

# Break Free...

*A Thought for the Week From Patrick Kemper at  
No Strongholds Ministries*

## Week 20

### Is This Really What Needs Fixing?

*Proverbs 25:6-7 (NIV)*

<sup>6</sup> Do not exalt yourself in the king's presence, and do not claim a place among great men;  
<sup>7</sup> it is better for him to say to you, "Come up here," than for him to humiliate you before a nobleman.

Isn't it great when worship time is consistent and we truly feel connected to God? There's nothing like getting lost in submitting, honoring God and really feeling good about our walk.

But what happens when we screw up? At some point we all make stupid choices.

We respond in some way we shouldn't have, or maybe we get worked over by our schedule and, for some unacceptable (but seemingly unavoidable) reason, we skip worship (or let's face it, we skipped the *whole* time God should have gotten).

It's awkward when we show up again, isn't it? Even though we really want to get back to being connected the way we were, doesn't it *feel* like we don't deserve to be there?

To assuage our guilt, we start thinking we should do something, *anything*, to show our remorse so we can just get back to where we were.

Ever feel that way?

I believe that everybody (everyone, that is, who has an authentic relationship with Jesus) has felt this way at some point in his or her walk. I have been there more times than I would care to count. In fact, I am writing this now because of what God has revealed to me as I sat in the middle of that puddle just recently.

This morning I was sitting in my office trying to get back... to that place. Yesterday, I made the uncharacteristic choice to get some other things out of the way first - my justification being, I would rather have them completed and remove a potential

distraction during my IRT (Investment in Relationship Time/quiet time). The results were as predictable as the rising of the sun.

So, this morning, while I was struggling to return to the place I felt I had been two days ago, this thought came to my heart and my mind... Is *this* really what needs fixing?

I can almost see the wrinkling of your forehead as the question rattles around in your head. I understand... it was the same for me too.

Is the attitude we have – attempting to make amends after having been less than faithful (okay, just say it, *unfaithful*, because that's the truth) – is *that* the attitude that really needs the adjustment? Or is our current, retro state-of-spirit (a humbled, undeserving mentality) the perspective we should adopt *every time* we come to bow before the throne of The Almighty, God Most High?

Perhaps, in a round-about-sort-of-way, we bring this on ourselves. Do we (because we're able to demonstrate some consistency) lose our humbleness (if we ever really had it) over time and not notice it is gone until we are, once again, feeling like we are on the outside looking in? Do we, as members of the "Christian Club," begin to think that we deserve to be there and start taking it for granted?

Initially, I really believe we strive to be submitted and humble. With our heart on our sleeve and pride tossed to the wind, we respectfully approach God in worship. With a bit of consistency, though, we can begin to pat ourselves on the back (the model servant we have become) and, without really thinking about it, we grant ourselves permission to not be so humble. We begin to get a little too comfortable. We make an assumption. We might even progress to feeling we're entitled to be there. After all, Daddy is on the throne...

If we're not careful, we can evolve from the committed, submitted position of a humble, grateful heart (one that knows it doesn't ever deserve to be in the throne room of God) to an ascended status of the "deserving." It is not long before our uncanny, human talent for locating misplaced banana peels brings us back to reality and we are reminded of what our attitude should have been... all along.

So which is it, exactly, that needs adjusting? Do we need to alter the self-flogging, undeserving attitude we are feeling (as the result of a poor choice), or do we need to address our initial attitude? Should *that* attitude (before the stupid choice) have been something altogether different?

Are you getting what I am trying to say?

Our problem is not that we screwed up and we need to work our way back to some previously achieved level - there's a lie from the pit of hell. This perspective we have as the result of our poor trade-off (this one of unworthiness and of repentance) is the attitude we should have had (and intentionally worked to preserve) in our approach to worship all along. When we find ourselves trying to earn our way back, it is evident we have lost sight of the fact that we will never deserve to be there in God's throne room... or in God's presence.

It's only because of Jesus Christ - the Blessed Sacrifice - that God the Father is able to welcome us into His holy sanctuary where He dwells in righteousness and truth. Three words must describe our approach – *boldly, but humbly*.

