

*The Heartbeat of*   
**The Remnant**

Volume 27, Issue 2  
Summer 2022

A ministry of   
*The Berean Voice*



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“The Berean Voice” is an outreach ministry of Faith Christian Fellowship, a church located in Holmes County, Ohio. It is operated by a board of directors, which ultimately answers to the elders of the church.

As a non-profit ministry, we desire to work with the Lord, for without Him we can do nothing. We are trusting God to provide for the ongoing work of this magazine and our other outreach projects through the free-will offerings of His people. Would you join us in prayer for this work and ongoing need?

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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.*

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Greetings of love in the blessed name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Many Christians have gone through a time of trial and testing during the past several years, yet we trust that each one is able to say with Paul... *Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content –Philippians 4:11.*

Summer is hard upon us, along with the heat and humidity that goes along with summers here in Ohio. Springtime, along with the normal planting season, was extra long and drawn out. But, by now, most of what is known locally as “the spring work” has been finished. The farmers’ crops and the gardeners’ herbs are pushing through the cool soil and towards the heat and light of the sun.

In this issue you can take a stroll on the road to Emmaus and try to put yourself in the sandals of Jesus’ disciples as they puzzled over the sudden turn of events surrounding Christ’s death, burial, and alleged “resurrection”. You can try to picture yourself with Daniel of old as he chose to keep praying like normal at his open window, while knowing full well that this simple act most likely could change his life forever. You can marvel with little “Ellie” how God met the “desires of her heart” even before she knew things weren’t working out according to plan.

Something new in this issue is the beginning of a series by Brother Donald Brechbill on “discipleship”. Disciple has almost the same spelling as discipline. For many, discipline carries a negative connotation, which hopefully will not interfere with the reader being drawn to what Brother Donald has to share. Let’s remember that Jesus gave personal example of the discipleship model—He chose and called “disciples” to follow and learn from Him. Later He sent them out two by two to teach and make more disciples. And then when He gave the “Great Commission” it was to His disciples at that time, and to all future disciples—the Church of Jesus Christ. We trust that each one can be inspired by this series.

Coming up in future issues, we are planning to have a “Song of the Quarter” and a section on various aspects of “Church History”. You can pray for us as we continue to move forward with our ministry and our magazine.

Just a friendly reminder... We encourage feedback from our readers. If you have been especially blessed by a certain article, feedback is helpful for us as a board, and it is encouraging for our writers. Also, if there is something specific that someone wishes to see included in future magazine issues, we welcome the input. This helps provide ideas for us as a board when choosing articles and when asking authors to write.

In the spring of 2022, we made some changes with our ministry in our endeavors to keep the work of The Berean Voice moving forward into the future. Personnel changes:

Brother Andrew (our designer) has become increasingly busy as a young father with a growing family and as a deacon for our local church congregation. In looking at this challenge, the board decided to support Andrew’s desire to find someone to help him (for now) with the bulk of the design work for each issue of our magazine—The Heartbeat of the Remnant. Thus, there may be some slight changes in the “style” of design in upcoming issues.

In the spring of 2022, there was a decision to seek several new board members to replace several others who had quit over the last number of years due to personal responsibilities. After praying for the Lord’s wisdom and direction, and after consultation with the leadership of our church, Brother Joe Mast and Brother Sheldon Bower were chosen to fill the empty slots on the board. These brothers have both graciously accepted this calling and are already allowing God to use their spiritual gifts to make a difference

Brother Joe Tindall has been a board member for The Berean Voice since our beginning in June of 2016. Due to his age (83) Brother Joe asked to be relieved of his duties as a board member. At our monthly board meeting in May of 2022, the board honored Brother Joe’s request. We will miss the stability of his quiet wisdom in our board meetings and during our article selection process. Please join us in prayer for Brother Joe and his family as he and his wife face the end of their lives and all that goes along with that season of life—that they might remain faithful and courageous.

May God bless and keep each one.

Curvin L Wenger

# If you love your life...

by Barry Grant  
Titanyen, Haiti

It's been said that in the 1500s, after baptism, the Anabaptists lived an average of only 27 days. They were hunted and killed. They realized one thing—serving Christ would most certainly cost them everything. They forsook the comforts of easy living; they forsook it all. It could also have been a similar situation when Jesus walked on the earth, or shortly after He was killed.

*...and he turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he **cannot be my disciple**. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, **cannot be my disciple**. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he **cannot be my disciple** –Luke 14:25-33.*

Jesus clearly asked His disciples to count the cost. And they must have counted the cost, for they faithfully gave all, including their lives, for Christ's Kingdom. They realized they could have had the good things in this life; however, they also realized it would cost them the good things in the next.

*Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution* –2 Timothy 3:12. If we look at the promises which Jesus gave us in His Word about persecution, and then compare them with the lives of Jesus' followers today, we might be confused. And rightfully so.

*He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to*

*walk, even as he walked* –1 John 2:6. Jesus says we should walk as He walked, He also tells us that we need to follow Him.

How did He walk? We know that Jesus had no place to lay His head—this was how He wanted it. We know that Jesus could have chosen to live where and how He wanted. He was, in fact, in control of the whole world, yet He was despised and rejected by the world and its system. When He spoke, people wanted to lay their hands on Him; they wanted to kill Him. He was not a popular person; He had few friends. In reality, He didn't fit in, and He didn't last long. Three years after His ministry began, He was killed. *...He was numbered with the transgressors* –Mark 15:28.

What about His followers today? Are they walking how He walked? And if not, why not?

We read about the children of Israel going through the wilderness. They fought and overtook the cities in their paths, killing all in the process. We read many accounts about how God instructed the children of Israel to kill all of the enemy, even the women and children. The following is one such account of many.

*So the LORD our God delivered into our hands Og also, the king of Bashan, and all his people: and we smote him until none was left to him remaining. And we took all his cities at that time, there was not a city which we took not from them, threescore cities, all the region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan. All these cities were fenced with high walls, gates, and bars; beside unwalled towns a great many. And we utterly destroyed them, as we did unto Sihon king of Heshbon, utterly destroying the men, women, and children, of every city* –Deuteronomy 3:3-6.

We read accounts like this in scripture, and it can cause us to cringe. It is almost as if life itself was not important. Even in the New Testament, death doesn't seem to be that big of a deal. People lived and people died.

The first week after we moved to Haiti, I was driving through the city. Suddenly, right in front of me I saw a man lying in the street. Blood ran down the road and pooled in a low spot—he was dead. I was shocked. But what shocked me the most was that no one seemed to notice. People by the hundreds busily walked around him, not even looking at the man—no one cared.

Over the next six years we saw many dead or dying people—it became a normal scene.

If that was how it was back in the Bible times, and it is still how it is today in many countries of the world, maybe we are the ones that are out of the norm? Maybe we esteem life higher than God does. Maybe we are among those that Jesus spoke of when He said—*He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal*—John 12:25.

*In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return*—Genesis 3:19. We were created out of the dust, and after a few short years, we return to the very same dust.

*Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away*—James 4:14. The Bible also calls our lives a vapor.

We all know what happens after that—the judgment, then eternity. So why do we care so much about this life? Maybe it is an American problem or a western problem.

It is obvious that Americans are looked upon as ‘more valuable’ than most other nationalities. If you are an American in a developing country, you are heralded as a king. If something happens to an American, it is quickly headline news. I once stood over the bodies of two murdered men. One of their close friends stood by, so I asked him how he was doing. He shrugged and said, “This is life”.

So why does life mean so much to us Americans? The answer is simple. We can obtain almost anything we want; money is easy to get, and we can live how we want. We can live in pleasure every day. We go to the store and buy what we want, when we want—we have it our way. This is just how it is; for most of us it is all we have ever known—the life of plenty. So how does this affect us?

This type of living makes it especially hard to ‘give all’ for Christ. It makes it difficult to obey Jesus’ command to ... *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature*—Mark 16:15. It makes it difficult to say with the Apostle Paul, *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*—Philippians 1:21. In reality, it makes it difficult to be a Christian.

When Jesus said... *For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it*—Matthew 16:25, what did He mean? Could it mean literally just what it says: that when you fall in love with your own life, you cannot effectively follow Christ, so that in the end you will actually lose your life?

Can you go to the lost and forsake the comforts of this life if it’s those comforts that you love and live for? It’s not likely. What we have is “Americanized” Christians that will only go to the mission field if they can take their comforts with them. This produces rich, comfortable missionaries who, despite their best efforts, can’t win the lost, rather they make them jealous. Can we go into the cities and preach the gospel to the lost like so many before us have? Can we take time to teach and disciple the tens of thousands who are seeking? If we love our lives, we probably will not, since there is too much to lose and it’s a waste of good talent and opportunity. God help us.

When we are living to please the flesh and we have our lives figured out, it is hard for God to use us. We are puffed up. We tend to believe that God has blessed us because of all our possessions and our status in life; but isn’t this the prosperity gospel? What if that changed? Would we still consider ourselves to be blessed? Is it God or our own doing that causes us to be joyful? What if we found ourselves in John the Baptist’s shoes? Or the Apostle Paul’s? If we would be sitting in prison for doing nothing wrong, would our joy remain? It should if the Holy Spirit is living and working in our hearts. The Bible says that we can suffer joyfully!

Years ago, a coworker of mine was a happy fellow. He had a nice life. There was one problem—he did not believe there was a God. We would talk day after day. He would constantly tell me how happy he was and that one didn’t need to be a Christian to be happy. He would talk about his nice life, all that he possessed, his good job, his nice family. Interestingly enough, he truly did seem happy.

I would tell him that true happiness didn’t come from the things that we possess or the position that we find ourselves in, but he would just disagree. He also proclaimed that he lived a better life than most Christians that he knew. He also said he didn’t get angry like most Christians and could control himself. I tried to convince him that he was deceived. At times I would think I was getting somewhere with him, then later it would seem I was far from reaching him. One day he soberly admitted that I seemed to be different that most Christians he had known in the past, but that still wasn’t enough.

I left that job and lost contact with him. Recently, I ran into another one of my former coworkers. I quickly thought of my friend and asked how he was doing. He looked at me

strangely and then shocked me to my core as he said, “He committed suicide”.

The devil wants us to love our life—it’s that simple. When we love our life, we focus on it, we cherish it. The last thing we want to do is lose our life, even if it is for something eternal.

When I was in the Marines, they would constantly remind us that our lives were not number one; our country was. There are many young men who put their country first. Many have gone and given their all; many have died.

In World War 2, the Japanese would try to sneak up to a fox hole housing soldiers and throw in a grenade. Many times, it didn’t end like the Japanese wanted, because someone would jump on the grenade, absorbing the explosion. Thousands gave their lives to save their friends and defend their country. But be sure, if their priorities were not in order (of country first before themselves), they would not have done so.

If someone today, in America, would risk their life for the sake of the gospel, he would be labeled as foolish, reckless, and immature. But what do we say about so many before us—the ones that gave their lives while standing for the same things that we say we believe today? And what about the thousands today who are putting their lives on the line in other countries—are they foolish? Let’s look at a very obvious example in Acts.

