

The Heartbeat of 
The Remnant

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A ministry of
The Berean Voice 



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~ *The Berean Voice Board*

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While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease –Genesis 8:22. Greetings to one and all. As I am writing this, it is the beginning of May and yet in our area it still seems as though spring has not yet quite arrived. There are glimmers of hope that summer surely will come—some of the trees are pushing their leaves and select early flowers have pushed their blossoms up to

wave bravely in the cool, damp breezes. Yet, overall, the weather seems to feel much more like the month of March.

This coming week has the promise of warm, dry weather, which should make many area farmers and homeowners happy. We are anticipating a great bevy of activity as gardens and fields are tilled and seeded with this year's crops. To those who read the Holy Scriptures and who believe the written Word of God, these normal day-to-day activities should be a reminder of God's promises in the same way as each new sighting of a rainbow.

And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places –Matthew 24:6-7.

And there shall be ... pestilences ... in divers places

In February or March of 2020, COVID-19 was declared a pandemic (a disease that spreads rapidly and affects a large percentage of the population). Now, over two years later, health officials and government leaders are somewhat reticent to publicly declare that the crisis has passed.

Some parts of the world have lifted all regulations regarding COVID-19 such as Denmark and England, while others such as New Zealand are still quite rigid with their ongoing rules and guidelines. And quite recently Chinese officials again locked down certain areas of their country in their efforts to quash a recent outbreak of new infections.

Many, if not most, individuals are tired of it all, ready for it to be over, and anxious to get back to life as normal. Many have lost loved ones. Many have endured financial setbacks and economic loss. Recent data from the World Health Organization (WHO) provides the approximate deaths (both direct and indirect) from COVID-19 to be around 15 million for the first two years of the pandemic.

While recent data from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates that the median global GDP dropped by 3.9% from 2019 to 2020, making it the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, creating a global recession that is the deepest since the end of World War 2.

Recently, a brother mentioned to me that “the world is in a mess” and that he has heard realtors, auctioneers, and financial advisors say that the world of finance is in unprecedented waters and that no one knows where, when, or how it will all end.

However, we should not be surprised by this major worldwide struggle. The Scriptures foretell of famine and hunger, pestilence and death, plagues of all varieties, and the list goes on of things that will come upon the earth just prior to the end of time: *...for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet –Matthew 24:6.*

And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars

In recent years there have been numerous wars and rumors of wars. However, since February 24, 2022 when Russia launched its current full-scale invasion of Ukraine, there have been increased worries voiced by media and politicians about how this seems different. With the many sanctions enacted by the EU and the west, there have been ripple effects causing negative outcomes for many of the world's economies, with sky-rocketing prices for many items and services being the outcome. Sure, there were high prices before this recent outbreak of war which was a result of the various supply chain problems that were caused by COVID-19 and its ripple effects. But since the sanctions were enacted against Russia the gas and oil prices have risen noticeably which in turn has caused the cost of most goods and services to follow suit.

What about all the what if's...? If this happens then “there will be a nuclear war.” If this happens then “it will cause World War 3 to begin.” “The Democrats are taking the U.S. to war with Russia.” These and many more comments are being made in our world today. To me it seems that when countries and individuals *...trust in chariots, and some in horses: Psalm 20:7a*, then their outcome will be that *They are brought down and [are] fallen... –Psalm 20:8a. But if ... we will remember the name of the LORD our God –Psalm 20:7b, then ... we are risen, and [will] stand upright –Psalm 20:8b.*

From my perspective it seems that many in the world have allowed fear to take root in their hearts during the whole COVID-19 ordeal. Now whenever some new “scary” development surfaces in this current Russia/Ukraine

...continued on page 33

Pride or Humility?

by Barry Grant
Titanyen, Haiti

Pride is something that everyone must deal with. It is something that naturally tends to come into our lives and stay. Like many other things, it is very deceitful, because it is commonly accepted by the world in which we live. People today are proud of being proud. Americans are proud of their country, their jobs, their children, their lawns, their sports teams, their vehicles, their ambitions, their goals, their looks, their friends, their homes, and the list could go on. If we think about it, the carnal man is proud of just about anything. People stand and proclaim they are proud and boast of their great accomplishments. People look at something someone has done and proclaim to the doer, “You should be proud of yourself!”

There is one problem; God hates pride! God actually despises the proud. In Psalms, it says that God will cut off *...the tongue that speaketh proud things –Psalm 12:3*. And in Job it says He will *...behold every one that is proud, and abase [put down or make low] him –Job 40:11*. Psalms 40:4 says He will not respect the proud and in Psalm 119: *Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from thy commandments –Psalm 119:21*. In Proverbs, we read that: *The LORD will destroy the house of the proud... –Proverbs 15:25*, and that *Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD... –Proverbs 16:5*. In Malachi, it says that *...behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud... –Malachi 4:1*. Finally, James states that *...God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble –James 4:6*.

As we can see, the Bible is very clear on pride, and the people who are proud. There is no room for pride in our hearts or lives. So, what do we do with this? Are we proud? Do we boast as the world does?

I would like to call attention to a hidden form of pride that can slip into our lives, sometimes unnoticed. We will call it false humility. If we have a false humility, would it not actually be a form of pride?

Let us look first at Law and Grace. Someone that is under the law does not desire to do what he must do, but rather, he does it because of the law. For example, the law states that we should not kill, yet (according to the law) we are allowed to be angry. Someone can hate another and even desire to kill him, but if they resist the temptation to kill, they have indeed kept the law. Many people today who claim to be Christians, are actually under the law. They do all that they do because of a law, or an order from their authority. We can see this clearly when people push the law, doing the least that is required, but still technically keeping the law.

The head covering is a good example. A woman who desires to cover her head because of what the Bible teaches, will indeed cover her head. She does not need to be reminded to do it or be admonished for doing it half-heartedly. On the other hand, there are Christians that cover their heads; however, the actual covering continues to get smaller, and less noticeable. Some even put it all the way on the back of the head and color it the same as their hair, trying to keep it from being noticed by the uncovered public. This clearly reveals the heart; they are simply complying with the law.

This type of thinking can go for many things. One more would be adornment. The bible says that the adornment should not be outward. Many Christians will not adorn themselves with flashy eye-catching things, however there are no standards about adorning homes, vehicles, and such like. So, a plain, unadorned person gets out of their adorned vehicle and walks into their very adorned home. This shows where the heart is—under the law.

Now let us look at grace. It is the power of God in the life of a human being. It causes one to actually love their enemies, to do good to those who mistreat them. It causes one to love their God with all their heart and obey God's commands because of a passionate love for Him. The law is no longer needed because the heart is new; it desires to live for God. When someone does evil to you, you do not think

about getting even. In fact, you do not even get angry. You are a new creature and because of this power—grace from God—you love him that has done you wrong. Forgiving is not a problem; helping others is natural. You are not your own and you desire to be all you can be for your Savior who died for you.

What does this have to do with pride or humility?

The Bible says that *...the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ –John 1:17*. It does not take God's Spirit in our lives for us to obey the law—we can do that on our own. Therefore, we can become proud by doing things for God because WE did them. When we did not allow our anger to spew out when disagreeing with a neighbor, we think well of ourselves, and we can become proud. However, when we actually love our neighbor that has a problem with us, we cannot become proud because it was grace; it was the power of God that caused this, not ourselves. Therefore, we marvel at God and his abundant grace.

It would be foolish for someone to be proud of something that God clearly did! If Lazarus walked around boasting of himself for being raised from the dead, people would question his sanity, saying, "You did nothing! It was Jesus that did everything."

I'm not trying to say that the Christian does nothing. No, we must humbly obey the commandments of God and walk in His ways. However, I am saying that we cannot boast in ourselves because it is God that enables us to obey His commandments.

Let us look at the popular story of David and Goliath. David went to the army to take provisions to his brothers who were fighting there. As he approached, he marveled at what he saw, a large man challenging his people! David seemed a bit shocked, and aggrieved as he asked, *...who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God? –1 Samuel 17:26*.

What does David's oldest brother Eliab say to him? "I know thy pride."

Eliab thought the attitude of David was prideful, and we can see why. A ruddy youth walks up from tending sheep and wonders why someone is not taking care of this large man. It sounds a bit off. But what was David thinking? He was only thinking about what God could, and most likely, wanted to do! He did not think for a moment that he himself could do anything in this situation.

He is then brought before King Saul: And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: *for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth –1 Samuel 17:33*.

David responded, ... Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this

uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God –1 Samuel 17:34-36.

David here is super confident, but why?! David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine... –1 Samuel 17:37.

Clearly his confidence is because the Lord is fighting for him. David was not concerned that he was "but a youth" and he did not understand why people questioned him. He was only thinking about what God was going to do! However, Eliab saw David's confidence as pride. Possibly God had not worked in Eliab's life. Maybe he did not know of the power of God; therefore, to him it looked like foolish pride.

And Saul armed David with his armour, and he put an helmet of brass upon his head; also he armed him with a coat of mail. And David girded his sword upon his armour,

Now let us look at grace.
**It is the power of God in
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those who mistreat them.

and he assayed to go; for he had not proved it. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him –1 Samuel 17:38-39.

So, David chose to not wear the armor; it would only have been a hindrance. Rather, he chose some stones then he ran out to fight the giant. Of course, the giant also did not understand. When he ...saw David, he disdained him: for he was but a youth ... *And the Philistine said unto David, Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field* –1 Samuel 17:42-44.

Then David said ... *Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee ... that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel* –1 Samuel 17:45-46.

Notice then what David did. He killed the giant, cut off his head, and took his head back to Jerusalem. What do you think Eliab thought now? Here is the younger brother marching around the streets of Jerusalem with the head of the defeated giant! King Saul calls for David and he goes to see Saul, still holding the severed head.

Why was David not proud? Because he knew it was not he himself that did it. It was God who had done a marvelous work! He was simply testifying of the grace of God.

When we do a work on our own, we cannot boast of it because we did it. It would be pride, so we remain silent and call it humility, even if we desire others to see it. However, when it is a super-natural work of God, we now must boast of what God has done! We are called to this.

