

The Heartbeat of 
The Remnant

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A ministry of
The Berean Voice



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~ *The Berean Voice Board*

It is our goal that the content of this magazine bring honor and glory to God. All Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise notated. In the event of discovering any errors in content or detail, please count it to our oversight and kindly bring it to our attention.

Magazine Contact Info

The Heartbeat of the Remnant

c/o: The Berean Voice

P.O. Box 279

Shreve, Ohio 44676

Ph. (330) 439-9547

website: bereanvoice.com

Email Contacts

Questions or Comments

editor@bereanvoice.org

Address Changes & Subscriptions

(Free Subscriptions—Donation Funded)

subscribe@bereanvoice.org

Submitting Articles, Poems, & Photos

(please contact us for requirements)

submit@bereanvoice.org

Board of Directors

Edward Martin *Chairman*

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Greetings in the worthy name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. I trust that amid the present uncertainties in the world our hearts echo with the Psalmist: *In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God* –Psalm 62:7. And, *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble* –Psalm 46:1.

We are facing unprecedented and challenging times. More so than many of us can remember in our lifetime. I'm sure that each generation has faced challenges unique to their time in history. The same is true of us. But what is our 'time' in history? Most god-fearing individuals believe we are on the threshold of what the Scriptures refer to as "the time of the end". (See Daniel 8:17; 11:35; 11:40; 12:4; & 12:9)

Maybe it is just me, or perhaps it has a lot to do with how fast news is broadcast around the world now a days. But it sure seems like there is a lot more chaos and violent acts of nature than there was five or ten years ago. Hurricanes, tornadoes, wildfires, earthquakes, drought, flooding, political unrest, wars, and rumors of war. Did I miss anything? Oh yes, there's the ever-present issue of a worldwide pestilence—Covid-19.

Much of the world today seems to have a sense that "something is up", or that "something is about to happen". We should not be surprised by this, Jesus foretold it. We should not be overcome and distracted by fear, Jesus has told us what to do. In the following Scripture I have underlined

three things that I see Jesus wants us to be active in doing as long as time continues.

And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come –Matthew 24:4-14.

Take heed that no man deceive you

I find it interesting that Jesus mentions this before telling us what He wants us to do. Someone has said that spiritual blindness is different than physical blindness in that when someone is physically blind, they know it, but when someone is spiritually blind, they don't know it. In fact, that is the foundation of being spiritually blind—to no longer be aware of one's own spiritual condition.

...continued on page 31



Separation

Barry Grant
Titanyen, Haiti



There He was, the King Himself, standing before Pilate, awaiting His death sentence. A large crowd had gathered outside. There was no mistaking it, these people were angry. They wanted this man, Jesus of Nazareth, dead. “Crucify him! Crucify him!” was all that could be heard. This man must have done something terrible. But who were these people that were so angry at the Son of God? Maybe they were rapists, thieves, and murderers. Possibly they were the local liars, drunks, or some other evildoers. Actually, they were the religious people, the church goers, the ones claiming to be God’s people.

Ever since that infamous day, history has repeated itself. People claiming to be God’s people have seen those who love Jesus and try to follow His teachings as their enemies and have persecuted them any way they could. From the Jews, to the Roman Catholics, to the Protestants, the mainstream church of the day has always been the enemy of those who try to govern their everyday lives by the simple clarity of the Scriptures.

I am concerned that we have signed a deal with the mainstream church of our day—a deal for peace at all costs.

Any Scripture that teaches rebuke, reproof, or correction is considered out-of-date and is not allowed to be used to help shape the faith and practice of today’s Christian. Many individuals, church leaders, and even whole churches have begun to believe that love and acceptance alone is a better way to point others to Christ. Those who would raise a voice of warning are seen to be critical and stirring unrest, so they are quickly silenced.

As we search the Scriptures, we see that Jesus, then the

disciples, then the early church, had nothing good to say or think about the false church.

While out witnessing or talking to people about the Lord, I’m amazed at the backlash from the mainstream church of our day. Mainly, the Protestant church.

A simple man walked up to a Christian concert holding a sign reading ‘Jesus saves from sin.’ Without him ever saying a word, he was attacked. “Quit judging us!” “You don’t know our hearts!” “You’re a disgrace!” “Bigot!” The man slowly walked away.

Many times, the people who get angry when discussions involving God come up are actually folks who claim to know Jesus. The sinners seem to let the message penetrate their hearts. If you were to go to an intersection in a city and simply hold a sign proclaiming something about Christ, you would soon see that this is true.

As I was standing in line at a fast-food restaurant, I noticed that the young man preparing my sandwich had many interesting tattoos. Some were of tombstones, skulls, and other graphic designs. I calmly asked him if he could explain what the tattoos meant to him. He began going into detail about each one. I then asked the young man if he knew Jesus. He got sober and explained that he wanted to believe in God but couldn’t. I quoted a few Bible verses and told him that God was waiting for him. I noticed that God’s Word was having a great effect on the young man.

Meanwhile, I also noticed that the lady behind me was beginning to get frustrated. Finally, she interrupted our conversation and told the man, “Jesus loves you just the way you are. You don’t have to change for this man.” This lady

later told me what church she went to and how judgmental she thought that I had acted. I was amazed. I had only told the young man about the Savior!

Before I left the restaurant, I walked back over to the young man to bid him farewell. As I approached, he looked up with tears in his eyes. “Thank you”, he said “I can tell that you truly care about me. I will go home and really think about what you said.”

That night, as I reflected on the day’s events, I wondered why that professing Christian woman had such a problem with my interaction with the young man. Why did she get so angry? I felt like the Lord gave me an answer: *No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon –Matthew 6:24.*

She was a nice young lady. And, yes, she professed that she was a Christian, but she clearly did not live a life that was in obedience to God’s Word. Rather, outside of going to church, one would not be able to tell at all that she was a follower of Christ. I’m sure if I would have met her at the park, we could have had a nice chat. I’m sure she would have been courteous and polite. I’m sure she would have presented herself as a good citizen and nice person. But when it came to being excited about Jesus, sharing the gospel, and talking about God’s Word, her true colors came out.

Am I saying that a person must be an Anabaptist to make it to heaven? Absolutely not, but I am saying we must obey the Bible and follow Christ to make it to heaven. Most professing Christians are super nice and seem godly, until you start talking about God.

Since when has the definition of a Christian been ‘a nice person’, or ‘a good citizen’? Is that all there is to it anymore—simply do what you want, find a fun church that doesn’t require anything from you, get a good job, get married, have a few children and just like that you’re a ‘Christian’? God help us!

When He was having a discussion with a group of people about whether or not they were true followers of God, Jesus said, *...If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth ... Ye do the deeds of your father ... Ye are of your father the devil... –John 8:39-44.*

Has the true church slipped so far as to not be able to call things as they are? God’s Word gives us clear understanding on the matter: *Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather **reprove** them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. But all things that are **reproved** are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever*

doth make manifest is light –Ephesians 5:10-13.

Jesus says *Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid –Matthew 5:14.* Do we expose sin and heresy in the same way that light exposes darkness? Or are we too attached to a comfortable life with no enemies? We do not need to be scared of the world, or of the false church, because we know that we have what they need! For years the mainstream churches have been getting farther and farther away from the truth of God’s Word. Are we afraid to recognize this? Are we afraid to separate ourselves from this? Will we stand up against it like the early church did?

There is a reason why the Protestant reformer, Martin Luther, died hating the Anabaptist people—because they rejected his interpretation of the Scriptures. The Anabaptist people were not respecters of people. Rather their only respect was for God and His Word, and that without compromise. It was for this that they were persecuted. It would have been much easier for those godly young men to just be quiet and try to get along with the Catholics and Protestants, but they refused and both groups sought to extinguish them. Still, they lived on, trusting only in their God. When we joined the church of Jesus Christ didn’t we promise to continue fighting the same fight—the same fight that Jesus fought; the same fight the early church fought—the fight against the false church? Or have we agreed to get along, for the sake of peace? After all isn’t it better for business, for friendships, and for reputation?! God forbid!

We can live a life that seems to be without sin, but still be living in disobedience. The Bible calls us to action! We are called to be lights, to be witnesses, to pursue godliness, and to live uprightly, not just to put on a good show. I believe this is what has become popular in our day. Lying, cheating, stealing, and killing are attributes that even the world rejects. It’s the ‘in thing’ to be respectable, to make a nice living, and to be upstanding citizens. But is this the life of a born-again believer? Should we fit in with the American dream? Should the only thing that’s different between us and the Protestant church be a head covering? I think we should prayerfully consider this move, the move to join hands with the mainstream church.

I personally know many Protestant Christians. I’m not trying to say they are bad people; many are good folks. But that is not what we are talking about. I believe we need to draw a line and slow down this draw to join them in any compromising manner. Let’s look at just a few of the differences between the Protestants and Anabaptists.

War

Can you believe in war, killing your enemies, and still be a New Testament Christian? Most Protestants are supporters of fighting for our freedoms and our rights. Many will go

as far as calling Anabaptist people cowards for not fighting.

Years ago, a group of professing Christians gathered around the biggest bomb ever made. This bomb was about to be sent into a foreign land to destroy an entire city; this bomb was meant to kill everything in its path. Men, women, and children alike would perish because of this bomb; that was the plan. As this group was gathered around this bomb they began to pray, they asked God's blessing on this bombing mission. They then thanked Him for its success—killing nearly one quarter of a million souls.

Jesus calls us to love our enemies. This topic clearly separated the churches during the various wars. Most of the 'Christian' churches in the world supported the war effort of their country. The Anabaptists would not, and they were sorely persecuted for it. So, can we be a Christian and continue to support war? If we support war, where will it stop? Will we also prepare to defend ourselves and our families against violence and lawlessness? The American church calls 'defending ourselves', our families, and our country, heroism or bravery; the Bible calls it.

Entertainment

It seems that most Christians in America have no problem watching as many ballgames and sports events as they desire. Movies and television are found in nearly every home. Going to the beach, casinos, and festivals are commonplace. Spending thousands on big hunting trips and expensive vacations is completed without a second thought. To be honest, there really are no limits to what the Christian in America can do, as long as it seems right

to them. Jesus tells us multiple times to deny ourselves. It seems that we look for any loophole possible to indulge in all the self-gratifying activities we want! It's no wonder the church is struggling with pornography and many other sins of the flesh. When we learn how to deny ourselves, pick up the cross, and follow Jesus, then we will start to see a clear, distinct, and large separation between us and the mainstream church of our day.

Non-conformity

It is common to conform to one's surroundings. This is one reason we don't send our children to public schools. Jesus is also very clear that we need to come out from among them and be separate, to say "No" to evil communication and the ways of this world, and to not be afraid of identifying ourselves with the people of God. It almost seems that dress is really the only thing that separates many of us, and that is changing also.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world –1 John 2:15-16. Where are the people that hate the world? Where are the people that want to be as separated as possible? Where are the people that are not afraid to be laughed at? Where are the people that are not afraid to be different? Oh, where are God's people?! If history repeats itself, there will soon be no difference between the church and the world. Oh, where are the men?!