*And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul’s girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. –Acts 21:10-13.*

What would we think of Paul’s actions today? Paul went to Jerusalem and was quickly taken, beaten, and put in prison. It was the beginning of the end for our dear brother. He was

moved from prison to prison and eventually ended up in Rome where he was beheaded. What do you think the ones that tried to persuade him to not go to Jerusalem thought? Do you think they called him a fool? Did they shake their heads and say, “I told him not to go!”?

We cannot know for sure. However, I am sure that Paul was simply putting the kingdom of Christ first; his life did not matter. He was obeying God, and God had told him to go.

When we love our lives, it is very difficult to be an effective disciple of the Lord Jesus. We end up forsaking God’s calling and then we are stuck trying to live the Christian life alone, and without God—no spiritual help from above, causing us to fall way short of the mark.

It’s ironic that only when we forsake all, including our lives, will we find true peace and purpose for our lives. And when we love our lives, that is when we will lose them.

Rise up, O saints of God!  
Have done with lesser things.  
Give heart and soul and mind and strength  
To serve the King of kings.  
Rise up, O saints of God!  
The kingdom tarries long.  
Bring in the day of Christlike love  
And end the night of wrong.  
Lift high the cross of Christ!  
Tread where His feet have trod.  
Led onward by the Son of Man,  
Rise up, O saints of God!

Let us rise up, as God’s people, and begin to be done with lesser things, with our gaze on things above, not on the things of this earth. Yes, we will stand out; we will be labeled fools and many other things. However, we will once again catch God’s attention and the fires of revival will once again burn!

# The Battle That Rages

There is coming a day when all will be well.  
The things that are bad will all be in hell.  
But we must not forget that day has not come.  
We are in a battle; we must still overcome.  
The enemy rages, his time here is short.  
He spreads all his lies, the truth to distort.  
Sin in our lives, it is his great goal.  
For he knows very well it will cost us our soul.  
It need not be big; a small sin will do.  
He'll trick and deceive, each soul to pursue.  
The darts of the wicked come from all sides.  
When faced with God's power, that devil—he hides!  
When God is with us, he cannot advance!  
When God is with us, sin has no chance!  
For the eyes of the Lord seek to and fro,  
To find one perfect, His power He'll show!  
Let's be done with the lesser and look far beyond.  
Let's take hold of God's power! It's time to respond!

*—by Barry Grant*



# Daniel in the Den of Lions

## A Study of Daniel 6:1-28

By Harold S. Martin

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**T**he events of Daniel 6 are likely the best known of all the accounts given in the book of Daniel. It's a thrilling account of God's power, and of Daniel's lovely character. Strangely enough, only a brief, passing reference to the event is found in the New Testament. Hebrews 11:33 speaks of some... *who through faith ... stopped the mouths of lions.*

Chapters 1-4 of the book of Daniel took place while the Babylonians were in power. Nebuchadnezzar was the Babylonian king, and Daniel was a young man. Chapter 5 took place while the Babylonians were fading from power, Belshazzar was king, and Daniel was an old man. Chapter 6 occurred when the Medo-Persian kings were in power, and Darius the Mede was king. By then Daniel was a very old man.

Daniel was a man of regular prayer. King Darius had forbidden prayer to any god other than Darius himself. Daniel's co-workers, who were envious of his success, were able to arrange for Daniel to be arrested and thrown into the den of lions. The mighty demonstration of Daniel's deliverance from the mouths of the lions was clear evidence that the God of the captive Hebrews is really the God who controls the issues of life.

### 1. Favored by Darius (Daniel 6:1-3)

The Persians were in control of the entire former Babylonian Empire. Darius the king appointed 120 officers over all the countries he had conquered, and these men helped to administer the work of government. All the officers were placed under three presidents, one of whom was Daniel. The officers were responsible for collecting the revenues that were due to the king. Their task was to see that the king would not experience any loss of revenue.

Daniel's work was obviously very satisfactory, and Darius preferred him above all the other officers. So, he made arrangements to place all the affairs of the kingdom in Daniel's hands. Daniel was to become a kind of prime minister, or as we would call him, a Secretary of State (Daniel 6:3).

### 2. Framed by His Enemies (Daniel 6:4-9)

Daniel's blameless performance stirred the jealousy of the other princes and administrators. When a person does a good job in the workplace, there is sometimes jealousy on the part of people who are not as committed. When a talented person is advanced, occasionally other less devoted people become envious, and jealousy rears its ugly head.

Daniel lived an open, clean, godly life—above reproach. His co-workers could find no error or fault in Daniel (Daniel 6:4). There was no spiritual decline in Daniel's life as he grew older. When some persons come toward the final years of life, the devil makes one last attempt to snatch them away from God. But even in his old age, Daniel did not give in to the enemy. From first to last, he was seen as the same faithful, courageous, steady servant of God—enduring faithfully to the end. Daniel had stood firmly for the Lord in his youth, and now he was faithful to God even in his old age.

The office where Daniel worked was likely a terrible place. Lust, greed, self-seeking, idolatry, and cruelty were all around him. It was about like an office or a factory in our own society. Verse 5 indicates that the princes checked Daniel's personal life, and his professional life—and they came to the conclusion that the only way to trap Daniel was to find some complaint in connection with his religious life. Daniel's co-workers knew the intensity of his convictions, and they knew that at specific times every day, he went into his chamber to pray.

So, the fellow-workers got their heads together and drew up a statute which they were sure would lead to Daniel's downfall. The officers, without disclosing their purpose, went to the king, and proposed that he should sign a decree prohibiting any petition to any god or man (except the king) for 30 days (Daniel 6:7). The penalty for violation was to be cast into the den of lions.

Persians regarded their kings as divine. They had other gods, of course, so Darius was one among many gods. But now, for thirty days, he was to be the only god!



Consider for a few minutes the absurdity of this decree. No person in the kingdom was allowed to make any request from anybody except the king for 30 days. It was illegal to ask somebody for a drink, or to pass the bread during a meal.

In Daniel 6, we read about a man who was appointed “god for a month” (that is, for thirty days)—and the king was flattered! He was taken off guard by the very suddenness of their approach, so that the matter appeared to be reasonable to Darius. He signed the decree, and according to Persian custom, once it had been signed, it could never be revoked (Esther 8:8). Thus, the matter became the law of the land.

Most laws are designed to be kept, but this law (in the minds of the officers) was designed to be broken! They secretly hoped that Daniel would break the law.

### 3. Faithful to God (Daniel 6:10-15)

When Daniel learned what had happened, he simply kept on with his upright practice of prayer as he had done before the charge was issued.

There are several alternatives that Daniel could have taken. He could have discontinued his prayers for 30 days. After all, he could have said, “I’ll pray in my heart; God searches the heart anyway; He knows that I am praying.” Daniel could have gone into hiding while he was praying. Or, he could have made a bold public show of his praying! Daniel didn’t do any of those things. He simply followed his usual custom of praying three times a day with his face turned toward Jerusalem, as Jews were told to do.

Daniel had lived in Babylon now for seventy years, and he had not returned to his homeland. Yet every day, he knelt in his bedroom with the window open toward Jerusalem three times a day. He never forgot his homeland or the days of his youth, nor the anguish of separation from his godly parents. We notice several lessons from the phrase in verse 10, with “his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem.”

- Daniel did not go home and open the windows to make a show of what he was doing (that would be fanaticism).
- He did not go home and close the windows to hide his actions (that would be cowardice).
- He just left the windows the way they were before.

Daniel was not a fanatic, nor a coward, but was the same steady man of God that he had always been!

The text (in Daniel 6:10) continues by saying that he “gave thanks.” For what did he give thanks? Did he thank God for the persecution that was being heaped upon him, or for the hungry lions that he might soon face? One thing is

sure; Daniel thanked God for His salvation, His love, His grace, His power, and His promises. The text says that he was delivered from the lions “because he believed in his God”—...*So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God*—Daniel 6:23.

Daniel’s good life is quite evident in the Bible account, and here we learn the inner secret. He was a man of regular prayer! In verses 11-13 we learn that when Daniel went home to pray, his enemies came flocking around his house, and when they saw that he was praying, they lost no time taking the news to the king. Daniel’s enemies rushed into the king’s presence, crowded into his courtroom, and reminded the king of the decree he had signed. They accused Daniel before him, and their conspiracy seemed to be working!

When the king heard their appeal to activate the decree he had just signed, he at once recognized the mistake he had made, and he was highly displeased. In the Babylonian Empire, the king was absolute, and he slew whom he would and kept alive those he chose to pardon. But in the Persian Empire, even the rulers were subject to the laws they had made.

When Darius saw how his nobles had deceived him, he moved quickly and tried to discover some way by which to deliver Daniel. *Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him*—Daniel 6:14. He was hoping to find some technicality in the law by which he might keep Daniel from being thrown into the den of lions.

### 4. Thrown to the Lions (Daniel 6:16-18)

Darius may have consulted with his lawyers, but when he couldn’t find any loophole in the law, he finally consented to allow Daniel to be cast to the lions. Darius seemed to sense in his soul something of the power of Daniel’s God. When they put Daniel into the den, he said ... *Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee*—Daniel 6:16.

When the guards had closed and sealed the opening to the pit, Daniel slid way down to the floor of the den. Some of the lions undoubtedly came bounding out of their caverns, only to be stayed by the powerful hand of God. I think I can see those beasts as they yawned and simply lay down on the floor.

Daniel had been cast into the den of lions and the opening was closed off and sealed (Daniel 6:17). Thus, Daniel’s friends could not attempt to rescue him, and neither could they throw meat to the lions, hoping to satisfy the animals and spare Daniel.

Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night fasting. No musicians were brought before him, and sleep went from him. He had a bad night. He tossed and rolled, and just couldn't sleep (Daniel 6:18). Daniel had likely told Darius about the Lord, and certainly he had given testimony by his godly living. Darius had seen enough of Daniel's daily activity to realize that his way of life was reputable.

In light of verse 18 (and verse 22), who do you think rested better that night—the king in his palace, or the prophet in the lion's den surrounded by lions? Daniel was at peace with God and the king. He knew he was innocent of any wrongdoing. On the other hand, the mind of Darius was troubled. It is always better to suffer an injustice than it is to commit an injustice!

### 5. Freed by the King (Daniel 6:19-28)

At the break of dawn, the troubled king arose and hurried to the pit. He was hoping for the best but feared the worst! Just as the flames had not been able to bring even the smell of fire upon Daniel's three friends (in Daniel 3), so the lions were not permitted to touch the prophet Daniel (in Daniel 6). The last clause of verse 22 explains that Daniel was spared because he was innocent before God—and before the king.

However, Darius himself didn't have any real faith in Daniel's deliverance because the next morning he came to the pit, fearing that there would be nothing but silence. *And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? –Daniel 6:20.* Then Daniel called from the bottom of the pit, and said ... *O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me... – Daniel 6:21-22.*

Daniel's disobedience of the king's new law, when he kept on praying at his home three times a day, was not because of any contempt for the king, but because of his high regard for the King of kings! Daniel knew that God sometimes allows what He hates in order to accomplish what He loves. He knew that what God allowed was for His good.