When we come into the presence of Elohim (God the Creator), Jehovah (God the Redeemer), Iesoos (Jesus, the Begotten One), remembering how He (Jesus) paid our admission, our relationship and our expectations need to be appropriately respectful.

We cannot struggle with getting back to good graces if we are never so audacious as to think we qualify, on our own, to be there in the first place. Pigs never have to apologize for being pigs and rolling in the mud... but make no mistake. No matter how often a pig may get an apple core fed to him by the hand of his owner, that pig (because of what it is – a pig) better never start believing he's/she's been invited into the house to eat at the table.

Look at it another way.

Imagine that Sandra Bullock is celebrating, at some grand gala, the end of filming what is expected to be the greatest blockbuster of the year. You get invited, not because you deserve to be there, but because someone who knows you (her agent) put your name on the list. This allows you to come and observe and act like you are supposed to be there, but you know, deep down, you have absolutely no justifiable reason for being there beyond the fact that someone who does pulled some strings and allowed you to be included. You will never, ever, be deserving of the access.

You had absolutely nothing to do with what was done to create the necessity for the party. What you do and say will ultimately come back to the one who provided the opportunity for you. This is why, as a guest, you would never walk in and start making demands or act as though you owned the place.

“Respect,” “best behavior,” and “appreciation,” are probably the prevailing thoughts in your mind and heart while attending such a function. You would do your best to blend in, just grateful for the opportunity to be there.

Jesus got your name onto the list.

Multiply, by a thousand times, the respect and the gratefulness one would try to display at the wrap party, and we'll begin to reflect the submission, respect and gratefulness we should display when coming to worship God in His sanctuary.

We should never forget – the whole party is because of Jesus.

It's only because of what Jesus did to open the access for us that we are allowed anywhere near this place where God - holy, righteous and just - reigns in sovereignty forever and ever.

If we can get our heart wrapped around this concept it will be impossible to not strive harder, every day, to make sure we know - and remember - our place. We should never be there for any reason except to recognize the One whose party it is, the One who deserves the honor and whose name is to be exalted. Poor choices we make outside the party shouldn't make us feel any less qualified to utilize the invitation we received – we don't deserve to be there in the first place.

We need to cultivate the attitude that always demonstrates our gratefulness for just being allowed to be there. Our unintended (even our intended) misbehavior during the day would not cause us to disqualify ourselves from going to the party that night, would it? I suspect that remembering how inappropriately I might have acted, at some point during the day, would probably make me painfully aware that I should be cautious regarding my choices in such a setting.

The whole point is this.

If we will get, and maintain, the humble, respectful, underserving attitude we are supposed to have (and refuse to fall into that trap of believing we have earned some right to worship in God's throne room), there will never be a time when we feel like we have to earn our way *back* into acceptance. We should always enter into worship, individually

and corporately, remembering that our ability to access the throne room is only because Jesus wrote our name on His hands and made sure we have access where we never deserve to be.

So, which one do you need to fix?

## *Application*

Ok, now that you hopefully have a handle on that part, let me see if I can stir the waters a bit more in an effort, not to muddy things, but to fine tune them.

If you enter into worship with *only* the humble, undeserving attitude, you only have it half right. If this is your only attitude, you can develop a negative, inaccurate perspective, and you will miss out on the best part of worship. You need to *arrive* in humility, but *stay*, understanding your acceptance.

What?

Look. You *arrive* at the party, authentically grateful for the invitation and you demonstrate the respect you should with a heart of gratitude. But you *stay* at the party, *participating* in the festivities, because you have become an official member of the family through adoption.

You didn't gain admittance because of deceptive planning. You are not at the party under false pretenses or pretending to be someone you are not. There is no chance of being tossed from the party because you have been outted – you are there legitimately. This is where you must learn to combine *undeserving* with *legitimacy*... and experience *humbly authentic*.<sup>1</sup>

The Bible tells us says that if we have a relationship with Jesus, we have an assurance:

### **Romans 8:15-17 (NIV)**

<sup>15</sup> *For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."*

<sup>16</sup> *The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.*

<sup>17</sup> *Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

You, as a result of a relationship with Christ, have become a child of God (you have received the spirit of son-ship) and you can cry out, "Daddy!" Look again at verse 17:

<sup>17</sup> *Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

This is the collision of your humble gratitude with legitimacy, which produces authentic, familial interaction.

