



Cause and Effect

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Christians often fail to realize that things they want or need in their lives such as peace, joy, and rest are not things they can just pray for. They are things that have specific causes. Only when the cause is employed can the effect be realized. In this message we look at examples in the Word that illustrate how direct God has been and how simple He has made it to receive some of the most basic and important things to us.

Introduction

The principle of "cause and effect" should be second nature to us in the physical realm. Smoke does not occur without fire - it always has a cause. Rain does not fall without evaporation and condensation having first occurred - it always has a cause. Sunlight does not reach us without fusion having occurred in our nearby star to release energy in the form of light. If we wish to have heat in our house we must generate energy in some manner (burn wood, natural gas, or coal at the electricity plant, etc.). Virtually everything has a cause whether we can fully and properly explain it or not.

So, the physical realm is highly ordered and well-defined in terms of cause and effect. But, the physical realm was created by the spiritual realm - God, a spirit, spoke the physical world into existence. Therefore, since order is never the natural result of disorder (this is the Law of Entropy), the spiritual realm must also be highly ordered and well-defined. Otherwise, the physical realm would not be well-ordered.

Since we are part spiritual beings, we have contact with and can be influenced by the spiritual realm. (When the Bible speaks of "the heart" it is referring to the part of ourselves where the soul and spirit meet.) Thus, we should expect these interactions to also be well-ordered. If we desire a particular spiritual effect, we must employ the cause in order to see it manifest.

Often we expect rest, joy, peace, and so forth to just magically appear from the spiritual realm. To say it another way, often we just pray for these things to manifest in our lives. But, these are effects. Just as in the physical realm, a cause must be employed in order to produce one of these effects. They cannot just be prayed for. This is not understood by many Christians. But, Jesus was very specific that we should expect this type of order.

Matthew 7:16

Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

If we plant a thorn bush (the cause), the result (effect) will be thorns. If we plant a grape vine, the result will be grapes. If we plant nothing, the result will be nothing. All things produce after their own kind. If we employ the right cause, we will achieve the desired effect. If we do not employ the right cause, why should we expect a particular effect? This is illogical and virtually impossible.

We will see that the cause is usually the planting of a spiritual seed. This is a beautiful reflection of the natural world which runs almost entirely on seeds. The question is: what spiritual seeds (causes) should be planted to produce the desired effect whether that be rest, joy, peace, faith, etc.?

Rest

The first effect we are going to examine is rest. God gives us very specific directions in two places on how to cause rest.

Matthew 11:28-30

²⁸Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Sometimes I think language and phrasing trips us up and we fail to receive the full impact of what we are reading. In this case, if we replace the word “for” in verse 29 with the word “because” it will help. Now walk through the verses...

Jesus invites us to come to Him and He will give us rest (verse 28). How will He give us rest? We must learn from Him (verse 29). What must we learn from Him? Why did He have rest when He was here on earth as a human? Verse 29 again - *because* he was meek (gentle) and lowly in heart (humble).

That's it. Be gentle towards others and think more highly of them than yourself. These are the causes that produce the effect of rest.

If you stop to think about it, this makes perfect sense. When we stop striving to be better than others, when we defer to them and their desires, when we cease all of the strife and contention and anger, when we picture all of these things we can see the relaxation and rest and peace that would come.

So, being gentle and humble brings rest. But, we can take it a step further even.

Hebrews 4:9-11

⁹There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

¹⁰For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.

¹¹Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

There is a whole teaching that comes out of Hebrews chapter 4 called "The Sabbath Rest." To summarize that teaching, the context is about receiving the *whole* Gospel. When we become a Christian we are a new creation. As a new creation, God has prepared a Sabbath Rest for us to immediately enter into. This Sabbath Rest is simply a relationship with Him in which all of our needs are met through provisions in the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Many of us have never entered that rest either by choice or ignorance. And so we need instruction on how to cause the effect of rest. Verse 10 above tells us the cause of this rest: we must cease from our own works. When we stop trying and striving to receive from God or provide for ourselves the things God gifts us in salvation (for our spirit, soul *and* body), then we will find rest. As verse 11 indicates, this is a cause that we must constantly and diligently work for because it is not in our nature to trust.

But, isn't this essentially saying the same kind of thing as before? When we are humble towards God, we do not think our way is better than His way and we trust Him. When we are humble and cease from our own works and simply receive from Him as He intended for us to do, we enter the Sabbath Rest.

So, rest is caused by being gentle and humble (towards others and towards God) and by fully receiving (and not working for the benefits of) the Gospel.

One last note about the yoke mentioned in Matthew 11:30. Dealing with people each day is often very difficult work. Stressful situations, different personalities, and uncontrollable external circumstances often lead to friction, discord, and exasperation. This difficult work is where the yoke comes in to play. A yoke is designed to make a burden lighter or a task easier - multiple oxen using a yoke can do their work far easier than the same oxen just tied to the load. So what Jesus is telling us is that the work of living and interacting with people every day is made easier by the yoke of being gentle and humble. Why? Because it brings us rest.

It takes work - a specific and often difficult mental choice - to be gentle and humble. As contrary as it seems, Jesus makes it clear that this is work that will bring us rest like no other can.

Joy

Another blessing God has made available to us with a definite cause is joy.

John 15:9-12

⁹As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

¹⁰If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

¹¹These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

¹²This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

How do we experience joy? Do what God tells us to do (“keep His commandments”). By doing so, we will experience His love, and this will cause us to love other people. The effect, God says, is that we will be full of joy. This should not surprise us. God’s ways are always better than our ways. He knows how He made us. He knows what specific things will bring joy to each individual person. We just need to listen for His voice and seek out His leadings. If we hear and follow, we can have nothing but joy because He knows us better than we know ourselves.

Psalms 37:23

The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.

This scripture is used in a teaching called “Prepare Your Heart.” The idea is that if we let God prepare our heart, if we let Him put the desires we should have in our heart (Psalm 37:4), the Lord will order our steps. Psalm 37:23 says the result is that we will be delighted (have joy).

Peace

Along with joy and happiness, the most sought after blessing in the world is peace. Man has tried to establish peace on this earth ever since the fall, and he has never fully succeeded. On an individual level, how can a person obtain peace? Again, God gives us a simple cause.

II Peter 1:2

Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.

Peace comes through knowing God and knowing Christ. And this isn't something new. In 712 B.C. under the Old Covenant Isaiah wrote...

Isaiah 26:3

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

If you do not have peace, you do not truly know who God is and what His character is, or you don't fully trust what He has done for you through the death and resurrection of Christ. Even if you think you know God, if you do not have peace, you do not truly know Him or you are not trusting Him in some area. Maybe there are things that you have misunderstood or misinterpreted or maybe you are focused on the circumstances and not on Him. In this case, focus your attention on the Father, seek Him out in these areas, and ask Him to show you who He really is, how He really feels about you, and what He has done for you in Christ.

Conclusion

Many of the blessings provided by the Father are readily available to us. But, often they do not come by simply asking or praying for them. God has designed many laws and principles upon which both the physical and spiritual world operate. If we desire certain effects in our lives, we need to seek out the causes God has put in place to create these effects.

- Rest is caused by being gentle and humble towards others and towards God.
- Joy is caused by doing what God has told us to do and loving other people.
- Peace is caused by truly knowing and trusting God and Christ.

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