

To Be or To Do

By Harold & Bette Gillogly

You would think that with a Seminary education, many years of ministry as well as many years “under the belt” (and over half a century of marriage now), one would have only marginal life-changing lessons yet to apply - WRONG! Bette and I have learned a great deal over the last few years that has reconstructed our beliefs and attitudes. Who said, “You can’t teach old dogs new tricks?”

Where did we learn these new insights and perspectives of life-changing proportions? In a small group class studying Henry Blackaby and Claude King’s book Experiencing God, Knowing and Doing the Will of God. We highly recommend it to any and all — it’s published by Life Way Press in Nashville.

I, Harold, have had a long history of doing, doing, doing. Being very task-oriented, I felt guilty if I stopped even for a moment — I had to keep busy DOING something. This orientation has also governed my relationship with God. I’d say, “Give me something to do, Lord, and I’ll do it.” My emphasis on being in a ministry of service has kept my focus on “doing a work for God.”

The Experiencing God course caused me to rethink my orientation. I have had to ask myself, “Is God more interested in what I can do **for** Him or in my relationship **with** Him?” I am coming to believe the

latter. He is more interested in our personal relationship with Him than in our works of service which we **do** for Him. After all, what is His stated purpose in us? It is to “conform us to the image of His Son” (Rom. 8:28). That involves character development — i.e., relationship issues, not skill issues.

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Sometimes it may even be necessary for God to “lay us up” for awhile so that He can get our focus off our “acts of service” or “works” and onto relationship with Him. His goal is the development of our *character* not what we can *do* for Him. During such times of inactivity, if we listen carefully, we may hear Him saying, “Don’t just do something — stand there!”

What should **our** goal be then? Shouldn’t it be like Paul’s — “**Knowing** Christ Jesus, my Lord” (Philippians 3:8)? Paul considered *everything* else as “rubbish” compared to that. And we should, too. **That** should be our primary goal — not the “work” or “ministry task.”

Am I saying that works are not important? **NO** — James forbids that (“Faith without works is dead”). But what part does obedience play in knowing God? Obedience is “doing what you are told to do, when you are

told to do it, with the right heart attitude.” The EXPERIENCING GOD course ties “knowing God” to obedience in one of its seven “realities,” or truths: ***You come to know God by experience as you obey Him and He accomplishes His work through you.***

Obedience is a key element, for without it God would not accomplish His work through us — the very process by which we come to know Him by experience. *Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him* (John 14:21). Yes, obedience is necessary to know God; but obedience and the tasks obedience involves are not to become our **focus**. Our focus is to be the surpassing greatness of “knowing God” — the **Person** we obey.

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Ask yourself, “If God never gives me a significant ministry assignment, would I be content in just ‘knowing Christ?’” Is Christ alone sufficient for me, or must I be about *doing* great and marvelous things for God. What if we turned the question around to Jesus? Would He be content to have a relationship with me,

even if I could not do something significant for Him? We know His answer, don't we? He *craves* relationship with us!

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If I as your friend came to your house and said, "I've come to help you today. What would you like me to do? Just tell me, and I'll do it." And you said, "My kitchen floor needs scrubbed. The bucket and scrub brush are in the closet. Let me know when you're finished." That is how many of us serve God. "Tell me what to do, and I'll go do it." But relationship-obedience is more like this: "I've come to be with you today. May I join You in Your work?" The reply comes, "Well, I'm down here scrubbing the kitchen floor. Would you like to grab a brush and work with me?"

Obviously, our perspective of what is significant and what God sees as significant in His kingdom are more often than not

totally different. We've been programmed to think only that which is *noticeable* is significant. But look at John the Baptist's ministry. A plain man in camel's hair had a ministry limited to a small area of Judea. He had been prepared his entire life for a public ministry that lasted only around six months. But Jesus said there was **none** greater than John. Jesus' perspective of John's ministry was different from human perspective.

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God certainly changed and stretched us through this study. We have become more aware of what God is doing around us — the things only **He** can do. We are beginning to view His activity as our invitation to join **Him** in that work. (We're picking up "the brush" and working *with* Him.) The responsibility for the results, then, is His — not ours. This gives great freedom as we

conduct marriage enrichment seminars. **He** is the One who's *been* at work, is *doing* the work and will *continue* the work in couples' lives.

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In the online webinars available on our website, it is obvious to us that God is at work in many couples' lives. And He will continue that work after we are long gone. We are under much less pressure when we realize that God, Himself, does the work through us, not us. Therefore, the results are in His hands, not ours.

Our responsibility is simply to focus on our relationship with the Lord, to allow that relationship to be more important than anything else. And within that love relationship, to obey Him. So the answer to the title question is not "To be" or "To do" but rather to be in love with God and **then** to do what He bids us do.

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