

Loving, Copying, Depending

A sermon by Larry Kirkpatrick

2009-06-27

<http://www.greatcontroversy.org/gco/pdf/2009/kirl-copying.pdf>

<http://www.greatcontroversy.org/gco/ser/kirl-copying.php>

Daily Consecration	2
Choosing the Breath of Persistent Communion	4
Refusing to Dwell on Self	5
Alternative Heart Themes	6
Rest and Service	8
Conclusion	9

Presenter: Larry Kirkpatrick
Location: Mentone Seventh-day Adventist Church, CA, USA
Delivery: 2009-06-28 01:30Z
Publication: GreatControversy.org 2009-06-28 01:30Z
Type: Sermon

CITE THIS ARTICLE AS: Larry Kirkpatrick, "Loving, Copying, Depending" ONLINE AT:
<http://www.greatcontroversy.org/gco/pdf/2009/kirl-copying.pdf>. THIS ARTICLE IS subject to a
Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses>).

Today, one burning question: How do we grow in Christ?

The short answer: we grow by loving, copying, and depending upon Him. We'll put this into practical terms under three headings: (1) daily consecration, (2) choosing the breath of persistent communion, and (3), the rest and service combination.

Daily Consecration

We live and work in cycles. We follow a pattern of sleeping and rising, day by day. We order our time.

The first thing we should do each day, is to set aside time to give ourselves to God afresh. When you rise, at the very beginning of your day, come aside and talk to God. This is basic (Psalm 5:3; 88:13; Genesis 28:18; Daniel 6:10).

Now if you have to use the bathroom, by all means do so, then come aside. Don't place yourself in a position of rushing and distraction. Then there is the issue of alarm clocks, programmed radios, and television remote controls. You set it; at the appointed hour, it goes off. Immediately your mind is flooded with the latest "news" or popular music, or religious tunes. You may have set up a machine to start your day listening to the most godly Christian music or a recording of a sermon. But consider a different approach.

The first thing for you to do is to talk with God. The first thing is for you to speak to Him, place yourself in His care afresh. There will be time to hear a sermon later. Right now, you wake up, and you tell Him, Good morning, Lord! (Daniel 2:19-23).

Perhaps this sounds too hard. Well, get a hold of yourself. This is the easiest practice we will discuss today. My brother, my sister, God has made an enormous investment in you at Calvary; now you bend yourself to making a serious investment in Him.

Your first work every day is to get up and to get quiet. Open a space for your mind. Get on your knees, or take a morning walk, or whatever works best. Find a way, make a way, and go straight on to God.

When you pray to Him, consider asking for these things.

First, ask Him to help you be entirely His for the day. This does not mean you are going to stay home from work and pray alone at home all day long. It just means that you are asking Him to help you remain with Him through the day. You are acknowledging your weakness. You are praying like the man in the Bible who said, “Lord I believe; please help my unbelief!” (Mark 9:24).

Second, commit your daily plans to Him. This does not mean that you are going to fly on impressions all day long. This means that you will carry out your plans for the day that you have already arranged unless He makes clear a change in those plans for you and opens the way for you to act. You are not choosing chaos; you are choosing order and availability. You are going to conduct yourself throughout your day as a hard-working Christian. If there should be a change, an opportunity for ministry that works itself out, you are going to act on it in just as orderly a manner.

Third, ask Him to use you. You’ve already given yourself to Him, so implicitly, you have already done this. Nevertheless, ask Him explicitly to use you. Give Him permission. In doing so, you empower Him. He operates under a set of “rules of engagement” that He has chosen. In these rules, He respects the free will of others, He refuses to use force or coercion upon His children. He invites our cooperation, desires that we ask, then He freely moves to bless us.

Fourth, ask Him to abide with you. We'll talk more about abiding in a moment. For now, realize that you are to prepare your heart so that all that you do is done in Christ. Again, be intentional; ask Him to abide with you. Plead with Him to. Not because He needs persuading, but because it is good for your own heart to plead with Him. You want an openness to His presence, and that is not going to happen unless you open the way for it.

Choosing the Breath of Persistent Communion

We move now to the challenge of how to abide. Consecrating yourself to Him first thing when you wake up is straightforward. But abiding throughout the day, that can be a challenge.

