



Over the past weeks and days, I have continued to profess a strong confidence in the character of Ohio Conference folks. I have interacted enough with a wide range of folks to believe that the Spirit has a good foothold in the lives of the pastors and people of our churches.



What will we "take away" from Event Two?

Any reasonable person might well ask this question or one much like it in considering the prospect of Ohio Conference's credentialed leaders meeting together on Sept. 28.

I would suggest the more important question might be, "What will we bring to Event Two?" If we bring only expectations about the rules, the answers, the procedures, we may be disappointed, each and all, when what we take away doesn't match our expectations.

Today I realized something a bit new during a look at Matthew 22, when Jesus was asked about the greatest commandment. Do we recognize that Jesus responded with words which are actually about the greatest relationships? For these two commandments are not actually just rules to "check off" (or "on" for that matter), such as "do not steal" or "do not bear false witness."

... and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." — Matthew 22:35-39

To fulfill such commands we must bring our whole selves to both relationships. If we can give ourselves to these relationships, all the rest follows. As Jesus said, "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." — Matthew 22:40

Paul goes so far in Galatians 5:14 as to suggest the second is enough, and in this implies that only after giving ourselves fully to God can we give ourselves fully to our neighbors, or better, when we actually do love our neighbors as ourselves, we provide certain evidence of having first loved God with our whole being. When one brings such things to relationships, one can expect great things from them. If on the other hand we bring doubtfulness, distrust and skepticism, we should be able to predict fairly well what we will take away.

Over the past weeks and days, I have continued to profess a strong confidence in the character of Ohio Conference folks. I have interacted enough with a wide range of folks to believe that the Spirit has a good foothold in the lives of the pastors and people of our churches. So I hold out hope that in gathering together on Sept. 28 we will "take away" great things from our time together. That is, if we consider carefully what we bring in coming. Will we bring our whole selves to our time together? If we do, we may well take away better things than we expected.

I am ready to predict things of the Spirit if we come with the Spirit of Christ empowering us to love God and neighbor — especially the "neighbors" with whom we will come to meet that day!