Is God working in your life? Are you confused as to whether it is you or God? Ask yourself a question, “Am I doing things that people who are not relying on God can still do?” If we are not doing anything differently than the world, then God is not working in our life. It is that simple. No one enjoys getting angry. I spent most of my childhood and teenage years going to anger management classes where counselors tried to teach us how to control our anger. The unregenerate heart can learn to hide anger, but only God can change the heart. I never heard a counselor teach us how to love people instead of getting angry with them, since it is impossible! It is only a work of the living God in one’s life, and in that work, we must boast! We testify of the outpouring of the grace of God in our lives. When someone believes it is pride, just like Eliab did, it’s because they only see the working of the Law, where all is done by

man’s feeble attempts.

Let us look at an example to help us understand. If you decide to build a house, every day you put on your nail bag and get to work. It takes you time and energy, but finally the house is finished. You are standing in front of the newly constructed home with a friend. “Wow,” he states, “This house is beautiful! It looks perfectly built!”

Your cheeks blush a little and you begin to point out the flaws that you know, “No, it’s not perfect, you see that over there? I messed up on that gable.... And the siding over there... it’s not exactly straight.” We do this because we want to be humble! If we would say, “Yes, it is a beautiful house; I did a great job building it!” it would be prideful, right?

Now, what if you wanted to build a house and you realize you are not able to build it; you need God’s help. You pray for help then bam, the house is built! You never even put on your nail bag; the house miraculously appeared. God built it. Now how would the conversation go with your friend? Would you still point out all the flaws? NO! You would boast of its perfection, boldly proclaiming what the Lord had done.

When God does a work in our lives, it is not pride to tell people about it. It takes humility to say that we did not do it, but that God did! However, the devil wants us to quiet down and say it is humility like Eliab wanted David to do. We need men and women today that can boldly proclaim what God is doing in their lives!

Instead, it seems we have many defeated people that actually believe it is godly to talk down about ourselves, to act as if we are a defeated sinner trying to struggle through this earthly existence. “Rise up, Oh man of God! Be done with lesser things!”

I realize one could ask, “So, we should go around boasting about how righteous we are?” To this question, I will paint another picture. A poor criminal who has only known the city streets as home, steals and robs just to get by. He knows he is a bad person, yet he knows nothing else. One day God reveals himself to this man. In a dark alley he repents of his sin and gives his life to the Lord. God saves him, transforms him, converts him. He leaves that alley a new person! He has joy in his heart and peace in his soul!

What do you expect him to tell his friends? Um, the siding over there is not straight, the windows are too small....

NO, certainly not! Rather, he would say I’m perfect! God has done a great work, look at me! I’ve been saved by the power of God! By the blood of Jesus! All this as he skips down the road in the beauty of holiness.

If Heaven Is Real

We hear all the talk, the beauties of glory
The Bible speaks and tells its own story.
There's a place up there, no toil or strife.
However, the church, can forget of that life,
If the presence of God, shines as the sun,
The singing so sweet, includes everyone.
If heaven is real, then a question I'll cast.
Why so much focus on a life that won't last?
We build our mansions here on this earth,
We must have forgotten, how little it's worth.
We look at our stuff, and say that we're blessed,
Forgetting that soon, it will burn with the rest.
Treasures are worthy, of that we agree.
But lay them in heaven where forever they'll be.
Would we lose our life, for the good Lord's sake?
Then eternity we'd gain, and heaven partake.
Or love our life, which the Bible is clear
We'd lose our chance, at heaven so dear.
If heaven is real, we must be confused
For it seems it's this life, that has us amused.
If heaven awaits, and we know there we'd go,
Then why do we fear when death gives its blow?
When the next life is heaven, eternity with Him,
Then death is the beginning, so why is it grim?
Our life's but a vapor, the Good Book conveys.
Let's reason with wisdom and change our gaze.

~by Barry Grant

What Manner of Man is This!

by Paul Shirk

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The account we will study begins with Jesus and His disciples crossing the Sea of Galilee. On the way they experienced Jesus' authority over a violent storm. Landing in Gadara, they encountered two men possessed with devils. This account is recorded in Matthew 8:18-34, Mark 4:33-5:20, and Luke 8:22-39.

Mark prefaced this story by calling to our attention the fact that Jesus used parables to teach the people and then explained their meaning to the disciples when they were alone. *And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it. But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples. And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side* –Mark 4:33-35.

Mark wanted this point riveted in the mind of the reader when he introduced this event. It was a teaching event for Jesus' disciples, and for those who would follow Jesus down through the ages.

1. The Command

Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side –Matthew 8:18.

The action began to unfold when Jesus gave orders to leave Galilee, get into a boat, and cross to the other side, to the country of Gadara (or country of the Gergesenes). We know from history that the other side of the Sea of Galilee was settled by both Jews and pagans. Prior to the New Testament era, it was a Greek city. During the time of Jesus' ministry, it was a Roman city. The Gospel accounts mention that some people there kept pigs. Those Gadarenes would have been heathen since the Jews considered pigs unclean. The city would have been familiar with both Jewish and heathen cultures. On one side of the sea was Galilee with a larger Jewish population; the other side would have been predominantly heathen with some Jewish settlers. While the other side was close enough to the Jewish faith to be familiar with it, the people primarily practiced their heathen culture.

On the Galilee side, Jesus had plenty of opportunity for ministry. People were coming to Him, and He was healing them (see Matthew 8:16,17; Luke 8:19). Yet Jesus stopped the ministry when it seemed fruitful—when there were numerous opportunities—and said, “Let us pass over to the other side.” There

were multitudes on the Galilee side seeking Him, but there were two bound souls on the other side who needed Him. Jesus and His disciples entered the ship. While the disciples sailed, Jesus slept.

2. The Storm of Preparation

And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep –Matthew 8:24.

Several of the disciples were seasoned fishermen. They were in their element. The Sea of Galilee, also known as the Sea of Gennesaret or Tiberias, was where they fished. No ordinary storm would daunt these men. They most likely had experience with strong storms, for it was known that storms could arise suddenly on this sea. They knew the risks of sailing. In that time, sailors and fishermen were known to be some of the most fearless of all men because danger was their constant companion.

However, the tempest that came upon these sailors was fierce beyond their experience. The waves were slamming into the ship. The violence of the wind threatened to break it apart. The Greek word for “tempest” here means “a swirling wind of hurricane, or tornado, proportions.” This storm, according to Luke, “came down” upon them. It was a divine storm, not a natural storm. It was like the ones that came upon the ships of Jonah and Paul.

The storm had not yet capsized their ship, but the disciples saw that in spite of their best efforts they were going down. There was no way they could save the floundering ship. It sunk lower with each wave that washed over it. Luke's Gospel says they were in jeopardy—all was about to be lost. Finally, they realized it was futile; they were going down unless Jesus came to their rescue. The sailors asked for help from the sleeping carpenter: “Lord, save us: we perish.”

We have noticed this storm “came down” upon them and was divinely sent. It is a picture of God taking us to the point of extremity where we know any more human effort is futile. If, perhaps, you think that God does not at times take His people to the extremity of their faith, please consider these few of many possible examples:

Peter— *And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren* –Luke 22:31-32.

Paul— *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* –2 Corinthians 1:8.

When God brings us low under His mighty hand, we are to humble ourselves and cast all our care on Him. It may seem that He is asleep in the ship, oblivious to the storm and to our danger. We know the storm does not frighten Him, even though it brings us to our knees and makes us cry, “Lord save us, we perish!” When God wishes to increase our faith, He shows us how small it presently is, and how greatly we fear the storm, and our need to trust Him completely.

Before Jesus rebuked the wind (and while still lying down according to Matthew’s Gospel), He asked why they were so fearful and had such little faith. He spoke to their hearts before He spoke to the wind and the sea. Then He “arose” (got up from His sleeping posture) and rebuked the winds and the sea. God brings us low under His mighty hand so that we might stand in awe of Him and fear. *And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?* –Mark 4:41.

Notice that all this took place on a journey. The storm seemed about to end their lives; yet the storm was God’s plan for their lives. His plan was for them to go through this storm and to be on the other side. In the storms of life, we can lose all sense of direction or purpose and just try to survive; but Christ is still saying, “Let us go over to the other side.” He was preparing His disciples for their meeting with two men who were possessed of devils.

3. The Great Conflict

And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time? –Matthew 8:28-29.

Only one man is mentioned in the other Gospels, and he was most likely the spokesman for the two referenced in Matthew’s account. These men were demon possessed and displayed an extreme picture of depravity. In this extreme picture we can clearly see the Devil’s ultimate desire for those whom he traps in sin. They fell into bondage so far that they became spokesmen for demons. They were taken captive by the Devil.

Let’s notice some of the descriptive details concerning these two fierce men:

1. They were bound with many Satanic strongholds (as indicated by the name Legion—Luke 8:30). With so many strongholds their case appeared beyond help; hopeless. Perhaps the one man spoken of in Mark’s and Luke’s Gospels was the worst case. Many had tried to help by attempting to restrain him and his wild behavior, but

they were unsuccessful. The freedom offered by the Devil proves to be the greatest bondage of all. These men represent people in bondage who resist all attempts to help them and try to protect what they believe is their “freedom.”

2. They were exceedingly fierce. This is a picture of people who are very touchy, defensive, and volatile in their emotional response to others. They are controlled by their wild passions of bitterness and anger.

3. They had their turf. No one could trespass into their territory or privacy. Such people don’t want any outsider intruding into their life or getting too close to them. They defend their privacy fiercely. But the area over which they wield control becomes a domain from which they cannot escape. The walls they set up in their lives to keep people out are the same walls that define their bondage.

4. They wanted left alone until Judgment Day. Likewise, there are those who don’t want anyone in their life to address their bondage to sin. They say, “This is my life; the issues are between me and God, and I’ll answer to God when that time comes. Leave me alone.”

5. They had withdrawn from others. Luke 8:27 says the man who met them was from the city, but he lived among the tombs. He had removed himself from others.

Isaiah 65:1-9 gives us an Old Testament prophecy which helps explain this New Testament event. There are people who must be sought out by others because they have withdrawn themselves (Isaiah 65:1). God actively pursues them (spreads out His hands) in their sinful state (Isaiah 65:2). They openly defile themselves before God with rebellion against God’s ways (Isaiah 65:3-4). They are described as living among the tombs and eating swine’s flesh. Yet God reaches out to a remnant of them and saves them and makes them His chosen people (Isaiah 65:8,9). This prophecy shows us what is happening in this account.

