

The Heartbeat of



The Remnant

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The Berean Voice



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Purpose Statement

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

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

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— *The Berean Voice Board*

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

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From the EDITOR



Autumn. That time of year when it seems that all of creation, at least in the northern climes, puts on one final show of beauty and splendor that reflects the glory and majesty of the Creator God. One by one the last colorful leaves flutter to the ground, surrendering their brilliance to the frozen grayness of winter. What happened to summer? Wasn't it just last week we saw the first robin? It seems that time madly rushes on from one season to the next. The great American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow sums it up well in his poem The Psalm of Life where he wrote:

Art is long, and Time is fleeting,
And our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still, like muffled drums, are beating
Funeral marches to the grave.

Along with changes in seasons come other changes in life as well. One of those changes is currently happening here with The Berean Voice. I will be taking Curvin Wenger's role as editor of The Heartbeat of the Remnant Magazine. In the middle of the transition, we realize this fall issue of The Heartbeat of The Remnant is delayed and apologize for that. We hope to have the winter issue delivered close on time.

As life madly rushes on, it seems many are trying to keep up with ever-increasingly busy schedules. In many conversations, the topic soon drifts to discussing how busy we are. Mothers are overwhelmed, and fathers are worn out with all the coming and going. Teachers are stressed, and church leaders are distressed. For some, there is not enough time to sleep, and for others, sleep doesn't come when it's time to sleep. In this issue the doctor's article addresses the problem of insomnia. "We are fearfully and wonderfully made," writes Dr. Waldron, "but sometimes, with the modern world running full speed around us, we do not take the time we need to calm our minds and take care of our bodies." An ordered life may be one solution to have a more stress-free life.

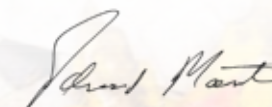
The sister's article offers practical solutions to maintaining a well-organized home.

On October 9th, the terrorist group Hamas from Gaza (similar to ISIS) attacked Israel with a barrage of thousands of rockets and missiles. In addition to rocket fire, they bulldozed down sections of the border wall between Israel and Gaza. Thousands of terrorists swarmed into Israel, killing and wounding, pillaging border villages, and kidnapping Israelis for hostages. Within 24 hours of the attack on Israel, 15 earthquakes greater than 5 on the Richter scale shook the earth in various places. The two largest, both measuring 6.3 in magnitude destroyed towns in western Afghanistan, killing over 2,000 people and injuring many. In response to the attack, Israel declared war on Hamas, vowing to eliminate them. Since then until the time of this publication, Israel has been bombing Hamas targets inside the Gaza Strip in a relentless airstrike campaign killing thousands and injuring tens of thousands. Exact numbers are impossible to verify.

What can we learn from these crises? Jesus said in Matthew 24:6-8 that we would hear of wars and rumours of wars and there will be earthquakes in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. But, he continues in Luke 21:28, And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

As life continues its rush from season to season, let us daily serve the King of kings, for one day he will suddenly appear, and if we are prepared, we will be in his presence forevermore.

Interim editor,


Edward Martin



Cross Bearing

The Discipleship Series

by Donald Brechbill
Chambersburg, PA

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.

There is, deep in the heart of every person, a longing to identify with a cause greater than ourselves. Men and women have made great personal sacrifice in the advancement of science, medical research, politics, and warfare. Every advancement is the product of someone's personal sacrifice.

Jesus became the ultimate example of personal sacrifice for a greater cause. In Philippians, Paul writes:

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross –Philippians 2:5-8.

Notice the three ways that Jesus embraced personal sacrifice for the greater good.

1. Although He could claim equality with God, He willingly took on the form of man.
2. As a man He chose to serve His fellow man—He became a servant.
3. As a servant to humanity, He made the ultimate sacrifice by dying for us so that we can have eternal life.

In this way Jesus demonstrated humility and great personal sacrifice for the good of others. This passage begins with: *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus* –Philippians 2:5. As a follower of Jesus, we are called to follow His example of humility, service, and self-sacrifice. It is incumbent on us as Christians to allow ourselves to be “broken bread and poured-out wine” for the cause of Christ.

It is our “reasonable service”. Paul wrote: *I beseech you*

therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service –Romans 12:1. It is only reasonable that we would be willing to present ourselves as a sacrificial offering to God since we have been redeemed through the sacrifice of another—Jesus Christ.

And [Jesus] when he had called the people unto him[self] with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me –Mark 8:34. What does it mean to take up our cross in our modern, technologically-advanced society? This cross is a highly personalized self-sacrifice. It means different things to different people because we have differing strengths and weaknesses, and differing desires and longings. A sacrifice that for one person is a huge loss, for another may be a blessed relief.

To help us understand what Jesus meant by cross-bearing let's first examine what Biblical cross-bearing is not. Not all suffering is Biblical cross-bearing. There is suffering that is common to all—physical illness, natural disasters, accidents, and the death of loved ones. These sorrows come upon us because of the fall of man. They afflict all mankind everywhere. While they may be a cross to bear this is not what Jesus was referring to when He said that we should “take up our cross and follow Him”.

There are sorrows that are the reaping of our sinful choices—guilt, condemnation, broken homes, and strained relationships, etc. These are difficult conditions. They can overwhelm us emotionally and physically, but this is not the cross that Jesus calls us to bear. As a matter of fact, Jesus came to redeem us from these conditions. There are sorrows and losses that are common to all. We live in a fallen world, and we can see and feel the effects of that brokenness all around us. Things do not always turn out the way we had planned. Sometimes we experience losses that were not our responsibility. These are not the cross that Jesus was calling us to.

We sometimes hear people say, “This is just my cross to bear” and rightly so. Maybe you have been called to bear a difficult

burden. However, if you look closely at the text in Mark 16 you will see a promise associated with the call to discipleship. Jesus said, *...and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it* –Matthew 16:25. The cross that Jesus calls us to bear does not diminish us in any way; it actually is the gateway to life.

The cross that Jesus asks us to bear is not punishment for our sin. Jesus paid the penalty for our sins on the cross. God does not require us to suffer as a recompense for our sin. If that were so, Jesus' death would have been in vain. God does at times chastise us. That is for our sanctification (to set us free from our sin), not for our atonement. Only the blood of the sinless Son of God could atone for our sin.

The cross that Jesus asks us to bear is not asceticism. Asceticism is self-flagellation with an intention to merit favor with God. Church history is rife with examples of sincere people who attempted to prove their piety by denying themselves of ordinary comforts and pleasures of life. The measure that determines if our self-denial is ascetic is 1) whether or not the Bible approves or condemns the action or 2) if we are doing the action to earn favor with God through the exercise of the action.

What then can Jesus have meant by taking up our cross? The cross that Jesus is asking us to bear is the denial of the sinful and selfish desires of our carnal nature. Jesus only asks of us that which will prove to be a blessing to us. Cross-bearing is the denial of that which will hinder us from entering into the fullness of the new life which we have in Christ.

Paul wrote: *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me* –Galatians 2:20.

The function of a cross is to annihilate. The cross destroys and brings to naught. When Paul said “I am crucified with Christ” he was saying that his old life has been brought to naught, destroyed, annihilated. The old life was his life of serving himself and his interests.

Another word that the Bible uses to describe this death process is *mortify*.

Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him –Colossians 3:5-10.

Notice in this passage what we are to put off and what we are to put on. The things that we are to put off are things which

have the potential to destroy us. The things that we are to put off are things that will bring the wrath of God upon us. The things that we are to put on are the new man, renewed knowledge, and the restoration of the image of God with which we were created.

The sins of the flesh

The things that Paul asks us to mortify are sins of the flesh. These are sins which we commit with our body. Cross bearing is the process whereby we bring our flesh into subjection to the spirit of God. It involves placing constraints on our physical appetites and submitting our will to the will of God.

Death by crucifixion was a slow and agonizing death. The mortification of our carnal nature is not an instant event but is part of the sanctifying process of becoming transformed into the image of Christ. The sanctification of our carnal nature is not pleasing to our flesh. Our flesh resists it with passion. Our fleshly nature does not want to die. It wants to dominate us.

Paul wrote: *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would* –Galatians 5:16-17.

The discipline of the mind

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ –2 Corinthians 10:3-5.

Here, Paul admonishes us bring our thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ. Cross-bearing involves the inner discipline of our minds. Many sins begin in the mind, and we can counter fleshly inclinations by filling our minds with good thoughts (see Philippians 4:8). This exercise of replacing carnal thoughts with thoughts that reflect the mind of Christ requires discipline and is part of the cross that Jesus asks us to bear.

