

Living the Sermon on the Mount
by Doug Webster, JesusCollege.com

Have you been "animated" lately where you were fired up, lively, or energized? If you want to unveil an important force in your life, be a student of your animation. It reveals the presence of a kingdom reality.

"Animated" defined by Merriam-Webster:

a : endowed with life or the qualities of life: Alive

b : full of movement and activity <an animated crowd>

c : full of vigor and spirit : Lively <an animated discussion>

To see this kingdom power unveiled, pay attention to the energy levels in your body - your words and your bodily actions. Our animation is a matter of our will - getting what we want, fearing we won't get what we want or wanting what we think others should get. Even if it is goodwill, we can still get highly animated although we are usually more animated seeking what we want or not getting what we want.

If God's Kingdom is driving the force within, the energy will be fleshed out in love, joy and peace plus the other six Fruit of the Spirit notably self-control (Galatians 5). God's Kingdom animation is very much bodily energy governed by our self-control. It is never just "spiritual".

If the animation is from our kingdom animation, we most often feel energy of anger, anxiety or fear with the absence of self-control. These are the opposite of the Fruit of the Spirit. Call them the Fruit (Produce) of the Flesh. Pay special attention to animated anger in louder volume, speaking over others, biting words, condescending tone, belittling, dominating opinions and cutting sarcasm. Many of these are socially acceptable forms of attack.

The flip side of our kingdom driven animation is withdrawal. This power move is silence, passive aggressiveness, ceasing to listen, non-verbal body actions like rolling eyes or gasping. It is easy to deceive ourselves thinking, "I'm not mad" because the anger is cloaked. Who are we kidding? Removing loving participation in a conflict can be as powerful as outbursts. Our conditioned habits of practiced character leans towards outward or inward animation. We have a preferred path to and from our kingdom castle.

What can we discover from this animated movie playing through us?

The practice of an apprentice of Jesus is learning to discern the "source" of the animation, not just the "course" of the animation. The course is the path back to the kingdom source. The animated spirit is the trail to the throne and the king or queen ruling the heart (our will or spirit.) It is a power cord connected to the kingdom energy.

Hear the words of the most intelligent Master Teacher who ever lived:

"A good tree cannot bear bad fruit and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Only a good tree bears good fruit and a bad tree bears bad fruit." Matthew 7:18

"Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander." Matthew 15:17-19

Think about a recent animated moment when you're feelings "came to life." What powered your animation? Jesus commands us to consider when we "remove the speck from another's eye with a log in our own" or "cast pearls to the dogs & hogs". Instead of A.S.K. - Ask, Seek & Knock, we often B.O.P. - Browbeat, Opinion-ate & Pound. It's not just the action or words, it's the heart behind the action. My kingdom animation fuels my aggressive, lively, energized action. If that doesn't work or that's not my habitual practice, I will withdraw to control by omission.

Jesus says out of the heart come "thoughts" - evil or good. When I act, either in sin or for the good, thoughts spur my action. To act is a progression of thought, inclination and readiness to act. A thief is not just one who steals but one who would steal if the opportunity arose. A thief thinks about stealing, is inclined to steal and ready to steal if he can get away with it. Same applies to adultery, divorce, retaliation, judging, etc. The desire lies in the heart not just the action. I don't just steal. I am a thief. I don't just lie. I am a liar. I don't just sin. I'm a sinner.

We humans see two ways: the right way ("my way") and the wrong way ("your way".) I submit for your consideration a third option - The Kingdom Way ("Yahweh".) *"Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness"* (Mt. 6:33)

How do we seek the Kingdom of God?

First, trust His Kingdom is "at hand" to anyone, anytime, even the poor and persecuted. (Matthew 4:17, 5:3 & 10) Then, entrust to His Kingdom the people you care about while you stand with Jesus in a loving, joyful, peaceful way. We can listen with confidence knowing God will speak His wisdom (not our opinions) when the person has ears to hear and eyes to see His Kingdom reality. We let go of managing the results. We release control. We operate in His royal law of agape love as we surrender our governance. We don't just do good. We become a good person who loves like Jesus in a good way.

What does seeking the Kingdom of God look like in everyday life?

Look to Jesus' profound life manifesto in the Sermon on the Mount for real life application in these vital areas: (Matthew 5:21-6:32)

- * Anger & Contempt (outbursts when my will is challenged)
- * Fantasizing (imagining pretend, desirable scenarios)
- * Adultery (broken physical and/or emotional pursuits)
- * Divorcing (withdrawal from commitment)
- * Over-speaking (not simply "Yes is Yes, No is No")
- * Selflessly turning the other cheek, Going a 2nd mile, giving money
- * Genuinely loving enemies while talking to the Father about them
- * Letting go my ego driven reputation ("to be seen by others")
- * Treasuring heavenly wealth not earthly treasures ("where my heart is")

Realigning these areas into His Kingdom is the sanctification process of becoming like Jesus. Our mature character empowers Matthew 7:1-11.

- * Discerning without judging (log free spec removal)
- * Not casting unwanted pearls to avoid an animalistic reciprocation of defensive judging. Letting go of condemnation engineering.
- * Prayerfully "A.S.K." loved ones and the Father simultaneously.
Prayer becomes a community language not just spiritual action.
- * Practicing the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12).

We develop divine wisdom to guide us to discern the narrow or wide gates, true or false prophets, true or false disciples. (Matthew 7:13-23)

What is the end result?

Jesus the master carpenter teaches His apprentices yoked at His side the "restful, easy way" (Matthew 11:28-30) to build a "Rock House" that withstands the "falling rain, rising waters, blowing wind." Our house will not "fall with a mighty crash on the sand". (Matthew 7:24-27)

Jesus offers in the reality of His present Kingdom a good life of a good person who avoids a troubled life as a broken person. He teaches us to live under an open Heaven right here, right now "On Earth as it is in Heaven". Eternal life starts immediately in the gospel of the Kingdom of God. Blessed salvation is not delayed until life after death.

Is this the life you are hungering & thirsting for? (Matthew 5:6) If so, follow Jesus further up, further in His Kingdom. (Matthew 4:19; John 21:19)