

## Vending Machine or Friend

By Roger

Is God my personal vending machine or a personal friend? A vending machine is impersonal. It can offer nothing but a product of our choice with no additional benefit or blessing. [Insert coin and select D-3!] In other words, we are limited and bound by our own wisdom and knowledge in our choices, instead of immersing ourselves in a love relationship with all the wisdom and knowledge that birthed our existence. God's love is the power that produced creation. His love is why we are here. His desire for personal, intimate relationship is the reason He has made Himself available to us.

Now, is my relationship with God one way or two way? [This revelation came from Al Ells many, many years ago.] In a one way relationship one party does all the talking and makes all the effort, so it's not really a relationship, at least not a healthy one. An honest, two way relationship involves talking, listening, and sharing points of view and includes mutual honor and respect. On the other hand, if every time I come to you I ask you for something [a vending machine] for myself, yet I offer nothing in return, we don't have a relationship, I'm just using you to get what I want for my benefit at your expense. Do we dare try to use God in this selfish and self-centered manner? I guarantee it will not produce good fruit!

If I am self-centered, I generally see relationships with others as a potential benefit for me at their expense. This is the opposite priority a child of God should have. Our first priority in all our relationships should be to give the treasures we have from Heaven in order to be a blessing to others even at our own expense. The first priority of giving comes from a heart that is God-centered. Being God-centered is the fruit produced from our personal, intimate relationship with Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Sadly, for many of God's kids He is out there somewhere and He is holy and unapproachable. Besides, I usually feel He is angry with me because of my failures, so I'll just stick with Jesus. I'm safe with Him! This fear and misconception of Father and His nature is a major barrier to our ability to experience His unconditional love for us. Moving from 'O Holy God out there somewhere, too Holy to approach' to 'Father that I want to know, to Daddy [Abba] Who loves me unconditionally and wants to spend time with me' is an indescribable, life-changing experience available to all who are born again.

What is our priority in our relationship with God? Are we out to get everything we can from Him at little or no cost to ourselves? Do we use our self-designed manipulation tactics with God trying to get what we want? Hopefully someday something or someone will slap us in the face and wake us up to the reality that our self-centered, hair brained schemes do not work on God, yet He loves us in spite of ourselves!

I believe the major thing that hinders most of us from a personal, intimate relationship with God is our unwillingness to give up control of our lives to Him. Of course, this stubbornness is rooted in fear! Therefore, self must be in control of our destiny. This fear can be blinding to the reality that we are rejecting God and our privileged place in relationship with Him; not to mention the hindrance or even loss of our purpose and destiny He has prepared for each of us.

It was a wakeup call for me when I heard the results of the annual poll taken early this year. 70+% of Americans polled called themselves Christians, yet when asked if they were born again, only 26% answered 'yes'! So, nearly 50% of the people calling themselves Christians are somehow deceived into believing they are Christians. What a tragedy! It is also shocking to see what a minority we children of God really are in our society. Does this reality remind you of any scripture? For instance, Matthew 7:13-14 AMP *"Enter through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and spacious and broad is the way that leads away to destruction and many are those who are entering through it. [the 50% deceived] vs 14 But the gate is narrow [contracted by pressure] and the way is straightened and compressed that leads away to life and few are those who find it."* [the 26% born again].

*Matthew 7:13-14 THE MESSAGE "Don't look for shortcuts to God. The market is flooded with sure-fire, easy going formulas for a successful life that can be practiced in your spare time. Don't fall for that stuff, even though crowds of people do. The way to life – to God – is vigorous and requires total attention."*

We should wake up the reality that we don't dictate to God! Self-centered pride and arrogance will not win us a place of privilege with Him, yet humility and surrender will usher us into His grace and our rightful place in His heart. His love expressed and experienced within us is worth more than all the treasure the world has to offer! Our life's priorities will dramatically change in the atmosphere of Father's love and acceptance for us.

For many children of God we have not fully experienced our basic needs of expressed love and affection, acceptance, safety and security and purpose for our being. Whatever we are lacking can be found in a personal, intimate relationship with Father, Son and Holy Spirit because He designed us to need Him if we are to experience life to its fullest measure.

So what is our life experience now compared to what it could be if we were immersed in Father's love? We can't possibly know the answer to that question simply because we live in the natural and we know our life by experience in the natural. Father's plans for us include the supernatural which is beyond our ability to reason, so it must be experienced in the supernatural or as we usually say, in the spirit. So are you curious about where you are in your life experience compared to where you could be from Father's perspective? There is only one way to find out. Ask Him!

I remember back to our early years of ministry before we met Father. My purpose and goals were to preach and teach the Word and be used in the gifts of the Spirit, and bring healing to as many people as possible. I was performance driven! I really didn't have a conversational relationship with Jesus and I certainly didn't know Father, yet on occasion, Jesus or the Holy Spirit would speak to me bringing revelation, instruction and direction. I thought this life experience was the ultimate I could have as a Christian. Boy was I wrong!!!! Not only had I not arrived, I had barely started the journey available to me! I couldn't go where I needed to because I didn't know what and Who was available to me as a child of God. When the revelation came that I could have, was supposed to have, that personal, intimate relationship with my Heavenly Father, I was overwhelmed! When I received my first communication from Father it was a total life-changing experience! I instantly wanted more of Him and could hardly wait for our next communication. What would He say? What should I say? It was really hard to believe this was happening! What a miracle and I'm living it! Father was not bashful in telling me how much He loved me and that He was proud of me, nor has He been bashful in talking to me about my sin and my mistakes, my wrong attitudes and my misunderstandings. Never fear His corrections because they come wrapped in love. It's a strange experience to receive His correction and yet feel so good about it at the same time. This was not my previous life experience. Because of childhood abuse, I always feared correction for my mistakes. Father is polar opposite. I cannot explain how good I feel when He corrects me and I repent. It is such a cleansing experience and a sense of freedom that wasn't there before. I guess what I am describing here could be called a Heavenly experience, a Heavenly relationship because it doesn't compare to any other life experience I've had. My only regret is that I didn't find Father many years sooner.

So, back to my original question: How do we treat Father? Is He like a vending machine that we turn to when we want something from Him or is He our dearest Friend and intimate confidant with Whom we are immersed in a deep love relationship? If He is your vending machine [little or no relationship] you are to be pitied! If He has become your dearest Friend, I know you daily celebrate His goodness beyond all you could ask or think?

Remember this; change is not change until it's changed! Knowing you need to change, thinking about change, promising to change is not change. It is only when you get serious and determined and reach out to Father that He will come to your side and help you make the necessary changes. He has all the answers and all the provision necessary. Besides, He loves you unconditionally in spite of your faults. He is very ready to love you to life and usher you into the supernatural life He has prepared for you. It's your choice now!