These men were bound in sin, withdrew from others, and resisted all help; yet God pursued them through Jesus Christ. He is come to seek and to save that which was lost. That is just as true today as it was two thousand years ago.

4. Satan’s Ultimate Goal

And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding. So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters –Matthew 8:30-32.

Before we consider the meaning of the swine in relation to this event, let’s notice the representations of swine in the Bible. Under the Mosaic Law, swine were unclean. Anyone who touched their flesh was defiled. The Israelites were not to

eat of their flesh nor touch their dead carcasses (Deuteronomy 14:8). In the New Testament, people who know the truth and deliberately reject it, and mock and attack believers, are pictured as swine: *...neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you –Matthew 7:6*. Likewise, false teachers who were once enlightened but turned away and despised the way of righteousness are compared to a sow that was washed but returned to the mire (2 Peter 2:22). The prodigal son reached the lowest depth of depravity when *...he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him –Luke 15:16*.

What do the pigs have to do with this event? Consider this verse: *Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves –Romans 1:24*. The swine are a picture of people which God has given over to defilement with no further restraint. The demons knew they had a right to the swine because they were unclean and reprobate, and Jesus allowed the demons to enter them. Now this was done in the presence of the disciples. Perhaps Jesus wanted to show the disciples what happens when God removes His saving grace and allows Satan to have full control—they rush headlong down a slope to destruction.

Should God remove His Spirit from us when we err, we would all rush headlong down the slope and perish in the sea as swine. The disciples, most likely including Judas, saw that day what happens when Satan enters and possesses a person. Yet Judas would later open his life to Satan and come to a violent end like the pigs. The men in the tombs demonstrated lives in bondage to Satan. When the demons entered the swine, the disciples saw the ultimate end of those who are given over to the will of the Devil: they head down a slope to their destruction.

In the storm, Jesus demonstrated His power to save the disciples from death when it seemed inevitable. On the other side, He showed them that Satan's ultimate goal for everyone is misery and death.

Jesus brought His disciples through a great storm that taught them to rely completely on Him for their salvation, that they might recognize the power of God to save to the uttermost when they reached the other side.

5. The Challenge

And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd –John 10:16.

Jesus crossed over to the other side to rescue His sheep from the bondage of Satan. He took the disciples with Him. They left a multitude to seek out two lost souls. Jesus is Lord of the harvest, and prompts us with His Spirit to seek out those whom He intends to save. The disciples realized, that, in the storm, they were only

saved by the grace of God. When they got to the other side, they saw that others are only saved by the grace of God. God may take us through storms of life, that, except for the grace of God, would overwhelm our faith. He wants us to learn that God can save hopeless cases. Those who are saved by God's grace have a testimony.

Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee. And he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him –Luke 8:39.

Jesus not only saved the two men and restored their relationships to their homes, but He made evangelists out of them.

Are you facing severe storms that threaten to overwhelm and drown you? Have you lost all your bearings on the sea of life? Does it seem that Jesus sleeps while you toil and labor, to no avail? Does it seem like He is oblivious to your fears? Cry out, "Lord save me, I perish." He has brought you into this storm to increase your faith. He will save you. He is preparing you for the other side. The storm is a part of His plan, though unseen by us. It's only in the storms of life that threaten to overwhelm our faith that we glimpse what manner of Man this is, that even the winds and sea obey Him.

What manner of Man is this? John, who was on this boat, saw this Man in the Spirit on the Lord's Day (Revelation 1:10-20). What did he see in his vision of Jesus, the same Man who was on the boat sleeping? Jesus was clothed with a garment of purity and righteousness—He only thinks of our ultimate good. His eyes were like a flame of fire—seeing everything. His feet were like fine brass in a furnace—directing and leading our lives with clarity and purpose as we walk through the fire. His voice was like the sound of many waters—one that the storms of life obey. He walks among the candlesticks—the churches of His people (Revelation 2:1). He holds the stars (or the leaders) in His hands to keep them from falling.

What manner of Man is this? He is the Alpha and Omega; and He says, "Fear not." He is in the boat with us, and He will be with us on the other side. He will rescue His lost sheep, and they will tell others of the great things Christ has done for them. He goes to seek and to save the lost which no one else can recover. He will cross over to the other side to find them. But He looks at us and says, "Let us go over to the other side." Perhaps there are others in bondage and need the mighty power of Jesus. Will we go over with Jesus? He may take us into a storm that threatens to overwhelm us. Let us not fear the storm (which threatens us), nor be defeated by the hopelessness of hard cases. Rather, let us remember what manner of Man is with us.

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Is There Not a Cause?

by Lee Rufener
Athens, WI

And David said, What have I now done? Is there not a cause? –1 Samuel 17:29.

The story of David and Goliath took place over three millennia ago and has been a perennial favorite of the young and old ever since. There is something about the plight of the underdog that we all relate to. Perhaps we subconsciously view ourselves in such odds and secretly hope that there will come a day when our own “ship will come in” in a similar fashion. Unfortunately, that sort of random success seems more akin to a Hollywood production than to real life. We see only the conflict between the young and the old, the shepherd and the warrior, and the heavy military weapons and the sling. Yet there were some preliminary principles that David embraced in his youth that made him a prime candidate for success. But these often go unheralded in our love for a climactic romantic victory.

If the only vision we have of ourselves comes from the social mirror about us, we will carry a warped inner perception similar to what we see as we glance into a trick mirror at a carnival. The social opinions and perceptions of our environment often cast an awkward and skewed description of our person before our eyes and ears. Sometimes it is unrealistically positive, building the person up in the eyes of the media when there is very little heroic character displayed.

The sports arena is probably the biggest offender in this. The individuals are praised who can run, throw, or shoot better than everyone else. But sporting talent adds little to their honest pure worth as a human. The other side of the coin produces an immense amount of negative and degrading input that seeks to thwart any effort to try. These comments are produced in copious showers by stressed parents, insecure siblings, frustrated bosses, and a host of other acquaintances struggling for identity in a “survival of the fittest” society. The input from these two camps is both disjointed, and out of proportion. To be told you are great

will never produce greatness any more than a barrage of derogatory remarks will produce humility. Unfortunately, too often many of us allow these disproportionate projections to affect our thinking and chart our course.

The greatest and superior endowment given to mankind over the rest of creation is not found in his physical abilities, but in his mind. The most intelligent of animals can be trained to be responsible, but they cannot choose or direct that training. But as humans, we can write new programs for ourselves totally independent of our instincts or environmental training. Those of us who live in natural accord with our instincts and conditioning, will scarcely rise above the animal kingdom. But those who will exercise and develop those endowments shall uniquely fill the role God has designed for them in their encounter with the giants. While David’s time and position were unique, the principles he embraced were universal. If I could teach my dog to yodel, it would prove that yodeling is achievable for dogs and open the possibility for others to do it too. Likewise, if David defeated Goliath by miracle alone, then there is no hope for us but to sit and wait for God to do the same for us. However, if principles were at the core of the victory, then there is an example for us to follow and a virtue to secure for use on our own battlefield.

As David arose early that morning and shouldered his pack of corn, bread, and cheese to take to his brothers, he had no idea what the day would bring forth. The Lord was his Shepherd, and he had no lack, but as he came upon the scene he was shocked at the sight. Both armies were positioned on opposite mountains and locked in a stalemate. To take your entire army down into the valley and fight the opposition uphill would leave you at a tremendous disadvantage. One that neither side was willing to risk. So, the Philistines evoked a common dimension of warfare proposing that two warriors would fight in the valley giving no advantage to either side. But the Philistines had a giant among their numbers that terrified the army of Israel. As

David inquired into the situation as to why no one would confront the reproachful blasphemies of the infidel, he was met with a stiff rebuke from his oldest brother: *...and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle. And David said, What have I now done? Is there not a cause? -1 Samuel 17:28-29.*

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God -Hebrews 12:2. When a man has a cause set before him, he can endure almost anything. Some endure for a corruptible crown. King Saul had offered tax exempt wealth and son-in-law status, but the earthly dowry elicited no volunteers. While the thought of earthly prominence meant nothing to the tender heart of David, there was a jealous fire kindled by the blasphemous taunts of Goliath and he stepped forward by faith. But faith is not just a whim that may be inflated by an emotional tire pump. *For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works [action] is dead also -James 2:26.* Thus, with the cause clearly before him, and his God beside him, David offers to fight Goliath.

So David moved forward acting according to godly, uncorrupted principles...

A Caring Conscience is seated in the soul of man and determines what we care about. Many think that a conscience is only useful as a limiting guide. But the human conscience was also created to function in the reverse. When we are convicted that something is good and right, we pursue it with a passion. Thomas Edison said that genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration. While this may be true enough, it is without question that the inspiration must arrive first. Jacob's aspirations for Rachael made him forget the seven years of labor. Edison's pursuit of a successful light bulb caused him to forget the thousands of elements that had failed.

Careless apathy is the opposite and is the result of a seared conscience. David was amazed that the blasphemous taunts of Goliath produced no cause for action on the part of God's army. *Give a man a reason to live and he will supply the how -Nietzke.* As a holocaust prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp, Victor Frankl was commissioned to labor in the ward of the camp where prisoners were dying of typhus. He observed that when a person gave up hope, death was soon to follow. Likewise, for many of our day, when the hope of personal gain evaporates in the fray, so does the passion to overcome. Most workers today are more concerned about their paycheck than of doing a good and worthy job. Often when a man loses his feelings for his wife, he believes that he is incapable of loving her, but a man with a healthy

conscience toward godly principles will act in loving fashion toward her regardless of his feelings or her response. The cause is aroused and fueled by the conscience and lays the foundation for passionate action.

An Honest Imagination belongs to the realm of the spirit and is driven by our conscience. *Necessity is the mother of invention -Unknown.* Some are waiting for life to be discovered while others are inventing it as they go. This is not a license to claim false ideals. David's pursuit is honest for he was not warped by the media about him. He has met with success over the beasts (a lion and a bear) in the hills of Bethlehem and with God's help, incurs no fear of contending with one (a man of war from his youth) in the valley of Elah.

