit to read an entire chapter each morning before praying to the Father about its content. The problem is that chapters frequently deal with multiple events and topics and thus my focus in prayer did not center on a single theme or insight. It was more divided and diffuse and the longer readings (and our roosters' insistent crowing to be released from the coop) made me feel pressured to finish reflecting and praying. The very simple change I've made is to read just the portion of a chapter

that falls under a single heading and, in so doing, thereby to concentrate on just one of Jesus' attributes, either directly stated or deduced from something He did, and then to talk to Him about it.

That simple technique, essentially trying to accomplish more with less, is what is inspiring me now to do these writings. Now in my 70's, it is getting very late in the game, but maybe I can still come to know Jesus better and to see Him getting up off His throne and sitting down beside me to become the Brother I should always have known, loved and enjoyed more.