

PROGRAM 81 TEASER

“Atheist”! My definition of one? An atheist is a person who has turned away from all the evidence of an extravagant God so that he/she can live by faith that their sin will have no consequences or judgment. But for the majority of us mortals, we know there is a God-but not much else. Yet God wants to make Himself extravagantly real to anyone who really wishes to get to know Him. That’s why Christ came. And why I’m about to tell you that “religion” must be more than rules—or rituals. It must be an encounter—or else not be worth much more than the emptiness of the atheist. Is a love affair possible with the Creator of the universe? Christ says it is. I’m Frank Eiklor. Let’s explore together how we can experience God’s extravagance—today on More Than Talk.

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EXPERIENCING GOD’S EXTRAVAGANCE

PAGE 1 More Than Rules! More than Rituals!

“I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You.”
Job 42:5

When it comes to experiencing God, one encounter with Him is worth more than ten thousand explanations about Him. Those who experienced His immediate presence were never the same. Whether Moses, Isaiah, Paul, John on Patmos - or Job in our lesson today - not one was ever the same after such a revelation of the only true and living God.

After 41 chapters of arguments that raged back and forth between Job and his not-so-friendly friends - and finally God Himself addressing Job with a voice and arguments that rendered loquacious Job mute - the old servant's heart was forever changed. No more crowing about his own righteousness; no more crying over his pitiable condition; just a crushing need to repent before such a holy God. Perhaps Job's answer was little more than a broken whisper - that he now knew God could do anything - that he, Job, had talked too much - that his knowledge of God had reached his ear but never Job's spiritual eye. And thus such profound repentance!

Has your experience of God gone beyond explanation of spiritual principles to a life-changing encounter with a Person? Do you picture Jesus Christ as human-size or, like John, has your heart been so touched by the resurrected Messiah that you have fallen at His feet as dead? To the degree our spiritual eyes are allowed to behold the beauty of the Lord, to that same degree will we abhor our sins and self-life, and repent before Him. How much more of Him awaits you and me if we will refuse to settle for explanations about Him and instead cry out for an encounter with Him?!

My prayer: "Like Job, oh my Father, I have heard so much about You with my ear. But deep within my spirit I long to experience a deeper revelation of Your own holy presence."

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PAGE 2 A Love Affair Worth Seeking

"I have set the LORD always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved." Psalm 16:8

While this wondrous statement can be attributed to the Messiah in conversation with the Father, it can also be true in each of our lives. How can we so set the Lord always before us and so sense Him at our side that nothing can draw us away from His intimate companionship? First, we must commit ourselves to the study of the Word of God above all else. The deeper we get into the Word, the deeper the Word shall get into us. And the more we search out the written Word of God, the more the living Word - Jesus Christ - will reveal Himself to us.

Second, to thirst for, and be filled with, so much of the Holy Spirit that we become "God-inside-me" conscious - aware that He is as surely within my body as His temple as was the Shekinah when God's glory filled the temple at Jerusalem. Forget all the Christian arguments that rage back and forth concerning the Holy Spirit. They may confuse you almost as much as they grieve the Lord. The Holy Spirit is a Person and comes to make Jesus explosively and excitingly real to you.

Ask Him to possess you and to make you His own. Then trust that God is true to His promise to give you His Spirit, and go on your way believing.

Third, along with your private quiet times, begin to practice the presence of the Lord. You're always together, aren't you? Yet just as a husband and wife can be together and yet not notice each other, so is the case with most of us and our Lord. Discipline your thoughts to turn often to the Lord, moment by moment. You'll find the Holy Spirit most pleased, and He will turn that "discipline" into sheer "delight" as you become more aware that your Lord is always there!

My prayer: "I choose to set You always before me, Lord. Please fill me full of the Holy Spirit so that He can teach me how to begin to notice You more - not with long gaps of unawareness, but a moment by moment awareness of Your nearness."

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PAGE 3 Tests And Trials...Not Just Tickles And Smiles!

"Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You." Psalm 73:25

I return often to the seventy-third psalm. It keeps me focused on the matters of eternity rather than the materials of time. The writer was brutally honest with himself. He was envious at the prosperity of the wicked and their obvious fatness from all that money could buy - and he was irritated at what appeared to be their trouble-free lives. He even was tempted to think that following the trail of the godly might be just a dead-end. But then he got alone with God, understood that the wicked's end was destruction, and confessed his own foolishness for ever doubting God's love for him. Now from the depth of his spirit comes this cry of total surrender and satisfaction in the Lord whom he desired beyond all else and above anyone else.