Darius was exceedingly glad that Daniel had been spared and at once commanded that he should be drawn up out of the den (Daniel 6:23). Then those men who had accused Daniel (along with their wives and children) were cast into the den of lions instead, and they were destroyed by the lions before they even reached the bottom of the lion's den! This may prove several things, but one thing for sure: the lions were hungry. Daniel was saved, not because the lions were not hungry, but because God miraculously delivered him!

The final verses of Daniel 6 tell about the new decree which Darius issued—a sweeping proclamation that all men should “tremble and fear” before Daniel's God (Daniel 6:26). Darius did not repudiate his Persian gods, but his proclamation was a remarkable statement about the reality of Daniel's God.

*Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian –Daniel 6:25-28.*

It is not difficult to discover a number of timely lessons from this familiar chapter.

a) The events of the chapter foreshadow an even greater deliverance—the final deliverance of Israel from her enemies and her persecutors. The deliverance will occur at the time of the glorious return of Christ at His second coming. Both Zechariah 14:1-9 and Revelation 19:11-21 declare that Israel will experience a great deliverance in the end times, and the enemies of Israel will be judged and destroyed just like Daniel's enemies and persecutors were judged and destroyed.

b) The character of Daniel leaps out at us as we read this chapter. We see his integrity, his consistency down through the years, and his disciplined way of life. Keeping a demanding prayer schedule like Daniel kept requires great discipline of life. He was a busy man; he had heavy responsibilities; surely the temptation to neglect his prayer schedule was strong. But Daniel kept daily fellowship with God at the top of his list of priorities.

c) God's people today are not exempt from “the lions” of adversity. Such adversities include illness, business reverses, slander, children that disappoint us, etc. The key to victory in the midst of adversity is ongoing faith in the true and living God. For example, Christian parents whose child is snatched away by sudden death often grieve for a long time. But they do not become frantic, for they are comforted by the assurance that they will someday rejoin their child in Heaven.

Even though Daniel was at this time a very old man, God still wanted to accomplish good things in and through his character. God used the favor of King Darius to further His divine purposes. Daniel prayed earnestly for the restoration

of Israel (Daniel 9:1-3), and another king of Persia, Cyrus, gave an edict for the restoration of the Jews to Israel (Ezra 1:1-3).

Believers in Jesus Christ have inner resources that give purpose to their lives, so they can keep on going even in times of adversity! We should remember that God often allows hard things in our lives because He wants to accomplish good things in our character.

*Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That*

*the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ –1 Peter 1:6-7.*

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# Emotional Connection vs Emotionalism

by Conrad Hollinger  
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**H**ear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart –Deuteronomy 6:4-6.

Jesus quotes from this Old Testament Scripture in Matthew 22:37, in Mark 12:29-30, and in Luke 10:27, indicating that this is still the first part of the Greatest Commandment.

Do we understand the type of connection that God is longing to have with you and me? He is not satisfied if our worship and relationship with Him is mostly from our head and not coming from our deepest part of our being—our soul. He desires an emotional connection with you and me, which is not unlike a husband who deeply desires an emotional connection with his wife.

## Emotions

### 1. God feels.

God is an emotional God. Jesus cried and felt anger while here on earth. God feels joy and sorrow. He also hates sin. The Bible records His frustration with His people when they go their own way. We are emotional beings because we are made in God's image. This allows us to connect with Him emotionally.

### 2. Our feelings are God's gift to us.

Emotions make us human, setting us apart from animals and birds. It is our emotional ability that allows you and me to love, to be faithful and loyal, and to be kind and giving. Our emotions need to be controlled, which hopefully we learned early on as a child. All emotions, even the negative ones, have a purpose in our lives, but we can never allow them to control us or cause us to excuse sin or personal responsibility.

## Emotionalism

### 1. There is a ditch on either side of the road of life.

Emotionalism is living as if the only thing that matters in life is how I feel, instead of according to what I know

to be truth or what is right or wrong. This view says that everything in life revolves around my emotions, and those emotions dictate my actions. (On the other hand, stoicism says feelings are not to be considered, and the only things that really matter in the end are my will and the ability to think and reason.)

## Godly Living Out Of A Godly Heart

God gave us our emotions for a purpose. He wants us to worship Him with all our heart, mind, and strength—all the way down to the bottom of our being, so that we might have abundant life in Him. ...*I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly* –John 10:10.

We can learn from Bible characters like David who exemplify the abundant life. David wrote: *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever* –Psalm 73:25-26.

We can learn from Mary when she ...*stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment* –Luke 7:38.

The abundant life involves not just a spiritual connection, but also an emotional connection with God the Father, and Jesus, through His Spirit. If our emotions are not connected to our mind and our will, and as a believer, we only know God intellectually, we may be more like Simon than Mary. Simon no more understood Mary's soul connection with her Lord than Judas understood Mary washing Jesus' feet with expensive perfume (*see Matthew 26:7-10*). God will patiently work with any of His children to establish that emotional connection.

Jesus' mother, Mary, also had a heart connection with God. The Bible says, *But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart* –Luke 2:19. There can still be a deep heart connection with Jesus even if it is a quiet one, with or without tears.

It is dangerous to only have a head knowledge of God but no connection to the heart and no soul understanding of what it means to be a sinner saved by grace. That position could be understood as “cold truth.”

As we... *Confess [our] faults one to another, and pray one for another, [we will] be healed...* –James 5:16. Complete healing in Jesus brings our emotions and intellect together to make up the abundant life.

Our North American culture and our Anabaptist culture tends to cause us to lean towards the stoic end of the spectrum. We get good at stuffing our emotions because they are often considered too dangerous to really be openly in touch with. Jesus wants our heart, along with our will—our heart of flesh. A good connection with Him is not dependent on outside circumstances. Peace is based on a personal, spiritual, and emotional connection with our Lord, not only on “good” church life.

I pray that we may all have a personal relationship with God and Jesus, through His Spirit, not only intellectually and spiritually, but also emotionally—one that touches our hearts. When we have that connection, no one can take it from us—not the government, not distress, not immaturity in those around us. It is very personal and absolutely imperative to our Christian vitality. Without it, we do not live the abundant life. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?* –Romans 8:35.

How do we get this intimate emotional connection with

Jesus? We need a spiritual mentor, an intercessor, someone like Jesus who prayed for us. Biblically speaking, we need to become a disciple to another who has gone this way before us who can help us find our way in this journey of life.

*Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me* –John 17:20-21.

It may take a teacher who is there already to help us work through the sin and stumbling blocks in our life for us to cross the bar from the stormy ocean to the peaceful harbor. Someone like Paul had when God sent Ananias to help him.

The Holy Spirit loves to use other Christians to help us when we are in need, especially when we are desperate enough to accept it. Once we have attained that soul oneness with Jesus and God the Father, we must be there to help others to that place as well.

Eternity will reveal the results of our emotional and spiritual connection with our Lord and Savior. It is a oneness that no one can take away. Not a Simon. Not a Judas. Nor any circumstance. It inspires those around us to attain that same connection.

*The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly* –John 10:10.

**Praise the Lord! He is Good!**



# The Road to Emmaus

by Lee Rufener  
Athens, WI

*And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? –Luke 24:17.*

On June 6, 1944, 156,000 American, British, and Canadian troops landed on a 50-mile stretch of beach in Normandy, France. After several months of intense fighting, they overcame the initial defenses and swarmed into the German-held territory. The surprise attack, known as D-Day, caught the Germans off guard. However, it wasn't until March of the next year that France was finally liberated from German forces. D-day was the beginning of the end of World War II on the western front and it was the event that seemed to sap the life from the notorious German army, from which they never recovered. It appears rather coincidental that so many words with a negative connotation begin with the letter D: Disappointment, Doubt, Doleful, Doom, Disillusionment, Discouragement, Dreary, Defeat, Despondency, Depression, Despair, Devastation, Deception, and Death.

I can imagine that these two believers, plodding upon the road to Emmaus that dim and dismal evening, were feeling a little the same way. Their D-Day had arrived totally unexpected. I would suspect that every living person has at one time or another experienced moments of intense sadness—their own D-day, so-to-speak. Even some animals have been known to express a melancholy mood at the death of their master or mate. But these two disciples seemed to be experiencing a pain far beyond the normal loss of a friend. They were staring into the face of the grim reality that all their bright hopes of a shining tomorrow were hopelessly shattered in a ruinous heap at the foot of the cross.

This agony was no ordinary fit of depression but rather it was a depression linked to a crisis of faith. This type of discouragement is a state of intense spiritual anguish in which the struggling, despairing believer feels he is abandoned by God. It is a hopeless feeling that the sun of God's blessedness has been eclipsed and the dark night of the soul has become a permanent resident within.

While all of us seek to valiantly resist such dark temptations, a brief search into the lives of many godly

men will reveal that these temptations are very real and are quite common to man. In such a condition, life seems impossible and the impending gloom that has settled upon the heart sees no light at the end of the tunnel. *Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail? –Jeremiah 15:18.* This is obviously an overstated exaggeration that escaped the lips of the weeping prophet, but it gives us a direct snapshot into the dreaded pain in the depths of his soul.

*For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead –2 Corinthians 1:8-9.* This dark night of the soul shows no respect to persons. It invades the lives of princes and paupers, preachers and penitents, public and private people, pulpits and pews. These two disciples had verbally revisited every possible scenario in their journey along the Emmaus Road. They had no doubt found plenty of fault in others as well as personal regret. The “what ifs” and “if onlys” had thoroughly been discussed, but nothing could reverse the outcome and their restless anxiety lingered still.

The road from Jerusalem to Emmaus was *about threescore furlongs* or approximately seven miles. And along this doleful journey a Stranger joined ranks with the distraught duo in their D-Day and asked them for an account of their sadness. But he is no curious onlooker. He is the risen Lord who has come to cast His heavenly light upon our darkened pathway. Rather than revealing Himself abruptly, and perhaps for our benefit, he patiently allows them to expose the depleted spiritual road that they were treading upon.

Thus, the conversation unfolds as the mile markers pass, each revealing our sincere erroneous efforts that lead us further from the city of peace and into the dark night of the soul...

### ...The Ignorance of Others

*And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? –Luke 24:18.* Ask any stranger on the streets of New York City why the flags were flying at half-mast three days after the towers fell on September 11, and you would receive the same incredulous answer ascribed to these two. “How can you be so ignorant?” We all tend to marvel at people who do not hold the same knowledge that we imagine ourselves to possess. The younger the man, the more answers that he believes the coffers of his understanding hold.

This is nothing new. Moses, as a young man, *...supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not –Acts 7:25.* While he firmly understood that he owned the plan of God, he was badly mistaken in the percentage that he possessed. If our recourse cannot rectify the given situation, our answers are not the real answer. The heartfelt disdain that naturally arises toward those who see it differently is the beginning marker that we are on the wrong path. Miles down the pathway of life, Moses began to feel the desperation of that pain and the darkness of the hour. *I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness –Numbers 11:14-15.* Why did Moses not see this earlier in life? For the same cause that these two fervent disciples’ *...eyes were holden that they should not know him –Luke 24:16.*

### ...Reason

*And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people –Luke 24:19.* They had their private perception of who the Christ was, but they were seeing *...through a glass, darkly... –1 Corinthians 13:12.* Their partial knowledge was leaning heavily on their own understanding and looking for the wrong kind of redemption. To them, their redeemer was (past tense) a prophet that no longer could do what they wanted him to do. We all want Jesus to solve our problems and make us feel better, but His purpose is to free us from our presumption and sin.

