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God's Presence in Sacred and Secular Circles: Heading Good Advice

A Commentary by Jason Curry



The Reverend Dr. Jason Richard Curry is Dean of the Fisk Memorial Chapel at Fisk University. He can be reached at jcurry@fisk.edu or www.fiskmemorialchapel.com.

Jesus speaks of the following two commandments in the New Testament: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:37-39)." I am fortunate to have had the opportunity to spend time with people who love God and their neighbor. I have also been fortunate to form partnerships with individuals and institutions who have demonstrated a profound love for their neighbors even though they had not spoken explicitly about their love for God. For example, I have worked with individuals who provided clothes for those who needed clothing, food to those who needed food, jobs for the unemployed, medical service to those who needed medical assistance and tutorial services for those who sought to improve their educational well-being even though they avoided a conversation about God. These individuals championed

the cause of the poor, promoted peace and goodwill, demonstrated a reverence for all human life and did not explicitly mention the name Jesus Christ. Their love for their neighbor was both profound and unprecedented. These people primarily worked in secular (e.g., nonprofits) as opposed to sacred institutions (e.g., the church), yet they provided me with invaluable advice about how to love my neighbor more effectively.

The Old Testament often describes how God's servants or prophets provided advice to kings; however, God's servant Jeremiah describes how he actually benefited from the advice of a (secular) king named Zedekiah. Jeremiah provided king Zedekiah with sound advice, and Zedekiah told Jeremiah not to tell anyone about the advice that he had provided him (Jeremiah 38: 24-28). Jeremiah's life was ultimately spared by Zedekiah's princes because he listened to the sound advice of a secular ruler. As Dean of the Chapel, I can

attest to the fact that the ministries of the Chapel were recently blessed through the invaluable advice that I received from the President of Fisk University, the Honorable Hazel O'Leary.

Paul states that the fruits of the spirit are "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness (Galatians 5:22)." I am proud to have worked with people and institutions in secular circles who promote these Christian virtues. In the same manner in which Jeremiah benefited from the advice of the king, those who have confessed Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior may benefit from the advice of others when that advice reflects the fruits of the spirit. An omnipotent (all-powerful) God is able to have influence within and outside of the church; therefore, let us remain vigilant and discerning (1 Corinthians 12:10) as we experience God's presence in both sacred and secular circles.