I've heard many Anabaptist people say they can't say

For I am *not ashamed* of the
gospel of Christ: for it is the *power*
of God unto *salvation* to every
one that *believeth*; to the Jew
first, and also to the Greek.

–Romans 1:16

that those in the worldly church are not Christians; they just don't want to go in that direction. Is that truthful? Is that the message we want to send to our youth, and to our children? I don't believe so. The Bible says that few will make it. If we pass on to our children that the Protestant church is also ok, and that they just do things differently, we are destroying everything that Jesus preached. We are saying that we do what we do, not because the Bible says, but rather we decide what we do based on our circumstances and what others around us think! No wonder our children are more interested in the modern church of today than ever before—there's no line drawn!

There was a modern church that caught my attention. They seemed to be on fire for the Lord! The pastor preached as a dying man. They were very interested in reaching the lost. But there were so many Bible teachings that they simply ignored! I finally took it to the Lord. "What is going on here God!" It was as if God told me to 'just wait'.

Soon after that, the pastor was released from his position because he was having an affair. Then it all became clear to me—you can have a nice church, you can preach a good message, and you can help the poor, but if you're not willing to obey ALL of the New Testament teachings, you're not a true Christian, and you will not find victory. It's easy to take Christianity so far, but it is not easy to sell all that you have, put your all on the altar, and follow your Master. I know this is bold, but it is the truth of God's Word.

I was speaking to a young lady in a Protestant setting, who wanted to give her life to the Lord. She was ready to do

what it took, or so she said. I asked her if she was ready to suffer for Jesus, if she was ready to separate herself from her old friends, if she was ready to be hated by the world, and ready to be different. I asked her if she was willing to change how she looked. It didn't take long before she shockingly responded with an emphatic "No!" "I want to start going to church, but not all that other stuff." I later noticed her with her friends pointing and laughing at me. Being cool does not define a true Christian but being rejected for the sake of the Gospel does.

This is a tough article to write. It's not a popular message and not very encouraging. But I think it's a message we must consider today, not only for our sake, but for our children's sake, and that of the church of tomorrow. We must draw clear lines of separation, without any compromise. We must honestly evaluate the modern church of our day with the clear teachings of the New Testament. We must call sin, sin. We must call disobedience, sin. We must call compromise, sin. We must once again choose to suffer with the true people of God. This does not mean that we shun people or act distasteful towards them, but with love in our hearts, and a message on our lips, we point the masses to Christ!

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek –Romans 1:16.



The Call

The night was still, the air was drear.

A man walked alone; his direction unclear.

A battle raged within his troubled soul.

He was at the crossroads, all his life as a whole.

He believed in God, or at least so he thought.

He obeyed what he knew—all that he'd been taught.

But something's not right, there's something I lack.

I've lived like most others, as my life plays back.

But I go to church! I sing and I pray!

I even helped the neighbor, just the other day!

He fought with his mind, justifying the wrong.

It was God that was working, He seemed quite strong.

The fact of the matter, it's confidence I lack.

I believe in myself, not the God from way back.

God wants to show strong, in my life every day.

He wants me to be proved; He's the Life and the Way.

There's no better One, in Whom to put all your trust;

Than the almighty God. For all men it's a must!

—by Barry Grant



Religious Drama vs True Worship

Ivan Weaver
Bethel, PA

Editor's Note: Many of our readers may at first be convinced that this topic doesn't pertain to them. If this is correct, we rejoice with you. However, before simply passing over this article we urge the reader to carefully read what is written here then start asking questions of family, friends, and acquaintances. We are hearing that especially the younger generation is being drawn into para-church events (such as concerts, seminars, Bible Schools, etc.) or special services at neighboring churches, which involve this type of content to one degree or another. Especially prominent are special music groups/concerts, ventriloquism, religious films, and skits. We wish to raise awareness on this issue and stimulate a discussion on the matter.

Religious drama—what is it?

A serious story by actors performing or impersonating any given dialogue in a theatrical manner, or an event of real life with emotional effects which are characteristics of a play, patterned after a religious theme. (American Heritage College Dictionary)

Is this something the church needs to be concerned about? It should be. It usually seems to get its beginning in extended “prayer and praise” services between Sunday school and church services. Or in special services other than on a Sunday morning. It can include such things as instrumental presentations, puppet shows, skits, plays, dances, and religious films.

Religious drama is not something new. It was introduced during the Dark Ages (A.D. 400 to 1200) as dramatic performances with religious themes known as “miracle plays.” These plays became so corrupt that the Catholic Church tried to put a stop to them, but to no avail. In 1242, the Passion play, a performance that depicts the death of Christ, started in Germany and it is still being performed around the world today.

An interesting observation, as we look back through time, is that religious drama was introduced during the darkest time of history (the Dark Ages), but the church emerged from this long era of moral decay through Spirit-filled, Bible-based, New Covenant-focused preaching of the Anabaptist Revival during the Reformation time period.

I. Why Drama Violates True Worship

a. Drama is a violation of the law of hearing.

In a spiritual world, seeing is not as important as hearing (2 Corinthians 4:18). The words hear, heareth, and heard are found over 1,000 times in the Bible. As a matter of fact, the whole Bible is God speaking to man. He wants mankind to hear! “Thus, saith the Lord” is a constant refrain throughout Scripture.

On Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:9), the people heard the message of God through His spokesman, Moses. God’s voice was frightening to them (Exodus 20:18-19) but hearing from Him was essential so that they “sin not.” In Exodus 20, God gave some detailed instructions of what the worship pattern was to be. *Ye shall not make with me gods of silver; neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold—Exodus 20:23.* These visual aids (idols) were a violation of God’s law of hearing. Through the eye gate comes the temptation to build idols. The altars that God did permit were to be plain and uncut (vss. 24-25). What they did see was not to distract from that which was heard from the altar! What is seen, especially immodesty, tends to be a distraction from what is heard (v. 26).

The preaching of Jesus appealed to the hearing: *Who hath ears to hear, let him hear—Matthew 13:9.* While He did not use visual aids like speakers do today, Jesus did use verbal aids (parables) as a tool to appeal to the hearing (Mat 13:18).

On the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17), Peter wanted to reinvent the worship experience by building three shrines. He wanted something to see! But the voice in the clouds alerted the disciples to the importance of hearing (v. 5). Worship with visual aids is not endorsed by God!

Jesus said, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life ... The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. John 5:24-25.* Salvation comes by hearing the Word of God, but only when one believes what is heard!

Paul raises some sobering questions: *How then shall they*

call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? –Romans 10:14. He answers his own questions: So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God –Romans 10:17. God’s law to experience salvation is either by hearing God’s Word or by reading God’s Word!

In the 2nd and 3rd chapters of Revelation, Jesus repeats seven times: “He that hath an ear, let him hear.” Religious drama is superficial in that it appeals to the soulish part of man, not the spiritual part. The soulish part of man (emotions) can have a great time while the spirit within man remains untouched and unmoved. Satan uses the eye gate to distract man from his real heart issues.

Hebrews 11:6 tells us, “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (or demonstrated).” Real faith comes to the human heart by hearing, not by demonstration. Therefore, religious drama borders on being anti-Christ because it is counterproductive to God’s law of hearing.

b. Drama is a violation of sincerity.

The Scriptures teach the importance of sincerity in all of life (1 Corinthians 5:8; 2 Corinthians 1:12, 2:17; Philippians 1:10). In maintaining our sincerity, it is important for each person to recognize that God has created us as unique individuals (Psalm 139:14-15). We are not and cannot be someone else! To try to be someone else violates our individual uniqueness. And, when one does so, he becomes insincere.

How does this connect with religious drama? Drama employs playacting. Jesus had a constant controversy with the Pharisees. They were constantly playacting, or pretending to be something that they were not. Jesus repeatedly called them hypocrites. The original Greek word means “play actor.”

The Pharisees’ sole motivation to pray in public was to be seen of men (Matthew 6:5-7). They were conscious of their audience, thus their performance. Jesus made it very clear that religious devotion was to be private, in “thy closet.” When a person who expresses his piety becomes more concerned about his performance than his message, he is no longer worshiping, but putting on a show! This can happen to preachers, quartets, choruses, etc. “Prayer walks” also usually fall into this same category of playacting.

When a person makes play-acting a regular habit, he becomes a hypocrite. He violates his own soul, because he injures his own uniqueness, which was given by God.

Jesus addressed the Pharisees as hypocrites seven times in Matthew 23. He informed them that they were walking dead men (Matthew 23:27-28). They had playacted for so

long that they did not know the difference between the real and the unreal!

This deception is one reason that professional actors become such extremists about the issues of life. Professionally, they become increasingly detached from truth, sincerity, and reality. In such matters as ecology, animal rights, abortion, gay rights, and global warming, many of them have taken positions that are disconnected from the foundations of truth and are no longer sincere.

To pretend to pray or worship or to act out Bible characters in a play is not only insincere, but it borders on being sacrilegious. Imagine pretending to be Jesus in a play! To pretend to be Jesus is blasphemous because no Christian has ever come anywhere close to His perfection! Or, what about pretending to be the devil? Why, pray tell, would anyone who is sincerely following the teachings of Jesus take upon himself the embodiment of evil? A. W. Tozer concludes, “Playacting embodies a gross moral contradiction in that it calls a lie to the service of the truth.”

Religious drama, those who involve themselves in it, and for that matter those who approve of the very hypocrisy that Jesus condemned, are frauds. The Holy Spirit does not honor pretense and showmanship!

The reason multitudes followed Jesus was that His sincerity was so refreshing in comparison to the constant playacting of the Pharisees.

II. Practical Reasons Why Religious Drama is a Menace

a. Religious drama demoralizes reverence for God.

A person who pretends to be Jesus Christ or any other Bible character erodes his reverence for the Lord. When one playacts enough, his fear of God slowly dies within. After all, if a person can pretend to be equal to Christ, what is the need for reverence to a higher being? The Pharisees did not even suspect that they were walking dead men (Matthew 23:27).

b. Religious drama identifies worship with the theatrical world.

Hollywood has effectively proven that the theatrical world cannot produce godly moral values. Pairing a man and a woman as a pretend husband and wife breaks down the sanctity of marriage. The theatrical world also endorses courtship practices that violate the biblical standards of purity. The theatrical world has become the pacesetter of moral standards in today’s society, and many are following their ungodly pattern.

c. Religious drama does not satisfy the inner man.

When a person’s senses are titillated by outward show, the emotions keep seeking a new high and another feel-good worship experience. It creates a desire within to see

yet another show that is more satisfying than the previous one. The emotions are having fun, but the inner man starves and slowly dies because the heart and mind have not been fed with real substance.

d. Religious drama ruins the preacher.