Jacob had every *reason* to believe that the birthright and blessing was to be his. At Bethel, God had promised to bless him. Jacob reckoned this to arrive in a material format. *And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God –Genesis*

*28:20-21.*

But the greatest blessing he ever received from God arrived to him on the wings of a deep dark night. *And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed –Genesis 32:24-28.*

Jacob had already accumulated an abundance of earthly possessions. What more could he want? It was a dark night for Jacob when he discovered that he'd spent his life pursuing possessions and resisting God. He now seeks godly character and spiritual affluence. His victory was through surrender, and he limped away as a cripple with a crown. The Lord cannot fully bless a man until He has first conquered his powers of reason.

### ...Ill Fate

*And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him –Luke 24:20.* God specializes in turning grave dilemmas into monumental victories. Still, man looks around him and curses the darkness about him. Though there may be a volley of good reciprocating them, *...the morning is to them even as the shadow of death... –Job 24:17.* To give undo emphasis upon the evil about us is to mock the divinity of God. While we all may regret at times things that we could have done or said differently, we must invariably leave the results in the hands of God. Job experienced as much ill fate as anybody. So much so that he opened *...his mouth, and cursed his day. And Job spake, and said, Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived. Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it. Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it; let a cloud dwell upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it. As for that night, let darkness seize upon it... –Job 3:1-6.* But somewhere before the dark events were rectified and lifted, the light shined into his soul, and he laid his hand to his mouth and worshiped.

### ...Personal Agenda

*But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel... –Luke 24:21.* It is but natural to attempt to understand any given situation and these two had selected the correct equation. Their folly lay in the presumption of the means that Christ was to perform this and the type of redemption they were to receive. They were looking forward

to the day when their nation would be exalted over the Romans. When we unwittingly seek our own security, it is bound to lead to bitter disappointment. Naaman thought *...He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper* –2 Kings 5:11.

Abraham was promised the land of Canaan and he asked for a confirmation. He then prepared the covenant sacrifice prescribed by God, but the entire day passed, and God did nothing with them. *And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.* –Genesis 15:12.

As Abraham waited on God to receive his offering, he continued to beat back the birds of prey. But as the day neared an end he began to feel abandoned by God and the dark night began to settle upon his soul. It takes a midnight experience for things to get dark enough for us to see the stars and quiet enough to hear His voice. *But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead* –2 Corinthians 1:9.

### ...Impatience

*...And beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done* –Luke 24:21. Many of us are disciplined enough to hold out for a season. It is when our hope is deferred (*see Proverbs 13:12*) that our hearts grow sick and faint. Three days seemed like a long time to these two. But three days, weeks, months, years, or even decades are all within the disposal of God's clock. *How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?* –Psalm 13:1.

Joseph patiently endured the ill treatment of his brothers and Potiphar, but the dungeon got long, and he entreated the butler to send for him when he was restored his position. But it was *two full years* (Genesis 41:1) until Pharaoh dreamed and Joseph was finally hailed forth. But it was not so much the fault of the butler as it was the will of God who had called Joseph to be *...laid in iron: Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him* –Psalm 105:18-19. There is no more effective avenue to teach us patience than the discipline of darkness, from which few saints are exempt.

### ...Self-Pity

*Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive* –Luke 24:22-23. No one enjoys missing out. In fact, psychology has uncovered a new disorder –FOMO (fear of missing out). The tidings brought by the women was good news and an amazing turn of events, yet it brought the others no

joy for it did not happen to them. Good news can rarely penetrate a person immersed in self-pity and Elijah was one such. His dark night arrived on the heels of a breathtaking triumph on Mount Carmel against the prophets of Baal. But in the blackness of his own inner feelings *...he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers* –1 Kings 19:4.

### ...Feelings of Failure

*And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not* –Luke 24:24. It is easy to think, "It worked for them but it's not working for me." While unsuccessful efforts may discourage us, it is not necessarily a failure on our part. John the Baptist had faithfully called the people to repentance, baptized Christ, and witnessed the thundering voice from heaven. He accurately announced the coming Messiah and pointed his disciples to *...the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world* –John 1:29. This ministry earned him a secure place in a dark prison cell. He had been well accustomed to the lack of comfort and a meager diet, but it was the feelings of utter abandonment by God that brought him unto dark doubts. *And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?* –Luke 7:19.

"Was I wrong?" In the darkness he began to experience life on the sloping back of a question mark. John Bunyan describes it as the slough of despond. It may appear like D-Day for the Christian, but undue emphasis upon our unsuccessful efforts promotes no resurrection.

### Conclusion

Not all spiritual darkness is completely avoidable. Not every spiritual experience is a time of heartfelt blessing, nor is every place. There are times of persecution and testing that are designed to bring saints unto the soul reckoning that only dark nights can minister unto. Jesus Himself was tempted in a similar manner to us, when in the pervading darkness of the ninth hour on the cross, His voice rang out *...with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* –Matthew 27:46.

The road to Emmaus bears witness to the fact that a vibrant existence of faith gives no guarantee of the absence of spiritual depression. It is a story about real people with real faith experiencing real trials. It is helpful to teach us that even spiritual pleasures ought not to be held too tightly. Our confident visions for the future both immediate and long term must be immersed in the fires of humility. The dark night is the place where such self-deception dies, and an intimate knowledge of God is birthed. It transitions us from loving God for the blessings He gives us, to loving



God for our relationship with Him and the communion that follows.

The traveling companion of Cleopas was never mentioned. Some think it was his wife. Some claim it was Luke. But their identity was omitted, perhaps so that we might be more apt to fill the vacancy with our own name. Seven miles from Jerusalem we stumble upon the stark reality of whom the Savior really is and that salvation is more than just a rubber stamp marking His possession. The scales fall from our eyes and the dark night of the soul gives way to the brightness of the noonday light of the presence of God. It is then that we make our joyous dash back to the city of peace only to be misunderstood again. *And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them* –Mark 16:13.

And so, I wonder even at the profitability of writing down such thoughts. It is not an encounter that can be manufactured and intellectually understood. It is a highly

personal convocation with God and tailored specifically to each individual. But perhaps we, in our shallow generation, can be encouraged to reach out and embrace the darkness instead of meeting it with a loathing resistance. And there in the menacing darkness of night, learn to embrace the Savior of light.

Long my imprisoned spirit lay,  
Fast bound in sin and nature's night.  
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,  
I woke; the dungeon flamed with light.  
My chains fell off. My heart was free.  
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

- Charles Wesley



# The Promise of A Song

Eileen H Wenger  
Dalton, OH

Ellie edged her chair closer to the grown-ups who were visiting in the kitchen. Grandpa, Grandma, and Aunt Lily had stopped by for a visit, and although she didn't always understand the conversation, she loved to listen. She found that she learned a lot of things that way.

The topic this evening was about something related to church and that got her mind to thinking about singing during Sunday morning worship services. Although Ellie was only five years old, she very much loved to sing. She thought about the fact that her dear Grandpa was a song leader in their church and how much she liked when he led a song.

At Ellie's church the song leaders all sat around a table near the center of the church. They took turns choosing a song and then leading it for the congregation. Ellie didn't always know the songs that were chosen. They sang out of a little black hymnbook that had lots of songs with hard words and tunes she didn't recognize. However, in the back of this little songbook was a section called "The Appendix" and here were hymns that were familiar to her and she was always pleased when a song was announced from that part of the book. Her favorite song was 'Saviour, Like a Shepherd Lead Us' and although she couldn't read yet, she knew it was number eight. When that particular song number was announced on a Sunday morning, she always felt a twinge of excitement. *She would be able to help along with this song!*

*I wish we would sing that song again,* thought Ellie. *It's been a long time since we have.*

Then a sudden thought struck her. *Why couldn't she ask Grandpa to choose that song next Sunday?*

*Yes, I will ask him and see what he says about that idea,* she smiled to herself. She decided to wait until her grandparents were ready to leave. She followed Grandpa out the door and as he walked across the porch, she quickly stepped up next to him. "Grandpa," she asked. "Do you think you could lead the song 'Saviour, Like A Shepherd Lead Us' this next Sunday? I would really like to sing it again!" She felt suddenly shy at having asked such a question, and she ducked back toward the doorway of the house.

Grandpa smiled down at her. "I think I can do that. Is that a song you like?" His eyes twinkled at Ellie. "I'll be happy to lead that one just for you."

Ellie could scarcely wait for church the following Sunday. She would get to sing "her" song. Grandpa said he would choose it and she had no doubt he would do as he said.

Sunday morning, she waited eagerly for the song service to begin. The first and second songs were ones that were not familiar to her. Then came time for the third one. "Let's sing number 8 in the Appendix," announced the song leader. Ellie's heart sang. They were going to sing her favorite song. Her grandpa had honored her request. Her eyes shone as she joined in the singing of the

beautiful song. It was a lovely hymn that spoke of Jesus' care as a Shepherd and a Friend, and how He would always keep His children close to Himself.

Later, after church was over and they were on their way home, Ellie remarked to her mother, "Grandpa chose that one song, just like I asked him to!"

Ellie's mom looked a bit startled. "You asked him to lead a song today? When did you ask him?"

"Yes, I did. The other evening when they visited, I asked him if he could lead it today and he said he would. And he did!" Ellie said with delight.

Mom had a strange look on her face, and she was quiet for a moment.

"Did you know that Grandpas weren't there today? At the last minute they decided to visit elsewhere this morning for church." Mom smiled tenderly at her little daughter. "It seems that God knew what a little girl's heart was desiring and He led another brother to choose the song you like so much. That's so amazing, isn't it?" Ellie nodded. To think that Grandpa wasn't even at church today, and still they sang her favorite song anyway! It gave her such a special feeling to know that Jesus cared for her that much.

Today, Ellie is a grown-up woman and now has children of her own. Whenever she thinks about how Jesus cares for all His children, she especially remembers how God cared about one little, five-year-old girl and the song she loved so much. As her mother said, and still does, "Of course God cares. He loves all the little children of the world!"

## *Saviour, Like A Shepherd Lead Us*

Savior, like a Shepherd lead us,  
Much we need Thy tender care.  
In Thy pleasant pastures feed us,  
For our use Thy folds prepare:  
Blessed Jesus! blessed Jesus!  
Thou hast bought us, Thine we are.  
Blessed Jesus! blessed Jesus!  
Thou hast bought us, Thine we are.  
We are Thine, do Thou befriend us,  
Be the guardian of our way.  
Keep Thy flock, from sin defend us,  
Seek us when we go astray:  
Blessed Jesus! blessed Jesus!  
Hear, O hear us when we pray.  
Blessed Jesus! blessed Jesus!  
Hear, O hear us when we pray.  
Thou hast promised to receive us,  
Poor and sinful though we be.  
Thou hast mercy to relieve us,  
Grace to cleanse, and pow'r to free:  
Blessed Jesus! blessed Jesus!  
Early let us turn to Thee.  
Blessed Jesus! blessed Jesus!  
Early let us turn to Thee.  
Early let us seek Thy favor,  
Early let us do Thy will.  
Blessed Lord and only Savior,  
With Thy love our bosoms fill:  
Blessed Jesus! blessed Jesus!  
Thou hast loved us, love us still.  
Blessed Jesus! blessed Jesus!  
Thou hast loved us, love us still.