The cross of kingdom service

Kingdom service is the labor of men and women who put the kingdom of heaven ahead of temporal pursuits. Jesus taught us to *...seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you* –Matthew 6:33. There are many ways to do this. The labor spent investing in raising a godly family is kingdom service. If you make meeting the needs of your family a priority over satisfying your personal desires, that is kingdom service.

Some are called to more vocational types of Christian service. Some are called to church leadership, some to mission work, some to teaching, plus many other types of service that

*This is why Jesus said—
If you want to be My
disciple, if you want to
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and come after Me, you
cannot be My disciple.*

call for great sacrifices of time and money that will never be compensated in this life. These kinds of sacrifice are a cross to bear. Those who bear it gladly will be rewarded in eternity.

The cross of kingdom living

Kingdom living is the practical application of the kingdom principles as taught by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. If we take these principles seriously and adapt our lives to them, we will find that they call for a level of self-sacrifice that others need not make. Principles such as: turning the other cheek, going the extra mile, loving your enemy, and blessing those who curse you. Principles of forgiveness and reconciliation, mutual accountability, and church discipline. These are all principles that can only be utilized by those who have come to a place of brokenness and humility—surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is a cross to bear. This is why Jesus said—If you want to be My disciple, if you want to follow Me, and walk in My footsteps then you must be willing to take up your cross. If you are not willing to bear your cross and come after Me, you cannot be My disciple.

The yielding of the will

Prior to His Calvary experience, Jesus had a Gethsemane experience. Here His humanity struggled with the will of His Heavenly Father. *Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered –Hebrews 5:8.* This was not just a casual differing of opinion as we humans many times experience. This was a confrontation of the will of God the Father with the will of His Son, Jesus Christ. The Father's will was established, and the Son was struggling to bring His will into complete compliance with the will of His Father.

After an intense struggle where His "sweat was as great drops of blood", He relinquished His will and prayed, "Nevertheless, not My will but Thine be done". This great spiritual struggle is not altogether unlike the struggle that we experience when our will comes into conflict with the will of God. Each of us will sometime struggle to resign ourselves to the will of God. As was the case with Jesus, the will of the Father in your life has already been established. The conflict lies with you. Will you like Jesus bow your head and pray, "Nevertheless, not my will but Thine be done"?

This principle is also true of cross-bearing. We can willingly embrace the cross of Jesus, or we can struggle against it. When Jesus was hanging on the cross, He was in excruciating agony and anguish—He cried out *...My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? –Matthew 27:46*, yet, the moment that he *... bowed his head, and gave up the ghost –John 19:30*, the agony was over, and he was in paradise.

Most of our struggles, our pain, the fomenting of our minds, is the result of struggling against the nails that bind us to our cross. If like Jesus, we bow our head and allow the cross to do its deadly work of mortifying our carnal nature and freeing us from the clutches of the self-life, we can experience the freedom and joy that belongs to those who know the secret of dying with Jesus.

Beyond the cross is the empty tomb. Jesus does not ask us to surrender our lives without due compensation. Those who surrender their will, and their self-interests will be richly compensated with the new life that is ours in Christ Jesus. *For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it –Mark 8:35.* May you find it.

This Is The Way, Walk Ye In It

by Barry Grant
Hicksville, OH

It was February 22, 2016, when our family stepped off the airplane in Port-Au-Prince, Haiti. I was excited. When I was converted, I told God I would go where He wanted me to go and say what He wanted me to say. Now here we were, in a foreign land. As we were waiting in the slow-moving, noisy line, hot and tired, many thoughts went through my mind. I looked at my wife and two small boys. 'How long will we be here?' 'Will the gospel be accepted?' 'Will we all leave?' There were tensions at home, because some of our family didn't think we should go to such a place. It was not a good place for children. However, like Paul, in Acts 21, God had sent us; how could we not go?

Our time in Haiti was a rich blessing. Despite many fears, our family thrived. We were truly fulfilled in the work of the Lord. Being able to preach in nearly any church, and to a captive audience, was something I had not expected. There was no shortage of work. Traveling daily to tell the good news led us into many unique situations, and it seemed clear that God's hand was involved.

We made mistakes. We learned a lot—about life, about ourselves, about each other, about our God.

God had given us a message, a burden, and a people to share it with. The many tragedies and hardships were welcomed as small obstacles in our journey to minister to these dear people. Stepping out of one





culture and into a culture completely different was refreshing. It was a learning experience that will hopefully never be forgotten. A culture where the unexpected is anticipated; a culture where the spirit world is relied upon, and where prayer is not shameful. Miracles abound and demons roam free. Nothing is unordinary.

In short, Haiti was a place where we needed God every day. Time and time again, it seemed our lives were on the line, no one to call, nothing to do, but cry out to God, and God was always there, waiting to help a child of His in need. It was revolutionary. It was a place where money didn't rule, in fact in most places it was nonexistent. It was a place where reputation didn't matter; nothing was posted online. It forced us to be real, to deal with the realities of who we were, and deal with the consequences of what we did. There was time for people, and for friendships. There was time for family, and most importantly, there was time for God.

Although everyday brought its challenges, we found that grace did much more abound. Many evenings we sat together as a family and marveled at the goodness of God. We often had opportunities to humbly thank God for His protecting hand. To thank Him for being there when no one else was.

Many times, when we found ourselves at a crossroads, we would seek the Lord. At times the direction was clear; other times it was not. Once a direction was chosen, there were times we questioned it. Did we discern God's will correctly? Eventually, God in His mercy, would confirm the direction He had chosen. Often the path that God led us on was challenging, difficult, and times it seemed impossible. However, God's peace would assure us that everything was going to be alright.

I've talked with many people trying to find God, people that desire to be Christians, however, they seem to fall short in that quest. I realize they fall short because they don't want it bad enough. They seem to want their own way more than God's way, and they are not able to help it. It's just the way it is. Jesus likened the kingdom of heaven to a *...treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field*

—*Matthew 13:44*. If he wanted the treasure, as all people do, yet if he didn't want it badly enough, he might go home and sell only some of his things. He might sell many things; he could even tell people that he had found something great. However, if there were things that he refused to sell, then he has lied to himself by deciding that it is not necessary to sell everything. Selling what he did was a great sacrifice, but it wasn't enough. For, to obtain the treasure, one must sell all—everything. If he doesn't do everything necessary to obtain the treasure, he then will go away feeling rejected. Although the field was ready to be bought, the buyer, however, was not ready to buy. Once all is sold, there is always enough money there to buy the field. The catch that leads most to losing out on the treasure is simply hanging on to something worth only a trifle.

A soul that sells all and gets the field that holds the treasure is set. A peace that passeth all understanding solidifies his decision and leads him through all of life's troubles.

Some of those difficult times were brought on when things out of our control seemed to deter us from the mission God had us on, or so we thought. Several times we seemed to be sure of the path God had us on, and we were used to opposition, in fact it was opposition that helped confirm the path was the right path. However, when the opposition got so strong that we were deterred from our path, we would find that in fact it was God who was opposing us, trying to change our course.

An example of this, chosen from several, was when my wife Julia was expecting our 4th child. We had a midwife chosen from the city to help with labor. We had our last child in the city and although things didn't go ideally, things turned out well. With all the unrest and country lockdowns due to riots, my wife had an uneasiness about having the baby in Port. She wondered if we weren't supposed to go back to the states for the birth. I rejected the idea because of all the time it would take. We had too much going on to take several months off. As the due date approached, her thoughts remained the same. Then I received a message from the midwife. They had been robbed several times in the past month and had decided to close down and head back to the states. I read the message to

my wife, and she again wondered if God didn't want us to go back for the birth. I took it as something evil trying to stop our work, something that we could easily overcome.

When we couldn't find anyone to help with the birth, I also began to wonder what God was saying. "Should we go to the states for the birth?" I prayed. It did seem to be what God was saying. I didn't understand, yet I moved ahead with the change in plans. She was legally too close to the due date to fly however we had no trouble getting back to the states where our stateside midwife helped deliver a healthy baby boy. Julia's parents came to see the little one. Later that same night her mother complained of pain in her stomach, which ended with her admission to the hospital. In short, she was full of cancer, and she died in a few short weeks. It was devastating to my dear wife; they had always been close, however what if we wouldn't have come home? With a new baby without a passport, we would have missed it all. God knew it would have been too much for Julia. I'm thankful for God's mercy, especially when I seemed to be kicking against the pricks.

