Columns
Spirituality



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Although the Merriam Webster Dictionary defines it as "the quality or condition of being obstinate; stubborn; inflexible or intractable," in my own thinking spiritual obstinacy is when we assume that either God does not know what we do or that it does not matter whether He knows it or not.

Instead of inviting God into our plans, we want God to follow our already made plans. It is when God wants to change our lives but you and I resist change. What have we achieved that has not been willed and guided by God Himself?

Recently I watched with amusement as my little nephew displayed his obstinacy. I went to the shop with him and bought him candy, but when we reached the car, just before we drove off, I decided to test him. "Please, let me have some of your candy, dear?" But the young man could not part with his candy. I thought this was quite obstinate of him since I provided the necessary money to get it for him, yet he could not give me even a small bit in return. This is normal for a child to behave in this selfish manner, and his age allows that. The problem comes later in life if he is not well trained — and as an adult he continues to manifest the same stubborn behavior.

I imagine we display this same behavior as Christians and children of God whenever we deny God anything that he asks of us, since everything we have comes from Him. There is nothing that we own that does not come from God: time, talent, strength, knowledge, sound health — to name but a few.

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This spiritual obstinacy has a long history in the life of the human race. We can trace this back as far as when we first meet the Israelites traveling through the desert. Under the able leadership of Moses, the Israelites were still inflexible when they retorted against him, "Were there no burial places in Egypt that you had to bring us out here to die in the desert? … Did we not tell you this in Egypt when we said, 'Leave us alone. Let us serve the Egyptians'?" (Exodus 14: 11-14).

Every answer that we seek is ultimately in the Word of God. But let me ask: How many times a day do you eat a meal? How many times a day do you pause in your busy schedule to read the Word of God? You and I know the answer to these questions. No wonder we experience such confusion, such hunger and thirst in our daily life!

I heard a story of two men who were quite stubborn. Each was on either side of a perimeter wall that was green on one side and red on the other. From either side, one man claimed that the wall was painted green and the other claimed it was red. Neither was willing to drop the idea and embrace the fact that the other could be right; each claimed to be the right one. Stubborn hearts do not dialogue; they are closed and believe they are the only ones that are right.

Rudyard Kipling once said, "Words are the most powerful drug used by human race." The Word of God is even more powerful, for the Word is God. It is through the Word that everything came into being.

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The most obstinate person who ever lived might be the Egyptian Pharaoh. Despite the many plagues that God sent to his people, he refused to let the Israelites to go free. As we read in Exodus 7: 3-5 God said "Yet I will make pharaoh so obstinate that despite the many signs and wonders that I will work in the land of Egypt, he will not listen to you … "

Like the pharaoh, in our day-to-day life, we do encounter many people who are not willing to listen to us. They are too busy to give us some of their time or they simply are not interested in the fact that someone is speaking to them. Speaking may not necessarily be physical: It could be through body language that says: "I am not comfortable in my place of work, I need a change." Body language from a neglected child might say: "Mum, Dad, pause and hear what I have to say about my school experiences today." A young person might say: "I am tired of empty promises of being a leader; tomorrow I need mentorship to get started in my career now."

The list is endless but is there anyone there to hear what the other is crying out, whether physically or emotionally? Until each individual resolves to listen to the other, we will continue to remain obstinate, no better than that pharaoh of old.