*Dorothy Ann Thrupp*

# A Joyful Calling

by Sheryl Zeiset  
Lebanon, PA

I stepped quietly down the stairs, my eyes groggy. It was midnight and a soft light glowed from my parents' room. My new baby brother was crying, probably what had woken me up at this hour, and I decided to check up on Mom and wee baby.

My mother was picking him up, crooning softly. I expected her to look weary. Instead, her eyes were sparkling with delight as she exclaimed, "Oh, he's just hungry!" She settled into the rocking chair and soon the house was restored to its midnight quiet.

Her joy at getting up in the middle of the night to feed her baby made a deep impression on my 18-year-old mind. She gave me the unspoken message that this baby was wanted and loved, and she found deep delight in caring for him. This was her ninth baby and I had often seen this in my mother, but this time it felt extra special.

Was my mother deprived of a fulfilling life?

Throughout history the role of a woman and motherhood has been evaluated and reevaluated; respected and demonized by turn. In the early 1900s, girls dreamed of becoming a mother just as their mothers and grandmothers before them. By the 1970s, the centuries'-old classic role of women was under attack. As one woman wrote, "I was busy raising my four children. These were the happiest years of my life, and we were shocked to suddenly hear that mothering only takes a third-grade education and a fulltime mother is unnecessary. Mothers who were applauded by society were suddenly bombarded with a new buzzword—fullfillment."<sup>1</sup>

Today, according to some online reports, roughly 27% of infants and toddlers in America are placed in some form of paid childcare arrangement. Many of these mothers say they are happier and healthier on the job than they are at home with their children. Perhaps they are happier because taking on a challenge provides a sense of well-being, rather than living "discontentedly" at home. God's will is that women

of God would find their deepest joy and fulfillment in their home and with their children.

*The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may **teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed** – Titus 2:3-5.*

In the past, the term "a keeper at home" had a more clearly understood and defined definition. Today we can stay at home and yet still be consumed with ... *wandering about from house to house...* –1 Timothy 5:13, on our phones. In 2 Timothy, Paul continues ... *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves...* –2 Timothy 3:1-2. How much of my messaging and communication is consumed with loving myself? Technology can be a useful tool, but it can also become a distracting vice and addiction. It can also be a source of depression and discouragement if my house, décor, birthday cakes, or holidays are compared with all the perfect accomplishments of others. Choosing to stay at home in your focuses and thoughts produces peace and contentment.

God says, *Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward* –Psalm 127:3. Our children are His heritage and His reward! In a noisy world, full of other distractions, let's not lose sight of this.

We want to keep a mother's role respected and well-defined. But even in the church, time and technology are changing things and a subtle influence has crept in. Lucrative online businesses grab our attention, breeding a subtle discontent. "Me time" and "self-care" have become buzzwords and we are fascinated with new culture fads like coffee shops and shopping malls, each of which can take

focus and energy away from our children. For some, it is easier to focus on the newest décor or an affluent lifestyle rather than a large family.

While some may question or wish to debate how many children are too many, or too little, let's remember that God has given us some clear principles on this issue. *Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate* –Psalm 127:3-5. The Scripture passages that speak about children show us that God's view regarding children is quite different from the prevailing view that many have in our world today.

An even more subtle question that I see young women wrestling with is this: "Is it more spiritual to be involved in ministry rather than to bring more children into the world?" I wrestled through this question as a young mother. All my work in the house was done with a subconscious "I'll get this done quickly and then I'll have time for more important things." But when I look at the example of older, godly mothers, I see that their home and children were their important work—their focus.

My calling as a mother is not an inferior calling. A peaceful home is an oasis for hurting people and few things are as refreshing and beautiful as children who are loved and "trained up" in the ways of God. An orderly happy family is a powerful witness to our communities, and it is one way



truth is propagated. It is not a choice between family or ministry, but rather family is ministry and together we can minister to others. No, it is not a ministry that all are called to; some are called to singleness, while others go through the difficulty of infertility. In each of these we are called to a selfless life of service to God and others.

Elisabeth Elliot said, “The process of shaping the child, shapes also the mother herself. Reverence for her sacred burden calls her to all that is pure and good, that she may teach primarily by her own humble, daily example.”<sup>2</sup> Reverence—first to God and then to our sacred calling—allows our own souls to be purified as we live in obedience to this calling.

In these busy years, it is easy to feel overwhelmed and discouraged with the daily responsibilities, but God sees the big picture of what is being accomplished. It is infinitely more glorious than the messy floors and hungry tummies that I see. He sees the souls being birthed and raised, each one as a potential soldier in His kingdom. He sees what He is doing in our hearts as we learn to unselfishly give to our families. He is actively involved, even when all I can see is the challenge of today.

Eventually, the child-bearing and child-raising years are over. Children grow up and leave home. Then what? In Titus 2, godly older women are described as ...*teachers of good things* –Titus 2:3. They are given the directive: *That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed* –Titus 2:4-5.

*Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve* –1 Timothy 2:11-13. Just as Paul instructs us, we believe in women being silent in the church, but this doesn't mean that women are to be silent in all situations, places, and relationships. God has an important ministry for older women who have learned valuable life lessons and have the ability to encourage and disciple the younger generation. The younger women also have an important ministry ...*to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed* –Titus 2:4-5.

God doesn't need perfect women to teach the younger, rather He wants those who are honest, humble, and willing. Often the best advice is born out of experience. If you have made mistakes in your marriage, if you have gone through

infertility or grief and have come out as a better person, you are all the more qualified to disciple a younger woman. Experience brings compassion for another's pain and equips you to understand and articulate the path forward for a struggling younger woman.

I hear the cry of younger women desiring to have an older sister walk beside them, but I also see older women shrinking from the task. Can we change this? Perhaps it has never been your habit to engage in heart sharing. Perhaps you struggle with fear as you think of being vulnerable. Perhaps you feel like you don't have the time it takes to include others in your life. These hindrances are common to us all, but we can, by the grace of God, push past these fears and fulfill God's will for us as women.

- Reach out and ask. Don't always wait until someone pursues you. Choose one younger woman to befriend and learn the inner thoughts and questions of her heart. If you have never learned how to be vulnerable in your relationships, ask God to teach you. And He will.
- Start with small gestures of encouragement and love. These will grow into relationships, and opportunities to influence.
- Be willing to sacrifice your time. Ministry is a lifestyle of caring more about others than ourselves. God needs us to be willing to use our voice. It is His way for us to reproduce our spiritual values and bless the next generation.

Teaching others about the things of God strengthens everyone involved—the teacher and the disciple. Truth, dissected and taught, settles into the heart. Don't believe the lie that we don't need spiritual vulnerability with each other. We do need it since it is vital for our on-going growth and maturity. It is also vital for the health of the church and for the next generation.

Busy young mother or older woman, whatever stage of life you're in, God has given you the tools through His spirit to be an influence for good in the lives of those around you.

*And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not* –Galatians 6:9.

#### Endnotes:

1. [marionstar.com/story/opinion/2015/05/09/role-mothers-changed-years/270511951](http://marionstar.com/story/opinion/2015/05/09/role-mothers-changed-years/270511951)
2. [Bookroo.com](http://bookroo.com) 22 of the best book quotes from Elisabeth Elliot

# What Do You See?

When you, my friend, are standing on this earth  
And gazing up into the firmament  
Where stretches all of space, what do you see?  
A great black blanket stretched o'er all the sky  
With many a mystery light somewhere up there?  
Or can you see the distances so great  
Which stretch the mind almost to breaking point  
And make you feel the size you really are?  
In the still silence of the spacious sky,  
The far-off planets seem almost in reach  
Compared to the great distance to the stars.  
The crescent moon is closer yet to you,  
And yet it took man three whole days to reach  
That tiny sphere so very close at hand.  
But what you see while gazing up to heights  
Which you cannot begin to comprehend  
Is but a streak of all the vast expanse  
Beyond the knowledge of this human race.  
And so, my friend, I hope that you will feel  
That greatness, vastness, emptiness of space  
Which our Creator made for us so we  
Can feel His greatness and His tender love  
And humbly bow our heads and worship Him.

*—by Daniel Kaufman*

# Morally Pure In A Corrupt Society

by Sim Yoder  
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We will start with a few definitions... Moral has to do with right and wrong behavior. Pure is free from moral fault or guilt, marked by chastity, which is personal integrity. Pure contains nothing that does not properly belong and where the inside mirrors the outside.

As the title suggests, this article will be about doing right and being free from moral fault and guilt, living a life of integrity, and keeping our inside and outside free of anything that doesn't properly belong.

Notice some things that the Scriptures teach about being pure:

- *Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God –Matthew 5:8.*
- *That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere [pure] and without offence till the day of Christ; –Philippians 1:10.*
- *...whatsoever things are pure ... think on these things. –Philippians 4:8.*
- *...keep thyself pure –1 Timothy 5:22.*
- *And there shall in no wise enter into it [the new Jerusalem] any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie... –Revelation 21:27.* In other words, anything that is the opposite of that which is pure.
- *Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully –Psalm 24:3-4.* In other words, it is the people who are clean inside and out that will enter His presence and see God.

In our world today, being morally pure will not happen without strong determination and personal discipline. It has always been this way, but even more so today with the rise of technology and the availability of evil at our fingertips.

Sexual sins are not foreign to conservative churches. In fact, they are not foreign to any people of any race. We

cannot relax and let down our guard and suppose that our children will be safe from the evils of society and our humanity. We must show by example and teach our children and our youth if we expect them to stay clean in this corrupt society. We cannot assume that if a person dresses a certain way that all is well on the inside. The story is not told fully by the outside. The Pharisees made the outside look good while the inside was full of corruption. Jesus said... *Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also –Matthew 23:26.* We, too, should give primary attention to heart issues. When the heart is clean, then, and only then, will the outside be able to be cleansed.

*If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth –1 John 1:6.* This is light on the outside and darkness on the inside. Internal darkness will always destroy fellowship and kill relationships—every time. *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin –1 John 1:7.*

The message here is intended to be a message of hope, not gloom. If you have a hidden dark spot, confess it and get rid of it; you can be free! It is possible to be free from the clutch of Satan and live an open, transparent life with joy in your soul. You don't need to go through life trying to hide the darkness of evil. Jesus wants to forgive and heal.

Satan is so cruel. *The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy... –John 10:10.* He wants to steal your purity, kill your character, and destroy all godly relationships. His interest is to break up your home, destroy your respect and send you to hell. All the while, he is luring you through the lust of your flesh, with his sword drawn to bind and kill you.

Moral sins are so shameful and hard to admit. The natural thing is to try to hide what we know is wrong. Children who learn to hide wrongdoing early in life naturally develop into youth who hide things from parents, schoolteachers, and ministers. After developing this type of behavior, this young



person will need to learn to be open and transparent, or the time will come when they will be hiding things from their spouse—just saying marriage vows will not change a deceptive heart. Hiding results in a double life and leads to more bondage and broken relationships. People who have closed doors in some corners of their life will be possessive of their phones and not be willing to share their password with a trusted partner. It seems we easily forget the truth about God and how futile it is to hide from Him.

*Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do [or to whom we will give account] –Hebrews 4:13.* How can we be so naive and foolish to think we can hide anything from God? Or take it a step further—why would we want to hide something from Him? God loves us too much to let us go on in a life of hiding evil.

*But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out –Numbers 32:23.* This is still very true—and you can be sure of it. God loves you too much to let you keep hiding what needs to be brought out and forgiven. *Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that **the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?** –Romans 2:4.* This message is hope to all who are tired of hiding and running.

Sexual sins are also extremely deceptive. It usually happens similar to the way James described it in chapter one; we are enticed... drawn away... pulled like a magnet off-center... feel a surge of desire... make sure no one is looking, and our tracks are covered... step closer to the forbidden... feel more desire... begin very quickly to lose reasoning and sound thinking... not able to calculate consequences much like an intoxicated person... *Then when lust [desire] hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished [completed], bringeth forth death –James 1:15.* James tells us not to follow our lusts for what isn't ours to have, not even a hint.

The Bible tells us three things we should flee from. One of these is fornication which can be broadened to include all sexual sins. Don't dabble with it; don't take the second look; get away from it. Replace those thoughts with upbuilding thoughts of God and His ways. Start singing a familiar hymn. (Thankfully we can't think of two things at once.) By all means, flee from that base desire that will take you farther than you want to go and cost more than you want to pay. Stop and think about the end result; if you follow what you are being tempted for, will you have what you honestly want? Satan always promises pleasure, but he always delivers pain. Remember Satan has never invented a pleasure; he only takes what God made to be pure and good, perverts it, then offers it back in its perverted form. Remember, his sword is always drawn to eventually kill. Flee evil desires!

Don't follow your lust, not even a hint. Pornography is extremely addictive and has ensnared many a person. Promise Keepers have stated that in a survey, 65% of men were addicted. The way in which a person responds to pornography is similar to the way it is with alcohol or drugs, and so soon, an addiction is formed. They tell us that the brain is calling for endorphins to be poured into it, whether from addiction to alcohol, drugs, or porn. I want to emphasize again the fact that the men and women who make it to victory will be those who, like Daniel of old, purpose in their hearts to not defile themselves.

While many times the focus is on the brothers, young men in particular, this subject is for our sisters as well. Here some questions seem appropriate. What inside your life is tucked neatly away and hidden? Have life's disappointments caused an emptiness for which taking an 'emotional Tylenol' makes you feel better for a short while? Is your emotional connection attached where God has planned it to be? Young ladies tend to be tempted more in the area of emotional connections (fantasies and love stories), while young men tend to be tempted more by what they see (pornography).

Young girls should be taught the need to develop a healthy reserve with men. On the one hand not with a nose in the air and with never a smile, while on the other hand not too free in relating to young men. Our society is geared exactly opposite of this. From kindergarten on, boys and girls are being teased of special friendships. As a result, children grow up with little to no reserve. Socializing through messaging between genders should be avoided by all outside of family relationships. Failure in this will develop a habit in youth that will one day need to be broken if they expect to live an open, transparent life with a spouse. Think of it this way: would you want your spouse to socialize with the opposite gender on social media?

Sisters, be careful of the books you read. The romance novels will deaden the desire for the Word of God and give unrealistic expectations of married life. These books will give the idea that the right man somewhere would be your key to fulfillment and happiness in life. Only Jesus can fill the hole that sin has brought to every human being. No man or woman, young or old, will ever be able to give the security and tranquility of the soul that we all want so badly. This hurt in the heart will never be quenched by bandages or pain relievers. They help only for a moment, and when they wear off, the cry of the heart is even louder. Unwholesome books will deaden a taste for the things of God, and in its place, the craving for junk food and pain relievers (spiritually speaking) will grow.

Another concern for the sisters is the amount of time you spend online. There is no end to feeding the craving for finery, uniqueness, charm, and beauty. Don't let these things be the drive of your life as they will never cry out

“enough” and they will do nothing for the satisfying of your soul or to point your children in the right direction. Consider the amount of time that’s spent hosting parties of whatever name brand they are. Over the years, I have seen names come and go of business opportunities and products that one “must-have”. But alas, in a few years, we cannot remember even those names, and all the while, the children were growing and then they’re adults. Consider the real needs in your life and your responsibilities, then decide which will bring eternal investments. Sisters with children, you need to limit the hobbies which you so much enjoy because at this moment, you are blessed with children who have never-dying souls. Time with them is an eternal investment. Remember, the needs of your husband, your home, and your children are far more worthy of your time than hosting another party or spending hours at a party hosted by someone else.

So how can we all go from here and live a morally pure life, where the outside and inside are both clean?

**Be Humble.** *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much –James 5:16.* It takes humility and brokenness to acknowledge our needs, but brokenness is the key to victory. ...*For God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble –1 Peter 5:5.*

One of the most comprehensive definitions of grace is *unmerited divine assistance given to humans for regeneration and sanctification*. Regeneration is **redeeming grace**, and sanctification is **transforming grace**. The truth of this is that God gives *transforming grace* to the humble. This grace changes us from the inside out, making us into His Holiness and love. This aspect of grace must be desired and sought after as much as *redeeming grace* was when God saved us. This is probably the single most important step in overcoming addictions of any kind. Be humble enough to make it a daily prayer to God for His *transforming grace*. Jesus taught this when He said ...*cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also –Matthew 23:26.*

**Be Honest.** Examine your thoughts, actions, temptations, and the things you struggle with such as anger, lust, pride, bitterness, etc. Are you as spiritual inside your heart as you portray yourself to be on the outside? Strip the veneer and admit the need for help.

**Be transparent.** *In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel –Romans 2:16.* We are so foolish to think we can hide evil. We can for a while, but our actions will stand naked before an all-knowing God someday. Why would we try to hide something now? Again, this is a message of hope. Those

hidden things can be sent before to judgment and a guilt-free life can be a reality today. Be transparent; it must be a working goal.

**Tell yourself the truth.** When you are tempted, honestly consider the end thereof. If you follow your lust and get what you are craving, will you get what you want? Will this craving be satisfied, or will it only crave for more evil? Tell yourself the truth. If you saw your brother doing what you are going after, how would it look? How will it look thirty years down the road if you follow your evil desire? Will it bring joy or sorrow then? Will it be a help to someone then, or will someone else be spiritually scarred? Tell yourself the truth before you become intoxicated and unable to make rational judgments.

**Teach your eyes to bounce.** You can't help what you look at the first time, but you can control what you look at twice. Make it a practice until it becomes a habit to turn your eyes in a different direction whenever you see a sight that leads to impure thoughts. It works.

**Teach your children the ways of God.** This should be heavy on our hearts from early childhood. If we don't teach our children that God made us in the image of Himself, which needs to be kept pure, someone else will teach them to be secretive and make them feel impure. The book “God, our Children, and the Facts of Life” is a good starter for parents with young children. Stay close to your children as they grow; teach them as they mature.

**Keep your emotional ties in the proper place.** The more this is in place, the safer you will be in keeping pure in a corrupt society. The farther you get from this, the more vulnerable you will be to corruption. Keep your spouse as the one you are tied to emotionally above all others, the one you run to, to share with first. Keep he or she as the first in your life, other than God.

The Bible tells us to flee lust and fornication. Run from it. Get away from it and stop feeding it. These cravings are addictions that must be broken. They must not be fed. Remember, what you feed will grow, and what you starve will die. These addictions can be broken, but it will take feeding the relationships that God has given and starving all the hurtful and sinful ones.

God has made us in a way that when we love the things He loves, our heart still has room to love more. No matter how many children and grandchildren we have or how many godly friends we have around the world, our hearts still have room to love more people. But the moment we start to love what God has forbidden, it begins to replace and destroy all other love, filling the heart with emptiness, pain, and loneliness, and leading to a bitter end.

Many a man (or woman) has come to his senses and seen the utter foolishness of the path he took. Many men tried long and hard to hide impure conduct and were successful until late in life. Some even kept it hidden until after they were gone. I ask one simple question for you to ponder in the quietness of this moment and when your mind is clear of any intoxication. If you have hidden sin, is it worth it? Of course, the answer is a resounding NO! Oh, how wonderful to live an open life free of guilt and to have peace with God and the assurance of our sins forgiven, so that one day we will be taken out of this present evil world and be ushered into the very presence of our Holy God.

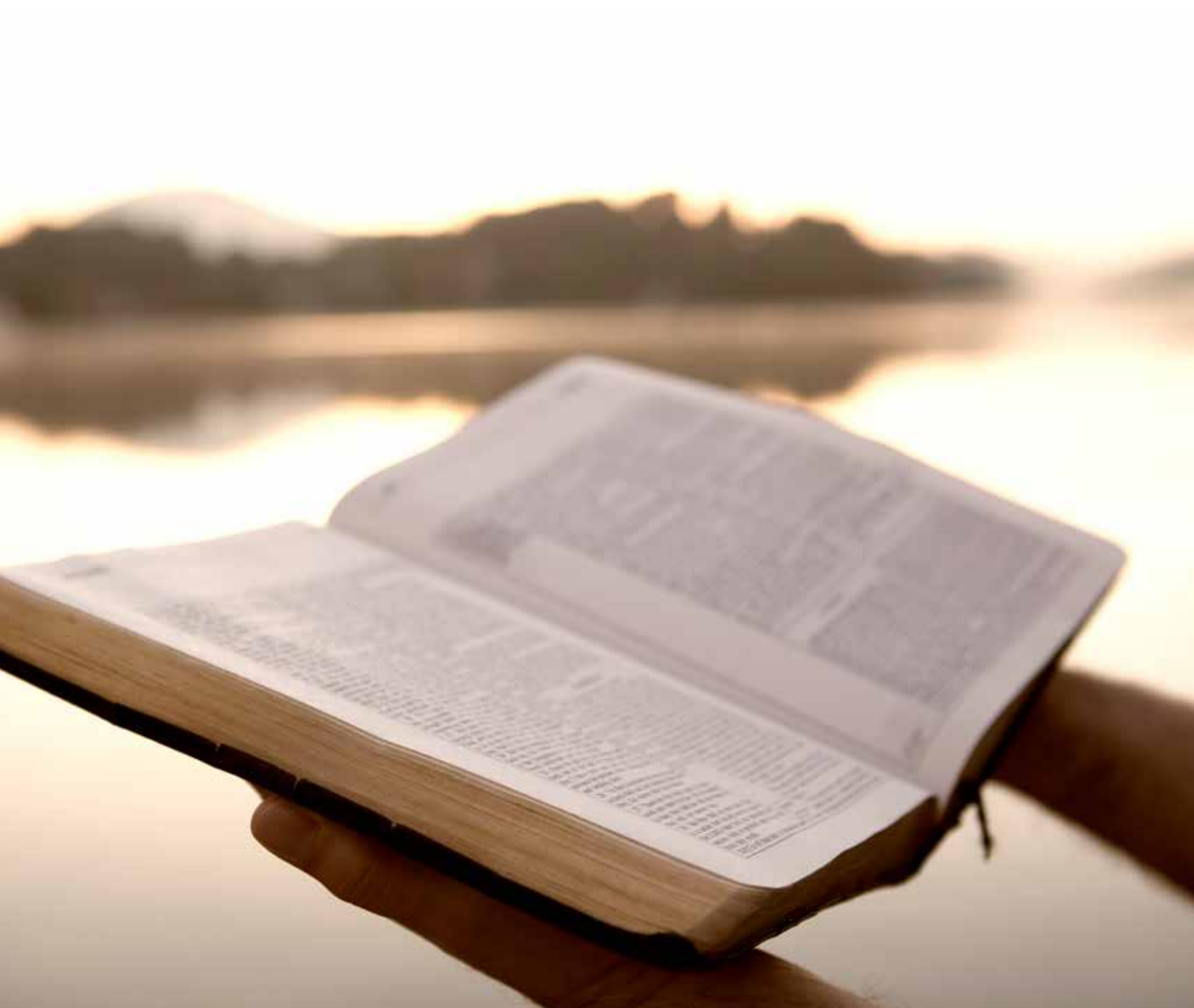
I will close with two quotes to help us fight for moral purity.

