

Don't be without the spirit

Recently I was reading 'What the Dog Saw,' a book by Malcolm Gladwell; in it I saw his analysis of the lives of a number of people. The dog whisperer, Cesar Milan, was one of them, which explains the title of the book.

I noticed how thoroughly the psychologist and the choreographer referenced in the book analysed the work of Cesar Milan with the dogs, and how they tried to explain his success. His physical balance was analysed, the movements of his arms, his tone of voice and many such things. They also explained what they believed were the things that the dogs would be seeing as he performed his motions. He would come out to the dogs as respectful, non-threatening, yet authoritative, they inferred. The dogs, of course, always submitted to him, which is why he is the dog whisperer.

I do not judge the intention of the authors and analysts, but what I wish to point out, which is often easily missed by readers of such analyses, is that Cesar Milan never learned any of these things. One is most unlikely to be wrong to say he doesn't even know he does them. He is just being himself, doing what comes to him naturally. He doesn't care concerning his choreographed movements nor did he consciously learn the way to manipulate dogs through psychological analyses. He is just being Cesar Milan, and that is what the difference is.

So who or what is Cesar Milan?

He is a man who loves dogs and understands them. He has a God-endowed ability to connect with these animals. All such inner attributes constitute what the Bible calls a spirit. The traits are tangibly embedded in his spirit; they are not just psychological states. They are spiritual substances which a person either has or doesn't have. Let us bear in mind that there is a possibility that one may acquire this spirit thing through various means, but until one gets it, it is not there.

The outward things which Milan does are the natural out-workings of the spirit. Once the spirit is present, it will eventually work its way out into the outward—this is a principle of life as God created it.

But God gives it a body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own. All flesh is not the same flesh... 1Co 15:38-39

The state of the spirit (or seed, according to this verse above) begets physical qualities. The presence of the right spirit makes learning the outward things quite easy. It is so easy that even without being taught a person just learns by practicing. Life seems to take up the role of the teacher. It is the presence of the spirit that makes the difference.

Now, here is the common tragedy today: many people are learning the mechanical side of things without having or even trying to get the spirit. Once they discover that dog whispering makes money or earns public respect, people will start taking courses in it, straining hard to learn every single gesture and every single motion that have been described as the reason for the success of Cesar Milan. For them, it becomes labour – excessive labour – because they do not have the spirit of the whisperer in them. Here I refer to the spirit that loves dogs that much or has a gift that is God-given. Each person has his or her own gift.

This principle applies to every area of life, even to matters of righteousness. Many times people are learning 'how to do' without first learning how to *be*. Being is more important than doing. It is not that doing is not important, but it is an endless and frustrating struggle if the spirit isn't present. The presence of the spirit would have made the doing a simple thing. Without the spirit, people eventually become discouraged, especially when they do not see the material benefits they were looking for. The struggle is because we have put the cart before the horse.

This is the thing that makes Christ Jesus stand out among all men. He did not come to make people just do things, but he came to make them become something they were not before. He came to make righteousness a nature rather than just a learnt set of outward habits.

Cesar Milan (I have seen him in his TV programme many times) just seems to understand dogs. He is a dog man. He intuitively and by a spirit-guided experience knows what his actions means and how the dogs interpret them. His spirit has led him into the work of righteousness, so to speak, of dog handling.

Many Christian today are learning acts rather than focusing on becoming. Most of the motivational books and teachers do that too. They want to motivate a failure into success, when the man is a failure in his spirit. He lacks the spirit to make those outward acts work. A few successes may be recorded by these methods simply because many people, in learning the exterior, end up discovering what lies in them. They are the few examples of 'it works' that mislead others in vain pursuit.

People should go first for the spirit.

The spirit comes from God. He is the only one who can make you become. Many people can help you to learn to do, but only God can change you inside and help you discover what he placed inside.

There are many people today in different professions in which they have no spirit. Only the love of money keeps them there or the spirit of mammon (Mammon, according to the Lord is 'what shall we eat, what shall we drink, and with what shall we clothe ourselves?'). They are bodies without the spirit, and they soon 'die' away from the place.

...the body without the spirit is dead... James 2:26

I like to use giving as an example. Many Christians do not know what it means to be a giver. They are always learning giving; how to use one trick to make God produce something. They want to quickly sow some money so they can reap something more: 58 dollars for 58 blessings, 24000 naira for a 24 hour miracle, 77 dollars for grace perfected, etc. All of these are signs that these people have not become givers; no matter how much they give, they are not givers, and they will not be blessed by those actions.

Being a giver is about having the spirit; it is something you *are* and is not just what you do. A giver is not a giver because he gives; rather he gives *because* he is first of all a giver. God first makes him a giver before teaching him the outward work of giving. No wonder it is so easy for him to learn. A giver may not have been giving because he lacked the opportunity like the Philippians (Phil 4:10) or because of negligence like the Corinthians (2 Cor 8:10), but he is still a giver because of the giver

spirit. A little motivation is all he needs and he is back to action. He is not doing it because of what he will get.

The spirit of giving is love for God, love for the needy, honour for those who are deserving of honour and a general desire to be a blessing. Love for God and love for people are the bases of giving. That is the right spirit.

We are *not* to follow the Lord for learning how to get using the 'tricks' of giving. We are to follow him so that we may be changed and be like Him. That is what it means to have the spirit of Christ (Rom 8:9). The Bible tells us that God is love and that is the basis of His giving (*for God so loved the world that He gave...* Jn 3:16). Becoming like God in spirit makes the doing of righteousness easy – it comes naturally. We are to become rather than just to try to do. That must be the focus – becoming.

How do we become?

For those who haven't, the first thing you are to do is to give your life to Christ by a deliberate decision. You ask God simply to change you and take over your life. It is that simple.

The second thing is that we constantly feed on the word of God. As we do this, the nature of God is becoming real in us; we are becoming like God in what we do. We love because He loves as we become what our Father in heaven is like. We become more and more like Him in all that we do. We allow the desire to obey the word of God to be the motivation for everything we do. The spirit of God is constantly infused into us by His word and by prayer.

What are we when we are full of action but not motivated by having the spirit?

We are producers of dead works! The body without the spirit is dead; that is a spiritual law. All those works we do just because we want to get something from God or because we want to go to heaven are not acceptable at all before God because they are dead works! God sees us as lukewarm people whose works are dead. Zeal does not equate to righteous heat; it is only when it emanates from the spirit that is alive that the work counts.

Christianity is not first of all about the works; it is the impartation of the right spirit, making people become exactly like their Lord.

For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. John 1:17-18

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