As Saul reluctantly consents to David's proposal, he proceeds to arm the lad in typical worldly fashion. While it may have been an honor to wear the armor of the king, David would have none of it: *...I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him -1 Samuel 17:39,* choosing five stones instead. Knowing what others do and knowing what to do are not necessarily the same thing.

The cowering beliefs of the Israelite army were rooted in a pagan value system. Goliath was not the problem, but rather, faithless fear and the assumption that they needed to engage in the warfare on the terms of the world. Those that embrace a true and worthy cause will surely find the imagination to pursue it.

Goliath had automatically assumed that he would be in combat under his own terms. Insulted and angered he cries out: *...Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field -1 Samuel 17:44.* As a giant, speed and agility are not his forte and so he orders David to come to him. But Goliath has grossly overestimated his personal ability and underestimated his foe. According to some estimates, at six or seven revolutions per second, David's sling had the stopping power of a 45 mm handgun, and the hand of a skillful slinger *...could sling stones at an hair breadth, and not miss -Judges 20:16.* It was not unusual for them to be able to hit birds in flight. Ancient ruins have uncovered tongs that were believed to be used by the military to remove embedded stones from wounded soldiers. If Goliath had a spear and David a pistol, we would not be so quick to believe that the larger man held the major advantage.

Faithful Action is inevitable when our bodies are subject to our soul and spirit, and they are under the direction of God's Spirit. We are then free to act independently of our nature and other influences. When the lustful passions of the mortal body hold sway over our inner heart and mind, we are defeated before we take one step toward the enemy. As vessels of God's design, with a moral free will, we have the

divine ability to choose our course of action. Some believe that being proactive is merely taking the initiative. But initiative alone will not fit us for victory any more than it did for the sons of Sceva. The desire to dominate is no more noble than Goliath's unbridled rage to destroy this young upstart. His adrenaline flowed as he scorned David's youth, jumped to conclusions, was easily insulted, and marveled at the ignorance of others.

But David carried no such reactive mission. His endeavor was that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. *And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear... -1 Samuel 17:47.* Faithful action must be focused on yielding what you have, rather than obtaining what you don't. If life erects concerns outside of our ability to change, it is fruitless to give them our attention. Joseph could not change his brothers' reception, his master's wife's deception, the jail's seclusion, or the butler's delusion. The faith of the shepherd boy teaches us to stop lamenting over what we *wanna-be* and start being what we *oughta-be*. We need to stop looking for a miracle and start looking for an opportunity. It is not about overcoming extreme odds, but rather it is how we respond to a traffic jam, a disobedient child, an irate customer, or a demanding spouse. It is about owning a cause big enough to defuse selfish reaction and incite charitable pro-action.

Why would Japanese Kamikaze pilots die for a losing cause during World War Two? Why would Muslim terrorists blow themselves up? Why do Catholic Priests and Nuns take vows of celibacy and poverty? Is there no cause for the Christian that extends broader and deeper than the giants of this world? Is there not a cause that stirs our imagination and sanctifies our action? Or isn't there even one that transforms our mundane work into a channel of grace for the service of the King of the Universe? How would history be different if Jesse would have spent his retirement like the elders of our day? God slays giants by the instruments we yield to him, from the needle of Dorcas... to the nail of Jael, from Zebedee's boats of the business... to the boys of his bosom.

Shamgar had an oxgoad;

David had a sling;

Dorcus had a needle;

Rahab had a string;

Samson had a jawbone;

Moses had a rod;

Mary had some ointment;

And all were used for God!



They Are No More Twain

by Kenneth Hopkins
Greenville, OH

Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh... –Matthew 19:6.

The marriage relationship was authored by God in the very beginning of time. God also offered to bless the marriage (Genesis 1:28) of the man and woman entering into it, if they desired to maintain its beauty and holiness. Since then, Satan has attempted, in every way possible, to corrupt and destroy the existence of Holy Matrimony. As early as Genesis 4:19, mankind was using polygamy to corrupt God's design of marriage. In Leviticus chapters 21 and 22, a plan, called a divorce, was put in place to legally dissolve the "first love". This also included the option to remarry. When it was first developed as a practice, the call for divorce was initiated by man, not God, and was for the purpose of dissolving what was understood up until that time to be a lifelong commitment.

In this article we want to look at a number of points:

- What does the Bible teach about marriage? Does the first marriage carry any special position with God?
- What does the Bible teach about divorce? Does God recognize divorce as terminating the original marriage vow while either spouse is still living?
- What does the Bible teach about the reuniting of a separated or divorced first marriage?

It is the desire of this study to be comprehensive, while allowing the scriptures to be their own interpreter, thus keeping commentary to a minimum. The purpose of this writing is to encourage diligence with prayer in seeking the will of God through a study of His Word. The desire of the writer has been to prayerfully consider all relevant scriptures and the context for which they were written.

What does the Bible teach about God's view of the first marriage?

At least five times in the Old Testament, the *first* marriage is described by the Lord as exclusive and lifelong. This same

view was supported by Jesus and the apostles in the New Testament.

1. *Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with **the wife of thy youth** –Proverbs 5:18.* Note the attention given to *the wife of thy youth*.

2. *For the LORD hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and **a wife of youth**, when thou wast refused, saith thy God –Isaiah 54:6.* Being a wife of one's youth and then later refused, intensified the grieving of this forsaken woman.

3. *Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and **the wife of thy youth**, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against **the wife of his youth**. For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously. –Malachi 2:14-16.* And why are they made one, exclusive to each other? To raise up a godly seed unto the Lord. Even though *God hates putting away*, men still try to cover it with a garment of civil, legal acceptance called "divorce".

4. Matthew 19:3-12: V.4 In the beginning... Jesus, when asked by the Pharisees about this issue, takes them back to original intent of His Father when He chides them... *And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female –Matthew 19:4.* He then goes on to remind them of the Scriptures teaching that *...a man [shall] leave [his] father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder –Matthew 19:5-6.* Don't equate man's

authority (the civil court) with God's authority when it comes to deciding what the facts are concerning marriage, divorce, and remarriage. We need to remember that it is God who has joined each marriage together in Heaven and has recorded them in the Book of Life.

5. *For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man* –Romans 7:2-3. Again, this is pointing back to *the beginning* in order to establish a basis of Truth.

Only the death of either spouse will terminate the initial marriage covenant in the heavenly records. And once this life is over, only the heavenly records will matter—for all of eternity.

There are several exceptions to the Biblical ideal:

- *Defraud [deprive, keep back] ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency [lack of self-restraint]* –1 Corinthians 7:5. So, restraining the marriage relationship for a time with voluntary consent from both husband and wife when there is a need for seeking God's favor or guidance on a matter of great importance, may in some circumstances find God's blessing. However, this should only be engaged in with a clear understanding and commitment by both spouses involved, about when and how to come together again, lest Satan tempt you. This exception has three clear qualifiers... 1) **with consent**, 2) **for a time**, & 3) for the purpose of **giving yourselves to prayer and fasting**.

- *And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife* –1 Corinthians 7:10-11. This is the Scriptural passage that frees the innocent spouse from biblical guilt when the other spouse is the one who chose to part ways. However, the teaching still remains that they shall not marry another “so long as the original partner remains alive”.

What does the Bible teach about God's view of divorce?

It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery –Matthew 5:31-32. As Jesus taught the people in

His Sermon on the Mount, one of the many things that He kept focusing on was this issue of God's original plan for marriage.

“Saving for the cause of fornication” Fornication is any type of immorality **prior** to marriage. Modern-day Christianity, at times, struggles with this idea since the customs of the ancient Jewish culture have long since been forgotten. In Jewish culture, the betrothal period was considered almost as binding as the marriage ceremony itself, so much so that to end a betrothal required a “divorce”. With this as a foundational understanding, fornication here is speaking of immorality during the espousal or betrothal period. If any unfaithfulness was discovered, a writing of divorcement was required to break the betrothal, espousal, or engagement. This specific aspect of divorce was not criticized by Jesus. Even though they were not permitted to engage in the physical relationship of marriage during the betrothal period, they were still referred to as husband and wife. Finally, the reason this is referred to as fornication instead of adultery is because that during the betrothal period the marriage of the two has not yet taken place, nor has their relationship been consummated physically. Thus, **just prior** to the point in time when they are considered by God as being married, any outside relationship would be *fornication*, while **just after** they are considered married, any similar relationship would be *adultery*.

We have an excellent biblical example of this type of situation with Joseph & Mary in the following verses: *Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily* – Matthew 1:18, 19.

So, biblically speaking, divorce can put asunder the first marriage according to civil law but cannot terminate a first marriage before God. A divorced person remains the companion of their first marriage (as long as the other spouse is alive) even when remarrying, whether they are legally divorced or not, thus resulting in biblical adultery for both parties. However, when divorce is allowed to be recognized as being legitimate in breaking or annulling the initial marriage covenant, we have thereby removed the specific reason by which God calls subsequent marriages adultery.

In Matthew 19:3-10, Jesus is teaching the same lesson as in Matthew 5:31-32. However, Matthew 19:3-10 was initiated from an attempt by the Pharisees to trap Jesus with a question: *They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her*

away? –Matthew 19:7. Jesus then responds further and says, ...Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so –Matthew 19:8.

Also, in Mark it is written, *But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder* –Mark 10:6-9.

Thus, divorce, with all its regulations, is man's attempt to use civil law to terminate that which from the beginning was understood to be until the death of either spouse.

What does the Bible teach about the reuniting of a separated or a divorced first marriage?

He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so –Matthew 19:8. Here Jesus is teaching the initial mind of His Father. In the law, Moses taught that... *When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife. And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife; Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife...* –Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

This is Moses' teaching regarding permission and qualifications for divorce which Jesus explained was *because of the hardness of their hearts*. Jesus further clarified this by saying, **but from the beginning it was not so** –Matthew 19:8.

Perhaps Jeremiah also is referring to Moses' writing in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 when he says, *They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the LORD* –Jeremiah 3:1. The remainder of Jeremiah chapter 3 speaks of God receiving them back if they repent. God pleads for them to (v.13) "acknowledge thine iniquity" (repent), and repeatedly calls for their return (v.14-)

God invited Israel back into fellowship with Him on the basis of acknowledging her sin and changing her ways, giving no heed to the instruction that Moses gave in Deuteronomy 24:1-4, because "from the beginning it was not so."

