

"The Kingdom of God Is Within You"

(The Passions and Purposes of the King - John 17:1-26) Part 4

When we believe into Christ and are born from above, we are reborn with His passions and purposes - a passion for truth, a passion for oneness, a passion for self-expenditure. Why is that so? We now share in His nature, His character (II Pet 1:3,4). Our God is a self-giving Lover. That is what it means to be God. That is also what it means to be the people born of God.

We activate that passion with a "battle cry"... "Not I, but you!" When we say, "But God...", we are turning to the Truth. As we pray, "Not I, but Christ!", we are embracing our oneness with Him. When we declare, "Not I, but you!", we are laying down our lives for the sake of others (I Jo 3:16). We begin to participate in the intent and action of God to love others into being.

In the Kingdom of God, His love must set the course of our lives. (I Jo 4:19; II Cor 5:14). Getting lost in His love (I Jo 4:19) casts the fear out of us (I Jo 4:18) that keeps us all wrapped up in ourselves. We are ready to think with the "mind of Christ" (I Cor 2:16) - an intelligence fueled by love - and move creatively and even sacrificially in the direction of need.

For what purpose? To display and glorify the character of God. To reveal His Life for others. When we get lost in the love of God and declare, "Not I, but you!", we become God's primary sacramental matter in His universe. His means of conveyance whereby He moves Himself (His Love) to someone in need and our lives become the "road" that God travels. "So send I you" (Jo 17:18; 20:21)!

What would that look like? Mostly, it would look like you! You... me... the servants, the bondslaves of Christ. When deity and humanity showed up as one on earth for the first time, it looked like a bondsman (Phil 2:5-7). Someone volunteering to pay the price so others go free. Love begins to run its course... from a Person... through a person... to a person. Isn't that the "way" of the cross? To walk that "way", "not I, but Christ" must be translated into "not I, but you". And the passion of Christ will be fulfilled, "You will disclose Me to the world". (Jo 14:22)

A passion for truth is the ground of our faith. A passion for oneness is the foundation of our hope. It is faith and hope that free us to love. And in that freedom we are sent by God to have communion with the world.

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Greetings

I know people are urged to make resolutions as the new year begins. I guess there are worse things to do... such as resign ourselves to the status quo, keep doing the same things over and over even though nothing changes, or just sit and curse the darkness rather than turn on the light!

Nevertheless, how about choosing hope this year instead of choosing resolutions? Hope battles negative expectations, limits catastrophic thinking and energizes us to move on through adversity. Hope searches for meaning, even in suffering, and activates creativity when it seems like we're stuck.

For the children of God, hope is a passion for what is possible because of Who is with us in whatever we are in! (Ps 71:5; I Tim 1:1) It is standing in the present moment with a future look toward a Sovereign, Loving, Redemptive God Who is "causing all things to work together for our good." (Lam 3:21-24; Ro 8:28-29) Hope is abiding in the joyful certainty of knowing we are God's always being loved children (Ps 33:22; Ro 5:1-5). Hope is always within us telling us we can experience and express the glory of God in all things. (Col 1:27)

But be ready - if you choose hope this coming year - you just may have to "give and account of the hope that is within you!" (I Pet 3:15) Then go ahead and tell them your hope is a Person... His name is Jesus Christ, the Lord of your life!

CALENDAR

JANUARY	
1,8,15,22,29	FBCA
10	Alachua Study
24	Ocala Study
FEBRUARY	
3-5	Fruitland Park, FL (men's retreat - 352-431-3935)
24-26	Florida Retreat (see below)

2023 Florida Retreat

February 24, 25, 26, 2023	
Alachua, Florida	
<i>"Eternally Connected: Living with Uncommon Sense in a Senseless World"</i>	
<u>Deadline for reservations with \$50 per person deposit will be January 27th, 2023</u>	
\$325 couple	
\$170 single (2 to a room)	
\$270 single (1 to a room)	
Includes:	
lodging, conference fee, Saturday dinner and 2 breakfasts	
\$30 person conference fee (no lodging, no meals)	
\$50 person fee and Saturday dinner	