

the substance of my heart

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In the past I have felt like a shotgun. Shotguns do not require precision. The line of fire is scattered. Presently I feel more like a laser at the present. Single-focused. Shotguns look for bodies. Lasers find the chinks in the armor. In former seasons I have felt like a telescope viewing the expanses of the Kingdom. In this season I feel like a microscope viewing specifically what God reveals.

What was the substance of John the Baptist? What structure did he build in the wilderness? Was it built on a three thousand-acre complex? Did the sanctuary seat ten thousand? Was the temple as grand as Solomon's? **It was a riverbank.**

What was the substance of John's dress code? Did he wear wing tips? How many hours did he spend shopping for ties? Designer robes? **Does camel hair apparel count?**

Were the Pharisee's threatened by John? **Probably.** Did the Pharisees' possibly criticize him? **Probably.** Therefore, should we consider it an insult or complement to be associated with John?

What is our role in church? **Corporately, we express and manifest what God has deposited in our spiritual DNA.** These expressions of God are impartations of life. A "God deposit" is truth in its purest form. Our role then become prophetic indicators of the very heart of God.

What encompasses the heart of God as it relates to people? Redemption and Justice are at the very center of God's longing for us. Redemption is the jealous pursuit of the lost. Justice is the unwavering unction to see the wrongs made right. The crux is God loves people over programs, theologies, and structures. He loves both the loveable and the unlovable. That is why Jesus was quoted constantly throughout the Gospels as saying, "I desire mercy over sacrifice.

More questions...

Who sets the standard of what is important? On earth who do we search out for advice? Do we pursue the "John the Baptists" or the religious masses? Do we trust our traditions or the prophets in the wilderness?

The Pharisees loved to be visible, and they loved to justify it. How would a Pharisee celebrate Easter? Probably by buying a huge corsage and a new

suit of clothes. The justification would be a “new clothes-new beginning” argument. However as a whole the motives would be a little more self-focused. At this point allow me to interject there is nothing wrong with Easter clothes, but when people become worried and depressed because they can't afford Easter Clothes then the system needs to be overhauled.

Who has determined practically everything about the way we do church? Was it the God of John the Baptist? Was it the God of Jesus (who essentially broke every rule of the Sabbath and seemed to delight in doing so)?

Imagine a church who ordered pizzas every Sunday Morning. There is a part of me that complains and “rolls my spiritual (religious) eyes at the very thought of a church doing this. HOWEVER, there are arguably more scriptural references for pizza than altar calls. That part of me that automatically screams “REJECT” scares me.

Man can not define church anymore than man can define God. Simply because the “real” church is so connected to God that it becomes God. We can not turn our back on the church. It is of God. We have been mandated to be a part of it. However, my prayer is that the Kingdom, God's reign, overwhelm the church.

Have you ever wondered if the “rules/preferences” of the church are meant to conform into the likeness of itself or transform into the likeness of God? Which camp do we place Jesus and John the Baptist? Which side do we associate the Pharisees? Are we threatened by freedom or do we embrace it?

If our rules, theologies, mindsets, preferences, and structures exist at the expense of people then we must raise the question. What is of God? If the rule, theology, mindset, etc...is of God, the so be it. But if it belongs to us, then we must carry it to the cross.

Can we live a “Jesus and John the Baptist lifestyle” while at the same time looking like a Pharisee? Why would we want to?

We claim to believe in a Jesus that associated with prostitutes, BUT do we worship that Jesus? If so, are we becoming like that Jesus? If not, are we worshipping that Jesus? If we are truly worshipping that Jesus, then through association we will become like Him.

There is something in me that violently fights the thought of looking, acting, and even smelling like a Pharisee. I can't explain this passion but everything they stand for, I stand against. I would rather worship in the wilderness where God is the object of everything than in a cathedral where people are focused on architecture.

Is God concerned with the external fluff or the internal heart and passion? If He's not concerned with the fluff, why should I kill myself in pursuit of it?

Is balance a cop-out? Did Jesus use the "cop-out of balance" when cleansing the temple? Did he try to lessen the abrasiveness of truth by explaining too much... Did Elijah explain the judgement of the prophets of Baal in such a way that made God's actions more socially, politically, and spiritually correct?

Is everyone called to be a forerunner? The easy answer is no. The more difficult questions are: Was Jesus a forerunner? Are we to be like Him? Are we to be conformed to His image or is His image to be conformed to ours? A bride doesn't dread her wedding day. They anticipate it. A bride isn't indifferent with her groom; he is the center of her life. Does Jesus want a passionate bride? What passion level does He have? What is the mind of Christ? Do we really have an option other than Him? Really, there is only one forerunner, His name is Jesus. We all travel behind Him at varying speeds. The question becomes how close do you want to be.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for but not yet seen. The substance of my heart is the Kingdom, the reign of sovereign God, overwhelming the Church, thus creating a place where people can individually experience God free of religious expectations. Even to the point that the corporate identity of the Church becomes one based on being ravished by a Lover and not chained to earthly limitations. My heart is not to abandon the church. My heart is to see it transformed into what God intends it to be. My dream is to see it come under the reign of the Kingdom. Its time for the church to grow into a bride. If the church is to be the bride then we must be a vital part of the church.