Let me share a story that might bring it all together for you.

Some time ago there was a missionary couple who served for more than twenty years in Israel. During one of their trips, they discovered a set of twins living in a landfill. The

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<sup>1</sup> Go ahead... read it again until you see it and it makes sense.

boy's name was Ana (Ah-nah') and the girl's name was Marah. No one knew exactly how long the two had been there, except to say no one who knew of them ever living any other way.

The couple visited them every day, sharing and talking, listening and, well, falling in love with them. The clothes the children wore were all they owned. The cardboard shelter they had erected was barely enough to keep them from the occasional rains and provided little against the afternoon sun or evening chill. These two children, claiming to be ten years old, had no recollection of parents or family. Their daily caloric intake subsisted of whatever they could get begging, stealing or scrounging within the refuse in which they lived. The most interesting thing, to this couple who spent many days with these children, was that they were relatively happy.

They had no idea what they were truly missing.

They smiled and laughed. They shared what they were able to obtain for food. They were neither bitter about their current situation, nor did they feel ashamed. Their life was... what it was.

The couple, with the help of some friends at the American Consulate, received permission to adopt these children and was allowed to bring them home (to the United States) while awaiting the final adoption decree.

Culture shock would not adequately describe their experience upon arrival at their new home. It was beyond anything they could have imagined. There were individual rooms with beds, closets and dressers with clothes. There was a mysterious metal box in one room that, when opened, lit up brightly and had food to eat that nobody else had already tried to eat!

Days turned into weeks and weeks turned into months as they settled into their new and mysteriously, wonderful life. About six months after their arrival, something peculiar began to happen. These twins (who had been through the worst, and now the best, things life had to offer) were responding, individually, quite differently.

Marah had progressed from an attitude of gratefulness, wonder and mystery, to a distinct sense of entitlement. The fascination with the light bulb in the fridge had transformed into whining for things that were not there. The closet and dresser, filled with new clothes, no longer produced squeals of joy or impromptu fashion shows; she complained how unfair it was that she did not get to wear the things her friends wore.

No longer were her eyes staring wide at this giant, flat picture frame on the wall that showed sights and sounds beyond imagination; there was now just dissatisfaction that she did not have one of her own, in her room, the way her friends did.

But Ana...

Ana was a completely different story. Every day, without fail, before the sun had risen in the sky of this indescribable new world, the couple would emerge from their bedroom to find Ana on the floor outside their door. Face down, knees tucked under and his palms on the floor, he would greet them with a smile and with tears running down his face.

Initially, the new parents were immediately concerned and, as they attempted to pick him up off the floor, he would protest. With salty streaks collecting at the tip of his cinnamon chin, he would look up at them and say, "I just want to tell you how much I appreciate what you have done for me! I just want you to know! Thank you! You rescued me and I don't have the words... I just want you to know!"

They would pick him up and attempt to straighten out his clothes. It was always obvious he had been at the door for some time. They would hug him and say, “It’s okay, buddy, we know. We understand, and it’s ok! But listen, let’s go have some breakfast, and then do our chores...” but before they could finish he would cut them off.

“I already ate. I did my chores and I did Marah’s too... I just want you to know!” And then they would have to pick him up off the floor again. This went on day after day... after day.

If you are not showing up at the throne room door with the intent of telling God how much you appreciate what He has done for you (with the gratefulness of Ana in your hearts), you are there for all the wrong reasons.

Now can you see how a *humble, undeserving* attitude mixed with *legitimacy* produces *humbly, authentic obedience*?

Worship is about two things: 1) Submitting all you have, and all you are, for whatever God asks of you and, 2) Honoring God in spirit and in truth (John 4:23). This should be our objective when coming to worship The King of kings and Lord of lords.

*Arrive* - like Ana - remembering what God has done to bless you and how He has rescued you from an eternity of separation. *Stay*... remembering that you are officially adopted into the family and God, who is your Father, wants to continue to bless and protect you.