But should it be such a challenge? No one has to ask us to breath. The capacity is in us to train ourselves to turn to God almost automatically. But we will have to be diligent in order to reach that goal. Still, if the change to glorified flesh will not be a change of character, if that change in character must be wrought beforehand, then when must it happen? It must take place now.

Throughout our day, we are usually engaging in this activity or that. Many of us are employed by others; our time is not our own. Along the way through our day at various points we will realize that our hold on God is slipping, that our thought patterns are reverting to the unconversion. Communion with God is essential; there are no substitutes for it. We need to find ways to know we are slipping and to immediately act to recover ourselves and places ourselves again in God's pathway.

So. How can we know when we are losing our grip on God?

Refusing to Dwell on Self

We must refuse to dwell on self. Satan has four traps, diversions he is continually springing upon us. These we must detect and avoid.

The first, is to lose our connection with God and shift to a focus on pleasures. “She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth” (1 Timothy 5:6). Pleasures can deaden spiritual perception. There is a difference between appreciating something that God has given us and in a thankful spirit enjoying it, compared to losing sight of Him completely and enjoying raw pleasure hedonistically. When we experience something pleasurable but forget God who gave us our taste buds, sense of smell, touch, eye for beauty, or ear for hearing, then our enjoyment becomes selfish. There is no recognition of our Maker, no thanksgiving filling the heart. Then we are missing God’s opportunity to rejoice in His kingdom. Material things are not bad in themselves (Genesis 1:30). It is not money that is evil, but an inordinate affection for it.

Another source of distraction is life’s cares, perplexities, and sorrows. These choke us, they take the heart and mind away from God’s things. They bend our perspective, they assume a false sense of magnitude (Mark 4:18, 19). There is a basic distortion of priorities that leads one to reduce the spiritual footprint in the life and instead focus on the transient things, everything around us that is crying out for our attention, claiming to be an urgent, immediate need. If any generation has been especially at risk of sensory overload, of being buzzed and beeped and alerted into catatonia, it is ours.

A third source of distraction is when we focus on the faults of others. Don’t we all know people like this? They always have an improvement, a way to do something better, a criticism, a fault that they find. And others see them as judgmental, fault-finding, imperious, condescending;

they don't rally want to be around them. These behaviors often originate in outward-oriented people, choleric, aggressive leader-types. They know how to tell others just what to do.

Sometimes they call themselves perfectionists. See, they know they have this fault, but will not engage in the heart labor of eradicating it. They place others around them at risk, for not everyone is able to psychologically sustain their relentless demands. Others lose hope of ever satisfying them. Relationships are damaged rather than healed.

A fourth approach is for people of yet another sort of personality: the inward-focused. Satan's distraction for this type of person is to lead them, if he can, to focus on their own faults, real or just imagined. If you are the kind who continually berates yourself, attacks yourself, beats yourself down into the dust, then this may be Satan's approach with you. And I guarantee you, you have some faults, you do want to spend some of your resources to be changed. But a person can be too hard on himself. Do not be Satan's accomplice in your own destruction.

These are ways that Satan distracts us from abiding in God. We die daily (1 Corinthians 15:31), but then we realize that self is in process of coming alive again (1 Corinthians 9:27; Romans 6:6). As we are able, we educate ourselves to keep our attention set in ways that are more spiritually productive.

Alternative Heart Themes

Instead of self, our focus should be on Christ. We want to learn to love as He loves, to copy Him, and to depend upon Him. The primary source for this education is the Scripture, and in particular the four gospels. Here is the source material for healing heart themes.

First, His love. We learn of it all through the Bible. How do we see it in the gospels? The first place we find the word explicitly in the New Testament, is Matthew, the sermon on the

mount. We can also see cases where His love is evident. It is all over the place. The woman caught in adultery, the tax collector called to discipleship, the woman with the flow of blood healed, Jesus washing Judas' feet, or His prayer as He is nailed to the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). His love was always reaching out.

Again, we look to Jesus and consider the perfection of His character. The way that He dealt with Judas. The way that He dealt with Peter. His tenderness breaking the hard hearts of the sons of thunder. We watch Jesus relating to other people and see a perfect character winning hearts that were willing to be won. Even Judas' heart was touched by seeing Jesus' perfect character in action. But we need more than to be touched. We need to look to Him continually, to look and to live.