After four busy, exciting, and growing years we found that God's clear leading landed us 30 minutes down the road at the Christian Aid Ministries base, serving as director. I never would have predicted this; however, God works in mysterious ways. I had many more things to learn. It was here where we met some of the most trying times of our lives. God was still faithful; it was very good for me and my family.

When we thought we had been pushed to our limits, the kidnapping happened. What was God saying? We had been working on planting another church nearby, the building was finished, and services were soon to start, then the kidnapping brought that to an abrupt halt, along with many other things that God seemed to be doing. I came to a peace with the idea that we had come face to face with evil again. There were forces out there that wanted to bring God's work to ruin, but who would win this war? We had fought many such battles, however, this one was different. The battle wasn't just between my family and evil, it seemed to be between the Anabaptist church and evil. Who would win? I had a strong feeling that this battle

would not end well, that we were not ready for this fight, that defeat was inevitable. However, I also felt that it was going to be for the good, to help open the eyes of so many that had been out of the fight for decades; for many that had fallen asleep.

After it was all over (62 days later), the mission was abandoned, and the workers went home. "But at least everyone was safe!" I heard it over and over again. It didn't soothe anything for me. I never thought that getting home safely was the objective; few Christian missionaries before us did.

I prayed long and hard about my family's future. Was Haiti no longer where God wanted us? The answer again was clear—God wanted us in the States—so that is where we currently are. I always knew there was a big need for missionaries, however I didn't realize that the need for them was in America.

We have decided to help with an outreach church in Shelbyville, Indiana, close to Indianapolis. It requires another move, however we feel that God again is leading, as He has done so faithfully in the past. Reaching out to souls lost in despair is still the church's work; it's still God's heart. I believe we need revival in our Anabaptist churches. We need to shake ourselves awake and rekindle the fires that our forefathers lit. When we love our lives, we will lose them. More importantly, we will lose the battle between good and evil. When we lose our lives for Christ's sake we gain them, and we fight on, overcoming in the fight for souls—ours and those of folks with whom we relate. This battle is contagious—it's what turns the world upside down. Our children will want to abandon their lives and live for the cause of Christ as well.

Please help me pray for another great awakening, amongst us, amongst our people. It won't be an easy journey, trials will test us at every turn, the devil with all his troops will be waiting, yet that's where the Christian thrives, in this very battle.

Not to the strong is the battle,
Not to the swift is the race.
Yet to the true and the faithful
Victory is promised through grace.

Acceptance, Belonging, and Continual Companionship

Used by permission – see the end of article

Incee Kure, a typical seventeen-year-old, found her phone a great comfort in times of loneliness. Third in a family of six children, Incee Kure was never quite sure where she fit in. Her older siblings were involved in exciting youth group activities, and the younger ones played games that seemed childish. In her early teenage years, Incee longed for the time she could join the local youth. They looked so confident, poised, and sure of themselves. Yet, strange as it may sound, another part of her longed to remain a little girl. She watched her two-year-old sister cuddle up in bed with her ever-present blankie, and she could identify with her need for security. As she entered her teens, Incee's greatest longing was to enjoy a sense of belonging and acceptance.

As she grew older, she longed for the time when she would finally outgrow those anxious feelings of timidity and uncertainty. Time crept by, but finally the day arrived when she was allowed to join the local youth group. Although she really enjoyed this opportunity, there was still a lingering suspicion that she didn't quite measure up. She would join a chattering group of girls and try to say something cute or funny, but it usually didn't come off quite as she had hoped. Incee Kure would lie in bed that night and replay these events. Had she said the wrong thing? What did they really think of her?

There were a few times when Incee knew she had blown it. Times when something had come out wrong and she was pretty sure the other girls were laughing behind her back. Those were miserable times, and once she even considered never returning to their social gatherings. A couple times she became embroiled in personality conflicts when girls took something she had said, twisted it, and then passed it on. The result was inner pain and turmoil. Getting older and joining the youth group wasn't as fulfilling as Incee Kure had hoped. But then she got her first phone.

Incee's phone became her lifesaver. Always right with her, it helped her stay connected and know what was happening. Best of all, it gave her control so she wouldn't say or do something stupid. Incee found herself spending a tremendous amount of time on social media crafting messages, passing on funny videos, and taking selfies in an attempt to portray the "right" image to her friends. It seemed like the answer to her inner need! As long as she had her phone and charger, she belonged!

The Promise of Social Media

When social media was first introduced, no one could have predicted its impact. It was simply viewed as an electronic platform allowing people to communicate, share files, and connect with people who have similar interests. But it didn't take long for it to catch on, and today it is a huge part of many people's lives. In fact, it offers to overcome one of humanity's greatest dilemmas.

We were created to be relational. Our greatest enjoyment

comes from interacting and sharing things with others. At the same time, relationships are also the source of our greatest problems! We get offended, we feel hurt, and at times we are misunderstood by the very people who are supposed to bring us joy. We want to be with friends, but after some time together we become weary of their presence. It's as if our relationship bucket gets full, and we are ready to be alone again.

It has been this way ever since the Fall. We like people, but we also like to be alone. And we soon realize that with people comes conflict. So, we work out our differences, try to reconcile, and sometimes even avoid people who are difficult to deal with. That is how human relationships have been for thousands of years. It can be hard because some of these people are in our family or church, and you can't just "get away" from them.

Social media proposes to solve this dilemma by allowing us to be "with people" without actually being with them. Sherry Turkle in her book *Reclaiming Conversations* has said, "Computers offer the illusion of companionship without the demands of friendship." Social media promises a sense of belonging and acceptance without those difficult and disagreeable face-to-face conversations. But is moving away from in-person conversations actually taking us where we want to go? What will happen if we are no longer forced to be with people we don't like? What will church communities look like when we lose the ability to exhort, confront, and warn face to face? Secular social researchers know the answers to these questions. Catherine Steiner-Adair, an author and psychologist, summarizes social media's impact on humans: "Texting is the worst possible training ground for anyone aspiring to a mature, loving, sensitive relationship."

Machine vs. People

People disappoint. We trust, confide in, and hope they will answer our inner cry for companionship. But eventually they almost always let us down. They aren't as faithful and loyal as we had hoped, and in the end, we feel disappointed, disillusioned, and crushed. And it is at this point that technology makes its bid. Promising to deliver what we want, when we want it, and in the way we want it, it looks like the perfect solution. We turn to technology when people let us down.

So, how is it working?

While there are benefits to social media, studies have consistently found that when used to alleviate loneliness, it actually compounds the problem. With the many ways we have found to communicate and connect, one could assume loneliness would have disappeared by now, but in the past fifty years loneliness has doubled in the United States. Multiple studies have revealed that those who spend more time on social media feel lonelier than those who spend less.

We crave connection with people, and technology promises to provide that without the negative consequences. But once

again, the advantages of technology are readily apparent, while its negative aspects are only revealed over time. Although there are places where social media platforms can be helpful and effective, don't be fooled by their promise to keep you connected to people without physical interaction. There is no substitute for authentic face-to-face interactions. These aren't always easy but make it your goal to invest in real relationships. That is still God's best!

Constant Companionship

When ignored at a social function, Incee Kure found herself withdrawing from the group and pretending to do important things on her phone. Swiping between music, videos, and social media gave Incee an illusion of stability—a sense of control. It provided relief and helped her feel in charge of her life instead of being dependent on the affirmation of others. It was strange, but the device itself seemed to provide comfort. Like her baby sister's blankie, just holding it seemed to satisfy something deep within and to calm her anxiety.

But reality was far different. As Incee pulled away from relationships with real people, she became more and more dependent on technology. In fact, Incee became fearful of in-person conversations, and forgetting her phone made panic churn inside. She didn't feel complete without it.

Incee Kure also became very tied to feedback. After sending a post, she would nervously wait to see how many "likes" it garnered. "Likes" sent Incee's emotions soaring, but her spirit plunged if few responded or noticed, and she became depressed. Similar to a heroin addict in search of the next fix, she was on a constant quest for things to post: humorous videos, cute pictures, anything to produce gratifying affirmation. It was an endless and elusive chase, never quite providing the rest she longed for but giving just enough to keep her coming back.