Drama is a friend to the lazy preacher. He no longer needs to: *Study to shew thyself approved unto God... -2 Timothy 2:15*. It requires no Holy Spirit unction to substitute a play for the sermon. Instead of commanding men to be “the light of the world,” he commands them to “lower the lights, please!” When the projector replaces the prophet, the primary means for man to find salvation is lost (1 Corinthians 1:21).

“As long as the preacher can fall back upon entertainment, the pressure that makes preachers will be wanting. The habit and rhythm which belongs to great preaching will be missing from their ministry.” –A. W. Tozer.

The use of religious drama will doom the preacher to mediocrity! The menace that we face today is that as religious drama multiplies, the heaven-sent revivals of the past will become extinct.

e. True worship will be viewed as inferior.

By using drama in a worship service, churches are training the youth to think that true worship is just another inferior form of amusement. When worship and drama are fused into one, worship is reduced to the lowest common denominator. The danger is that the next generation will not know what true worship is!

III. Patterns of True Worship

a. Prayer

Prayer is a vast subject, a worship pattern that too many times remains untapped. Public prayer in the congregational life is squeezed into our man-made time constraints.

In the early church, public prayers held a consistent pattern in their worship experiences. There was public prayer immediately after Christ’s ascension (Acts 1:14) and the first ordination (Acts 1:24). *And they continued stedfastly ... in prayers -Acts 2:42*. No spirit of apathy was present! Prayer meetings were an evangelistic tool, a means of implementing the fear of God, and a great unifier for the whole church (Acts 2:41-44).

Peter and John attended a midafternoon prayer meeting (Acts 3:1). (Say, fellow saint, when was the last time that you attended a midafternoon prayer meeting?) Their prayer meeting had seismic results (Acts 4:31)! The power and presence of the Holy Spirit in our worship services brings results!

Prayer meeting attendance was not a monthly or a bimonthly option (Act 6:4)! When Peter was in prison, they had a voluntary, round-the-clock, prayer chain (Acts 12:5). They laid hands on their missionaries and prayed for them (Acts 13:3). They gathered at the river for a prayer meeting (Acts 16:13). Please note: this gathering at the river was not for the purpose of any kind of water sports; it was a prayer meeting! They gathered ...*prayer was wont to be made...* –*Acts 16:13*. They understood that wherever Christians happened to meet, it was a normal activity to pray together.

b. Preaching

Preaching is a worship pattern that dates back to the time of Jonah (Jonah 3:2) and Moses (Acts 15:21). In the Old Testament, preaching was God’s pattern for communicating the will of God to man. When Jesus came on the scene, ... *[He] came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God -Mark 1:14*. He used the same worship pattern. Jesus used parables as verbal illustrations (not visual ones), which caught the attention of His hearers.

Near the end of His ministry, Jesus extended preaching as a worship pattern to future generations and all world cultures: ...*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature -Mark 16:15*.

Paul’s call was to preach the gospel (1 Corinthians 1:17-21). Preaching was not to be embellished by the cleverness of man. It pleased God to use the foolishness and simplicity of preaching to minister salvation to those who dared to believe. For this reason, preaching needs to be the focal point of every worship service. Praise services, concerts, and musicals are robbers of time that instead ought to be invested in listening to Holy Spirit-inspired preaching. When religious drama is used to present truth, it bypasses God’s ordained pattern of bringing the message of salvation to man.

Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein... - Revelation 1:3. God’s method of communication is the written or spoken Word. Not a picture! Not a play! Not a pageant!

c. Singing

The New Testament leaves no hint of professional singers, choirs, or musical performances. Meaningful singing requires participation by all, and an intelligent involvement of the mind (1 Corinthians 14:15). The context clearly implies that worship or singing is not only an individual experience; it is for the edification of all present. Soloists, who tend to be self-exalting, prohibit the remainder of the audience from entering into a corporate worship experience.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns

and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord –Colossians 3:16. Spiritual songs move the heart, while soulful songs move the feet and the emotions. Our singing is “to the Lord.” Preaching is from God to man, but singing is from man to God, containing expressions of praise, adoration, honor, and thanksgiving. Singing is for worship, not for entertainment.

Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord –Ephesians 5:19. Spirit-filled singing brings mutual edification, inspiration, and encouragement. Participation in singing has a way of ministering to heartfelt needs, where other methods fail. “Making melody in your heart” involves the accompaniment of the heart. External instrumentation tends to focus on a person’s abilities rather than on the heart. If our singing is not accompanied by our hearts, it becomes just another pharisaical worship show.

Old Testament worship was acceptable to God; nevertheless, it was also ritualistic with animal sacrifices, burning incense, using musical instruments, and dancing before the Lord. New Testament worship, however, is quite different. Jesus teaches us that we ...*must worship him in spirit and in truth –John 4:24.* The spirit of worship replaces the rituals. When we move from intrinsic methods of worship to extrinsic methods, we violate the New Testament “spirit” of worship. Our worship is not to be stimulated by the extrinsic, but rather by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

IV. Essence of True Worship

When Jesus met the woman at the well, she expressed a concern about His change in worship format (John 4:20). She was concerned about how her fathers worshiped. In other words, “this is the way that we have always done it!” Every generation of worshipers must guard against formalistic worship.

There are two attitudes that affect true worship in a wrong way:

- Formal –becoming so accustomed to the way that we have always done it, that we end up merely going through the motions and losing focus on the One being worshiped.
- Casual –becoming so aloof to any form of worship that the One being worshiped becomes obscured by indifference.

Both formal and casual worship styles have one root problem: **lack of reverence for God!**

The fathers of the woman at the well had lost both the focus and the concept of worship: “Ye worship ye know

not what” (John 4:22a). Jesus clearly indicated that worship is not thoughtless: “We know what we worship” (4:22b). True worship is the exercise of our mind and intellect. True worship has something to offer: “Salvation is of Jesus” (4:22c). It is life-changing!

The worship location is not as important as the attitude (John 4:23). The emphasis that Jesus gives is not on the outward ceremony, but on the state of the mind and spirit.

*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him **must** worship him in spirit and in truth –John 4:24.* Note the word **must**! The only acceptable worship is in spirit and in truth. Our attitude must be such that it is in harmony with the Spirit of God. True worship also involves our response to truth. If our spirits are not responding to truth, we are not worshipping! If our minds are somewhere else, or on anything else, our worship is merely cold, dead ritualism!

Conclusion

In the observation of the principles of Scripture, it is clear that religious drama is not God’s pattern to bring faith and life into the human soul!

The pattern of true worship in the New Testament is to gather to hear the Word preached; to pray together and for each other; and to sing songs, hymns, and spiritual songs.

The temptation to introduce new things to worship is very real today. The appeal of Jesus is to worship in spirit and in truth. When each of us sincerely does his part to keep worship services meaningful and spiritual, it reduces the temptation to reintroduce the formal (“the way our fathers worshiped”) or to introduce the casual (any new irreverent worship).

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He That Hath Ears To Hear...

Lee Rufener
Athens, WI

*Matthew 11:15, Matthew 13:9, Matthew 13:43, Mark 4:9, Mark 4:23, Mark 7:16, Luke 8:8, Luke 14:35
Matthew 11:15; 13:9, 43, Mark 4:9, 23; 7:16, Luke 8:8; 14:35*

If there ever was a catch phrase of our Lord Jesus Christ, this would surely be it. Sometimes in the beginning of a discourse and sometimes at the conclusion, the audience would observe Him pause during the address, glance around His company, and say, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” It was a solemn summons to reflect upon that which was being brought to their attention. It was a deft reminder to those within the sound of His voice to take full responsibility for what they had heard. All were listening, but not all were hearing. Christ knew it intuitively. He could read it from the look on their faces. All ears were subject unto the same words, but every heart was handling the discourse differently.

There was once a lad who responded to his mother, “Sure, I heard you calling, but you didn’t sound like you meant it yet.” Thus, we come to understand that hearing is not a mere physical activity. Rather, it is the reaction of the soul to the audibles which have been placed before it. Just as two men may gaze upon the same event yet see in it very different things, likewise, they may listen to the same set of words and conclude the most dissimilar of perceptions. For it is not with the ear that we hear but rather with the soul. We cannot choose everything that rides the air waves

and penetrates our ears, but our soul can pass verdict on it all. What we hear is not only a revelation of the tongue of another, but of our own character as well. It exposes our loves and our hates. It excites or resists our ruling passions. It unveils our character and paves our destiny. *Two men looked through the prison bars. The one saw mud, the other saw stars –unknown.*

Of course, there is a literal sense in which our hearing is independent of our will. We cannot choose entirely what we hear any more than we can choose everything that we see. Every day there are thousands of vibrations hurled toward us in rapid succession, and we hear them whether we want to or not. Some are bold and obvious. Others are subliminal, and only our subconscious mind receives them. Those who dwell in the city are bombarded by the multiplicity of sounds of the street. Those stationed by the ocean cannot escape the droning music of the sea.

Our minds are accustomed to turn off monotonous tones no matter how loud the input. Still, when matters of import break our realm, we listen with keen interest. While the driver of an automobile may only hear the steady modulation of engine beneath his controls, the seasoned mechanic may hear a dozen other sounds coming from the

same vehicle. Is it a blemish in the virtue of the first who cannot hear the misfiring cylinder or the rasping brakes? Yes, for it is not by the ear that we hear, but by the character of our will. If he were to care, he could also learn to hear. So, it is true in spiritual matters. A sermon that litigates the soul is a revelation of the preacher. How we respond to the motivation and challenge is a revelation of the hearer.

Our Unique Personality

Those disinterested in mathematics, motors, or music can get along in life just fine, though they fail to assimilate ninety percent of the sounds that enter their realm of hearing concerning these topics. It is when our major interests fall outside the realm of God that our ability to hear is considered to be handicapped. We may possess the best of intentions to be a sincere believer, but without the innate quickening of the Spirit, we will fail to comprehend the things that God would have us to hear.

The things that we set our hearts upon, and intuitively give our energies to, will determine what we hear. Every temptation we have ever met, and every sin we have ever fought and mastered, determines the kinds of thing that we shall hear as we take our pilgrimage. Live sparingly and you shall hear sparingly, though you be listening to an angel from heaven. Live nobly and you will hear nobly, though all that the ear catches is but mediocrity.

There was a crowd of people who had the golden opportunity to hear the voice of the Creator Himself. *The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him* –John 12:29. It was the same voice that resonated upon every ear, and, yet, to one it sounded like the angels, and to another there was nothing in it save the garbled roll of the thunder in the hills. If only the human ear had been involved, there would be no diversity of testimony. But these men were not hearing with the ear; they were hearing by what they were. Their heart's orientation, enhanced by all their past, their habits, their traditions, and their manner of taking in the common things of life drew their own conclusion subconsciously concerning the interpretation of the Lord's voice.