Again, we watch Him in His self-denial. He goes into the wilderness and refuses to eat for more than a month. He withstands temptations to bring His kingdom by divine imposition rather than human solidarity. He refuses to make stones into bread, to cast Himself from the temple and be caught up by angels, and to take control of the kingdoms of men. He refuses at every point, relies upon His Father at every point. Beaten, spat upon, cursed at, He declines every opportunity for retaliation. He could call 12 legions of angels, but does not. He is wounded for our transgressions, chastised for our sins, and He bears it, the Just suffering for the unjust.

And we see Jesus in humility. He hides His deity. He lays down divine power, entrusts it into His Father's hand, He leaves behind His glory that He had with the Father before this world was. He keeps Himself in limitation to our human weaknesses. That which is His by right He refuses to take back to Himself—not until His mission in our flesh is accomplished.

We see Jesus in His purity and holiness. He refuses to carry Caesar's coinage, but makes His questioners bring forth the coin with Caesar's image upon it. We see Jesus in His purity calling to the Father, praying, asking His Father to raise Lazarus. Jesus in the upper room washing the feet of the disciples—including His betrayer, Judas. Jesus pleading as He is nailed to the cross, "Father, forgive them, they do not understand what they are doing."

As we dwell on these alternative heart themes, we change. As we consider again and again these characteristics of Jesus, we learn to copy them. We learn the breath of consistent communion.

Rest and Service

There is another point we do not want to miss. God's promise of rest is united with His call to labor. We see this in Matthew 11. Jesus calls to us, and says,

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 (Matthew 11:28, 29).

If we would receive His rest, there is labor to be accomplished. Self is to be battled. The way of battle is to take Christ's yoke upon us. We join with Him. Our weakness is united to His strength; our foolishness united to His wisdom. If we would learn to love, we must love Him. If we would learn to be like Him, we must copy Him. And if we would find strength to follow in His track, then we must learn to depend upon Him.

It is precisely as we labor on His behalf that we best learn to trust in Him. It is then that we see our need of Him, and then that we especially practice dependence upon Him. Many

things in our own culture speak against being dependent upon others. But in Christianity, learning how to trust and to be trustworthy are virtues.

Our need to continuously abide through the day might be better described as learning how to cling closely to Jesus. Along the way, because of human frailty, the mind begins to wander, the heart begins to drift. Growing up in Christ means learning how to tell when this is happening, and to stage an intervention.

The means of intervention is both simple and profound. One who knows, wrote in the little book *Steps to Christ*, p. 71:

It is by loving Him, copying Him, depending wholly upon Him, that you are to be transformed into His likeness. p. 71).

In order to become like Him, we must understand what He is like. The Bible, and especially the four gospels help us. To bring these desires to be like Jesus into reality, we must engage in their reproduction personally. First we consider them and then we reenact them.

Conclusion

In order to become like Jesus, we need ourselves to love as did Jesus, to copy Jesus, and to learn to depend upon Jesus. We need to consecrate ourselves to Him each day. Then through the day, we need to keep by His side. When we begin to lose our grip on Him, we need to return. By recognizing Satan's traps of distraction, we head off successful assaults by him. By dwelling on Jesus, we fortify ourselves in right behaviors. And finally, by resting from trying to save ourselves and instead helping others, we find ourselves in special need and we learn to depend upon Jesus. In loving, copying, depending, we find transformation. Then not only we ourselves but others are drawn to the kingdom of our Father.

Biographical Note: Pastor Larry Kirkpatrick is a convert to the Adventist faith. Since 1994 he has served in the ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He holds degrees from Southern Adventist University and the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. His work has included research assistant for the Ellen G. White Estate, pioneering Adventist internet ministry, involvement in GYC, and presenter at the 50th Anniversary *Questions on Doctrine* Conference. He is author of the books *Real Grace for Real People* and *Cleanse and Close*. For many years his sermons and papers have been published on the internet. Larry and wife Pamela have served churches in Nevada, Utah, and California. The Kirkpatricks presently serve at the [Mentone church](#) near Loma Linda, California.