Face-to-face conversations gradually became more

uncomfortable for Incee Kure. They made her feel vulnerable, as she was always afraid her facial expressions might reveal more than she wanted. Texting had become much more comfortable. As she hid behind her phone, Incee could carefully edit each message before sending. She found security in avoiding difficult or uncomfortable questions, so she increasingly circumvented authentic relationships. By associating only with those who affirmed her, Incee avoided being challenged, and thus never needed to confront her weaknesses.

While social media enabled her to communicate widely and easily, Incee Kure was unaware that she was losing things of far greater value.

The Real Thing

Most of us can identify in some measure with Incee Kure. Technology has given us the opportunity to retreat behind our screens. We are faced with the temptation to settle into digital villages of people who think like we do, avoiding the potential conflict that comes with associating with people who don't. Social media allows us to believe we have the correct perspective and keeps us from confronting our blind spots. In contrast, authentic human relationships can be messy, demanding, and challenging. We are at times reprimanded or questioned. Things don't always work out, and sometimes we need to apologize and ask for forgiveness. But relationships can also be rich, rewarding, and deeply fulfilling.

God has made us for real social connection, and few things are as satisfying as healthy human relationships. Although there are legitimate uses, social media promises more than it can deliver. Don't sacrifice God's best for an elusive and unrealistic counterfeit.

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Mary—Jesus' Mother and Disciple

by Joshua Yoder

Big Prairie, OH

Hail Mary, Full of Grace, The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of death. Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. —the Hail Mary (a Catholic prayer)

Such is the remembrance of the mother of Christ, one who found favor with God, but should this be the way in which she is remembered? Who was this daughter of Israel, and what is her impact on the Christian story?

To accurately determine her place in the story of the church, we must first begin with her own story. Mary, according to church tradition, spent her early years in the Galilean town of Nazareth. As a young woman, she was betrothed to Joseph, a carpenter from the tribe of Judah, descendant of King David. In a nation firmly under the thumb of the mighty Roman empire, Mary prepares herself for a happy but unremarkable life, envisioning the blessing of marriage and a family.

As we, in posterity know, she was not to be just another mother and wife living her life in the anonymity of the Judean hills. God's favor rested on her, for her virtue and her humility, and for her readiness to pursue the path God ordained for her life. This calling to a greater service to God came now, after her betrothal. Confronted by Gabriel, the messenger of God, Mary stands ready to obey, not esteeming herself to be capable of carrying out the work God has given her, but instead trusting God's power and foresight to choose and direct this sudden shift in her life's plans, for she is to be mother of the Most High, Saviour of His people. Even though she does initially question Gabriel as to the plausibility of the conception of this divine child, at his reassurance of God's intent, and of the miracle taking place with Elizabeth, she simply believes.

Does she tell anyone what has transpired? It is unclear what her family knows, but soon enough Joseph becomes aware of what must at first have been a most alarming turn of events—his youthful bride-to-be is carrying a child, in a time where adultery is punishable by death. As the Bible states, Joseph is first minded to "put her away privily", but then he too has a life-changing visit from God's messenger, carrying

confirmation of what Mary has already been told—that the child is to be the Son of God. (-see Luke 1:31-35)

Joseph, displaying his godly character and faith, acts upon this new directive, marries his betrothed, and cares for her. The events of Mary's visit to Elizabeth unfold, further confirming the holiness of the child she is bearing, and then the Roman census is decreed. In the humble town of Bethlehem, Mary brings forth the Savior of the world, and cares for Him in His infancy.

Throughout the coming years, whether it be a visit from the Wise Men of the East, or Jesus' three-day discussion with the priests and elders at Jerusalem, Mary keeps those signs of His Godly origin and deity in her heart. Thirty years pass, and her son begins to perform miracles, to gather disciples to Himself, and to move about the countryside, preaching, teaching, and healing the crowds that flock to his message of peace and hope.

But as Jesus embarks on the monumental final years of His earthly life, where do we find His mother? The Bible gives us numerous stories of her path crossing her son's path during those years. First, she attends a wedding in Cana. As the day of feasting commences, wine is brought out for the guests in abundance. Perhaps there are excessive numbers of guests, or excessive drinking, but the wine stores dry up, and the wedding is threatened with the disgrace of thirsty guests. Mary recognizes what to do. She does not have a solution, but she knows Who does, and goes straight to Jesus to inform Him of the impending catastrophe, and true to her faith, Jesus does have the solution. Water, turned to wine, saves the wedding, and marks the beginning of His miracles.

Mary, having kept all the signs of Jesus' power in her heart, seems to have recognized to some extent the intent of His power much sooner than many of His disciples, including many of His own siblings and cousins. Even when His hometown turns on Jesus, attempting to throw Him from a cliff, Mary does not seem to waver in her belief in the words of Gabriel, that the Spirit of the Most High rests upon her first born.

Nothing, however, can prepare her for the Crucifixion. There on the hill of Golgotha, her dying Son gives the apostle John

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responsibility for her care. Following the resurrection and ascension, Mary is numbered among those praying for the Holy Spirit, but from there our immediate record grows dim. Outside of the Bible, we can gather that John did continue to care for her, taking her with him to Ephesus, where she would live out the rest of her life in its church.

Now we approach the question: what then is her significance to our faith? Does she intercede for sinners, as stated in the well-known Catholic prayer? Did she have an extra measure of insight into the truths of Christianity, perhaps drawn from the relationship with her son? Questions such as these have led to varied and often incorrect beliefs throughout the history of the church.

There are three main ideas on the attributes of Mary which have led the broader church into error regarding the nature and importance of Mary to the faith. First among those is belief in her perpetual virginity—a doctrine which was of importance to the Gnostics in their arguments against the humanity of Christ. Despite no assertions amongst the Gospels, Epistles, or any other sound writings of the first three centuries of Christendom, the idea that Mary bore no children following the birth of Christ is first introduced in the heretical *Protevangelium Jacobi*, a 2nd century work that provides an elaborate story of the divinely sanctioned birth of Mary through visions to her childless parents, her commitment to the Temple at an early age, and how she was hand-fed there by an angel until an appropriate age for betrothal. The record becomes even more fanciful, as now the priests of the temple begin to search, not for a suitable husband for Mary, but a guardian from among the most prominent widowers of Israel, one of whom happens to be Joseph, in this story already having

buried his first wife, and being the father of several children. Mary is put under his care, but remains in the Temple, where Gabriel then delivers God's message. Upon discovery of the conception of Christ, Joseph is called to the Temple, and he and Mary are questioned by the priests, who believe that Mary's pregnancy will violate the sanctity of the Temple. Proving their innocence by exposure to "the water of the ordeal of the Lord". In this way they are released to go to Bethlehem, where matters proceed as normal- the inn is full, the stable houses the young Messiah, and the family eventually flees for Egypt.

This false doctrine was further perpetrated by Jerome, who in his youth seems to have set great store in it. To explain the mention of Jesus' brothers, he devises a story in which Mary has a sister also named Mary, and it is this Mary, sister of Mary, who is the mother of James, Jude, and the others, and not, in fact, Mary.

As foolish as these knots of doctrine may seem, their effect is nonetheless felt in the nominal Church. First, as the Gnostics argued, Mary being of purportedly divine origins strengthens the argument that Jesus was not true flesh and blood. At stake in this argument lies the whole legitimacy of Christianity, for if Christ was not human, than how are we to know that the struggles and temptations that we encounter can be born with the power that He gives us? The miracle of His holiness lies not in the fact that Christ was divine—it lies in the fact that not only was He human, but He was also blameless, sinless, and perfect. Therefore, removing the humanity of Christ negates His message of hope to a lost humanity.

The second misconception about Mary carries much of the same weight as the first. In a slightly more contentious point, Mary is often portrayed as being completely sinless, born

without the nature of sin. This corresponds roughly with the heretical story of her divine conception and service in the temple, which sets her up as a deity in a questionable position between God and man. Where in the Scriptures is there a place for a divine being born of man, but sinless, other than Christ? This belief, however, is not as widely accepted and the first point, as even Augustine repeatedly asserts that she was born in original sin.

Thirdly, and most heretically, is the belief that Mary intercedes for sinners. Firstly, this is the unique position of Jesus, as can be seen in the Lord's Prayer, where we are to pray in the specific name of Christ. This doctrine came into popular belief in the early 4th century- even writings of the late 3rd century will refrain from even calling her the mother of God, a term which would become quite popular within a half a century. Much of the acceptance of a more intermediary and important role for Mary seems to have come into place because of her popularity among the laity of the Catholic Church. Appeals to Mary, used rarely and with much hesitation in the 3rd century, became marks of orthodoxy, as did the exhibiting of figures of the Holy Mother and Child.