In Jeremiah 3:8, the Lord had put her (Israel) away and

given her a bill of divorcement. But in verses 1 and 12, He invites her to return and in verse 14 He offers the terms of reconciliation. In Malachi it is written, *Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the LORD which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god* –Malachi 2:11.

God's divorcing of Israel and Israel's subsequent remarriage to a strange god in no way interfered with them returning to their first marriage. Instead, the Lord invited them back if they would repent, Jeremiah 3:13-14. By the time of Deuteronomy chapter 24 and through most of the Old Testament, divorce was the accepted normal, with mankind attempting to put some regulations on it, "but from the beginning it was not so."

In the book of Hosea, we have a biblical example of the reuniting of a separated or divorced first marriage: ... *And the LORD said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the LORD* –Hosea 1:2 (see also Hosea 2:5).

Sometime after Hosea marries her, she resorts to the life of a "harlot" (Hosea 3:3) and goes after other "lovers" (2:7). When she refers to Hosea as "my first husband" (2:7), it is evidence that she likely remarried after deserting Hosea. (2:14) By Hosea patiently "alluring her and speaking comfortably to her" (2:19-20), Hosea betrothed her again and Gomer apparently responded (2:20) "in faithfulness" and came to "know the Lord." (3:3) Eventually, Hosea and Gomer both reunited with a commitment of faithfulness to each other.

Restoration to the initial God-ordained commitment is the goal, reconciliation is the process, and a repentant heart before the Lord for His mercy and forgiveness is the means (see Hosea 3:5).

John 4:1-42 is a scripture that some would interpret as objecting to the reuniting of a first marriage after a separation or divorce, because of Jesus' reply to the woman. After she said ...*I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly* –John 4:17-18.

Some would interpret Jesus to be saying, "You are right woman, none of your five former husbands of which you have divorced or put away (including your first one) are your husband, and neither is the one you have now. Some commentators and others refer to this woman as a five-time divorcee and currently living with a man in an unmarried state. However, I find no evidence in this account that this woman was living an unholy life.

Jesus' purpose of this account is to reveal Himself as the "Messias" with "Living Water" to this woman and many more in Sychar. Jesus says nothing to fault or correct her, which He typically would when meeting with sin. All five husbands could have been passed away and the one she was now seeing, just a friend, perhaps anticipating marriage. Also, we don't know since it doesn't say, but she seemed to be a woman of respect and influence in the city, which would have been unlikely with an ongoing reputation of immorality. Jesus would surely have said something to inform her of her sin, when making available His Living Water. So, to use this account and say that all five husbands are adulterous and still classified as God-recorded husbands does not agree with the rest of Scripture. Nor does it support the context of the statement: *he whom thou now hast is not thy husband*. To claim that this story is a display of an immoral lifestyle with no known biblical evidence is close to "adding to" or "taking away" from the Scriptures. (See Revelation 22:18)

In conclusion... In our world today and in history past, mankind has attempted to equate subsequent marriages following a divorce, to the level of the initial marriage covenant. This has confused the emphasis and intent God has put on the initial marriage covenant. God's Word teaches that the Lord has always respected repentance in the restoration of any initial God-blessed covenant. For the Lord to bless and prosper the reconciling of any struggling relationship, He requires a broken, contrite spirit of humility and repentance with submission.

The context of 1 Corinthians 7:10-16 is that of a believer being in a covenant relationship with a spouse who is an unbeliever. In verse 15, the remaining believing spouse is

not under obligation to denounce their walk of faith to continue a marriage relationship, neither are they free to remarry (verse 11) in the event of the unbelieving spouse leaving. If verse 15 is speaking of the marriage covenant, then verse 39 would contradict verse 15 and the will of God according to the rest of Scripture, (see Matthew 19:5 and 1 Corinthians 7:10). Living separately limits influence to the family and is a negative witness to the community, thus the believing spouse will always have a much greater impact for the Lord by staying true to the "initial marriage commitment" as challenging as that may be.

The Word of God holds the initial marriage covenant exclusively binding and honorable. Any subsequent marriage vow while either spouse is living is considered by our Lord as the sin of lust and adultery and must be repented of if we wish to seek God's forgiveness.

Therefore, repentance and forgiveness by both spouses, with the desire to reunite and honor their initial God-blessed marriage covenant, is not a desire of the flesh but is the work of the Holy Spirit deep within the heart of the sinner. When there is a godly desire to repent and reconcile a broken relationship, we should fall on our knees in support and sincere gratitude to our Heavenly Father.

Jesus has offered to come between and restore struggling relationships that through humility and repentance seek forgiveness, thus returning to full service for their Lord resulting in eternal joy. He says: *For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them* -Matthew 18:20. And Paul says, *But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you* -Romans 8:11.

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-Romans 8:11.

The Forgotten Stamp

by Lois Sutherland
Millersburg, OH

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose –Romans 8:28.

"I've been thinking that we could take a trip next week with school being off." Arthur said, hanging his hat on the hook in the utility room and turning to his wife. "What do you think about such an idea?"

Myrtle, who had been busy preparing supper in the kitchen, looked up with a smile. "That would be great, I have been having similar thoughts. I'm sure the children would enjoy a vacation as well."

"Why don't we plan to visit the congregation at Bethel Fellowship next Sunday then?" Arthur continued. "Would that suit you?"

"Yes, I think so," Myrtle answered. "It seems like it has been a little while since we went visiting to another congregation. When were you thinking of leaving?"

"I haven't made definite plans yet," Arthur replied, "but I was thinking of leaving Thursday and coming home on Monday."

"That sounds fine to me," Myrtle answered.

"Alright," Arthur said. "I'll plan to send a letter to Brother Oscar Peight to let them know we're coming."

The next Thursday found the Coblentz family

heading for Pennsylvania.

Many miles passed uneventfully as the family traveled north. They were getting closer to their destination when suddenly Arthur got sick. He pulled their van off the road so he could empty his stomach's contents. Patiently the family waited, wondering what they should do next.

"Do you think we should go on?" Myrtle inquired. It would be another hour before they reached Brother Oscar's place.

"I don't see how I can go on," Arthur responded weakly. "I feel really dizzy now. Maybe you should take over driving now," he said to Myrtle.

Soon the drivers had switched places. It was with disappointed hearts that the family turned around and headed back home. It was difficult for the whole family, especially the children. They had looked forward to this trip all week long, and now their plans were spoiled.

Upon arriving home, Myrtle stopped at the mailbox to get their mail. She handed the mail to Arthur, then drove in their lane.

"Why.... What's this?" Arthur sputtered, spying a familiar envelope. He ripped open the envelope

and could not believe what he saw. “The letter I sent to Brother Oscar Peight!” Why ever had it been returned? His heart sank as he turned over the envelope. “Of all things, I forgot to put a stamp on the envelope!” he exclaimed. “How silly was that!”

That evening at the supper table, the family once more discussed how foolish it seemed to have

forgotten to stick a stamp in the corner of that envelope. “But yet,” Arthur marveled, “God had all this planned. If that letter would have reached Brother Oscars, they would have been preparing for us. But this way, they did not even know we were coming to visit.”

“All things do work together for good to them that love God,” Myrtle replied.



To Walk With Her Through Grief

by Naomi Lapp
Lakeville, OH

One day you may be walking along a seashore. You glance back to watch your footprints disappear with the next surge of foaming water. You love to hear the soothing swish of the breakers. You gaze at the graceful sweep of shoreline and glittering ocean way out to the horizon. Life is good.

Suddenly a huge wave sweeps in and lifts you off your feet. You struggle and flail to regain your footing. Or the wave may even carry you farther and slam you against a rock wall, leaving you stunned and gasping in pain.

This wave may be called grief, as expressed in the following stanza from the song by Mary A. Baker.

Master, with anguish of spirit
I bow in my grief today;
The depths of my sad heart are troubled;
Oh, waken and save, I pray!
Torrents of sin and of anguish
Sweep o'er my sinking soul!
And I perish! I perish, dear Master;
Oh hasten, and take control.

In the past year, many of us have lost loved ones. Perhaps it was a childhood friend, or someone from our church family, or even from our immediate family. Depending on how close we were, we felt drops, splashes, or even tidal waves of grief.

Our grief stems from the relationship we shared. We have invested in each other's lives to some degree. We have loved, but now that love has nowhere to go. We could say that grief is the price of love.

Here is how one widow described grief: "At the sudden and untimely death of my husband, the feeling was one of overwhelming shock, disbelief, and even panic, as I faced an uncertain future without him at the age of 51. Looking

back, I realize how merciful God is to allow us to be in a certain state of numbness and shock at a time like this, allowing the reality to sink in more slowly."

How did she cope? She says, "I am also awed at how He provides the grace and strength to go through hard things in life that we never thought we would have to face. He walks with us as we go through the valley of grief, so we are never walking alone. The journey of grief is not the same for everyone. It is not over in a few months. For me, I still cried a year later. It took a long time for the pain to fade and for life to become meaningful again. But praise God, that time does come! It is best not to look too far into the future. We walk one day at a time with Jesus, knowing that the best is yet to come."

Here are more experiences from those who have been there:

- "I am still learning that when we say, 'It's all right, Lord,' we need to leave it there, at Jesus' feet."
- "Grieving people are very lonely, but there's also an aloneness that comes from not having a place to belong. You may be in a room of people, and still feel utterly alone, because you've lost your sense of belonging, or your category of belonging has changed."
- "The presence of a grieving person can be painful for others. It's a reminder that "bad" things can happen. So, at times they are not invited, which is painful. A grieving person wants to be invited, but at times when included they feel their lack of belonging anew and think they should have stayed at home. Most times, casual conversation can be difficult for them when their world has been violently shaken. Their hearts are heavy while the mood of others is lighthearted, making them feel even more despondent. Understandably, many people don't know what to do when they see others grieving, so they default to doing nothing and walk

away. Many friendships are lost after a loss, which is even more painful.”

- “God was so close. He was always there. ‘Underneath are the everlasting arms,’ and I felt them.”

God can use sorrow and grief to teach us what we might not learn in happier times. We learn to depend on Him. We think of the seriousness of life. We learn to embrace eternal values and anticipate heaven. We are motivated to cherish the loved ones we still have when we hear expressions such as this: “Looking back, I wish we would not have taken the time we had together for granted. I wish I would have recognized his personality traits as strengths rather than things that annoyed.”