This happens to all on a constant daily basis. Our verdict of others is our own verdict. Often our judgment of a minister or a sermon is really the judgment of ourselves. We are listening, not with the bodily ear, but with our loves and hates, our grudges and preferences. We are listening through the hidden recesses within our heart. When Christ said, *...ye cannot hear my word* –John 8:43, it was not due to the lack of a microphone. There was no physical barrier. The hurdle was spiritual. Prejudices, jealousies, and antagonisms made the message of Christ inaudible to them, though every syllable fell upon their ears.

Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do ... He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God –John 8:43-47.

There is an elusive and gnawing factor corroding the moral fiber of this nation. While some would conclude that **attention deficit disorder** is a disease relentlessly attacking its victims against their will, honesty will surely deem it otherwise. It could very well be considered **spiritual attention deficit**. This is nominally just selective interest. Place a smart phone or video game before the eyes of most of these individuals and there is no lack of attention given to it. Our interests are trained by our environment. Those who spend countless hours in front of a television and video images are crippling their ability to hear a solemn message. The more our ears are exposed to decrepit signals the more surely we will handicap them from hearing the Word of God.

Fat Hearts

And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed –Isaiah 6:9-10.

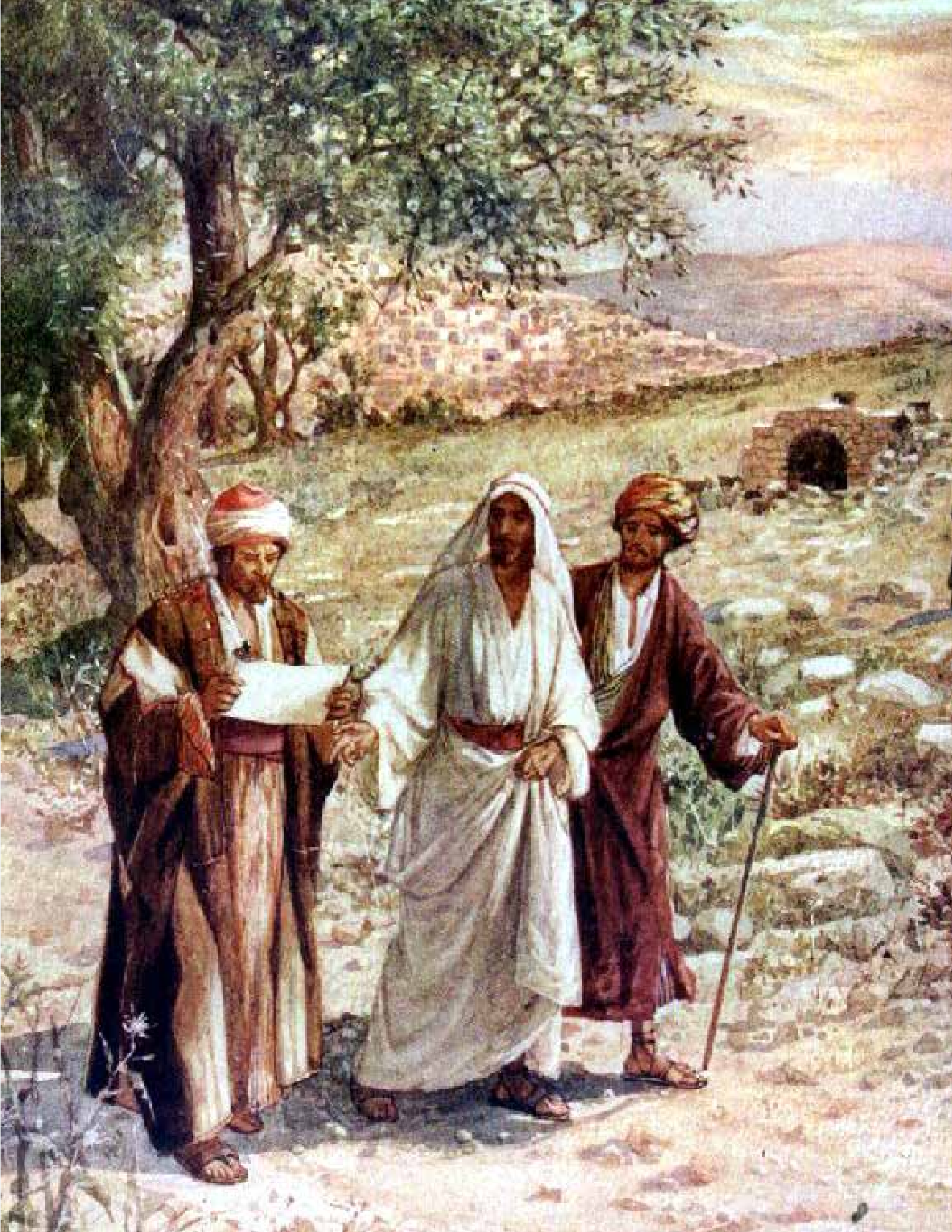
While some resign themselves to this fate, others will guard themselves from the ears' greatest enemies...

...Distraction

We live in a society where people thrive on activity and are loathe to sit still. They have been trained to give their attention to the gadgetry of the electronic world and social input. If a text message falls upon their device, it will surely take their immediate attention while any prayerful meditation must wait on the back burner. Those who spend much time before a video screen will have their ears deadened by the encroachment of a new scene every five seconds (on average). Place this up against an hour of in-depth preaching and these souls will be gasping for air. For many of us, solitude has become nearly extinct since the advent of the cell phone and social media, while our attention span has fatefully eroded.

...Perfection

We play only the finest recorded music in our headset. This can deafen our ears to the message of the sincere and humble offerings of common singing. The message often becomes despised and discarded because the package is imperfect. As the intellectual standard is raised, often the heart sinks lower still. Who today would be stirred by the message from the lips of foolish and unlearned fishermen? If



an orator must be articulate and schooled in the professional world in order to hold our attention, it is doubtful that we would be impressed by the fuzzy rumblings from heaven. Those who need the gospel offered to them upon a silver platter will surely grow leaner in spirit while their hearts grow fatter.

...Fiction

From movies to novels, we have been bombarded with the ideals of greener pastures elsewhere. A girl feeding on romance stories will surely be disappointed once she's married. That which is common will never stir our appetite so long as it is being fed by fictitious elements without. ...*A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house* –Matthew 13:57. We know the imperfections of our home minister, brother, or family member. If they should bring us a message from the throne of God, dull ears will miss it. People will flock to hear inspirational preaching and seminar propaganda in an ecumenical setting. While great truth may be presented, the environment is surreal and often only serves to the fattening of the heart and eventual disappointment at home.

...Reputation

Many people will listen to a myriad of voices in order to preserve their self-image. We call it open-mindedness. But heaven knows that the many questionable things that people bring to our attention really depend upon our meager character and would never reach us if Christ were our full devotion. There are those with whom we would never dream of sharing our gossip. They do not hear it because of a principle they hold within. Nobody brings them nasty or lewd tales simply because of their known character. If someone were to tell me an objectionable story, I should be very much ashamed. Not only of the narrator, but of myself also. I should be ashamed that he had such thoughts of me and of the kind of thing that I love to hear that he should venture to bring such garbage to my attention. So, very often, the sort of thing we hear depends on the sort of character we bear. Thus, we are ultimately responsible for what we allow to enter our soul through our ears.

Burning Hearts

As two bedraggled disciples trudged the road to Emmaus, they were overtaken by a heavenly visitor who inquired into their melancholy mood. They had read the prophets, heard Christ speak, perhaps had seen the miracles, and then had watched Him suffer and die. While they marveled at this newcomer's oblivious ignorance to the current events, He described them as ...*slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken* –Luke 24:25. As the evening continued and they realized that they had been face to face with the resurrected Savior, ...*they said one to another, Did not our*

heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? –Luke 24:32.

Some may claim that to 'make hearts burn' is the responsibility of every faithful minister. This must be reconsidered. There is certainly no room for halfhearted preaching from halfhearted ministers. Those who are called to such a noble position should take the responsibility seriously enough to make it their utmost concern to provide solid milk and meat to their listeners. But those who find it their responsibility to make the hearts of the audience burn will often fall prey to animated preaching (call louder, perhaps they will respond; touch the emotional chords, perhaps they will weep). But speaking techniques can only administer earthly dynamics. It is the truth, alone, that can shake the bedrock of the never-dying soul.

To make the hearts burn is primarily the responsibility of the Holy Spirit and the ears upon which the oration falls. Christ could have spoken the same words to the hardened Roman soldiers and been met with sordid indifference. Had he laid his message upon the ears of a pair of young lovers out on an evening stroll, they would have exited His presence at the first opportunity. Had He revealed Himself to the proud religious zealots, perhaps they would have attempted to kill Him again. No, this sermon fell upon the voracious appetite of devout seekers, and their hearts burned with the rapturous revelation falling upon their ears. So ardent was their love that ...*they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them* –Luke 24:33.

All our hope is in our hearing and all selfishness is in our hearing—all the right that we have ever sought and all the wrong we have ever done. Love a person and his speech is sweet. Hate him and his every word is barbed. It is by love and hate, generosity and envy that we ingest each and every utterance. Thus, it is vital to self-knowledge not only to take heed to the words we say, but also to what we hear. *My sheep hear my voice* –John 10:27, says our Master—they hear it because they love the Shepherd. Those who will accept this responsibility must purge themselves from the rabble of earth-linked daydreams in order to give ear to the rising Day Star as His glowing rays dawn upon their burning hearts. *We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:* –2 Peter 1:19.



THE HEAVENLY CALLING

Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling... –Hebrews 3:1.

True wisdom dawns in gradual rays,
Minute degrees observed as nil.
Beyond the books of youthful days,
It beckons thee to yonder hill.
Forbear and press in patient ways...
“Forward! Upward! Higher still!”

At times we fret with downcast soul,
Our courage wanes in blasting chill.
We’ve failed the earthly honor roll,
Diminished hope, dejected will.
But hark the sound, the ringing toll...
“Forward! Upward! Higher still!”

Temptations rise and pleasures call,
They barter truth for empty thrill.
Those who yield are those who fall,
Achieving not God’s blessed will.
Sowing flesh shall reap but gall...
“Forward! Upward! Higher still!”

In days of brimming youthful years,
With dreams afresh to seek and fill.
A humble heart will stay more tears,
Than all of life’s great wit and will.
He who wins is he who hears...
“Forward! Upward! Higher still!”

–by Lee Rufener

*I press toward the mark for the prize of the
high calling of God in Christ Jesus –Philippians 3:14.*

“Do I need to tell?”

Laurel Wenger
Dalton, OH



“Let’s ask my mom if we can go on a walk to the creek. I want to go wading.” Angie told her friend Melissa.

“That sounds like fun,” Melissa said, following Angie to the kitchen. There was always something fun to do whenever Melissa visited her friend’s house.

