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I Cried in Church Today

Les. D. Lindquist

Les, you seem so restless these days. What's up?" This question from the chairman of the board of Deacons came at the end of another long meeting. Since I'd been a deacon from the age of 23, I was used to being frustrated by the slow progress made in church meetings. But lately I'd been feeling more frustrated than usual. It seemed as if we never got to anything really meaningful. Or if we did, it was always at the end of the evening when everyone was tired and anxious to get home.

I didn't really know how to answer. I simply said, "I don't know. It just seems there must be more to it."

A puzzled look appeared on Alan's face.

I tried to explain. "More to being a Christian, I mean. I'm so tired of meetings where nothing ever seems to be accomplished. Nothing that matters, at least."

"I guess I don't understand," Alan replied. "I think we're doing great. We've got a new building. The church is growing. Great people. Good services. The church is sure meeting my needs."

I went home that night more frustrated than ever. I'd been a Christian since the age of three, an active layman since I was 18. I was now forty-two. Was this part of the mid-life crisis they talked about? Did I have needs the church wasn't meeting, or was there something wrong with me?

Sunday morning, in the middle of singing "Crown Him with Many Crowns", I did something I had never ever done before. I began to laugh out loud. The words "Potentate of time, Creator of the rolling spheres, ineffably sublime" suddenly seemed ridiculous. Although I have an

honors degree from university, I had no idea what the words I was singing meant. Nor would I ever use them in real life. Yet here we all were singing them to God. I suppose he knew what they meant, but did it matter to him that I didn't? And how many others in our congregation were singing words they didn't understand? Laughter kept bubbling up inside my throat as I thought of all the thousands of people who could be singing this song without having a clue what the words meant.

But the laughter died as I thought to myself, "Is this worship?" I remembered the verses from the Bible that talk about God's dislike of outward worship if the heart isn't right. I wanted, desperately, to really worship God. What was wrong? And was it me or the church?

I went home that day and did something I have never done before or since. I wrote a poem. I use the word "wrote" loosely. God must have given it to me. It came out full-blown, and it effectively brought out the root of my distress. I had never once wavered from the commitment I had made at three years of age. I had served faithfully in several churches, as a founding member of two of them. I believed with all my heart that our role as Christians was to make disciples of all the world. But, except for leading my younger brother to Christ when I was six, directing a camp where a number of young teens had made decisions, and accompanying my pastor on visits twenty years ago where he led several people to Christ, I had not personally led anyone to Christ! Something was drastically wrong.

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I cried in church today
again
not for the sermon
it was fine
not for the singing
it stirred my heart
but when it was done
I felt inside
there must be more
there must be more
Did Jesus die on the cross
so we could come together
and wear our masks
and say our lines..
and dance our parts
and smile at each other
and talk about the weather?
I wanted you to know
to care
to feel with me
the doubts
the fears
the worries
that I'm afraid to let you know I have.
I wanted you to share with me
the joy of seeing my children grow up to love
Him
when I was so afraid that I had failed at that
too.

And I wondered if you too had cried
as you drove here
past all those houses
where people were going about
their morning chores
with no hope
and I don't even know their names.
I wanted to share with all of you
that I want to make a difference
I want to see Him work through me
I want to bring others to Him
but I'm afraid
and I need you
and you need me
and we say our lines
and dance our parts

I cried today in church
again.

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