



"From Where I Sit ..."

"How is it with your soul?"

The Importance of Testimonials

My wife and I own a timeshare unit in Osage Beach, MO that we visit each year in the Spring and Fall. There isn't a CME Church in the immediate area so I have become a frequent attendee of the only Methodist church in the community, Harper Chapel United Methodist Church. Needless to say, their one-hour service is quite different from our typical worship service, but at the same time, different can also be good and beneficial.

Their order of worship includes a period entitled "*Community Care – Joys and Concerns*" and the Pastor introduces it with the question "*Where have you seen God this week?*" Parishioner after parishioner, and sometimes even I, would join in and respond with instances of where we felt we had seen God present or needed God during the week whether it was a joyful experience or an occasion of concern or loss. To further the point, sometimes the Pastor would remind us that John Wesley often opened his small group meetings with the question, "*How is it with your soul?*" In other words, where we have taken the time to see God in the week prior is a partial answer to Wesley's question of "*How is it with your soul?*" As both a witness and an occasional participant of these expressions, these responses appeared to me to be both spiritual and therapeutic.

As I sat in the midst of these people as they would share their experiences of joys and concerns, it came to me that what they were doing, in their own way, was "testifying!" And my mind would go back to the midweek services and the old revival experiences of my childhood when my grandmother and others would join in the testimonial periods and "testify" as to the goodness of God in their lives over the past week. They would testify of healings and good health, of lives spared and renewed opportunities, of successful crops and increased livestock, of children born and young people born-again, and even of the strength received during times of sickness and death. Sometimes the testimonials would become so touching that others would be moved to "shout, dance, and run up and down aisles." And all because of a testimony that answered the question, "*How is it with your soul?*"



Somehow, we seem to have lost the testimonial period and the opportunity to strengthen the bonds of community by sharing our joys and concerns, one with another. Amid the hustle and bustle of our daily lives, we continually overlook God's daily miracles and without an opportunity that prods us to notice and remember these miracles, we miss many of our intended blessings.

"*Where have we seen God this week?*" is Harper Chapel's modernized approach of asking Wesley's question, "*How is it with your soul?*" But at least the question is being asked and, even within a one-hour service, there's an opportunity for the people of God to respond. An opportunity to confess that God is present and active in their lives, to acknowledge that God moves in, around and through them in the midst of their joys and concerns, and to affirm that God is still in the business of miracles. As Christian witnesses of the Love of God and God's rich blessings, we need an opportunity to answer the question, "*How is it with our souls?*" Or at least that's the way it looks to me...

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