After getting permission, the two girls stepped out into the hot, humid, sunny day. They had to cross a pasture to get to the creek, so Angie pushed apart the fence wires and stepped through. Then she held the wires apart so Melissa could also get through the fence into the goat pasture.

The girls walked across the pasture, through another fence, and into the woods. They walked down a dirt path to the stream. They lifted their skirts and stepped into the gurgling water. The two friends talked and laughed as they walked further downstream to a special spot in the creek where they always loved to go.

It was at this spot that the creek bed was filled with some unusual rocks. When these rocks were dry, they were grey, but when they got wet, they turned a very pretty blue.

After spending some time admiring the blue rocks, Melissa turned to Angie and said, “Let’s

go walk through that big culvert under the road.”

“Yes, let’s do that and then we can walk along the road back to the driveway.”

They stepped out of the cool water and walked through the woods to the tunnel-like culvert. The girls went through the dark tunnel to the other side and Melissa scrambled up the steep bank to the gravel road.

Suddenly, realizing she was alone, Melissa turned around and saw that Angie was still at the entrance of the tunnel looking into a pool of water. She moved a rock, then screamed and scrambled up the bank to join Melissa. “There was a crayfish under there!” she exclaimed.

The girls’ dress hems were damp from the creek but soon dried in the hot sun as they walked back towards the house. When they were halfway in the lane, Angie said, “Do you want to take the boat out on the pond? We have some oars that are fun to use.”

Melissa grinned in excitement, “That would be lots of fun!” She followed Angie into the barn to help get the oars and life jackets.

The girls snapped on their orange life jackets and pushed the boat out into the pond water. Soon they

had paddled out to the middle of the pond and sat there, watching the water slowly ripple around them.

“Hey, I know what we should do now!” Angie said. “Let’s bang the water with our oars to make splashes. Like this.” Angie slapped the surface of the pond with her oar. Melissa followed her example and began splashing on her side of the boat.

Their splashes got bigger and bigger. They were having a lot of fun seeing who could make the biggest splash. Melissa lifted her oar into the air and hit the water extra hard. As expected, the water splashed, but when Melissa lifted her oar, all she had was the handle. The paddle end had broken off and was floating just under the surface of the water next to the boat. She reached into the water, grabbed the broken paddle, and placed both pieces of the oar in the boat.

For a moment, Angie and Melissa looked at each other in silence. Melissa felt guilty for breaking the oar and Angie felt bad for suggesting that they splash in the water.

“Let’s go back to shore and put the oars in the barn,” Angie said. “It doesn’t matter that it broke. They’re just old ones anyway,” she finished, somewhat uncertainly.

Melissa thought that was a good idea and helped Angie pull the boat out of the water. They picked up the life jackets and the oars and carried them into the barn.

Melissa felt bad but she did not want to tell anyone that she had broken the oar. They passed the pile of sweet-smelling hay bales and the noisy goat pen, but Melissa hardly noticed them. All she could think about was that she had broken the oar and that she was going to hide what she had done. Her conscience was bothering her because she knew that her parents and God wanted her to always be honest and to never hide anything.

Just as the girls stepped out of the barn onto the lawn, Angie’s big brother jumped out from behind the barn where he had been hiding. “I saw you and I know what you did!” he told them. “You broke the oar. And guess what!? I followed you

the whole time you were in the creek and down by the road too. I’m going to tell Mom that you broke the oar.” He grinned, then ran toward the basement door, disappearing inside.

Angie and Melissa were a little upset that he had been sneaking around watching them (it wasn’t the first time he had done that). But in a strange way, Melissa felt a lot better. She did not need to worry anymore about someone finding out that she had broken the oar, because someone knew already. When Angie’s parents were told about the broken oar, they forgave Melissa for breaking it. Melissa was always very glad that it had not been kept a secret after all.



Dishonor and Loss

Regina Martin
Huaral, Peru

“Could you come with me to visit my sister and her husband?” a friend asked my husband. “They’re having serious marriage problems. My brother-in-law saw how God is working in our marriage and asked me how it happened. Can you tell them how God could change their marriage, too?”

At dusk that evening, my husband, and I, waited with our friend outside his sister’s home. Half an hour later a dilapidated red pickup chugged up and shuddered to a stop. An overweight man with grease-covered clothes and a perpetual smile heaved himself out from behind the steering wheel, while his pretty, fashionably dressed wife hopped out of the passenger seat.

“Come in! Come in!” they invited, guiding us to the stairway which led to their living quarters.

“Excuse the mess,” the wife apologized, swiping clothes from the couches so we could take seats. The room was elaborately furnished but dirty. A deep layer of dust covered the top of the large-screen television set, the end tables... everything.

“Lord, give us wisdom,” I silently implored as we took seats across from the couple. How could we connect with folks we scarcely knew, and who did not have God in their lives?

The husband talked. His wife had failed him miserably and had cheated on him many times. She was presently meeting with a new boyfriend, a young chap she had learned to know on the street. “But I’ll forgive you all that,” promised the husband, “If you are willing to start over, be my wife, and be a mom to our children. I know you’ve failed, but we all fail. Let’s start over, Dear.”

The wife sat in stony silence. Our friend talked, pleading with his sister and brother-in-law to be reconciled. My husband talked about God and His plan for marriage, urging them to turn to Him.

Finally, the wife opened her mouth. Bitterness poured out; dishonor; old dirt. “You never show me that you care. You never buy me anything. Why should I try to please you anymore?”

The husband joined the fray. Both talked at once, on and on, louder and louder.

We sat with sagging hearts, listening, praying, thinking. I tried to imagine how the wife must have felt. She was pretty and young. Why stay at home to clean, cook, and wash clothes for a hulk of a husband who spent his days leaning over greasy motors and crawling under dirty cars? Why, when she could have fun on the street with a cool, young fellow who made her feel so-o-o special?

Finally, the couple ran out of steam. We sat in sad silence. “I’m sorry,” my husband stated finally, “but we can’t help you. The only one who can help you is God. And if you don’t want His help, there’s no hope for your marriage.”

“Yeah, I really should go to church,” mumbled the husband.

“Ha, ha,” sneered the wife. “Just see you become a Mennonite yet!” We rose and shook hands, promised our prayers, and left.

After we left that evening, more harsh words flew between the couple. Their two children came upon the scene and, siding with their father, drove their mother from the house.

* * * * *

From far in the distance came a sound of music—and what else? Singing. Joyful shouting. A wife threw open the shutter from a window facing the street, leaned out, and peered up the road. *Oh, yes, today is the day my husband went to bring the Ark of the Covenant home. But why are they making such a ruckus over it?*

Into the city danced the parade, singing, shouting, and blowing trumpets. David danced with all his might, his heart overflowing with thanks to God. After agonizing years of fleeing from Saul, God had established him as king. And now the Ark of the Lord was finally returning to its proper dwelling place... *God be praised!*

As David leaped and shouted his way up the street, his wife looked down from her perch at the window with a dark scowl on her face. *Just look at how his robe flies around as he dances. Doesn’t he have any shame?! And hollering like that... what a way for a king to act! Doesn’t he care what others think?!*

David returned home several hours later—tired, but happy—to bless his household. It had been a good day. He could tell his wife, Michal, all about it at the supper table.

But she beat him to the subject. [“My, but didn’t you act gloriously today,”] were her frosty words. David must have looked confused. [“I mean, jumping around like that in front of the maidens, just like a vain fellow from off the streets!”]

David must have been smitten. [“I was doing it to the Lord, to the one who chose me to be king instead of your father.”]

I imagine Michal wincing. *Ouch!* [“Why do you have to throw that in my face?”]

[“I know I am low in your esteem,”]* continued David, [“but those maidens you mentioned, *they* esteem me.”]

* * * * *

I think of the wayward lady in town who was chased from home by her children, and I wonder who will care for her forty years from now when her pretty face is wrinkled, and her back is bent.

I picture Michal’s lonely old age. The account ends by saying she had no children until her dying day. I doubt if

her king-husband bothered to stop in with her anymore. Why would he? He received honor aplenty from others. I also wonder if Michal’s dishonor and their fall-out weakened King David. Several chapters later tell of his eyes roving to a neighbor’s wife and the resulting sin.

All wives are tempted to dishonor their husbands. We are tempted to dishonor regardless of whether our husband is a king or a mechanic, godly or ungodly.

Every day I choose to honor or dishonor the husband God gave me. I can skip alongside him, supporting with enthusiasm, or I can hang out the window, watching with scorn in my heart. I can focus on what he does well and compliment him, or I can nag about what he does wrong. My choice determines the reciprocating favor or loss. My choice affects, not only my husband and me, but also a cloud of witnesses... my children, my sisters in Christ, and my neighbors.

“And the wife see that she reverence her husband.”
(Ephesians 5:33b)

* *This is how the Spanish Bible says it; the thought is clearer than in the English translation.*





THE DAYS OF NOAH *Repeated*

By Harold S. Martin

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Luke records the words of Jesus: *And as it was in the days of Noe [Noah], so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man* –Luke 17:26. When conditions that existed before the Flood are repeated again, then we may know that the coming of the Lord is near at hand. The language is plain. Jesus foresaw that world conditions at the end of the age would be like the conditions that existed in the days of Noah just before the Flood. And so, we need to find out what conditions were like before the Flood and then compare them with the events taking place today, and in this way, we can see something about the approaching end of the age.

The entire record pertaining to the days before the Flood is contained in three short chapters in the Bible (Genesis 4, 5, 6). They are the only authentic record of the conditions that characterized the days of Noah. Secular history does not record the events that took place before the Flood.

In Genesis 4:16-24 there is a description of seven striking conditions that prevailed in the days of Noah.

1. The Pre-Flood Age Was an Age of Godlessness

Notice the words of Scripture, *And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden –Genesis 4:16.* Cain forfeited God's favor and moved to the land of wandering and his descendants became the founders of a great but godless civilization. Cain went out from the presence of the Lord. He simply did not want God in his company.

The general godlessness of the times in which we live can be demonstrated in many ways. For the most part, people have sold out to amusements, gambling, and sports. Even some church members can enjoy a double feature at the movies, sit up and watch TV until late hours, and shout at a double-header ball game—but let the preacher preach overtime on Sunday morning and those same people become quite disturbed. Many can sit for hours and read some secular magazine or a comic strip in the newspaper, while the Bible is dry, dead, and uninteresting.

The general godlessness of the times is also noticed in the fact that many tend to put confidence in science and in the achievements of man rather than in the power of God. Instead of looking into the heavens and saying with the Psalmist, *When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him... – Psalm 8:3-4,* many are looking into the heavens and saying, “When I consider the satellites and the space vehicles which men have made, who is God that I should pay any attention to him?” We are living in an age of godlessness, and this was a condition that existed in Noah's day.

