

Holy Play
A South Carolina Lutheran Via de Cristo Publication

My Story: Up, In, and Out

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I was sitting at a table at Camp Kinard in September 1996 where I heard again the message of the grace of God that was for me. We had just heard the talk entitled “Grace Filled Days,” given by Pastor Herman Yoos. We had burned our sins and heard words of forgiveness, “In obedience to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you of all you sins.” I began to weep. I felt a joy down deep in my soul like I had not felt before. I closed my eyes and pictured a mountain range and sensed a voice saying to me, “You are mine, and I am in control. It is going to be alright.”

God was not doing something new but I surely had a new realization of what he had already done for me. I call this my adult confirmation experience. My faith was strengthened and I felt set free to be the child of God He claimed me to be. I had a deeper sense of my call; the same mission God gave his church – GO, MAKE DISCIPLES! (Matthew 28:19) But before we go and “do” it is helpful to have some grounding in who we are.

Jesus’ life was marked by balance and prioritization in relationships. In the Gospels, it is very apparent that Jesus gave priorities to his relationships and at being intentional to tending to those relationships. Some friends of mine at the ministry entitled 3DM use a triangle to illustrate how Jesus intentionally prioritized relationships. Since we are followers of Jesus, we want to imitate our teacher’s life and not just learn historical facts “about” him.

Christ began intentionally focusing on and nurturing his relationship with his Father through prayer. We call this Christ’s **Up** relationship with the Father. He spent forty days fasting and praying in the wilderness and connecting with the Father. From the clarity he gains, Jesus comes on the scene teaching that “the kingdom of God has drawn near!” (Mark 1:15) Jesus then calls an inner circle of disciples: Peter, Andrew, James, and John. These first disciples seem to function as his most trusted companions throughout his earthly ministry. In their intimate relationship he both invites and

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challenges them to grow. This relationship is referred to as “**IN.**” Only after calling the first disciples did Jesus go “**OUT**” to Capernaum so that he could teach in the synagogue and begin his public ministry. (Mark 1:21)

There are priorities to these relationships, for a reason. When we focus on being in mission without the awe that we experience in **UP** and the community we are given in **IN**, we become a people with a cause, but without a clue! Instead of our mission to the world being what we do **Out** of our identity in Christ, it becomes something we do in search of an identity. Perhaps that is why so many of our movements lose steam. We do them in search of our personal identity. But that is not how Jesus functioned and found balance. How can we expect to do any better than our Lord?

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus continues an **Up, In, Out** pattern of prioritizing and tending to different relationships. To be called into His life is not an abstract thing. Jesus teaches us as His disciples to do the same by mirroring Him. God calls us to follow this example because without balance, we cannot function productively for Him.

I think it is a shame that so many of us are not modeling this “**Up, In, Out**” pattern. In my own story, my “**In**” relationship with God was nourished when I attended the Via de Cristo retreat. It was the first time that I truly began to have a sense of “awe” in my relationship with God, and out of that, found a community and a sense of purpose that I had not found before. This enabled me to say yes to what God had in store, but it also enabled me to say “no” to lots and lots of good things that I just was not called to do.

When we need to feel needed, we may “jump forward” into the **Out** process. But in the story of Mary and Martha Jesus reminds us it is not our “doing” that is primary. It is about sitting at the foot of our Savior, **IN** awe. We cultivate this in our congregations and in 4th Day communities, and then we are called **Out** into the world to share the good news about our God. Otherwise, we are searching in vain, trying to pass on a faith to the world that is missing something. Sure failure will result.

Where do you feel that sense of awe: At the communion rail? In worship? In prayer? What did your encounter with Jesus do for your life on your weekend? How is

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God calling you to share that gift? You are his child! Our mission to the world can only come out of that fact. May we, as his children come **Up** to Him first, find encouragement and strength **In** our close relationships, and allow the Helper to guide us **Out**. Thanks be to God!

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