The tremendous error to which this broadly popular worship of Mary reached is well documented in the words of the orator Proclus when preaching at a festival of the Virgin of Constantinople, where he described her as "the spotless treasure house of virginity... the one bridge between God and man." Here there is a clearly heretical teaching, completely dethroning the role of Christ, but Proclus is not done deposing of Christ and enshrining Mary, as he continues: "through whom (Mary) the Trinity is glorified and worshipped, the Cross of the Saviour exalted and honoured, through whom Heaven triumphs, the angels are made glad, devils driven forth, the tempter overcome, and the fallen creature raised up even to heaven." And the people Proclus was preaching to? They accepted it with enthusiasm, sheep with a wolf in their midst.

There are, additionally, several factors that led the common people of the church to accept the veneration of a mortal with such readiness and fervor. The Arian controversy seems to be an acceptable first step in arriving at this position. The controversy began with a debate on the nature of Christ, with the principal orators involved being Arius and Athanasius of Alexandria, two theologians from Alexandria, Egypt. The thought of Arius was that Jesus was created by the Father, a position which immediately brought into question the unity of the Trinity and the role of Christ in the Trinity. At the First Council of Nicaea, the debate raged, and Athanasius emerged as the leader of those opposing Arius. Discussion and differences would follow those two men throughout their service. By 360 the issue had been officially settled, with the decision that Father and Son were both uncreated beings, being of one another but with different roles in the Trinity. Unfortunately,

the strength of statement required to resolve this manner seems to have portrayed Jesus to the laity as a distant, awful part of the Godhead instead of the caring mediator that He is. Thus, the character of Mary, humanized, but with a touch of the divine, was appealing to those hungry for hope of reconciliation to God, for if they thought of Jesus as a heavy-handed judge, where were they to gain an ear to listen to their woes, and a mouth to approach God with their prayers?

But how does this view stand when compared to the Scripture's mentions of Mary and the role she played in the life of Jesus and the continuation of the church? Apart from her prominent role in the birth of the Christ, there are several mentions made of her in Scripture: coming in faith to Jesus at the wedding, trusting Him to supply the needed wine, and being committed to the care of John by Jesus at the site of the crucifixion. Both of these instances provide a glimpse into the relationship between mother and son, and the role Mary had within the church.

First, at the wedding in Cana. At this early point in Christ's ministry, His working of miracles has only started and yet Mary knows Who to come to when a problem arises. We know from the aftermath of the incident where Jesus was left alone at the temple, that Mary notices and remembers instances where Christ shows the divine nature of His calling, and by this action of making a simple approach and request for aid Mary shows a developing faith in her son as the Son of God. We can see that she is not divinely set above others—she recognizes Who is the source of spiritual power and she acts on that recognition.

Secondly, the interaction between Mary and Christ at the crucifixion shows the love and respect Jesus had for His mother. Even on the point of death, He cries out to her, seeking her as any son would seek the love of a mother in the time of ultimate trial. His cry, "Woman, behold thy son!", shows the deep connection Christ had with Mary, as is further evidenced by the command He gives John, who from that time forward cares for Mary. This scene also reinforces the nature of atonement and intercession for sin—it is Christ on the cross, dying for sinful mankind and later ascending to intercede between them and God.

Clearly, then, Mary and Jesus had the attachment and relationship typical of humanity. How then did they address the spiritual authority and mission that was given to Jesus? Luke 11: 27-28 seems to hold an answer for how Jesus viewed His mother within the broader scope of the church. A woman from the crowd has just blessed the mother of Christ, who responds with these words: "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." Jesus clearly states here that the blessed are those who obey God, and the further role of Mary in the church remains as a believer (nothing more), saved by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Being A Friend

by Marian Martin
Glenmont, Ohio

“Time to go!” Mom called up the stairs to the girls. Twelve-year-old Angela sighed and picked up her black and white striped backpack. They were going on a trip to Ohio. Their family was planning to move to Ohio, and they wanted to visit the church that they planned to attend there.

“What are you thinking, Angela?” asked her older sister Susanne. They had been driving for a few hours and almost everyone else was sleeping.

“I’m not sure,” admitted Angela. “I think that I’m excited, but I’m also sad about leaving my friends at home.”

“Don’t worry,” said Susanne. “I wrote to one of the girls from the church there and she said there are quite a few girls your age. I’m sure you’ll find friends pretty fast.”

Angela nodded and yawned. “I’m sure you’re right,” she said. “After all, you usually are,” she grinned.

“I’m not and you know it!” exclaimed Susanne. “I think you should take a nap now, so your brain doesn’t come up with such things.”

Angela yawned again. “Maybe I should.” She pulled out her pillow and was soon fast asleep.

She awoke just as Mom was getting sandwiches out of the cooler for lunch.

The afternoon passed slowly as she and her siblings played the ABC game and worked on the scavenger hunt Susanne made for them. A little before supper time, they arrived at the folks’ place where they were planning to stay for the night.

The next morning, they went to church. Angela shyly followed Mom and Susanne into the sanctuary. She saw some girls who looked about her age. After church was over, she stood next to Mom while she talked with the other ladies. As she looked around,

she saw a group of girls her age gathered in the back of the sanctuary. They were talking and laughing, but none of them came and talked with her. Every once in a while, she saw them look over at her. Angela felt funny. Were they talking about her?, she thought, Why didn't they come to talk to her? She felt a little sad, standing there all alone beside Mom.

After a while, Dad was ready to go. Angela picked up her Bible and followed Mom out to the van.

“How did you like this church?” asked Dad.

“I really like it!” said Susanne.

“So do I!” said Angela’s brothers.

“What about you, Angela?” asked Dad.

Angela’s lips quivered. “I don’t like it. No one came to talk to me. The girls were all standing in the back, and it looked like they were talking about me.”

“That’s too bad,” sympathized Mom. “Maybe the next time we come, I can help you make some friends. And always remember, when there’s a new girl in church, go talk to her. If you’re scared to, remember how you felt today.” Mom smiled at Angela.

Angela smiled back. “I’ll try,” she said.

Several years later, Angela was sitting in church beside Susanne when she saw a new family walk in and sit down. They had a girl who looked just her age. After church, Angela and her friends gathered in the back of the sanctuary like they usually did. Suddenly, Angela remembered what Mom had told her when they had visited, and no one talked to her.

“I’m going to talk to that new girl,” she told her friends. “It’s not fun to see a group of girls having fun and no one comes to talk to you.” Angela went and talked to her and pretty soon she had a new friend! Angela decided that Mom’s advice was always worth following.



Insomnia

by Vincent “John” Waldron MD
Gladys, VA

“Dr. Waldron, I just can’t sleep!” ‘Mildred’ was quite distraught. “I can usually fall asleep OK, but somewhere around midnight or 2:00 in the morning, I wake up and I can’t fall asleep again until a couple of hours later.”

“Is this something new?” I asked her.

“No,” she admitted. “It has been going on for a little while, but it keeps getting worse. I guess I focus on it more over time though. When I wake up, I just think to myself, ‘Here I go again,’ and then there’s no sleep for ages.”

We talked about different things that she had tried; what things were going on in her mind when she woke up. I was looking for things that she was doing well and things that she could do better to help with her sleep patterns.

Sleep is one of those things that is mysterious to most of us. We instinctively understand that it is important. We feel so much better after a good night’s rest, while alternatively, we feel much worse when we don’t get good sleep.

With modern technology, people have smart watches that monitor their sleep patterns. Even without doing a sleep study, they can tell how well they are sleeping and identify when they are in deep sleep or in less deep sleep.

I have a feeling that technology isn’t really the answer. The watches may tell you if you are getting good sleep, but they don’t really help you achieve it. More than that, if your watch makes you anxious about your sleep patterns, it may actually make your sleep quality worse.

Sleep comes to us unconsciously, and the harder we work to have it, the harder it is to achieve.

Biblical Reference to Restful Sleep

It is easy to think that people in Biblical times were different from us. Somehow, they never struggled with insomnia or similar things.

What we see is that good sleep is associated with the ideas of peace and protection of God. *I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety –Psalm 4:8.*

Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep –Psalm 127:1-2.

Proverbs 3:22 speaks of those who follow wisdom and discretion as having “sweet sleep.”