Those who lose loved ones often find themselves in the limelight for a time. Many people want to know how they are responding, especially when the death is an unusual situation. Consider the experience of Elizabeth Elliot and the four others who were made widows in 1956 by jungle killers in Ecuador. Or think of Marie Troyer whose husband John was murdered by guerrillas in Guatemala in 1981, or the mothers of the girls killed in Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania in 2006.

These women found themselves in the glare of an almost worldwide spotlight. Their greatest opportunity to display God’s enabling grace likely came at a time when they wanted it least. But their responses of forgiveness, unselfishness, and trust in God amazed the world, at least considering the amount of media attention. Truly, *A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid* –Matthew 5:14.

While we and those we know will hardly face that level of exposure, we too have a unique platform to display God’s grace. We may never have a better opportunity to touch hardened or seeking hearts than in our own hour of grief.

When we hear that people have indeed been drawn to God through the death of our loved one, it can be a source of comfort and meaning. This death was not a senseless tragedy; it was meant to bring glory to God. In other words, God does not waste our sorrows.

It reminds us of Jesus’ words about Lazarus when he said, *...This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby* –John 11:4. Jesus is our perfect example for relating to those in sorrow. He came to Mary and Martha and listened. He cried with them even though He knew He **could** and then **did** transform the whole situation by raising Lazarus.

How do we help?

What is our part in helping a grieving sister glorify God in the midst of her situation? Consider the thoughts shared by the following widows:

- “What helped was when a dear sister sat with me and told me she cared. And in her quietness, I could feel that her love was real.”
- “Grief is surprising and unexpected. The person may be having a good day when they hear a song, smell a certain scent, or see a familiar article of clothing which triggers a memory followed by a flood of tears. If this happens when you’re with them, it’s okay. Tears are okay. Tears are healing. Stay present and help them through it. Press in; grieve with them. It’s better to err in doing something than in doing nothing. You may not understand. That’s okay. You don’t need to experience loss to show that you care.”
- “Grief is exhausting and mentally debilitating. So don’t just ask what you can do; look for a need they may have and try to fill it. For example, ‘I’d like to come over Tuesday evening and fix your faucet’ or ‘We’d like to come and bring a meal if you’re up to it?’”
- “One thing that meant a lot to me was when people shared pleasant memories of our loved one, or things they appreciated about him. Even today, almost nineteen years later, it still warms my heart when people do that.”
- “It was all the cards that came every day for the first two months after my husband died. I looked forward to them every day, and the first day without a card was hard.”
- “What really helped me was when someone told me to focus on my blessings; that they are praying for me, and they care. Or they invited me to go along even if the number was then lopsided. Another thing was when they stopped by for coffee breaks or when they sent a text.”
- “Widows need encouragement on their anniversary date and on the date their husband died. It means a lot if someone ‘actually’ remembers! A widow’s supper is nice. So is having a secret sister. It helped when someone gave a listening ear and was there to help with the work and the young children. Most of all, I knew people were praying for us.”

What do we say?

We may struggle with what to say to a bereaved friend. After all, we do not want to be like Job’s wife or his friends whose words only increased Job’s suffering. Here are some perspectives:

- “They need not tell us we are alone now. We know that already.”
- “Grief may really shake someone’s faith in God, momentarily paralyzing them, especially if they haven’t experienced much trauma before. As much as they long

to trust God and accept this new reality in their lives, sometimes it takes time to simply get through the shock and be able to talk to God again. This is okay. They will most likely find healing and deepen their faith, but give them space to struggle, wrestle, and grieve deeply. Listen and try to refrain from “fixing” their faith with words such as “All things work together for good...”; or “At least you...”

- “Asking a grieving person how they are doing could put them in a difficult position. Asking in a crowd of people may not be the best time. It may be best not to ask unless you really want to know and are willing to take the time to listen.”
- “It is hard to think rationally in those first hard months. I did not appreciate being asked those first months what I would do for a living. I first needed to process my grief. I was also trying to help my young daughters who were devastated at the loss of their beloved daddy. That decision could wait.”

The following excerpts reveal other struggles with grief:

- “Everyone grieves differently; there is no right or wrong way. And it never goes away even though all my friends’ lives go on as normal, which is very painful to watch. Holidays are very hard. Attending weddings is almost not doable. This is a couple’s world and only by the grace of God is it possible. Actually, the weeks before the annual anniversary dates are harder than the actual days.”

- “One thing I realized very quickly was that we live in a very couple-orientated world. At the loss of a spouse, one is left trying to figure out where they fit in. I deeply appreciate, when I’m in a group setting that includes widows and singles, that there are those who try to make me feel included and not the odd one out.”
- “You can’t put a time limit on grief. It’s different for everyone. There’s no ‘getting over it’ so that it doesn’t hurt anymore. If grieved properly, the wound is not as raw, and it becomes a scar. It’s like getting used to living without an arm or a leg. You adjust to it not being there, but you never stop missing it.”
- “Death in the family or losing a spouse is harder than one can imagine until they are going through the same thing. I wish we would have had more church support. Our boys need a father figure to follow, one to teach them what a dad would.”
- “Our children make mistakes as other children do; they need encouragement, not criticism. Also, they could use a helping hand with their work. I wish I would not have needed to leave my youngest child alone so much when I went to work. I broke out in a sweat more than once wondering where the money was coming from to pay the bills, but I thank the Lord that it was always there.”

How can we remember to support the grieving beyond those first days and weeks? We could mark our calendars with the dates of their birthdays, anniversaries, and their



loved one's death date. Then we could designate a certain day of the week to do something for them. If we make a plan, we are more likely to carry out our good intentions.

Finally, we should also remember the "widows who aren't". Sometimes there are those among us whose life is racked by a grief worse than that of an actual death. Perhaps there was betrayal, abandonment, incarceration, or suicide in their life's journey. They may almost envy the clean wound of the "normal" widow. Or they may struggle with guilt on top of their grief.

These situations are often located far outside our comfort zones. There are no easy answers of how to deal with them. But let us not stay aloof from such a sister if we have the opportunity. God will help us find a way to show we care if we ask Him.

As we, and those we love, keep walking with God, may we portray the scene in the final verse of the song mentioned earlier:

"Master, the terror is over, the elements sweetly rest;

Earth's sun in the calm lake is mirrored,

And heaven's within my breast.

Linger, O blessed Redeemer,

Leave me alone no more;

And with joy I shall make the blest harbor,

And rest on the blissful shore."

Let's conclude with a quote from a widow:

"Walk with them until they can come out of the cave and feel the sunshine again. It may require hard work and getting messy at times, but to them you will be Jesus 'with skin on.' You are not responsible for their healing; only Jesus can do that. But you can bring them to Him.

Remember the friends that brought the paralyzed man to Jesus, lowering him through the roof. *And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee ... And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house. But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men –Matthew 9:2-8.*

What a beautiful picture! In like manner, you can carry your grief-'paralyzed' friend to Jesus. Watch them be healed, shoulder their burden of grief, and then move on toward their heavenly home. As we see God doing a work in their heart, we can all praise God together!"

~In this article, the sections in quotation marks were shared with the author by a number of anonymous widows.



Youth with Purpose of Heart

by Jerald Witmer
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Adapted from the original article listed at <https://www.pilgrimministry.org/> with permission by the author

In the first chapter of Daniel, we find the story of an exceptional young man—Daniel. He had been chosen along with many others by the king’s own delegate because there was no blemish found in them. They were well favored, skillful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge. Ultimately, Daniel and several of his friends were chosen out of the very best that Babylon (who ruled the world) had to offer.

Daniel was chosen to stand in the palace of the most powerful ruler of the world. Power and prestige were within his grasp. Certainly, to those looking on, Daniel was in an enviable position. What more could his heart wish for?

Only one thing stood in the way. A small thing, as most people would see it, yet there it was. Would he compromise his spiritual values to achieve earthly gain?

And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king’s meat, and of the wine which he drank... –Daniel 1:5. He was to eat of the king’s meat and drink of the king’s wine. Even though the very best was to be his, Daniel knew he could not partake. Exactly why Daniel would have been defiled by partaking of this food and wine we do not know, but one thing we do know is that Daniel stood for what he knew to be right. He understood that the luxuries of Babylon would never be able to fill his life and meet his needs. Only the God of Israel could do that. So ...*Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank... –Daniel 1:8.*

We need young men and women today who purpose in their hearts not to defile themselves, just as Daniel did. We live in a world that is pursuing pleasure, money, fame, knowledge, etc. Today, as never before, the opportunity lies before you as a youth to indulge in these things. Circumstances look promising. You have a good job. Money is yours to spend as you choose. You have many friends. The road appears to stretch before you, holding out promises of

a good life. What more could your heart wish for?

Only one thing stands in the way—a small thing, as many would have you believe. That small thing may be something different for each person, yet it stands before you. The devil says a little compromise doesn’t matter. What does God think? What does the Bible say?

Certainly, it is no less important for the youth of today to take a serious look at what God expects and deserves from them than it was for Daniel many years ago.

In his second letter to Timothy, Paul tells him to “flee youthful lusts.” What are youthful lusts? Lust is defined as “an intense longing or craving for the forbidden.” So, we are faced with the question, “Do youth have a longing for the forbidden?” Lust for forbidden things is a problem that has existed on this earth since soon after Adam and Eve were created and certainly has not diminished in the age in which we live.

What are some of these things facing youth today?

Music

The world’s music often has a strong appeal to youth. Is there really anything wrong with listening to the same music the world listens to, especially if the words are good? We must understand that the music one enjoys expresses what is in the heart and it feeds the heart as well. It is no secret that the songs this world enjoys are extremely immoral. Not only are the lyrics filthy, but the music also appeals to the flesh in a very sensual manner. The music alone can cause a person to develop feelings of hatred, rebellion, and lust. How can we take gospel words and sing it to music that encourages ungodly feelings? What concord hath Christ with Belial? Certainly, God is looking for youth who purpose in their hearts not to defile themselves with the world’s music.