2. The Preflood Age Was an Age of City-Building

And Cain ... [built] a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch –Genesis 4:17. Up until this time people had lived in the wide-open spaces. They were not crowded into cities. When God created man, He placed him in a garden, not in a city. Cities were first built by fallen man and have over the years been marked by wickedness and corruption. In the crowded life of the city, sin develops at an alarming rate. Thus, large cities are often beds of crime.

The first great city-building boom took place in the days before the Flood, and we are seeing a repetition of the days of Noah. Less than a century ago, most of our population lived on farms and in small rural communities. But with the invention of labor-saving machinery (the Industrial Revolution) there was less labor needed on the farm, and more help was needed in factories. And today a large

percentage of the population in many countries live in cities and metropolitan areas close to the factories, and fewer people live on farms. So it was in the days before the Flood.

3. The Preflood Age Saw the Breakdown of the Home

And Lamech took unto him two wives... –Genesis 4:19. Lamech was the first man in history to break God's law of creation—one man and one woman. Jesus deplored the abuse of marriage and said that in Noah's day they were “marrying and giving in marriage” (implying “trading” or “swapping” in marriage). Yet from the beginning God made one man (Adam) to be the husband of one wife (Eve), and said, *Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh –Genesis 2:24.*

In our day men divorce their wives for any foolish reason they can dream up. Divorce and remarriage is one of the greatest blots ever to come upon our civilization, and the USA has the distinction of having one of the largest numbers of broken homes anywhere on earth. Not too many years ago a divorce was the height of shame. The parties concerned often were so embarrassed that they began life in a new community. Divorces were hard to obtain. The promise “until death do us part” was taken seriously. Churches refused fellowship to those who were remarried while the first partner was still living. Today all this has changed and as a result there are many twisted, broken homes. Jesus said that the days just before His return would be like the days just before the Flood.

4. Noah's Days Were Days of Agricultural Development

And Adah bare Jabal: he was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle –Genesis 4:20. This is the first mention in the Bible of cattle raising for a profit. The age before the Flood was a time of great development in farming and in animal culture. Jabal was the originator of commerce. He most likely had a large and prosperous cattle ranch.

Today also is marked by developments in agriculture and animal husbandry. One encyclopedia article (under “agriculture”) says: “Great strides have been made in agricultural education in the Twentieth Century. Scientific research has developed many new crops and farm animal breeds. Until 100 years ago, agriculture had changed very little since ancient times.” In other words, just 100 years ago, farming methods were pretty much like they had been for hundreds of years, even thousands of years, before that. But now everything has changed, and agricultural development is on the rise. This is another point that is like the days of Noah.

5. The Pre-Flood Era Was an Age of Musicmaking

And his brother's name was Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ –Genesis 4:21. The descendants of Cain who had alienated themselves from God were without hope for the future and so they tried to entertain themselves here in this life with worldly music-making. It is surely correct to say that never before in human history has there been as much music as there is in our day. A large percentage of radio and television programs are musical in nature. CDs and tapes and DVDs are selling rapidly. We are living in an age of swing and jazz and rock 'n' roll which is beyond description. The words of most hit tunes express everything that is contrary to Christian virtue and to Bible standards.

Music does something to a person. It reaches the seat of the emotions. It can be helpful as well as harmful. The music that is popular today can actually stir the emotions so that intense sexual lust, and even murder, can result. Some of the music that is popular today has done more to condemn the youth of our nation than any other single thing that the devil has on his list. Music-making characterized the days before the Flood, and this too is a sign of the times in which we live.

6. The Pre-Flood Age Was Marked By the Use of Metals

And Zillah ... bare Tubalcain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron... –Genesis 4:22. The era before the Flood was a metallurgical age. Brass is an alloy of copper and zinc. Iron is the basic material for all steel. (Iron is one of the necessary metals for modern industry.)

The steel industry today provides the foundation for a great deal of modern technology. It is remarkable how strikes among steel workers tie up other manufacturers. The price of steel affects the price of many other commodities. As the supplies of wood decreased, men have developed the products of metal to an amazing degree. Today automobiles are made primarily of steel. The ship that plows through the sea is made of metal. Many household appliances are made of steel. The implements of farming are made of steel. Early automobiles had a wood frame, a wood dashboard, and even the spokes in the wheels were made of wood. Today we have skilled craftsmen in the use of iron and steel, and our Lord said that when the characteristics of the days of Noah return, then the coming of Jesus is at the door.

7. The Pre-Flood Age Was Characterized By Violence

And Lamech said unto his wives ... Hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech: for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt –Genesis

4:23. It was as if Lamech was saying, "I have slain a man because he wounded me. I killed him because he hurt me." He was proud of his own violence and bragged about it.

Human life was cheap in the days before the Flood. It was an age of merciless killing. But has there been any age in human history that was more brutal and more full of acts of violence than ours is today? The violence manifested in the attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, was shocking. Gun-related violence, child abuse, and forcible rape are rapidly increasing. One mother in a fit of anger choked her six-month-old baby to death because "he kept me awake with his crying."

We all know too that nearly every nation on earth is working night and day to prepare greater weapons of war to be used in the wholesale killing of human beings. *But as the days of Noe [Noah] were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be –Matthew 24:37.* The violence of the pre-Flood age is magnified many times in our own age.

With Lamech's boast of bigamy and bloodshed in Genesis 4, the Biblical history of the line of Cain ends. It was a brilliant generation. It was characterized by factors which are very much evident in our own generation. These are signs of a civilization which is overripe for the judgment of God.

In light of the times in which we live, none of us can afford to trifle with our soul. If you have never done so, it is urgent that you repent of your sins and surrender your life to Jesus so that you will be ready to meet Him when He comes. Jesus says that no person can come to the Father but "by me."

BIBLE HELPS
Robert Lehigh, Editor
PO Box 391
Hanover, PA 17331
United States of America



Christian Courtship Concepts

Luke B. Bennetch

Fredericksburg, PA

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Godly marriages that last a lifetime are becoming scarce in the world. As a godly people we are concerned that the youth growing up in our homes find godly life companions and establish homes on the solid foundation of the Word of God. Courtship is an important time of finding God's will for marriage.

Before beginning courtship, youth should establish a strong relationship with God. They need to know the joy of salvation. They should learn the blessing of worshiping their Creator God. Bible reading and prayer should become daily routines.

Youth should also build good relationships with their parents. While parents bear a lot of responsibility for this, youth have a part to play to connect with their parents in openness. They should choose to love, respect, and appreciate their parents. They should value their parents' experience and wisdom. They should seek parental advice before courting.

Good habits should be established in youth. Learning to work, to save money, to be on time, and to be sociable should be accomplished before considering courtship. Self-control, along with temperance, must be learned.

Young people should also consider voluntary service opportunities. Many good life skills are learned through mission work, teaching school, helping busy mothers, and helping in relief work. Youth should learn sacrificial giving. Having a good job but giving a hefty portion to the church is a healthy discipline. Choosing to spend less on ourselves and more on God's kingdom yields bountiful blessings and honors God above self!

Youth should seek God's face as they consider the questions of courtship. Who? When? How should I approach this? Prayer needs to be a priority. Consider Abraham's servant as he prayed for God's direction to find a wife for Isaac. God

blessed and prospered that effort. Youth should not pursue companionship based on feelings or good looks.

We should also remember that the purpose of courtship is to find a life companion. It is not just a party, a fun time, or a social status to enjoy. Its purpose is to find the will of God for our lives. Part of this is to understand whether this relationship will work in harmony for years to come. Is there enough commonality of goals, aspirations, and convictions?

There are two extremes that can be taken on the subject of courtship. One is the practice of "dating around" until you find the right match for you. The other is the idea that when a couple starts dating, something is seriously wrong if they break up. Young men are under considerable pressure to make certain this courtship 'will go' before they even begin. There is a balance needed where careful consideration precedes a courtship, but the door must be left open for dissolving the friendship if it seems wise to the couple. We should be respectful of courting couples who are finding their way and avoid gossip and supposition. The couples have parents and ministry to lean on for help and counsel.

Wise is the couple that starts slow and thinks deeply about what they are doing. Time between dates is so very important to think and evaluate the relationship. Seeing each other too often and communicating each day will tend to feed fascination with each other and hinder meditative contemplation on the serious questions of courtship.

Courting couples should remember the important things of life. They should find a time for Bible reading and prayer whenever they spend time together. They should go to church together, visit relatives, and participate in evangelism efforts. They should seek to understand the heart of their friend. A young man should learn to know his girlfriend's mother, and likewise the girl should learn to know her boyfriend's father. This is one way to understand

who has been molding your friend, and what your friend could become in later years. It is true that children can make choices that are different than those their parents have made, but patterns do tend to reproduce themselves.

Couples need to have a covenant of purity between themselves. A “hands-off” policy is very necessary. They need to understand that a little compromise will lead to great compromise. Impurity is like a sliding board ride to the bottom with no convenient place to stop! Couples should seek to avoid places of undue temptation, where the mind will be tempted to sin. They should avoid being alone late at night together. They should also avoid parked car and empty house dates. Rather, they should spend time together in one of their homes, where the family is present.

Parents should help their youth consider their courting plans. They understand the temptations of youth and should help youth make wise choices about what they do when they are together.

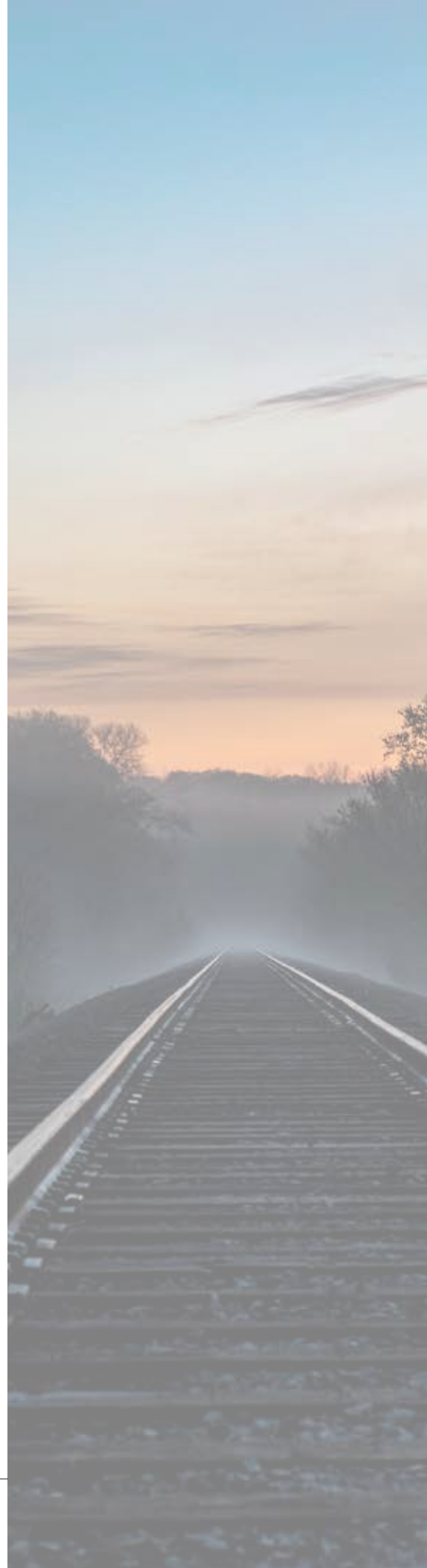
Communication is another important part of courtship. Sharing about family life and values is important. Understanding each other’s spiritual interests and insights is a must. Learning about each other’s habits with earning and saving money should be a part of courtship. Couples should seek to understand what they want to have in their homes, not just what they don’t want.

