

Misconceptions about growth

Historically, I have often found with mouth open with one or both feet inserted. I recall a recent discussion with my mentor that once again left me tasting my sneakers.

I made the statement, "Sometimes I feel like I can't really take another man spiritually beyond where I am myself". As the final words of the sentence rolled off my lips I realized that this statement was not only flawed but revealed my pride and misunderstanding of what mentoring is all about. My mentor quickly pointed out that God can do anything He wants and use anyone anyway He wants. DUH – of course he was right!

Afterwards I reflected on who God had used to speak to me in my life. There was a whole laundry list of unlikely folks who had been used of God in my life from my three year old grandson right up to my 90 year old grandmother before she passed away.

A few nights passed and then at a bible study I noticed a further example of this truth. In the book of 1st Corinthians Paul has to clarify his relationship with other ministers of the Gospel at Corinth and he mentions the name of Apollos. We are first introduced to Apollos in Acts 18:24-26 when Priscilla and Aquila take Apollos into their home and "explain to him the way of God more adequately". Obviously they saw that Apollos was on the right track but just needed a small course correction. He was just lacking a small piece of the puzzle and when they gave him that piece he immediately went out and God used him in a powerful way. It was like a light bulb went on for him. When the truth about God he knew was combined with the truth about God they knew, a new man was the result.

You only have to fast forward to verses 18:27&28 to see Apollos was almost instantly out in public irrefutably proving that Jesus is the Christ. So the guy whose name is in lights was ignited for the Lord by his providential encounter with a couple of quiet tentmakers who did their thing for the Lord in relative obscurity, ministering in their home.

Paul even underlines the point as to who is really responsible for growth. The answer is it is not us but God who is the source of growth.

^{1CO 3:5-7} What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe--as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.

So in the end I learned or maybe re-learned several things.

1. God can do anything He wants and use anyone in anyway He wants.
2. The power of God is not limited by the messenger. God even used a donkey to speak to Baalam. He can use me and you, if we are available.

3. We need to realize that God may speak to us through the lips of an unlikely messenger.
4. We need to be ready to give and receive. I need to not only look at others with the thought of what I can do to minister in their lives but perhaps they are someone that God may want to use in my life.
5. We can rejoice but we can't take credit for the way God uses us in others' lives because He is the source of growth.
6. We don't know how God might use us. In the life of Apollos the math was $2+2=1000$. God shined some light in his life through Priscilla and Aquila and the results were almost instantaneous.
7. In Corinth we see a genealogy of growth. Paul spoke into the lives of Priscilla and Aquila. Priscilla and Aquila spoke into the life of Apollos. Apollos spoke into the lives of many of the people of Corinth and eventually ministered to them in ways that were complimentary to Paul. What a beautiful picture of growth flourishing.
8. God can use different people in different ways. Both Paul and Apollos had different ministries to the same people of Corinth. There is no room for jealousy or pride here.