Two forces lie within my breast,  
The one I love, the one I hate.  
But the one I feed will dominate.

*-Jerry Yoder*

The more—  
Honestly I name  
What is true about myself,  
The less—  
I need to hide and defend  
and posture and pretend

*-Dan Allender*



# Isolation

by Vincent "John" Waldron MD  
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Around the world, but particularly in the United States, people seem to value rugged individualism. People who demonstrate this character quality make their own way through life, asking nothing from others and expecting nothing.

I suppose that this idea relates back to the pioneers. These were men and women who trekked across the various new countries looking for a place where they could settle down and call home. There were few general stores and as much as possible they lived as self-sufficiently as they could.

While this may sound like a scenario that demonstrates strength, the truth is somewhat different these days. These days people use technology to deliberately create bubbles of isolation around themselves.

Many older people have found themselves increasingly isolated from friends and family. COVID certainly made this worse, but there were seeds of this seclusion that had been sowed long before COVID was ever heard of.

## Isolation is Not a Natural State

Looking back to the Garden of Eden we can see that Adam was created before Eve. While there were lots of animals around, there was no true companionship for Adam. *And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him ... And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him –Genesis 2:18-20.*

*And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man –Genesis 2:21-22.* Of course, this was the beginning of marriage, but the more important thing to see here is that it is not a normal state for humans to be alone. We

desire companionship and not just the companionship of a pet dog or cat.

## Isolation can lead to Despair

Perhaps there is no story that demonstrates so clearly the dangers of isolation as the story of Elijah. We know from the biblical book of I Kings, that Elijah was a fiery prophet of God.

He brought word from God to Ahab that there would be no rain and there was terrible drought for the next three and a half years. During that time, Elijah spent time in the wilderness and then with a widow in Zarephath.

The whole time, he was miraculously fed through God's power, first by ravens and then through God's provision of flour and oil to a widow, with whom he lived. Through God's power, he raised the widow's son to life.

Then came a time when he challenged the prophets of Baal to a match on Mt. Carmel and won a decisive victory for God. Miraculous fire descended from heaven in answer to his prayer. Truly, God was working great things in his life.

Very soon though, Elijah was running for his life into the desert. Jezebel had threatened his life and rather than trusting God, he fled to Mt. Horeb where he heard the voice of God.

When God asked him what he was doing there, Elijah replied, *...I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away –1 Kings 19:10.*

We can see here a big reason for Elijah's weakness. He felt completely alone. God corrected Elijah's incorrect assumption when He stated: *Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him –1 Kings 19:18.*

The fact that those men and women existed in Israel did Elijah little good since he didn't spend time with them. Elijah's isolation led him to weakness and despair.

The story of Paul comes to mind as well. The Apostle Paul was a man who seemed to have nearly limitless amounts of energy and an unquenchable zeal for the things of God, but his last letter to Timothy from prison revealed a man who felt very alone. *Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me: For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee...* –2 Timothy 4:9-11.

The Apostle was not abandoned. Other than Demas, they had not fled because they were afraid or ashamed of his bonds. He had sent many of his friends away to strengthen the church in various parts of the Roman Empire. Yet, Paul was still feeling isolated and needed the good Christian brothers, Timothy and Mark, to come and encourage him as he faced a martyr's death.

### Isolation is Physically Harmful

Studies have showed that isolation is linked to higher rates of high blood pressure, heart disease, anxiety, and depression. Older people who are isolated often show signs of mental decline and can experience worsening dementia.

Many times, as people age, they experience the deaths of loved ones. The loss of a spouse can lead older people to withdraw from others and to experience loneliness and isolation. This in turn often leads to rapid progression of the aging process.

Science does not fully understand it, but loneliness leads to increased inflammation and poorer immune function. This in turn can lead to lonely people getting worse infections and struggling to recover after such an infection.

While we think of these problems as those that primarily affect elderly people, they can affect younger people as well. In younger people, often loneliness doesn't lead to memory issues, but it certainly can lead to things like depression, and it can make chronic inflammatory diseases much worse.

### The Opposite of Isolation

If asked what the opposite of isolation is most people would probably answer "Companionship" or maybe even "Friendship". There is another word which has a Christian connotation that is even better. That word is *fellowship*.

The Greek word translated *fellowship* in the New Testament is "Koinonia" and in the Bible it speaks of relationships that are founded on a shared love for God and for the church—a unity of belief and desire. Christian fellowship includes

concepts like praying together, encouraging one another, and even suffering together.

I am afraid that many today find themselves in one of two dangerous situations. First, they may not be a member of any church congregation. While this may be unavoidable in certain mission outreach situations, it is not ideal, and most certainly it should not be a normal situation. At the very least it can create a sense of isolation, and at the worst it hinders many of the "one-anothering" Bible passages from being followed. We need fellowship, both to encourage us and to keep us accountable.

The second dangerous situation is that many believers, while members of a church, isolate themselves within that church. If you are a member of a large church congregation, it is easy to blend in and not develop relationships with others. This is just as harmful as not being a member of a church body. Too many people feel lonely, even when there are lots of people around.

Scripture makes it clear that we need a church body. *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching* –Hebrews 10:25.

There are many people who have lives that are full of friends and acquaintances, but if they do not have a place where they receive fellowship, they are missing out.

When I see people in my office who are struggling with depression there are two things I always tell them to do for themselves.

First is to start exercising. There have been several studies that compared exercise to antidepressants and found that it had similar effectiveness to many of the commonly prescribed antidepressant medications. This doesn't have to be really vigorous exercise, but it does need to be aerobic (enough to raise the heart rate) and consistent.

The second is to become active in a church congregation; it is not enough to just attend church. Having brothers and sisters to pray for someone who is struggling, to listen to the discouraging situations, and to encourage that person to a more vibrant walk with God is really helpful.

Unfortunately, when someone is struggling with depression, the last thing they seem to want to do is make the effort to be around other people, which contrary to their feelings, is counterproductive to changing the problem.

As we consider this, it should move us to reach out to those who we know are struggling with isolation.

When someone loses a spouse, they often have a lot of encouragement for the first several weeks, but we need to

make certain that they continue to have an active presence in their lives in the months that follow.

*For every man shall bear his own burden –Galatians 6:5, should not give us excuse to not obey God’s command to Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ –Galatians 6:2.* The family of God is given no time limit on bearing burdens. There is only a mandate that as we see our brother or sister struggling, we are to help them, as we are able.

The blessing is that someday, when we are struggling, we will have men and women of faith around us to encourage us and to pray for us. We cannot carry these burdens alone. Together, we will reach the Celestial City.

Isolation comes for many reasons. Sometimes it seems to be a chosen way of life, as is the natural tendency of

introverted people. Sometimes it is foisted upon a person due to deaths of loved ones or other significant losses. Either way, it is not a healthy place to live.

As we find ourselves in these situations, we need to reach out for fellowship. The family of God is there for us if we only reach out.

As we see others who are struggling, we need to extend to them the right arm of fellowship. As we do so, we may, through our small efforts, help someone emotionally, physically, and spiritually, simply by being a friend in a time of isolation.

Links:

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# The Call to Discipleship

by Donald Brechbill  
Chambersburg, PA

This is the first of a series of articles on “Discipleship.” Today, Jesus is continuing to call men and women to respond to the simple call, “Follow Me.” Jesus is calling each of us to personally “Follow Me.” In this series, we will explore the depth of this simple command of Jesus. Like the disciples, you will find yourself drawn to follow Jesus.

You may experience both exhilaration and apprehension. Exhilaration, as your journey of faith takes you to heights of love that you have never known. Apprehension, as your faith is tested in new and difficult ways.

There is an emptiness in every human heart that only Jesus can fill. There is a purity and beauty in the life of Jesus that resonates with those heart longings. As we walk with Jesus, we find ourselves being transformed. Old things pass away. All things become new. His life becomes our life. His desires become our desires.

Discipleship is incumbent on the believer. Believing in Jesus, repenting of our sins, and receiving the Lord Jesus into our heart are the first steps into a lifelong journey of faith. Discipleship is not an alternate means of salvation. Following Jesus is the response of a soul set free. Following Jesus is not a carnal attempt to merit eternal life. It is the love response of one who has discovered the source of life.

If you join us on this journey, you will discover that following Jesus will lead us into the valley of decision where we will find ourselves compelled to choose between a life of total surrender to Christ or a life of sin and pleasing self.

\* \* \* \* \*

*And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him –Matthew 4:18-22.*

\* \* \* \* \*

Imagine yourself in a ship with one of these brethren. The sun was rising on the eastern horizon. Anticipating another day of fishing the blue waters of the Galilee, you busy yourself with the daily tasks. Fishing has been your life. You are as much at home on the sea as you are in your cottage.

Another day, another catch of fish, and you should be able to keep the creditors at bay for another week. It’s the only life you have ever known. Your father was a fisherman. Your grandfather was a fisherman. It’s a comfortable life. It’s a familiar life.

This morning, as the waves are gently lapping the sandy shoreline, a man approaches. He’s not a total stranger. Everyone knows about Mary’s son. Everyone has an opinion about Mary’s son. He astounds the local rabbi with his knowledge of the scriptures. His character is flawless; He is the friend of all and a stranger to none.

This man, Jesus (that is his name) is drawing near to your ship. As He draws near, He calls out in a rather cheerful voice, “Follow me.”

James looks at John, and together they look to their father Zebedee. His approving nod was all that they needed. Zebedee had worked with his two sons for many years. Perhaps he was hoping that time with the Nazarene would soften the temper of their abrasive characters.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” That’s what He called out to Peter and Andrew. They left their little boat full of nets, perhaps tethered to a stump by the shore. What was it about this Man that He could draw disciples after Him with a simple “Follow Me”? Maybe it was a deep longing in the heart of these disciples—a “hope” that following Jesus might fulfill.