Dress

A second area in which youth may be tempted to compromise is the area of dress. It is amazing how much

is conveyed about a person by the clothing they wear. While we may not dress just like the world, how easy it is to choose clothing that is quite similar to the world's fads. We need to stop to think what message we will send to the world by the clothing we choose to wear. While clothing alone can never make a person a Christian, it can surely be an indicator which kingdom one is a part of. Many people in the world unashamedly declare that they are a part of the kingdom of darkness by their clothing. Shouldn't Christians also be willing to bear a clear mark of belonging to God's kingdom? We need youth who purpose in their hearts not to defile themselves with worldly dress.

Pleasure

Thirdly, a youth may be lured by the world's leisure and hobbies. We live in a fast-paced, ever-changing world, and there seems to be no end to the list of new and exciting things to try. Does it really matter how much time and money we spend on these things? We must understand why the world always needs something new. Outside of Christ, a person will always be searching for something to fill the void in his life. It will never be found in worldly entertainment.

Let's consider what Solomon says: *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity. Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; Ecc 11:9 – 12:1.*

If anyone would know if fulfillment can be found through what this world has to offer, Solomon should. Two things are made very clear in these verses. God will bring us into judgment for how we follow our heart's desires, and remembering our Creator is important in our youth if we don't want to live with regrets later in life.

While there may be room for leisure activities, even justifiable activities can quickly be overdone. Consider these figures for the U.S. According to "Conservation Force" found at <https://www.conservationforce.org/> an online source for Wildlife Conservation data, as of 2018 ... *American hunters spend \$5.3 billion dollars each year on hunting-related travel, \$6.4 billion on hunting equipment, and \$8.4 billion on other, related, "big-ticket" items. All things combine for an annual expenditure of \$2,800 per hunter.* No figure was given of the value of game that each hunter took home.

Will these things bring contentment and satisfaction in old age, or will they bring emptiness?

As God's people, we have a purpose for which to live. Remember your Creator TODAY in the days of your youth. God is still searching for those who will choose Him above all the things this world has to offer and who will purpose in their hearts not to defile themselves with the vanity of this world.

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil –Ecclesiastes 12:13-14.



If There is a God; Why Does He Allow War?

by Dave Sweigart
Peach Bottom, PA

Adapted from <https://www.pilgrimministry.org/> with permission by the author

Since the beginning, one of the most perplexing questions about God is this: “If there is a God, why does He allow hard things in my life?” This “hard thing” could be many things. It could be the loss of financial freedom, the loss of a loved one, the pain of heartache, the fragility and loneliness of old age, and yes, even WAR.

If God is a God of love and justice (which He says He is) why does He allow hate to fester to the point that men pick up rifles and shoot one another? Why does He allow the unjust slaughter of the innocents which seems so cruel and heartless? All that bloodshed—for what—so that men who sit in ivory towers get their selfish way?!

Every single person has probably asked these perplexing questions at some point in their lives. It may be a small comfort to realize that you are not alone in asking these questions. But persistent and perplexing questions need answers. At least, we think they do. In fact, we have a natural human tendency to demand answers. We are sure we deserve answers.

We like to convince ourselves that if there was a God, He would provide us with a rational explanation for our predicament. You see, we want life to make sense. We like to experience cause and effect. So, when God allows something difficult or painful, we think it needs to make sense. Then when life does not make sense, we start to question God. But this is exactly where we start to go wrong. Why would we need to trust something outside of ourselves if we could figure out our own problems? If wars were sensible, clean, and fulfilling, we would take them in stride and go on our merry way.

Another reason for our modern difficulty with a question like this is that we are accustomed to trusting in man’s incredible abilities to conquer great odds, solve hard questions, and develop machines to move almost any kind of “mountain” imaginable. But when God allows us to get into a situation which is out of mankind’s control, suddenly we realize our smallness and inability to cope. When God allows global disasters, world wars, and worldwide diseases, we are forced to come to grips with the realization that we

are almost powerless.

There are two answers to this perplexing question of “why does God allow this.” The first answer is that there is no answer. While this might seem like a strange “answer,” it is not meant to be. If God is God, then His answer may not be known to us, and we will need to be satisfied with that.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts –Isaiah 55:8-9. If God was a man, His reasoning would probably make sense to us. Since He is God, His thoughts and reasons for allowing the carnage of a bombed-out infrastructure and the bloodshed of thousands, and maybe millions, is beyond our comprehension.

The second answer follows the first... God wants us to trust Him even if it makes no sense. If there is no answer known to us or if it makes no sense, what is our next option? We can throw God out of the picture. But then what are we left with?

The power of man? But that is limited because man cannot do everything he wants to do.

The power of government? But governments can only do so much in a natural or manmade disaster.

Outer space and extraterrestrial life? But if scientific fact is limited, so much more is science fiction.

So, what are we left with? Nothing. So then, in His infinite wisdom, God allows all these perplexities to call our attention to Himself. There is nothing else left other than accepting God’s divine will and accepting the fact that God does not owe us an explanation of why He allows what He does.

If you already know **of** God, He is calling you to come closer to Him and to truly come to **know** Him. He is stripping you of everything else you could place your trust in. He is calling you to put your faith and trust alone in Jesus Christ. Jesus came to this earth as God’s Son. He was

willing to come to this earth in the form of man (flesh and blood), and to suffer and die on the cross. As He did this, His blood was poured out as a sacrifice to make God's salvation available to all men. This precious blood of Christ is miraculously able to remove all the sins of mankind in the hearts of those who faithfully seek Him and accept this salvation. When we realize there is nowhere else on earth to turn to, let us turn to Jesus. When we do that, we will have forgiveness for our sins and find true peace. The terribleness of strife and war on this earth reminds us of a beautiful, peaceful, war-free home in heaven!

If you do not know God, He is trying to get your attention. He loves you. The message of the gospel is for you. *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life –John 3:16.* God allows these perplexing things because He loves each one of us—every single person.

He loves us and wants us to trust Him. While God allows war, He also allows us a free will to choose Him.

Even when we find ourselves in the dark clouds of war, choosing to follow Jesus, the Light of the World, creates a life of goodness and Light for the Christian even amid dark clouds of hate and destruction. Those who choose the darkness find themselves on the easy road to perdition and hell. Those who choose Christ find eternal, everlasting, glorious life in Heaven. No matter what happens in life, if we believe in God and obey His Word, these promises will be ours.

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord –Romans 8:38-39.



End of Life

by Vincent “John” Waldron MD
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In October of 2020, a 90-year-old woman named Nancy Russell, who was a resident of a nursing home in Toronto, Canada, expressed a desire to have a doctor help her kill herself. She felt that the isolation of the previous several months was more than she could endure, and she saw no end to it.

Nancy Russell did not have dementia. She did not have any condition that would normally be considered terminal. However, in Canada, it is not necessary to have a terminal condition to ask for help to go through with physician-assisted suicide. Canada calls this procedure “Medical Assistance in Dying” (MAID). The name implies that it is about comfort care, but the reality is that it is anything but comfort care.

A geriatrician heard her story and agreed to help her. She was discharged to spend the next week with her family. At the end of that time, she was given a lethal injection with her family present. This is not an isolated case. In 2020 there were 7,595 people who killed themselves with a doctor’s assistance.

As I consider these sobering statistics, I feel a great sadness. There is a sense in which many families abandon their elderly or ill family members. COVID has only seemed to worsen this problem. An even larger issue is that our society no longer values the lives of older individuals.

A society that no longer values **all** human lives as important, begins to allow things like physician-assisted suicide, and even euthanasia. Euthanasia is when someone administers medication to another person for the purpose of killing that other person, while assisted suicide is when one person provides medication to another person that they then “self”-administer, thereby killing themselves.

It is helpful to review how we, as Christians, approach end-of-life situations and try to understand where the world around us has gone so terribly wrong.

Made in the Image of God

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them –Genesis 1:27. And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul –Genesis 2:7.

God put the life into Adam and Eve during Creation. He molded Adam from the dust of the earth and made Eve from Adam’s rib. It was God Himself who breathed into them the breath of life. More than that, He stamped on them His own image.

Humans do not have value because of services they do for others. They are not worth something because of their intelligence or talents. Rather, humans have value because God created them for a purpose. He values each one of them.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life –John 3:16. Considered by some as the most well-known passage of Scripture, this verse makes it clear that every single one of us is valuable to God and worthy of His redemption. Whosoever means “every one of us”.

There are many other verses like Jeremiah 1:4-5 and Psalm 139:13-15 that speak of God’s foreknowledge in our creation. God didn’t simply plan to bring Adam and Eve into this world and then let things go on their own from that point. Instead, He guides the conception and development of each one who is born. We may not understand all of God’s purposes, but we can say with certainty that God does not make mistakes.

Quality of Life

Much of the ethics surrounding end-of-life issues has to do with concepts like “quality of life” and “dignity”. *Quality of life* is the extent to which someone can enjoy their normal,

everyday activities. *Dignity* refers to people feeling that they are being given adequate levels of respect.

Many people feel that both of these things—*quality of life* and *dignity*—decline when someone gets a severe and debilitating illness. Those with such illnesses who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus may feel that they have reached the point where they don't want to continue living.

It is a dangerous position when people believe that lives are only worth living when things are easy and when the *quality of life* is high.

We, as followers of Christ, understand that suffering will come to all of us. It brings glory to God when we suffer with a meek and quiet spirit. More than that, it teaches other people the power of a God-transformed life. We cannot bear these trials alone. And we don't need to because God's Spirit is with us and gives us the strength to endure faithfully until the end.

Leaving Our Lives in God's Hands

Christians should not be fatalistic. We do not believe that regardless of what we do, we are certain to die on a pre-determined day.

It seems likely that, while there is a maximum life span for each one of us, we can shorten that considerably through poor decisions.

Someone who drives while intoxicated, or who uses street drugs, may not have a long life, unless they mend their ways. To a lesser extent, someone who eats poorly and refuses to exercise may also shorten his lifespan and have considerably worse health than someone who chooses a healthy lifestyle.

Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass –Job 14:5. Our days are in God's hands. It is not our place to do something to deliberately shorten them.

One of the Ten Commandments is: Thou shalt not kill – Exodus 20:13. Certainly this command would forbid doctors from purposely taking the life of their patient. It would also be a command against someone ending their own life.

It is far better if we can leave our days and hours in God's hands. We have but to serve Him the best we can with what time we have. We do not get to choose the amount of time that is allotted to us.