Interestingly, in the Scriptures, we see two Persian kings struggling with sleep. King Ahaseurus was not able to sleep in Esther 6:1. His solution was to have his servants read to him from the records of the chronicles of his realm. I suppose this was boring enough reading that it often put him to sleep, although in this case, it did bring to mind the fact that Mordecai had saved his life and was worthy of a great reward.

Daniel 6:18 tells of a time when Darius the Persian was

unable to sleep due to his anxiety around the problem of Daniel being in the den of lions.

This is not to say that insomnia is the result of sinful behaviors, but it certainly is helpful to have the peace that passeth understanding when we lie down to sleep.

Why Insomnia is Important

Before jumping into a fuller discussion of insomnia, it is important to define what insomnia is. Insomnia is a sleep disorder where a person does not get adequate sleep even though they have spent adequate time trying to sleep. This can happen either because the individual has difficulty falling asleep or because they wake up early in the morning and can’t fall back asleep.

There is not an official length of time that humans need to sleep. I know that it is commonly stated that people need to sleep eight hours a night, but while this is a relatively normal average, many people need quite a bit less sleep than that, while some need more sleep time than that.

A good way to judge if you are getting adequate sleep is to see how likely you are to fall asleep in various settings. Doctors use something called the Epworth Sleepiness Scale to quantify just how sleepy people are.¹ A score of more than 10 indicates a lack of adequate sleep. (Although many times this is actually related to sleep apnea, rather than insomnia.)

One last thing to mention is that insomnia is a separate problem from sleep deprivation. Many people deliberately do

not spend enough time sleeping. Maybe they are in school or are trying to work two jobs and end up sleeping only four or five hours a night. It is probably obvious, but the solution for these folks is simply to rebalance their schedules so that they can get adequate sleep.

Studies on insomnia often lump sleep-deprived individuals with those who simply can’t fall asleep well. This can make their results confusing.

People who do not sleep well have an increased risk of poorly controlled high blood pressure, obesity, and even strokes and heart attacks. More than that, people who have inadequate sleep tend to have trouble with concentrating and with daytime sleepiness (This is a safety issue with things like driving and operating heavy machinery).

Statistics show that 1 in 3 Americans deal with chronic insomnia. Many of them use over-the-counter remedies to try to help them sleep.

Don’t Stress About Sleep

Sleep is one of those things that the more you work at doing, the less likely you will be to have it happen to you. It isn’t something where a person lies down to sleep and through sheer willpower and focus, they are able to fall asleep in 5 minutes.

Instead, sleep comes because our minds are relaxed, our hearts are at peace, and we are physically tired. There is little that you can do about getting yourself to sleep faster other than simply trying to wear yourself out during the day through hard

physical activity, such as work or exercise.

It seems like people who have trouble with insomnia have increasing levels of anxiety around falling asleep. They worry about it and even though they are tired, they have difficulty shutting down their minds when bedtime rolls around. They may even get sleep trackers to try to monitor how they are doing with their sleep patterns.

An excessive focus on sleep is bound to backfire. If you can keep from stressing about falling asleep or the amount that you are sleeping, that is better than ramping up your level of anxiety. It is important to remember that even though you are not actually asleep, you are still resting when you are lying in bed and that is beneficial.

Limit Caffeine

There is no evidence that moderate consumption of coffee and tea is harmful to humans. (By moderate consumption, doctors mean 2 to 3 cups a day.) In fact, coffee is associated with lower rates of heart disease, diabetes, and certain types of cancer.² Tea, both green and black, probably has similar health benefits.³

Even though these drinks are likely beneficial, they contain caffeine. Caffeine has two downsides. First, it often leads to palpitations (skipped heart beats). While not dangerous, these can be uncomfortable and if someone has issues with them, I recommend discontinuing the use of caffeinated drinks.

The second thing is that caffeine is a stimulant. We have all probably met people who can drink caffeinated drinks right before bedtime and it doesn't seem to bother them, but for most people, avoiding caffeine for five or six hours before bedtime is wise, particularly, for those who struggle with insomnia. Probably the biggest thing is that the use of caffeine in the evening increases people's worries and then leads to sleeplessness and restless sleep.⁴

A good rule of thumb that I suggest to my patients is to avoid drinking anything caffeinated past noon on any given day. Those who are very sensitive to caffeine may do well to cut it out altogether.

Exercise at the Right Time

Just about any health issue that is brought up could have exercise listed as something that is helpful in treating it. Insomnia is no exception.

For exercise to be effective, it needs to be aerobic (exercise that increases both breathing rate and heart rate) and done on a chronic basis (daily for at least 16 weeks). Studies that looked at the effectiveness of aerobic exercise found that it had similar benefits to sleeping medications from a sleep standpoint, yet without the downside of side effects.⁵

The point with exercise is not simply that it makes people more tired so that they fall asleep faster, it also seems to release

endorphins. These endorphins have many benefits in relaxing us when it comes time to sleep and helping us to stay asleep through the night.

It is important to note that vigorous exercise right before bedtime is probably not a good idea. While exercise is good, it gets the heart rate up and could make it more difficult for an hour or two afterward to fall asleep.

Practice Good Sleep Hygiene

Part of the reason that “modern” men struggle so much with sleep is that they have forgotten the basic techniques that people practiced, before the time of electricity.

One of the most important things is to try to be consistent in the times that we wake up and go to sleep. Your body and mind will get used to the schedule that you set for them, but if you wake up at 6:00 am on weekdays and then sleep in till 9:00 am on the weekends and fluctuate your evening schedule similarly, it will negatively impact your hormones.

Our pineal gland makes a hormone called melatonin that is highest in the evening hours. On the other hand, in the mornings, around the time we are ready to wake up, our adrenal glands make a hormone called cortisol, which increases our heart rate and blood pressure and gets us ready to start the day with maximum energy.

These hormones are cyclical and are affected by our exposure to sunlight and the sleep-wake patterns that we maintain. This is part of the reason why rotating shift workers (people who have a constantly changing work schedule) as well as night shift workers often struggle with disordered sleep. Simply, their bodies aren't able to get used to their sleep-wake patterns and probably aren't producing hormones in cycles that are helpful for them.

More than a schedule, it is important to do things to keep your bedroom a restful spot. Try to reserve your bed for sleep. Don't use screens in your bedroom—you want your mind to associate going into your bedroom and lying down in bed, with falling asleep.

Focus on doing things that you find restful for at least an hour before bedtime. Reading news stories that fill your mind with negative or angry thoughts is not a good idea in this time leading up to sleep. The same is true with getting into arguments—either in real life or on social media. It is going to be hard to shut our minds off when they are still churning from a recent debate.

Keep your bedroom dark. Even small amounts of light at night are associated with negative effects on sleep. It seems that people who sleep with a nightlight have higher nighttime heart rates, poorer sleep, and some negative metabolic effects.⁶ Nobody is totally certain why this is true, but in the days before electricity, when people blew out their lamps or candles, there was pretty much total darkness in a home. Our

bodies and minds probably need this downtime from light to function well.

Reduce nighttime noises. Using white noise makers or other things that mask the noise of the world around us can be helpful for people who are light sleepers.

Supplements

There is a huge market for vitamins and supplements in the United States. Most of these are not harmful, but it is questionable how effective they are at producing the effects that the people who take them hope they will.

Melatonin is the most commonly taken supplemental sleep aid. As mentioned above, our bodies make melatonin in the evening hours, and it helps relax us when it is time to go to sleep. As such, melatonin is most helpful in situations where your brain doesn't know when to make melatonin, such as people dealing with jet lag (flying across time zones), and people with rotating shift work.

If you take it every day, melatonin probably will stop working as effectively, but using it short term may help. There doesn't seem to be major downsides to using it, but some people do have hungover feelings with it.

Magnesium and B-complex vitamins also have some indication of improved sleep with those who take them. The one caution with magnesium is that people who have kidney issues can end up with elevated magnesium levels and should avoid taking magnesium supplementation without their doctor's approval.

Medications

Something like 65 billion dollars a year is spent by Americans on sleeping medications. Much of this is actually spent on over-the-counter sleeping pills, but there are lots of prescription-only medications as well.

The majority of over-the-counter medications for sleep contain sedating antihistamines. Antihistamines are medications that are designed to reduce allergy symptoms, but some of the earliest ones, like diphenhydramine and doxylamine, had lots of side effects, including sleepiness and dry mouth.