Courting couples should not ignore their circle of friends. Only having time for their “date” and always wanting time alone is not wise. Learning to know the friends of the one you are courting will also tell you something about the character of the one you are dating.

Engagement should be a time of commitment. It should be entered prayerfully and with deep commitment to a lasting marriage. It is a time to plan for a godly wedding. Couples begin to think about setting up housekeeping and planning a wedding trip. Early in their courtship, youth should be careful to evaluate whether or not they have an inner peace or rest when they are with their friend. If this rest is not present, it may be wise to break up the friendship or put it on hold. Breaking up a courtship after courting for a long time, or breaking up after engagement, should be very rare and only with counsel from parents and ministry.

Couples should seek to honor their parents’ wishes for their wedding and should keep the church’s standards in all their plans. The urge to have a unique wedding often prompts couples to step outside the boundaries of acceptable wedding practices. A marriage founded on the rock of Christ Jesus will be marked by biblical simplicity and obedience.

Remember, courting couples, if the Lord tarries and blesses you with life, you will look back and remember these days for many years. Be careful today to forge precious memories of lasting values. Keeping a long-range view will help you make better choices in your courtship. What a treasure to hold memories of a pure, God-honoring courtship with no regrets! What joy to be able to tell your children of your youthful days serving God together!



Weight Loss

by Vincent “John” Waldron MD
Gladys, VA

“Dr. Waldron,” the woman said to me as I prepared to leave the exam room. “I have one more question. How can I lose this extra weight?”

I sighed inaudibly as I sat down to discuss the situation with her. Dealing with weight gain is not the sort of thing that is easy to tack onto the end of an office visit and there have been many lengthy books written on the subject.

Americans seem to struggle with this. They spend an average of 33 billion dollars on weight loss products every year and 65 percent of Americans are either overweight or obese.

The whole discussion is a challenging one. We want a quick fix—to take a pill or add in a fat-burning food or do a simple exercise that will melt the extra weight away simply and quickly. The reality is that while we gain weight quite easily, it is much more difficult to lose that same weight. Maintaining weight loss is harder yet.

In the Beginning

We don’t know much about life before the fall in Genesis 3. We do know that ... *God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good...* –Genesis 1:31.

It is safe to assume that Adam and Eve did not struggle with their weight before sin entered the world. They were created perfectly which meant that they would not have struggled with metabolism issues. They also did not have the uncontrolled appetites for food that their descendants deal with today.

Two things happened with the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. First, humans started to have physical ailments—their bodies did not work as well as they did before. Adam and Eve were still able to live much longer lives than humans today, but metabolic diseases and other illnesses began to develop. The second thing that happened was that they began to have a sin nature.

Those two things have led to a lot of problems... Among them are metabolism and weight issues.

What the Bible Says About Food

Our bodies need to eat nutritious food—without eating they would deteriorate and eventually die. *There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God* –Ecclesiastes 2:24.

The Old Testament law was restrictive regarding what the Jewish people could eat. Under Kosher Law, the number of clean animals was far outweighed by the numbers of unclean animals. More than that, the book of Proverbs mentions several times that overeating is dangerous. *Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags* –Proverbs 23:20-21.

From the New Testament we find the early church no longer required Gentile Christians to follow Jewish laws regarding their diets. The Jerusalem council specifically required ... *that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood* –Acts 15:20. Otherwise, it seems that they were free to eat whatever they wanted.

What did not change in the New Testament was the idea of self-control. The Fruit of the Spirit lists temperance as one of the things Christians should have and Paul made it clear that he was focused on controlling his desires, lest he become a castaway (see 1 Corinthians 9:27).

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s –1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple

of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are –1 Corinthians 3:16-17.

Scripture is clear that Christians should take care of their bodies, put their desires under the control of God, and avoid things that have anything to do with idolatry.

Reasons People Gain Weight

It is easy to break down reasons for weight gain into two big categories:

1. problems with metabolism
2. problems with excessive calories.

When we think about metabolic issues, these include things like thyroid problems and diabetes. These disorders affect the rate at which our bodies burn calories. One of the main ways we have to increase our metabolism is to increase our activity levels, particularly exercise that increases the heart rate—cardiovascular exercise.

Excess calories mainly come from overeating. It is important to remember that people eat for lots of reasons other than because they are hungry. People eat because they are bored, lonely, sad, and yes, sometimes because they are hungry. Some medications, particularly steroids, can increase appetite and negatively affect the metabolic rate.

We call the number of calories our bodies burn while at rest, the body's metabolic rate. There are a couple of different formulas used to calculate our basal metabolic rates. They use height, weight, age, and gender to determine how many calories your body will burn in an average day. There are a few applications and websites that will do this calculation for you. <https://www.active.com/fitness/calculators/bmr> The important thing to know is that this is the number of calories you should consume to maintain your current body weight. Eat fewer calories than this number and you will tend to lose weight, take in more calories than this number and you will gain weight.

Is Weight Important?

From a medical standpoint, being overweight is associated with several different things. It tends to increase insulin resistance and it can lead to diabetes. It increases blood pressure. It can lead to obstructive sleep apnea, and it worsens arthritis in the back and legs.

Being overweight is not necessarily an indication of a spiritual problem and depending on a person's genetics, it can be difficult to get it where it should be according to the charts. Even though most people feel much better when they are close to their ideal weight, Scripture does not indicate that there is a specific weight or body mass index (BMI) that Christians should not go over.

The important thing is that our lives are to be under the control of God if we have yielded ourselves, appetites, and all, to Him. We should try to be healthy in order that we can best participate in Kingdom building. More than that, we should attempt to set an example for others of a life that is yielded to God.

Myths About Weight Loss...

There are many things that people believe about weight loss. We will look at a list of things which people repeat. While there may be a grain of truth in them, they are not completely true and may discourage activities that can help a person who is struggling with his weight.

...Vigorous exercise is the only way to lose weight.

Many people believe that the reason that they can't lose weight is because they can't do enough exercise. They struggle with pain, arthritis, or some heart or lung condition that makes them unable to do vigorous athletic endeavors.

Maybe they know someone who took up running and lost a bunch of weight and that seems like the right way to do it. They just don't feel able to take that path and feel hopeless about the whole endeavor.

Exercise is important. Most medical societies recommend that people exercise at least 150 minutes a week. While exercise does boost our metabolism and helps our hearts and lungs, it still may not change a person's weight very much.

Most people burn between 200 and 300 calories with a half hour of exercise. While this may sound like a lot, a body must burn 3500 calories to lose one pound. In addition, most of us are hungrier after we exercise, and it is awfully easy to eat an extra 200 calories that basically negates whatever was burned during the exercise time.

...Carbohydrates make you gain weight.

Carbohydrate is the medical term for sugars. The calories we consume in our diets come from one of three sources: carbohydrates, fats, and proteins. Carbohydrates are present in desserts, but they are also present in many starchy foods like rice, corn, pasta, bread, and lots of other things.

There are several diets, like the Atkins Diet and the Keto Diet, that push those who follow them to cut out as many carbohydrates as possible. People often do lose weight on these sorts of diets. Unfortunately, these diets are difficult to maintain long term as they are quite restrictive.

The healthiest thing is to eat carbohydrates moderately and steer towards the healthier options. Using whole grains and more complex carbohydrates is important. A bowl of oatmeal may have a similar number of grams of

carbohydrates as compared to a sugary breakfast cereal, but it will be broken down more slowly by our bodies and is easier for them to deal with.

...Starvation is the only way to lose weight.

Starvation does result in weight loss—there were no heavy-set people who came out of the concentration camps in World War II. This certainly is not the only way to lose weight, nor is it a healthy way to lose weight.

We know that when people starve for extended periods of time, they will begin to lose muscle mass, their bones will get weaker, and their metabolism will decrease. Most people who starve themselves will end up regaining all of the weight they lost within a few years and because their metabolism has been downgraded, in the long run it will be harder for them to keep weight off.

...You just need to eat ‘___’ fat burning food to lose weight!

I specifically left the food blank above because it seems that this is always changing. Maybe you’ve read that Greek yogurt, or cinnamon, or goji berry juice will help you lose weight. Studies indicate that there is no magic food that will melt fat away.

If these foods work, it is because you have replaced something unhealthy and rich in calories with something healthier. For example, if your normal breakfast consists of 5 strips of bacon, a glass of orange juice, 2 slices of toast, and two eggs and you replace that with a glass of water and a bowl of oatmeal, you will probably lose weight. It is not because the oatmeal is “burning fat,” but rather that it has significantly fewer calories than the breakfast you were eating before.

Some foods have almost no calories and probably take as much energy to eat and digest as humans get from them. Celery, iceberg lettuce, and mushrooms all fall into this category. The problem is that if you put peanut butter on the celery, salad dressing on the lettuce, and fry the mushrooms in butter or oil, then suddenly they aren’t the low-calorie foods they purport to be. We humans are very good at fixing low-cal foods so that they both taste better and are no longer low-calorie.

...Fat free and diet foods are the key to weight loss.

There are many foods and condiments on the market that have reduced fat and claim to be lower calorie than the normal versions of themselves. These often have a lot of different chemicals and sugar substitutes in them to get the taste and texture as similar to the regular versions as possible.

Sugar substitutes seem to be healthier than sugar when used moderately, but they also seem to encourage people to crave sweeter foods. Studies have linked artificial sweeteners with the onset of glucose intolerance—something that could lead to diabetes. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3095502/> Dieticians seem to think that of the various sugar substitutes, Stevia is the safest.

All in all, our goal should not be to try to eat all the same foods, just with fewer calories, but rather to eat a variety of healthy foods and moderate-sized portions. This is what will lead to a better metabolism and not simply getting reduced fat versions of our favorite foods.

...The solution is diet pills.

Over time I have seen many people take medications and supplements, both prescription and over the counter varieties, to try to help them lose weight. These medications and supplements are supposed to do a number of things—reduce appetite and increase the metabolic rate are several of these.

They often work in the short term. People lose quite a bit of weight in the first few weeks and think that they have conquered their struggles. The problem is that over time, they usually get used to whatever it is that they are taking, their appetite returns, and their metabolism goes back to normal.

