



Taken as a Whole

Fifth in a Series

For this reason also,
since the day we heard
of it, we have not
ceased to pray for you
and to ask that you
may be filled with the
knowledge of His will in
all spiritual wisdom and
understanding.

Colossians 1:9

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When we are ready to get serious about it, there are two essential components to the process of filling up a life with God. First we must admit our need of the filling. A life full of itself has very little room left for God. Not unlike the alcoholic that has hit bottom, we must face the fact that we need more of something greater than ourselves. For the believer, that “something greater” is God Himself.

There is no human substitute for the power and ministry of the Godhead. The most intelligent earthly scholar cannot replace a Christian’s time spent in the word; the most compassionate, wise counselor cannot replace the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Both temporal resources can be valuable, even vital, but neither can be used in place of direct contact with our God.

So each individual must reach a place where he or she admits the need for God—as much of Himself as He is willing to pour into his or her life.

Once this obstacle has been breached, we face another decision: Will God be permitted in unfiltered. We live in a world that is big on filters. The practice goes by many high-sounding names—the more common of which would be “post-modernism” or “relativism.” Different from healthy discernment, this is the practice of rejecting absolute truth in favor of a self-defined truth. The habit of the members of this contemporary cult of self is to filter out anything unpleasant—to reject anything that challenges the individual’s personal belief system.

Near our home in San Diego (where we lived for the first twenty years of our marriage), there was a “soup and salad” restaurant. Here one paid a flat fee, then helped oneself to a bounty of salad fixings and a selection of homemade soups. The salad bar in this restaurant was probably fifty feet long, double-sided, and replete with every imaginable companion to the chilled plate.

When we would visit, I would begin with the basics of lettuce, tomatoes, carrots, onions and grated cheese—passing by the pickled beets and cucumbers. Moving further down the line, I would grab a large spoonful of the crab salad, but ignore the three-bean salad; the potato and macaroni salads were favorites, but not the grated carrot; the creamy Jell-O and pineapple salad (the one put together with whipped cream) would be added to my plate, but not the one containing raisins; finally, a dressing would be selected from the many available.

From the salad bar, one would move on to the simmering pots of soup. I would usually pass up the vegetable or chili to help myself to a bowl of hearty turkey noodle. Across from the soups were the breads—fresh baked and still warm from the oven. The muffins were a favorite, usually choosing the apple-nut over the cornbread—unless, of course I was having chili, in which case the cornbread would be the perfect companion. Later I would return to sample the slices of cheese pizza or sweet almond cakes, but never, *ever*, anything that contained coconut.

And finally, after everything else had been consumed, I would waddle over to



the final station for a small dish of chocolate or tapioca pudding, not wasting my time on the lighter, and probably more healthy cubes of red Jell-O.



This is the kind of pick-and-choose relationship many Christians have with God. They move down the line, pushing their tray before them, selecting only those parts of Him they think they'll like.

Let's see, I'll have some of that grace and forgiveness—but I think I'll pass on the correction. How about just a little light Sunday School—but none of that heavy Bible study. And give me plenty of that "old-time religion"—but go easy on the conviction and wrath. For dessert, I believe I'll have a large helping of that love and compassion—hold the holiness.

To take God seriously we must be filled with Him. To be truly filled with God we must take *all* of Him. We cannot pick and choose what we want of God. He cannot be broken down into compartments, bins filled with His various character attributes, bins from which we may, at our personal discretion, choose to select or reject. He is of a piece, unified, inseparable.

He is to be taken as a whole.

Some people will say, "I'm comfortable with Jesus, but God the Father is too intimidating." But Jesus said,

"If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him." Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works."

John 14:7-10

Jesus was—and remains—the physical representation of God's true character. If we are drawn to the Christ as our compassionate Savior, we must remember that His compassion has come from and faithfully reflects the compassion of the Father. If we love Him for His sacrifice, we must remember that that same sacrifice began at the Father. Like Abraham, it was He who placed His only Son upon the altar. Jesus,

in His death, demonstrated no greater love than did His Father.

What God in His sovereignty may yet do on a world-scale I do not claim to know. But what He will do for the plain man or woman who seeks His face I believe I do know and can tell others. Let any man turn to God in earnest, let him begin to exercise himself unto godliness, let him seek to develop his powers of spiritual receptivity by trust and obedience and humility, and the results will exceed anything he may have hoped in his leaner and weaker days.

Any man who by repentance and a sincere return to God will break himself out of the mold in which he has been held, and will go to the Bible itself for his spiritual standards, will be delighted with what he finds there.

Let us say it again: The universal Presence is a fact. God is here. The whole universe is alive with His life. And He is no strange or foreign God, but the familiar Father of our Lord Jesus Christ whose love has for these thousands of years enfolded the sinful race of men. And always He is trying to get our attention, to reveal Himself to us, to communicate with us. We have within us the ability to know Him if we will but respond to His overtures. We will know Him in increasing degree as our receptivity becomes more perfect by faith and love and practice.

A. W. Tozer

*Come down, O Love divine,
Seek Thou this soul of mine,
And visit it with Thine own
ardor glowing;
O Comforter, draw near,
Within my heart appear,
And kindle it, Thy holy flame
bestowing.*

*O let it freely burn,
Till earthly passions turn
To dust and ashes in its
heat consuming;
And let Thy glorious light
Shine ever on my sight,
And clothe me round the while my
path illuming.*

*And so the yearning strong,
With which the soul will long,
Shall far outpass the power of
human telling;
For none can guess its grace,
Till he become the place
Wherein the Holy Spirit makes
His dwelling.*

Bianco da Siena

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