Most of the over-the-counter medicines for insomnia have one of these two agents in them. People, particularly those over 65, need to be careful with these medicines; they can lead to groggy feelings the next day, along with brain fog, and even gait unsteadiness.

It is hard to know what to say about prescription medications. They are varied and have a variety of side effects. Many of them are actually anxiety medications that have been repurposed to function as sleep aids. Others are specifically sleep agents that work on various chemicals in the brain that are associated with sleep.

Most of these medications can be helpful in the short term. If someone has terrible insomnia after a death in the family, they may need something to help them get back into a normal sleep pattern. However, if used over the long term, people develop a tolerance of these medicines and find that they have difficulty sleeping, even when they take them.

People who have some other thing that is causing them to struggle with sleep will need to address that. For instance, people who have really bad arthritis pain need to address that. It could be that taking Tylenol at night could make a big difference in the amount of sleep that someone with severe arthritis gets.

Just as a final note, it is important to figure out if there is something else going on that negatively impacts sleep. Two disorders – restless leg syndrome and obstructive sleep apnea – are very common and easy to treat. People who have them will struggle to achieve restful sleep, but their issues are very different from simple insomnia.

As always, the best thing to do, when in doubt, is consult a medical professional.

Conclusion

Our bodies were created with a need to have times of rest and times of sleep. There are few things that are as frustrating as lying down with the full intention to sleep and then watching the hours tick by on our clocks.

We are “fearfully and wonderfully made,” but sometimes, with the modern world running full speed around us, we do not take the time we need to calm our minds and take care of our bodies. It can turn into a vicious cycle where we are too exhausted to do the things we need to care for ourselves, but too stressed to have our minds enter the deep sleep that we are in need of.

There aren't easy answers, but for the Christian, we will begin to take healthy steps, even though we are tired. More than that, we will cast our cares and anxieties on our Heavenly Father, for we know that He cares for us.

Most of all, we know that *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee –Isaiah 26:3.*

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/emres/longhourstraining/scale.html>
2. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8562048/#:~:text=A%20significant%20number%20of%20studies,%20kahweol%2C%20and%20chlorogenic%20acids>
3. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4055352/>
4. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16949554/>
5. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3370319/>
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An Ordered Life

by Sheryl Zeiset
Lebanon, PA

The way you keep your house, the way you organize your time, the care you take in personal appearance, the things you spend your money on, all speak loudly about what you believe. The beauty of God's peace shines out of an ordered life. A disordered life speaks loudly of disorder in the soul. –Elisabeth Elliot

I've read some feisty disagreements to this quote. How can we judge the state of a woman's heart and soul by the state of her house? We can argue that visiting the sick, rocking your little ones, and having time to listen to the woes of another are infinitely more important than an orderly house. After all,

Jesus applauded Mary (...and [she] hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her. –Luke 10:42) for sitting at His feet, instead of flustering around like Martha.

I think Elisabeth Elliot would agree. But she also knew that having the clarity of mind to visit the sick and reach out to others usually comes from a woman who has her life in order. Elisabeth had unusually disciplined parents. Her father always had his papers, books, and pencils arranged one certain way on his desk, his sharpened pencils all pointing the same direction. As a child, she delighted in messing it up slightly when she dusted his desk, just to watch his chagrin. Everything from the

time of getting out of bed, to brushing teeth, and doing homework was done on a schedule.

Over the years, whenever she would describe her childhood, some would react negatively, thankful that they weren't raised in such a stringent environment. Elisabeth always disagreed with their pushback. Her experience was that their well-managed days left more time and energy for play, laughter, and the things that mattered.

I was raised in a family where cleanliness was considered nearly as important as godliness. We had daily, weekly, and bi-annual routines of keeping our house clean. These routines included sweeping and straightening the main rooms of the house every day. Dusting, mopping, scrubbing bathrooms, and washing sheets happened on Fridays. And we tore the whole house apart in the spring and fall, cleaning out closets and drawers, washing walls, sorting, throwing out, and organizing till every room was in fastidious order. We loved to find new ways to arrange the furniture to give each room a fresh, new appeal. My dad would patiently endure, even joking on one occasion that he almost crawled into a dresser drawer to sleep, as he couldn't find the bed. We would laugh, undeterred, intoxicated with the delight of throwing away bags of trash, of the lines upon lines of clean bedding flapping in the wind, and the ultimate reward of a clean house. By the time my six sisters and I got married and started homes of our own, these routines were so well established that we didn't consider any other way of keeping house. We had a lot to learn about other—perhaps more balanced—ways of doing things.

As teenagers, we girls started working in other homes as maids, helping busy moms. During this phase of life, we learned that there are many 'right' ways to keep house. I learned that it's okay for people to have different definitions of clean. I found that some women are queens of their kitchen, happily cooking up delectable caldrons of food, yet seemingly oblivious to their hopelessly cluttered house. Others kept their house neatly organized but struggled to keep a regular meal schedule. I learned that women often have different priorities in their housekeeping and each one has gifts that benefit their families. So even though I agree with the above-stated quote by Elisabeth Elliot, I think there is a lot of room for each woman to exercise her gifts and priorities.

I also spent years in an African village where clean was something entirely different than my earlier definition. I learned from my neighbors that a woman is expected to sweep her courtyard every morning if she wants to be well thought of in the neighborhood. To them it was acceptable and even expected to pile their supper dishes in a basin and wait till morning to wash them, because after all, it was dark, and who can wash dishes in the dark? Spring cleaning to my African neighbors meant hauling a special kind of mud from the river valley and spreading a fresh layer on their walls. Even though I

loved the 'clean' appeal of a freshly mudded wall, I didn't know how to do it. The difficulty of hauling heavy buckets of mud and dealing with blistered hands made it nearly impossible for me to live up to their standard unless I wanted to pay one of them to do it for me.

We often compare one housewife with another or one culture with another. But what is God's perspective on this subject? Does our housekeeping have anything to do with godliness or is it up to each individual?

Working and taking care of things was always part of God's plan. God spent six days creating a world of impeccable order, then on the sixth day He created Adam and Eve and placed them in the Garden of Eden for the purpose of tending it. And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it –Genesis 2:15. Adam and Eve had partnered with God to maintain this beauty and order. He had a job for them to do and He expected them to do it faithfully and well.

Every mother of little ones knows that keeping an orderly house is not for the fainthearted. It takes time, energy, and management we don't always have. Realistically, there are times when extra projects are happening, a new baby is born, or other circumstances happen which make it hard to keep order. But having a plan in place helps to get back on track.

Here are a few tips:

1. Set daily and weekly goals and schedules. The best advice I've heard on getting your goals accomplished is: "Get up and do it." Procrastination is our worst enemy.
2. Remember that your habits become your children's habits. If they have a daily chore list and do them regularly, it will become a normal part of life. By the time they are ten years old, making their beds and cleaning the bathroom on Wednesday morning will have become a habit. What can be better than a positive habit which blesses the whole family? If each child has a few of these habits, it helps a home run smoothly. Have your own set of habits, like always making your own bed before starting the day and keeping the kitchen counters clutter-free. Your children learn by watching you.

3. Have two or three set laundry days in your week. On laundry morning (or the night before) the dirty laundry gets sorted into piles and the first load started. By evening, I like to have it all washed, dried, folded, and put away. That way I have five days out of the week that I don't have to think about laundry. One of those 'laundry free' days can be scheduled for towels and bed sheets. Consider teaching your children to reuse towels or having one towel personalized for each child which only gets washed on the designated day. If you have the space, laundry can be folded right beside the washer and dryer, eliminating the need to haul baskets of unfolded laundry around.

4. Be a prudent shopper. If you're tempted to buy excess at yard sales, stay home. Make it a habit to buy only what you need and only if you have a plan and a place for the item. Remember that contentment at home feeds simplicity. Discontent feeds unnecessary shopping and overflowing cupboards and closets. Keep only enough clothes in your children's drawers to make it from one laundry day to the next, plus a few for traveling. Fewer clothes mean less to keep organized. Don't buy shampoo or toiletries just because they're on sale if you don't need them. Defrost your freezers once a year and keep tabs on what you have; use it instead of buying more. The less you have to keep organized, the easier your job.

5. Make sure everything has a place to belong. If it doesn't, find a solution or get rid of it. Your children should know where everything belongs, even the fingernail clippers. When they use a hammer or the broom or decide to build a blanket fort on a rainy afternoon, everyone should know the expectations—if you get it out, you are responsible to put it away. This takes a lot of training when the children are little, but it pays off!

