

Pastor's Ramblings: September 2005(Priorities for the Christian) WHERE AM I?

Have you ever asked yourself that question in your relationship with God? Perhaps more recently than you would like to admit. "Where are you?" is the first question God asked Adam in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:9). Adam responded, "*I heard the sound of thee in the garden, and I was afraid.*"

How would you have responded? Some may respond in terms of family affiliation, location or vocation. God was asking not where Adam and Eve were located, but why they were hiding in the garden. God knew the instructions had been disobeyed - "*... but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat*" (Genesis 2:17). This encounter lays a foundation for the relationship of God calling back the people he created.

Like Adam and Eve, we too have been abundantly blessed. We too are asked to be caretakers of God's world. And by God's grace, all that we need will be provided. This provision does though ask for obedience to the principle of stewardship. We can become separated from God, distanced by known revelation not honored with the heart. Where are we in our relationship with God? Are we hiding in the garden or standing on the mountaintop praising God's name?

In his book *In Search of Faithfulness*, Lutheran layman Bill Diehl suggests seven attributes of Christians who are faithfully seeking a relationship with God:

1. **Building a Sense of Identity** - We do this by building our relationship with God and recognizing our calling by God. Each of us is called to a ministry.
2. **Growth** - We are constantly changing and facing new challenges. The Bible serves as a daily guide for the content of our belief, but we must also experience our faith, or put in to practice what we believe. This combination shows us how the teaching of Jesus apply in everyday life.
3. **Prayer and Meditation** - This is how we communicate with God and keep a clear sense of God's will in our life. Simply take time for prayer.
4. **Life in Community** - We each live in three communities - universal, the congregation, a relational or support community. Each plays a role in our growth and building a sense of identity. How we worship with and serve others provides a witness to our faith.
5. **Giving** - Faithful people are marked by their willingness to give to others. This may include their time, talents and financial resources.
6. **Sense of Justice** - This involves applying the Christian values we learn to ethical issues we face in daily life. Accepting Christ means accepting certain responsibilities and fulfilling them to achieve desired outcomes.
7. **Simplicity of Life Style** - As people of God, we put God first in our life. Our security is in our faith, not our earthly possessions. We set our priorities based on God's will, not our own.

Where are you in your relationship with God? Are you hiding in the garden? If your desire is to be closer to God, consider incorporating the faith building practices listed above into your life. As we approach the season of stewardship and pledge emphasis, can we ask where are we in volunteerism, giving of our time and energies, and do we all truly recognize we are a valued and needed part of the family whole. Give this coming year from the heart and believe in the vision God has for this place...First Presbyterian Church, Minot, North Dakota 2006!!

Shalom! Pastor Bob (Lets get here done!)