End of Life

It is difficult to make sweeping statements about what someone can or should experience at the end of their life. Some terminal illnesses, like cancer with bony metastases, can cause large amounts of pain. On the other hand, some diseases, like kidney failure or dementia, cause very little

pain, if any.

Some people would rather not pursue aggressive treatments. Chemotherapy, dialysis, and many other modern treatments have side effects, some of which can be quite negative. Choosing not to take treatment for a disease is different from choosing to actively end our lives.

It is also important that it should be an individual person's own decision and not one that is foisted on them. In Sweden during COVID, the government made the decision that elderly residents of nursing facilities would not be treated for COVID. Many were not even given oxygen, but simply started on Morphine and sedatives to "make them comfortable" as they waited for the end.

Do Not Act in Fear

Many of the decisions that people make as they face a terminal diagnosis are made out of fear. They may be fearful of medication side effects, fearful of death, or simply fearful of being a burden to families.

Christians should not act out of such motivations. *For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind –2 Timothy 1:7.*

As God's children, we are not afraid of death. *But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him –1 Thessalonians 4:13-14.*

We understand that our Savior has had victory over death and that he has taken away its sting. Jesus won a victory over death and the grave, so that we too can live without fear.

We may choose to take aggressive treatments, but we won't be motivated by a desperate attempt to stave off death.

Rely On God's Strength

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me –Philippians 4:13. This verse comes after the Apostle Paul spends time talking about how he is able to be content in any situation, both in times of plenty and in times of need.

We see clearly in his life that he put this very thing into practice. He experienced stonings, beatings, and shipwreck. One needs to believe that his body complained every evening when he would lie down to sleep, telling him of all the privations it had suffered.

It wasn't ibuprofen or Tylenol that got him through these times (those wouldn't be invented for many centuries). Rather, it was the strength which his relationship with God gave him. That same strength is available to us today, no matter what we are facing, even a terminal illness.

Understand that There Will Likely be Pain

One of the choices that people can make at the end of life is to accept palliative care. This is a type of care that is specifically designed to treat the pain and other symptoms, usually of a terminally ill patient (to keep them comfortable, not to try to cure them). This is the sort of care that is offered by hospice programs.

The doctors and nurses in hospice programs are focused primarily on eliminating pain rather than seeking a cure for the individual. Consequently, they rely very much on patients being honest about their pain levels so they can give the doses that patients feel that they need to control their pain.

Of course, this is challenging. Many times, the only way to completely eliminate pain is for a person to be so heavily medicated with pain medication that they are not able to relate to the people around them. As always, there needs to be some balance between controlling the pain and not having so much medicine that the individual is groggy and sleepy.

God is Glorified in Our Suffering

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal –2 Corinthians 4:17-18.

None of us enjoys suffering and we certainly do not seek it out. When we go through suffering, the world around us sees how we deal with it, and they can tell if there is something different about us.

We know that Jesus suffered much during His trial and crucifixion. Whatever suffering we go through is tiny compared with that.

Most important is that we keep our eyes on our Savior. He is the one that gives us strength to endure to the end. He is always faithful.

Conclusion

The world is a dark place these days. The value of life seems to have diminished over time. More and more countries are allowing doctors to prescribe medications that allow patients to end their own lives, while others go so far as to even allow doctors to administer medications that will kill their patients.

It is important that we continue to value human life and that we glorify God in everything we face—even if we are dealing with a terminal illness.

If we are responsible for caring for someone in this situation, it is very important that we affirm their value and make certain that they understand that they are not a burden. God values their lives and so should we. This support will help them as they struggle with the limitations that their health has put upon them.

None of us will live forever, but the things we do here have eternal consequences for us and for those we influence.







conflict and the many issues connected to it, again fear seems to be the prevailing motivator. This gives us a glimpse of what things will be like some day soon when: *Men's hearts [are] failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken –Luke 21:26. Because ...those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads ... should be tormented five months ... and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them –Revelation 9:4-6. Also, there will come a day when ...the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, [will hide] themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And [will say] to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? –Revelation 6:15-17.*

The worth of a soul

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? –Matthew 16:24-26.

Recently, this verse came to my mind as I was thinking of a number of situations in our world today—both close to home and abroad.

First, that which is abroad...

I am one of those who enjoys relaxing on the porch of a house, which is located along a major highway, and watching the traffic. I also find it interesting to sit in an airport or bus terminal and observe the masses of people passing by. Many times, I have paused to consider that each one has a soul that will spend all of eternity somewhere! Alive! As I've pondered these thoughts, some further thoughts also come. "How many of these people have a personal awareness of eternity?" "Of life after death?" "Or of a God who is alive, sovereign, and holy who will some day require an accounting for all things done in this earthly body?"

How many of us bear a burden for the lost souls around us? I think of the testimony of a vehicle mechanic who told me how he prays and seeks the Lord's leading about how he can speak into the lives of those who come to his shop. And of his further testimony regarding the various ways that God has led and folks have been pointed to a Living

God and a life after death.

For many of us, for me in particular, it takes an effort to remember to stop and smell the roses or to pause and reflect on the beauty of a sunrise. Then it takes a further step to remember the Creator behind these earthly beauties. How much more can we become lulled into the sameness of our everyday lives and tend to forget that each soul we meet will someday stand before God? What if we were the one who God wanted to say a word for Him out of a life that was living for Him to bring His awareness to one who knows not the One, Living, and True God?

Now for that which is close...

This can take on many different situations. It can be those in our family. It can be our neighbors. It can be our more distant relatives. It can be our work associates. Finally, it can be anyone who we interact with in our daily lives.

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me –Matthew 25:34-40.

One specific thing that I wish to focus on is this growing problem of broken relationships and emotional/mental struggles within the plain communities. I do not wish to pass judgment on anyone, nor do I wish to make anyone feel bad. In fact, one of my strongest concerns regarding these issues is that the church would do everything that it can to take away the stigma or negativity of these struggles. How did Christ relate to those who were in these types of situations? We could get hung up on the details of how Jesus responded. Let's not allow details to hinder us from "being Christ" to these struggling individuals in our midst.

To bring perspective to how we approach and interact with someone who is struggling, we can ask ourselves several questions that will help. First a question for myself: "How would I appreciate someone responding to me if I was in that specific situation?" Second a question for the other person: "What can I do that would be a help or an

encouragement to you as you are going through this difficult experience?”

Too many times, the church doesn't have time for those who are struggling in their midst, since it is their lot in life and we are too busy to be bothered. Other times, the church doesn't know how to respond or what to say so they decide it is better to “leave sleeping dogs lie” or that it would be best to not “open that can of worms”.

God designed us in such a way that we need our brothers and sisters. Just consider all the “one-anothering” passages in the Scriptures. Then consider how we can “be Christ” to the struggling among us. Just remember that there may come a time when “the shoe is on the other foot”, so to speak. In other words, someday we may find ourselves in a similar situation wishing that our brothers and sisters would rally around us with love and encouragement in a real way that “helps”.

Resources

It has been a while since we have reminded our readers that we have select resources on a variety of topics to assist churches and individuals as they seek a practical

way forward that is pleasing to God. One resource, that is specific on the topic of how to help those in our midst, is an 8 CD set we put together titled “People Helping in the Local Church”. We have received feedback from many individuals and church leaders who have said that they found the information shared in this set to be very helpful in their efforts to understand how to “help” challenging situations in their midst.

Our resources are available free of charge to addresses located within the U.S. However, we are funded solely on the free-will offerings of God's people, so your donation would be helpful to continue our work. If you wish to receive one or more of these CD sets, please contact our ministry using the contact information listed inside the front cover of this magazine.

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

Let's not allow details to hinder us from
“being Christ” to these struggling
individuals in our midst.



Look At The Rainbow

The storm was dark and threatening,
Dark clouds billowed o'er head.
Lightning flashed around me,
Fears gripped and filled me with dread.

Thunder rolled out its forebodings.
My heart felt heavy and numb.
All around the storm was raging,
The turmoil inside struck me dumb.

Not only was the danger around me,
But just as real was the peril within.
I trembled as I looked at the future,
Not knowing how next to begin.

What lay behind the fog?
The wind whistled in my ears.
Suggesting questions, tripping my feet,
And ladening me down with fears.

This storm had removed all signs of the path,
That one time I had thought I could see.
Now, all the familiar was gone to my eyes,
Each step taken hesitatingly.

At the end of myself, I cried out in fear..
"Lord, come unto me! Tarry not, oh my King!"
Silence reigned heavy, I felt all alone,
Only to hope did I cling.

Then a still, but strong voice spoke in my ear,
"My precious child, look up."
Why such a request? When engulfed as I was,
In the fog that refused to break up.

Still in hope, I lifted my eyes,
Trembling at the dark clouds around.
Yet as I looked, I saw something more,
A treasure in the sky there was found.

Amidst all the dark and threatening clouds,
There it was! A cleft of light!
A rainbow shone through, of loveliest hue,
A beacon amidst this dark night.

"My child, fear not, you were never alone.
Not for a second could I leave your side.
Though the path is obscure, and there is much to endure,
Do not doubt that in Me you can hide."

"Yes, for now, you walk amidst trials,
Fears threaten both inside and out.
You wonder and question what is next to be done,
Dangers seem to laugh and flout."

"But here I have placed My rainbow,
That amidst all the darkness and fear,
You can see that My promise is certain.
I will never forsake, but always be near."

"If you keep your eyes on this promise,
My light will guide your way.
The fears and dangers surrounding,
Will then be held at bay."

"This promise can also open to you,
The secrets that are hid 'midst the storm.
For My strength and power are manifest,
When these to My will conform."

"So, My child, gaze long at the rainbow.
Ponder the message it brings.
Though all around you is angry and wild,
Remember the promise that it sings."

~by Adrianna Fanton

The Heartbeat of
The Remnant

c/o The Berean Voice
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A clear glass jar filled with water and a bouquet of white baby's breath flowers. The jar has a decorative embossed pattern on its side. The flowers are delicate and numerous, filling the jar and spilling over the top. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are *true*,
whatsoever things are *honest*, whatso-
ever things are *just*, whatsoever things are
pure, whatsoever things are *lovely*,
whatsoever things are of *good report*, if
there be any *virtue* and if there be any
praise, think on these things.

Philippians 4:8