You, too, will experience times when it appears that the more you seek the Lord the more you find tests and trials; and that the less some people value God, the more riches and pleasure they appear to find. Look past the illusion to that which is endless, namely God and eternity. Your tests and trials are for a wonderful

purpose; allowed by your all-loving Father to make you more like His beloved Son. And why ever envy the rich and famous - especially those who have so many gifts that they reject the only gift that lasts, God's gift of salvation?! They have but a brief span to enjoy their toys that rust and rot. But the one whose life is wrapped up doing the Lord's will, and not his own, has forever and forever to enjoy the Lord.

My prayer: "Cause me, my Father, to go often into my sanctuary - that quiet place where I can reflect on You and the eternity of joys that await those who desire You above anything this world can offer."

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PAGE 4 Welcome To The Holy Of Holies!

“He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” Psalm 91:1

The ninety-first psalm is well worth memorizing. The rich promises contained in verses 3-16 have brought hope to many a weary saint. But it has been wisely pointed out that those promises are conditional upon our obedience to the first two verses: intimacy and total trust in the Lord. Specific words stand out in the above verse: he that "dwells in" (not merely "visits occasionally") the "secret place" of the Unseen God (to me, that is the most sacred place God has ever invited those He has chosen to enter - the Holy of Holies). The awesome result of such intimacy is to abide under the unbroken shelter of the Almighty Himself.

In ancient Israel, the most spiritually hungry saint could only look longingly toward the Holy of Holies, and could only wonder at what it must be like beyond the veil. Only one man - the High Priest - ever dared enter in. Then Jesus came, the veil was rent, and the open arms of God now welcome every open heart that prizes His beloved Son and pants for His presence.

To the degree we seek Jesus' face, to that same degree will the Father reveal more from the "secret place." A poem of mine tries to express that: "More lovely than the rose that He created,

More tender than a babe on mother's breast;
More faithful than the sun that brings each morning,
More soothing than the night that whispers rest.
You're all that I desire and all I'll ever need,
Your love flows like a never-ending stream;
Living in my heart, yet ever at my side,
Abundant life beyond my highest dreams.
Jesus, my magnificent Lord, how You thrill me, and fill my life each day;
Jesus, my magnificent Lord,
I love You more than I can ever say."

My prayer: "I long to truly experience Your secret place, oh my Father. Work in me until You are everything to me"

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PAGE 5 Your Most Valuable Treasure

“Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.” Proverbs 4:23

I have called the book of Proverbs my own "Get Smart Book." So have other Christians, many of whom read one chapter a day (31 chapters) for each day of the month. There is no better verse than the above to sum up all of the proverbs. Nothing is more important than to guard your heart.

Look at the care people take to keep safe that which they deem valuable. Treasures are locked in safes, doors bolted, alarms installed and even windows barred in the attempt to guard home, car, etc. We even try to guard our stomachs from junk foods so as to guarantee better health. But often, the most important part of us - the real "us" - is kept unguarded and open to a thief and murderer called Satan. That's why Jesus listed the sins coming out of the heart that defile and destroy.

But how can I keep my heart? And is there a difference between heart and mind? My heart is the throne of my life and my mind is the road that leads to the heart. I must learn quickly what thoughts to give a "second thought" to, for three voices will vie for my attention - Satan, self and the Spirit of God. The one who does not

know the Word of God (thoughts and actions that either please or grieve the Lord) is at a terrible disadvantage. I can weigh each thought on the scales of the Word. Wrong thoughts are to be swiftly resisted before they become sin. Once dwelt on, they enter the heart and must be recognized and confessed as sin.

Place your heart daily in the "safe-deposit" of your Father, ask the Lord Jesus to be your bars of protection and learn to hear any alarms set off by the Holy Spirit. Nothing should command more diligence than the spiritual health of your heart!

My prayer: "I can see, precious Father, that the past is littered with broken lives of those whose hearts were not diligently guarded. Teach me, by Your power, to only allow into my heart that which pleases You."