

Are You Calling on the Real Jesus?

by Bob George

Late one night as I was drifting off to sleep, I was jolted by the harsh ring of the telephone. It was a neighbor, apologizing for the late hour, but asking for help. "What's the matter, Sue?" I asked.

"It's Stan," she answered in a low and tired voice. "He's drunk again. Please come over and talk to him."

Wearily, I climbed out of bed and dressed. Stan again! I wondered what I could say to him tonight when, quite frankly, I had already told him everything I knew.

In my first two years as a Christian, I became quickly involved in all kinds of ministries, from evangelism to teaching to counseling. I saw God do wonderful things in people's lives, but Stan was a mystery to me. Sixty-five years old, Stan had been an alcoholic since his college days. He was always open to hearing about Jesus Christ and about His offer of forgiveness of sins and a new way of life. Stan had even walked the aisle of a local church to profess his personal faith in Christ. But nothing seemed to happen to him. It was as if something was keeping the message from getting through. The drinking continued just as before, with all its degrading results.

In those days I had the tremendous experience of sharing the gospel with hundreds of people, and it seemed that most of them experienced an immediate turnaround. **But in the case of someone like Stan, someone who accepted the message without being changed afterward, I didn't really know what to do next except to share the same message again and hope that it would "take" this time.**

Stan's wife, Sue, on the other hand, was becoming visibly free and healed of her own drinking dependency following her acceptance of Christ. It was a joy to see her growing strong in faith, experiencing inner peace as never before. How was it that two people, both apparently sincere, displayed such contrasting effects of believing the same message? Why did it seem to work for her and not for him?

These questions puzzled me as I walked down the dark street to their home. I never doubted the power of God or the truth of the gospel. I had seen too much of that power in my own life and in the lives of the people I had led to Christ. To me it was like walking into a room, flipping on the light switch, and nothing happening. It would never occur to me to say, "Electricity is a failure." Decades of use have proven the reliability and power of electricity. Therefore, if the lights don't go on, there must be some bad connection on my end of it.

"Lord," I prayed, "there's nothing wrong with You. There's got to be something wrong with Stan, but I have no idea what the problem is, or even where to start. If I am going to help him tonight, You've got to put some words in my mouth...give me some direction...something."

God was going to answer my prayer that night, and more... ...I knocked on the door without a clue as to what I was going to say. Sue answered, greeted me with a quiet "Thank you," and gestured to the living room. There was Stan, heartbreaking sight in his drunken condition, with the familiar empty expression, lurching movements, and slurred speech. With an attitude of total dependency upon the Lord to guide me, I sat down to talk to him.

For a long time, we covered the same territory that we had discussed many times before, making no apparent progress. Suddenly, without any premeditation whatsoever, I asked Stan a question that I had never asked before. It went like this: "Stan, when you accepted Christ, which Jesus did you

believe in?"

He looked at me with a puzzled expression. "What do you mean?"

"Did you have in your mind an honorable man named Jesus of Nazareth who lived 2000 years ago in a place called Palestine? The historical man who performed miracles, made the blind to see, and the deaf to hear? The man who taught people to love one another, and eventually died on a cross? In other words, Stan, did you accept Jesus the *man*? Or did you accept Jesus Christ the **God** who became a man, who was raised again from the dead? He who is Lord and is alive today? The Lord Jesus Christ who offers to come and live inside of you and give His very life to you?"

Stan's eyes seemed to clear a little as he looked up at me intently. He said, "I received that Jesus who was a man 2000 years ago."

"Then the question, Stan is - are you willing tonight to put your full trust in Jesus *the God*? Not just accept the fact that there once was a good man who walked on the face of the earth that you're trying to imitate, but to accept the fact that this is the Lord God himself who is alive today and wants to live in you. Are you willing to get on your knees with me right now, Stan, and accept the living Christ, He who has the power to change your life from within?"

Stan immediately responded yes. We knelt together, and in his half-drunken state, he trusted in the living Christ. I looked into his face and saw a new man! After being an alcoholic for more than 40 years, Stan was totally freed of his dependency that night. This isn't to say that all his problems went away instantly. Stan's drinking had cost him his job, and he experienced a terribly frustrating series of rejections initially. But in the midst of trials and tribulations that would be enough to discourage almost anyone, Stan kept trusting God with his life. I thought of him often, and once on a trip back to California, I called and invited him to get together with me.

I marveled at God's healing power as I looked at this 70-year-old man standing before me, straight and tall, and compared him with the memory of the broken, defeated man I knew just five years before. Stan's story was an unforgettable example of the grace and power of Jesus Christ, who not only restored Stan spiritually, but enabled him to become the owner of a thriving business. This was a true miracle: the transformation of an insecure, fearful, angry man running from reality, to this firm, clear-eyed, peaceful, happy man. Once a burden to his loved ones, Stan was now a consistent, living husband who was dedicated to the service of other people because of his love for God...

...I learned a vivid lesson on communication: Communication is not just what you mean to say; it is what a person *hears*. Though he had learned to speak much of the Christian "language," Stan had not actually "heard" the true gospel. The message he was hearing was this: Being a Christian meant accepting the moral teachings of a great man who lived 2000 years ago and promising to imitate him. When I spotted the error and corrected the message, he was transformed. But it's not always easy to identify the missing link. It often takes a lot of probing to find the error that is the stumbling block to understanding.

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