While these sorts of solutions may give short-term help, being healthy in the long term, means figuring out a healthy eating plan and exercise schedule, then sticking with it long term. The goal should never be simply to “take off ten pounds,” but rather to be as healthy as possible.

We’ve covered a lot of things not to do and probably reading between the lines you can see some of the things that are helpful to do as well. A second part (Lord willing) will be coming with the next issue to discuss positive things that we can do to achieve a healthy weight.

With all of this, it is important to remember that our goal is not about achieving some sort of earthly beauty. The aim, rather, is to treat our body as the Temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Corinthians 6:19). I have heard this verse used to explain why we shouldn’t drink, smoke, or get tattoos, but we need to treat it with respect when it comes to eating and exercise, as well.

As we care for our bodies, we will be better able to meet the needs of the people around us and we will be prepared to meet whatever plan God has for our lives.





...continued from page 3

What all can we be deceived by? Who all might try to deceive us? Let's always remember that Satan wants to use whoever he can, however he can, to deceive as many as he can. Job's friends turned against him and even his own wife offered Satan's own words as a way out (See Job 1;11; 2:5; and 2:9). We should not be surprised if we find ourselves in similar situations; Christ predicted that this would happen (See Matthew 10:35-36; and Luke 12:53).

Let's never forget that God has given some clear solutions that we can follow to prevent ourselves from becoming deceived. *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation –Hebrews 3:12-15.*

Endure unto the end

This is one of the more interesting Scriptures that I think of whenever there is a heated discussion about whether or not someone who is once saved is then always saved and therefore never able to become unsaved. Doesn't Scripture assure us ...*that ye may know that ye have eternal life...* –1 John 5:13. However, Peter tells us to ...*beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness* –2 Peter 3:17.

So how do we bring this together so that Scripture harmonizes? First, we need to be saved initially so we can have eternal life which provides us with the power to walk in obedience to God's Word. Secondly, we stay saved as long as we continue walking in obedience to the Scriptures. Then lastly, we are finally saved forever, IF we endure through life faithfully until the end (the end of our life here on earth).

Preach the Gospel in all the world

Preach the Gospel? Yes. Maybe we can't all personally do the preaching, but we can all do our part to help the church fulfil this mandate. Some folks God has ordained to spend hours in their prayer closet in earnest intercessory prayer. Some have been called to give of their finances to support others who have been chosen to be on the front lines preaching the Gospel. This is a group effort. It is the church as a whole working together with each local church doing their part and everyone doing their individual part.

Let's not allow the chaos and confusion around us to cause us to become distracted and disoriented. Let's pull together as brothers and sisters with a common goal—not being deceived, enduring unto the end, and preaching the Gospel in all the world.

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. –Jude 1:24-25.



'Til the Storm

Rachel Martin
Glenmont, OH

We all have a story. Some feel like Job sometimes. Some have lost parents, or partners, or children, or siblings, or friends. Some suffer from severe illness. Some will never recover from their illnesses. Our loved ones might have a terminal illness. Maybe a husband or parent is abusive or unfaithful. Like Job, our friends might have turned against us. Maybe there are problems in the church that seem impossible to fix. It could be something like a colicky baby, or a hyper child. Maybe we just have a cold and are feeling like everything is going wrong. The list is endless. We can relate to the words of this song.

TILL THE STORM PASSES BY

In the dark of the midnight have I oft hid my face,
While the storm howls above me, and there's no hiding place.
'Mid the crash of the thunder, Precious Lord, hear my cry,
Keep me safe till the storm passes by.

REFRAIN:

Till the storm passes over, till the thunder sounds no more,
Till the clouds roll forever from the sky;
Hold me fast, let me stand in the hollow of Thy hand,
Keep me safe till the storm passes by.

Many times Satan whispered, "There is no need to try,
For there's no end of sorrow, there's no hope by and by"
But I know Thou art with me, and tomorrow I'll rise
Where the storms never darken the skies.

When the long night has ended and the storms come no more,
Let me stand in Thy presence on the bright peaceful shore;
In that land where the tempest, never comes, Lord, may I
Dwell with Thee when the storm passes by.

—by *Mosie Lister*

When I was a little girl, I thought the author was referring to thunderstorms. I was afraid of thunderstorms. Now I understand that he was referring to the storms of life we go through. On July 14, 2013, I suddenly ended up in the hospital with a life-threatening heart attack caused by a spontaneous coronary artery dissection. What a shock for a 40-year-old mother. The storm was howling, and the thunder was crashing. There was no hiding place from the danger, for it was within me. I only had one heart and it could not be trusted. What if it happens again? Would I die? Then my children would be motherless.

This song was one I'd pray in the dark of the midnight

Passes By

when I couldn't sleep, and fear threatened to overwhelm me. The Lord's presence was very real to me. I came through this storm with a greater awareness of how God reveals Himself to us in a deeper way when we are going through hard times. We must choose to yield ourselves completely to Him, and say, "Not my will, but Thine be done."

When the disciples were out on the sea in the storm, Jesus was with them. He is with us too. We can trust Him. Nothing will happen that is not according to His will. We do not always understand why things happen, but that's okay. An old preacher used to quote:

"Not now, but in the coming years,
It may be in the better land
We'll read the meaning of our tears,
And there, sometime, we'll understand."

It is so important that we accept what God allows in our lives. Accepting does not mean we don't do anything about it. We will go to the doctor if necessary. We will reach out to others for comfort and council. We will still have all kinds of feelings, but we should have peace. We can't wallow in self-pity and have a "poor me" attitude. *And we know that*

all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose –Romans 8:28. I believe that. I can't always see the good, but God does.

Life is hard sometimes, but the song tells about the time when the long night has ended, and the storms come no more. Dear sisters, let's remain faithful and lean hard on the Lord through the storms of life.

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. Revelation 21:1-4.



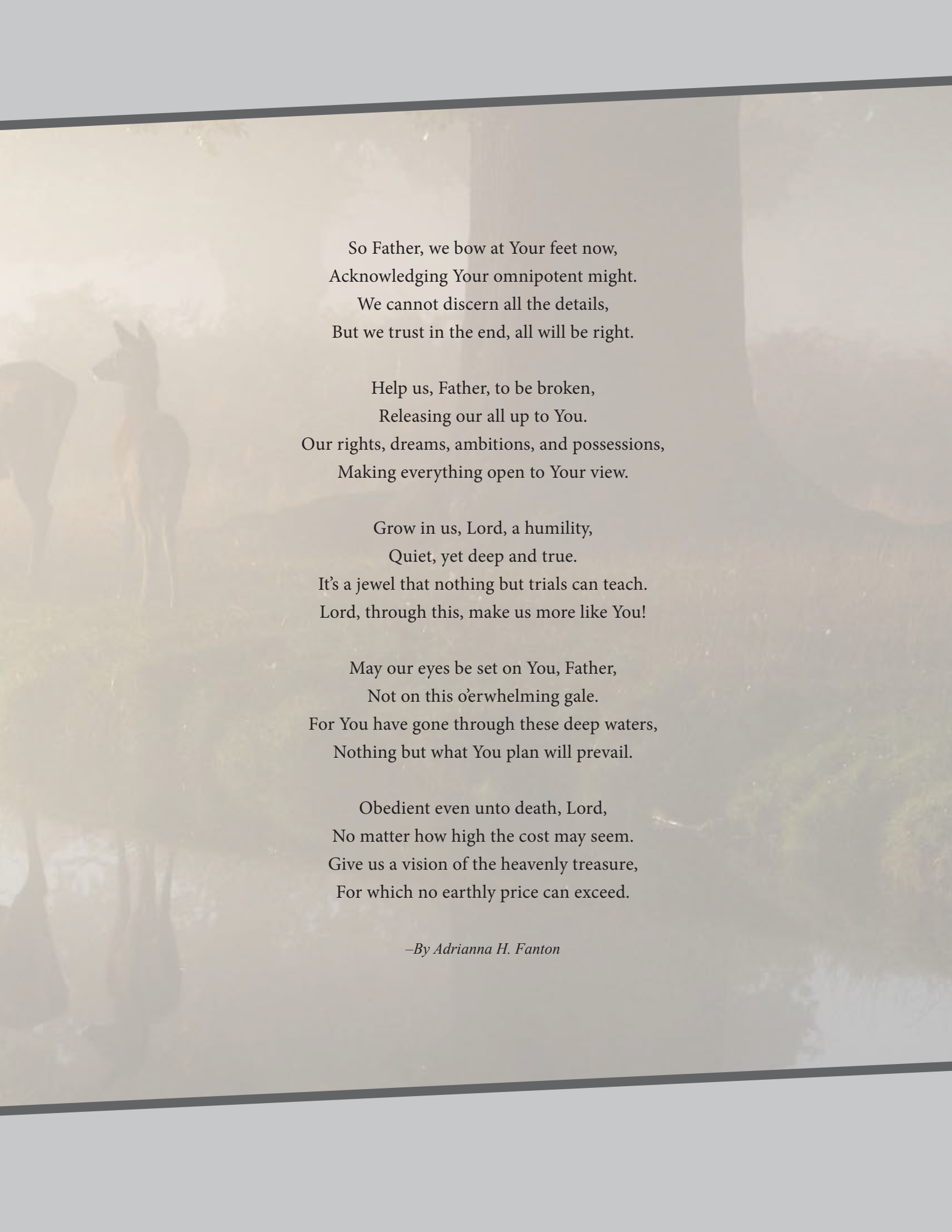
Not My Will

Lord, this pain seems unbearable.
Things once loved now must die.
So many hearts are bleeding.
No one has kept a dry eye.

We've wept and writhed and prayed
Asking, Lord, this cup to avoid.
We tried what we thought might change it,
But all attempts seemed to return to us void.

Father, we've cried out for mercy,
All would have escaped this pain.
But Lord, You bade us go through it;
Your hand in it all You've made plain.

Our minds seem to spin as we ponder,
Just exactly what You're trying to do.
Yet we know that no matter our feelings,
There's a reason we this storm must go through.



So Father, we bow at Your feet now,
Acknowledging Your omnipotent might.

We cannot discern all the details,
But we trust in the end, all will be right.

Help us, Father, to be broken,
Releasing our all up to You.
Our rights, dreams, ambitions, and possessions,
Making everything open to Your view.

Grow in us, Lord, a humility,
Quiet, yet deep and true.
It's a jewel that nothing but trials can teach.
Lord, through this, make us more like You!

May our eyes be set on You, Father,
Not on this o'erwhelming gale.
For You have gone through these deep waters,
Nothing but what You plan will prevail.

Obedient even unto death, Lord,
No matter how high the cost may seem.
Give us a vision of the heavenly treasure,
For which no earthly price can exceed.

—By Adrianna H. Fanton

The Heartbeat of
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**Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful
of the land, that they may dwell
with me: he that walketh in a
perfect way, he shall serve me.**

Psalm 101:6