

Dedicated But Disconnected

Is there a sense of disconnect between your professional life and your church and family life? Is it possible to be dedicated to your Lord, your family, and your profession, and yet feel disconnected?

In a recent lawyers' gathering, when asked about his sense of belonging in the local church community, I heard one gentleman say: *"I have developed a thick hide, but my wife feels that the people at our church seem to hold us at arm's length."*

Over and over again I hear a similar lament from those in the legal profession. When I explore what they mean by this, I hear these words repeated: separated, isolated, misunderstood, alienated, and avoided.

Is this your reality? Does the experience of your life as a Christian lawyer in church and community fail to match your initial expectations? Perhaps we should look at Biblical examples of people that were feeling isolated and what this created in their lives.

Moses is a great example. There was a definite collision between his upbringing and his calling. He shows us this in Exodus 17:4, where he complains to God: *"You bring me out here to get rocked by these people. Why?"* Like most of us, Moses could not see the big picture. His reality in God's economy did not match his earlier expectations. Moses felt disconnected.

Jonah was a man who suffered from classic disconnectedness. Several times Scripture mentions his "anger" with God (Jonah 4: 4, 9). He sat under that piece of shrubbery burning with frustration, having lost all control over the events. We can almost hear his cry: "What about me, O God?"

King David was another who went through seasons of disconnectedness. He spent much of his life doing what he thought God wanted, only to find out that he would not be the one to build the temple. The abruptness of this announcement no doubt left David feeling dropped, disconnected, alienated from all he held so dear.

But John the Baptist is perhaps the best example. He offers up the great question to Jesus, "Are you the man?" (Luke 7:19).

Only a few short months earlier he made the startling revelation to his listeners: *"After me will come one who is more powerful than I...he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and Fire, His winnowing fork is in His hand; He will clear, gather...and burn."* Now, he finds himself struggling with major doubts about Jesus.

What were the events in John's life that led him to this shaky state? There may be several reasons. Perhaps he spent too much time alone in the desert. Maybe he felt neglected and unappreciated. There is no doubt that John was emotionally and physically drained because of his imprisonment. William Barclay says this of John and his question: *"John asked the question because his captivity had put tremors in his heart."*

Or was there disconnectedness between him and Jesus because of lifestyle choices? John had adopted the lifestyle of an aesthete; Jesus partied with sinners. John seems to be a rigid man, as reflected in his chosen lifestyle. Personality may have been at work here too!

What do you think John wanted to hear about Jesus? I believe John wanted the disciples to tell him that Jesus was scorching the earth, calling down fire and brimstone on the heads of those who were sinners. Instead Jesus is extending forgiveness and grace.

John is asking where the fire is, and Jesus is saying, “Go and sin no more!”

What was Jesus’ answer to John? In Luke 7:22, Jesus tells John that his expectation of the Messiah coming with fork and fire was too narrow because Jesus also had come to heal and forgive. Then Jesus says some of his most profound words ever recorded, “Blessed is the person who does not stumble over me.” (v. 23)

For me, what Jesus said to John in this gentle admonition was this: “Your rigidity has given you a framework that does not allow God to work the way He wants. You have boxed God in and it is causing you great pain. Now, when you need the Father’s presence more than ever, you are haunted by some of these ghosts. Don’t let your preconceptions be a source of stumbling.”

Jesus wanted John to see that the compassion, with which He was acting, was the proof that He was the Messiah!

Friends, does this not make us halt in our tracks? We get so rigid about making sure others line up with us that when it doesn’t happen the way we expect, we dismiss them or the situation with disdain. After a while this will create a disconnection for us. Our world will get smaller and smaller.

I love the two-fold ending of this story. Jesus goes on to give John great praise, by stating that no man born of women is greater than Him. Then, for our own benefit, Jesus says that John would be least in God’s entire kingdom! What encouragement that is to you and to me!

The unwritten ending is perhaps the most fascinating conjecture. How did John respond to Jesus’ answer? I believe John gladly received the report, maybe with a smile on his face and a nod of approval, saying to himself: “Yes! He’s the Man.”

This is what cures our disconnectedness. It will not be in working to prove ourselves, but rather in intimacy and surrender to the Father. Then the two halves of disconnect, the plug and the source of power, will be joined together. The relief will flow and peace will define us.

Let’s passionately ask Him: “Make me usable in your Kingdom, Lord!”

In His Love,
Chaplain Reid