



I was reading this week in the “Acts of the Apostles” about how Peter and John got into trouble with the Temple leaders. I was struck by this statement from the “angel of the Lord”: *Go, stand in the Temple and tell the people the whole message about this life. (Acts 5:20)* How often do we think of our faith as a “way of life”? More than that, what is a “way of life”?

The Dictionary on Google defines it as “the typical pattern of behavior of a person or group.” So, the “angel of the Lord” (a euphemism for God Himself) told Peter and John to “tell the people the whole message about this typical way of life.” That led me to question what “typical way” of Christian life might mean? The answer, of course, is in the 4 Gospels where Jesus teaches us to do the will of the Father. Doing the will of the Father should be the typical way of life for all of us.

That only leads to another question, how do we know the Father’s will for our way of life? Jesus turns out to be the answer, but not so much what he said as how he actually lived day to day. Remember, Jesus was born a human being just like us in all things. That means he had to grow up as we do. Like us, Jesus had to learn to recognize his parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, neighbors, etc. He had to learn right and wrong via parental “no-no” and “don’t you dare” and the consequences of daring. His relationship with his parents changed over time from toddler, to young child to adolescent to mature adult. Tough though it is, parenting strives to help the child reach maturity and contribute to society, that is, the common good. Jesus went through all those stages until he reached mature adulthood.

Jesus was raised in the “way of life” of a first century Jew in Palestine. But as an adult he listened to the preaching of John the Baptist who pointed out that Jews were not living the “typical way of life” laid down by God through Moses and the Prophets. Choosing to totally commit himself to Yahweh, Jesus was “driven” into the wilderness where he learned how the “typical way of life” should be lived and then set outliving it and preaching about it. The Acts of the Apostles puts it in a nutshell: *he went about doing good (Acts 10:38)*.

What this whole way of life Jesus lived and then perfected demonstrates for us how our way of life in Christ should be. Jesus called us into a relationship with the Father similar to his own. I mean that as a child Jesus related to God as a child. As an adolescent Jesus related to God as a teen. As a man he related to God as an adult. His relationship with God evolved along with his human nature just as our own relationships do. The man in Gethsemane begging the Father to take this cup away from him was not the 12-year-old boy in the Temple. He grew up and so did his relationship with the Father.

This is our blueprint for “typical Christian pattern of behavior.” As we move through the stages of life, our relationships with others changes to fit our stage of life. As a 30-something we don’t relate to our parents or friends the same way we did when we were 12. If a 30-year-old did relate to his/her parents like a 12-year-old, we all would know something is wrong.

And yet, the relationship between many adults and God hasn't gone beyond a grade school level. How can we expect to deal with the issues of middle age or old age if our relationship with God hasn't matured beyond a teenager? The God of a child parents with "no-no's" and "don't you dare." That can't work for a mature man or woman. We need to face the Lord our God as full-grown human beings. Our relationship with God needs to be on a par with those we love.

When I was in my late teens at the time Vatican II was coming into effect, I had a serious objection to what God was doing. In prayer one night I let my anger with God fly. I told him I would *NOT* go along with some of the changes. Period! A day or so later when I cooled down, I mentioned this to my mother, telling her I was afraid of what God would do because I told him off. Her answer: we only get angry with those we love; otherwise, we wouldn't care. Love accepts the other as they are even when there is conflict. After that, I had no problem arguing with God. Of course, God always wins the argument, but at least he knows how I really feel.

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your strength." (Deut. 6:4-7)
This command of God is quoted by Jesus in the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. Only mature adults know how to live the life of love. That includes life with God.

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