Generations of Jewish men had been looking for The

Messiah—The Promised One; He who would break the Roman yoke and restore Israel to her former freedom and glory. Jesus was the most promising revolutionary prospect of the day. He would need a following. He would need their help. Little did they realize that day as they dropped their nets and followed Jesus where that journey would lead them. Little did they know that if they followed this Man, they would never be the same.

As Peter, Andrew, James, and John joined with eight others to follow Jesus, they were walking away from the familiar, secure life of the fisherman. They may have thought that following Jesus would be an adventure. They may have thought that after a term of service to the Nazarene, they could return to their fishing boats. As a matter of fact, that is what they did.

After Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, He made several appearances to His disciples. They had not yet received the Holy Spirit, and, in the midst of this great uncertainty, they could not resist the allure of the familiar. They decided to go fishing, but much to their consternation they had lost the touch. They fished all night and caught nothing. In the morning Jesus was standing on the shore. He told them to cast on the right side of the ship. They cast and were not able to pull in the nets due to the multitude of fish.

*Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes –John 21:3-6.*

Have you ever found yourself in a position where you have tried and tried and all your efforts are met with failure? You know what it is to “reach the end of my hoarded resources”. If that is where you find yourself, you are in a position to experience a miracle. God shows himself strong to those who acknowledge their weakness.

When you decide to follow Jesus, He will draw you into such an utter dependence upon Him that you will finally no longer trust in yourself. To become truly like Jesus is to realize with Paul *...that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing....* Paul then continues the verse *...for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not –Romans 7:18.*

Discipleship will lead us into a total abandonment of ourselves to Christ. Just as the disciples could not have fathomed where following Jesus would lead them, neither can we. We make a faith choice. We choose to follow. We commit the details to our Master.

If you want to be like Jesus, you cannot look back. Jesus said: *...No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God –Luke 9:62.* Peter looked back. He said, “I go a fishing”. Disillusioned following the crucifixion and glorious resurrection, Peter chose to return to the lifestyle that was familiar to him. He went back to fishing and James and John went with him.

When Jesus appeared on the shore after their long night of fruitless toil, He prepared a fish fry for the weary disciples. As Peter sat munching on a charbroiled fish, Jesus turned to him and said, “Peter, do you love Me more than these?” How gently piercing are the words of Jesus.

Peter responded, “Yes Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.” We do not know how much time passed, but Jesus turned to him again, “Peter...” (actually He called him Simon) “Do you love Me?” Peter gave the same staid response. “Yes Lord, you know that I love you”. It was the right answer, but Jesus was interested in more than just a right answer, so He said to him again, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?”

Peter finally began to feel that Jesus was asking for something more of him—something that pierced his soul through and through. He had begun following Jesus with the desire to receive from Him. Now Jesus is asking him to reciprocate that love.

Scenes of Caiaphas' house came before him. He saw Jesus being brutally handled, falsely accused, and spat upon. He heard the angry shouting of the Sanhedrin as they called for Jesus' death. And then there was that persistent young damsel that challenged him that he was one of Jesus' disciples. He said to her, “I am not”. Three times he had denied knowing Jesus and now three times Jesus has challenged his love.

In anguish of heart Peter cried out, “Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee”. Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep”. From that day, Peter was a man with a calling, not only to know Christ for the purpose of receiving from him, but also to emulate him. Discipleship is more than merely knowing about Jesus. Discipleship is walking in his footsteps and identifying with Jesus in his ministry and in his sufferings—truly knowing Him.

Jesus is asking you today, “Do you love me?” We all know the right answer, “Yes, of course, I love Jesus.” Then “Love your neighbor” – “Serve the needy” – “Defer to your brother” – “Forgive the one that has offended you”. Discipleship is very practical in that it moves us beyond the ideological and causes us to become the very hands and feet of Jesus to those around us.

If in your heart you are thinking, *this doesn't sound very appealing*, I would encourage you to focus on the moment and the task at hand. Peter walked with Jesus for three and



a half year before he received this call from Jesus. Jesus never calls us without equipping us, and He doesn't equip us until He determines that we are ready. After the Day of Pentecost, Peter was called, he was prepared, and he was equipped. Then God used him mightily to establish the church.

I would like to call your attention to another attribute of discipleship that is sometimes misplaced. Discipleship is never intended to be drudgery. If you find following Jesus to be hard and toilsome, that is evidence that your love has not yet been perfected.

Jesus' soul-piercing question to Peter was quite simple, "Do you love Me?" It was as if Jesus was testing Peter. ["I have a job for you, Peter, but a prerequisite for this job is your devoted love for Me."] Discipleship is a love response to Jesus. Our love for Christ makes service a joy. Toil is pleasant and sacrifice is not a loss.

We can best understand this in the context of human relationships. If you are married and you truly love your husband or your wife, you do not even consider it a sacrifice to work for the mutual benefit of your marriage. In the same way, if we are truly in love with Jesus it is not considered toil to work for him. No sacrifice that we make for the kingdom of heaven is a loss.

I welcome you to join us as we explore the realities of discipleship. We will learn from Christ's example of forgiveness. We will gain a greater understanding of what it means to walk by faith. Jesus taught us to not worry but to trust. He taught lessons on servant leadership and on cross bearing. There is so much to discover when we are walking with Jesus.

Expect to be changed. The teachings of Jesus are revolutionary in that they run counter to our human impulses. Purpose to allow the life of Christ to become your life and you will be amazed by what God will do for you.



# The Lost Sailboat

by David W. Lehigh

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Once there was a little boy who made a toy sailboat. He carefully carved the hull from a block of wood and painted it blue. Then he fitted it with a mast and sails. When it was finished, he decided to try it on the lake in the city park.

It was a beautiful day. The boy tied a cord to the front of the boat and set it in the water. The wind caught the sail and hurried the boat away. Soon the boat came to the end of the cord. But a puff of wind blew so hard that the cord broke, and the boat sailed away toward the far side of the lake. The boy cried, but the boat was gone.

Several months later, as the little boy was walking through the city streets, he passed a pawnshop. There in the window was his sailboat! It was scratched and dirty, and the sails were torn. But it was definitely his own boat! Someone had found the boat and sold it to the pawnshop owner. Now it had a price tag of \$2.00 on it. The boy hurried home and gathered up all his money. He hurried back to the shop and bought the boat. He took it home, cleaned it, and gave it a fresh coat of paint and a new sail. Then as he looked happily at it, he said, "Little boat, you are twice mine—I made you, and I bought you." The story is a beautiful illustration of what God did for us.

## 1. The Labor and Joy of Creation

The little boy spent many happy hours in making his boat. He had carefully carved the hull, sanded it smooth, and painted it. He had fitted the mast and sails. He had enjoyed the work, and often showed it to his parents as he worked. The boy was delighted when it was finished. He experienced both the labor and the joy of creation.

Let us think about a greater builder—God the Creator. God's greatest work was man, who was made in His own image. Just as it was a joy for God to create the universe, so it is a pleasure for a boy to build a boat, or a girl to sew a garment, or a man or woman to create something of beauty or usefulness. Creating takes effort. It took a lot of work for the boy to make the boat. But when a boy looks at a finished

boat, or a girl looks at a beautifully decorated cake, or when God looked at His finished creation, the toil seemed small when compared with the joy of the finished work.

## 2. The Risk and the Pain of Loss

There is a risk in attempting anything. There is disappointment and pain when something that has been created is lost. The boy might have kept his boat at home where it would have been safe, but he wanted to see it sail. God could have made man a robot without the power to disobey Him. But He wanted to win man's love and enjoy freely given fellowship from man. So, God gave Adam and Eve the freedom of choice—the power to obey and love God, or the power to reject and disobey Him. Adam and Eve chose to believe Satan rather than God. They became enemies of Him, and slaves of Satan. God knew that this could happen, but he took the risk in order to permit man to freely love Him and bring Him glory.

## 3. The Joy of Rediscovery

The little boy discovered his boat in the pawnshop. God knows those among the lost and wandering sinners who are willing to accept Jesus and be brought back. Jesus knew that Zacchaeus would accept Him by faith, or He would never have called him down from the sycamore tree. This is something that our limited minds cannot grasp; we do not know what will happen in the future. But God does know. David says *...thou understandest my thought afar off—Psalm 139:2*. So we see that God knows whether our thoughts toward Him are of obedience or rebellion, and God knows what our wills have determined. If we are willing to believe that God knows our thoughts, then we can see that He will give His saving grace to everyone who will receive it. The Bible tells us in many places that God wants everyone to be saved. We can believe that His joy is great when anyone accepts His offer of salvation.

## 4. The Repurchase or Buying Back

When the boy discovered his boat in the pawnshop

window, he gathered up all his money to buy it back. It reminds us of the story that Jesus told—about the merchant who was seeking beautiful pearls. When the merchant found a pearl of great value, he sold all his possessions to buy it. To Jesus, who helped to create the universe, sinners who want to come to Him are the most precious thing in the world. But there is a difference between the boy buying back his boat and Jesus redeeming His people.

The plan of salvation is often spoken of as “redemption,” which means setting someone free from slavery or captivity by paying a ransom. We were slaves to Satan, but Jesus did not need to buy us back from him, for God still owned us. Paul says that God ...*hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son* –Colossians 1:13.

John says that ...*For this purpose [because of sin] the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.* 1 John 3:8. So we see that we are not delivered from Satan’s power by paying a ransom, but by God’s power, which is greater than Satan’s power. Jesus Christ took the punishment for our sins. God loved us even when we were sinners. But God’s law demands that all sin must be punished, and when Jesus took our punishment, He brought us back to God.

## 5. The Refurnishing and Refitting of the Sailboat

The little sailboat was scratched and soiled while it was lost. The boy cleaned and repainted it and made a

new sail. Man was marred and spoiled by the fall of Adam and Eve, and we were lost to God. Our natures became sinful, and by our own efforts we could not be pleasing to Him. When Jesus took our punishment, this was like the boy buying back the boat; we then belonged to God again. But we still need to be cleaned up and refinished.

This is the work of the Holy Spirit working side by side with us, for we are workers together with God—...*work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure* –Philippians 2:13. If we abide in Jesus and yield our lives to His Spirit’s control, He will delight in cleaning us up and will make us fit to be ornaments in God’s house.

So now we come to the end of our story. The little sailboat stands safely in the boy’s room, giving him pleasure and happy recollections every time he looks at it, yet always ready to serve the boy whenever he wishes. In similar manner, we serve Jesus Christ here on the earth, while we are being prepared to take our place in the Father’s house, where we will be with Him through all eternity.

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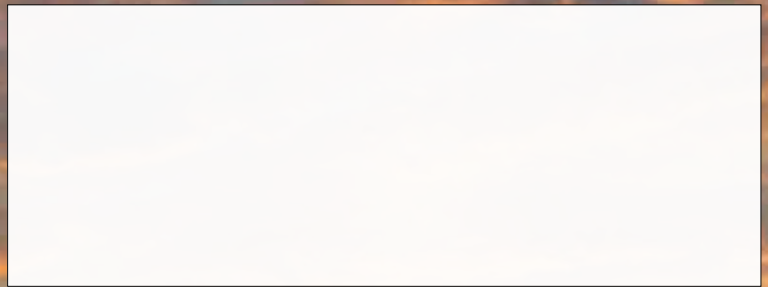
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1 John 4:18