6. Own what you love. With some careful shopping in thrift stores, you can collect dishes, bedding, and décor for only a few dollars. Buy only the things you're confident you like and that matches the things already in your cupboards (if color schemes are important to you). This takes some patience, but it's well worth it. My rule of thumb is this: a few beautiful things I love to use and that is all I need.

7. Put your house to sleep every evening before going to

bed. Do a quick sweep of the floors, straighten couch pillows and throws, put books and toys away, make sure the kitchen table and counters are cleared and wiped. It is inspiring to wake up to a tidy house, rather than having to deal with yesterday's clutter.

8. Notice beauty and find ways to bring it into your home. This is not selfish or vain; it is acknowledging God's creation and His love for beauty. This does not necessarily mean owning an up-to-date, expensive home. True beauty is simple and down to earth—a cup of tea, a few flowers gracing the table, or meals served with care and thought.

In your quest for order and beauty, remember that it is a balancing act. We are serving the ones we love, and servants are not selfish. It will not hurt your house to miss the weekly cleaning if there's a neighbor needing some care, or your children are sick, or unexpected company arrives. Having an open, hospitable attitude means welcoming people in, no matter what the state of your house. This relaxed atmosphere will make others feel at ease.

God is intensely interested in the way we run our homes. He is a God of order and beauty, and as we bring the same into our homes, we are partnering with Him to bring a small piece of beauty to this world of chaos. A welcoming home, full of peace and order is pushing back the darkness and ushering in light and goodness. Your home can be a haven of peace, a small slice of His kingdom come so others may know and see Jesus.

1. *The Shaping of a Christian Family, Elisabeth Elliot*

A welcoming home, full of peace and order is pushing back the darkness and ushering in light and goodness. Your home can be a haven of peace, a small slice of His kingdom come so others may know and see Jesus.



Are all Alternative Medicines and Practices equal?

by Rick Hess
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Maybe some of our readers would say that this question isn't necessary. Some would say that the answer is yes, while others would say that it is no. Some have assumed that because certain products have been used by evil men, that they are then by their very nature, evil. Believe it or not, some even feel that way about herbs. I recently read a church booklet that slammed all alternative practices and the use of oriental herbs. So, maybe to try to bring clarity to the issue, the pursuit of the answer to this question is valid.

From the creation of the world until today, God has allowed every culture to discover some truths about the plants and animals that they live beside every day. There is no one, but God Himself, who knows all there is to know about His fascinating creation. So, it is important that we be able to learn from each other. However, every culture has a dark, occultic side, as well. This we want to avoid.

My interest in learning about different cultures started when I was young. I was raised with a Korean sister and a Vietnamese brother, who were my siblings through adoption. Also, although the Hess family has Swiss background, I ended up being raised in a predominantly Russian Church.

Over the years, I have been able to study a bit on Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and Confucianism, as well as many diverse groups of Catholic, Protestant and Anabaptist Christians. I have also been greatly blessed with the opportunity to learn about many other cultures when my family was preparing to go to the mission field.

For two and a half years, we had the opportunity of living in the very primitive culture of rural Haiti. There, many of our native neighbors practiced a type of witchcraft called Voodoo, a hybrid form of animism (fear and the worship of many nature spirits/demons) and Roman Catholicism.

I have also been privileged, as a mission board chairman, to travel to remote eastern Tanzania's Rukwa Valley (in Africa) and to sit with, and interview, the animistic tribal people in the

bush. There too, their animistic world view leads them to practice a form of witchcraft with charms, spells, and lots of fear.

I applaud the desire of our churches to protect our unsuspecting members from the involvements in the cults and the occultic, often presented as alternative medicine. Both my wife and I have had some witchcraft involvements in our extended families. This we have renounced and have no desire to return to.

As Christians, we are called to love all people from all nations, races, and belief systems since we are all made in the image of God. Yet, in wisdom, we need to abhor that which God hates. Witchcraft would be one of those things. (see Deuteronomy 18:10-12 and Galatians 5:19-21) Having said this, I have a concern that we should take a fair and balanced look at this very important subject.

Oriental or Occidental

The simplest way of understanding and talking about cultures is to divide the world in two halves—Occident (western culture) and Oriental (eastern culture). There are differences greater than locations and races involved here. It is how we think and process our experiences, how we write our thoughts and poetry, etc. We need to be very cautious when starting this dividing process in cultural learning. We should not set up ourselves and our culture as superior. By nature, we all tend to think that "we" and "ours" are better than others, but no culture, or race is superior to another, just *different*. Pride will always divide. Paul declared that "God made of one blood all nations" (see Acts 17:26). Cultural and racial pride produces prejudice, and I know that it is not our desire to be prejudiced. Rather, we should seek to try to understand each other, the best that we can.

Does Oriental equal evil? Does the term "Traditional Chinese Medicine" mean it is, without further consideration, wrong by its very nature? Because of the fall of man into sin, the Oriental and Occidental cultures both have their fair share of evil in

them. They both have their false religions, folk superstitions, and forms of witchcraft and idolatry. Neither culture has the dark-side market cornered. In other words, neither culture has a measurable difference in its amount of darkness (evil).

Interestingly enough, according to the location depicted in the Bible, the Garden of Eden was part of the Oriental world, not the Occidental. The reality is that each of the biblical writers, whom God inspired to record the Bible, were Orientals by birth. Jesus Christ, Himself, grew up in an oriental culture. Both Judaism and Christianity are eastern religions. The Apostle Paul was, by birth, from Oriental culture, but had an incredible ability to understand and address those of Occidental cultures, like those with the Roman and the Greek worldviews.

What is a Worldview?

An individual's worldview includes all their experiences, upbringing, religion, traditions, superstitions, education, influences, economics, and even their local climate. All that has affected and impacted a person helps to form their worldview.

Every culture strives to explain that which they cannot see in one way or another. The more primitive cultures (animists), will attribute almost everything negative in life (like sickness, mysterious events, or calamity) to the unseen spirit world, including the fear of their own ancestral spirits. I saw this in Africa and in Haiti. It is surely the motivator of the Taoist priests in the orient, as well.

Fear drives people to do lots of different things to “appease” the spirit world. Sacrifices, charms, offerings, altars and special furnishings, rituals, herbal concoctions, ceremonies, incense, burning candles, self-abuse, libations, and other superstitions, all get woven in with the hope of causing the spirits to leave them alone. This is what establishes their world view.

The world view of the industrial world, on the other hand, is often established on a denial of the spirit world adopting secular humanism and the godless theory of evolution, thus

making man the highest moral being. Therefore, many conventional doctors' worldviews have been shaped and corrupted by their secular humanistic education. According to this world's wisdom, today's medical professionals are taught that it is their duty to control births, abort unborn babies, use vaccines made with human fetus materials, excuse the sin of fornication, and perform gender-change operations. Did you know that pharmaceutical companies are very much involved in influencing the training material for medical doctors, presenting pharmaceutical drugs as the only option? These things deserve to be questioned and challenged by sincere Christians. Is one worldview (primitive or industrial) actually superior to the other?

Should Doctors be trusted without question?

If you grew up like I did, you believed, “Just trust the doctor, he knows best”. But doctors are human beings, with all of the shortcomings and limitations of mankind. The modern medical education is highly specialized, often not allowing room for nutritional training, much less, time to consider any alternatives to the conventional path of medicine. When a conventional doctor suggests that someone should use contraceptives (even though the ones they are recommending may cause the body to abort after conception or raise the risk of cancer) will you accept his suggestion without question. What about if a medical professional advises that you should be sterilized or have an abortion because you can't afford more children (this happened in my own family), will you accept this advice of the world? What about when you are told that you need to accept vaccines made with aborted fetal tissue (more that 50% of them are), or allow your aged parent to die of morphine overdoses, should you hear this counsel? Obviously, the god of this world has darkened the thinking of these medical professionals.

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful –Psalm1:1.

Second Opinions... Even in areas of no moral question a

second opinion is wise. Soon after our tenth child (a daughter) was born, it was discovered that there was a problem with her hip. Some medical professionals who were advising us about her care told us that she would need to have a series of operations to repair a “hip click” or her future walking would be hindered. They were talking, at that time, tens of thousands of dollars' worth of surgeries.

I had been in the operating room when the C-section was performed. I had observed that she was a breech presentation and that the doctor had placed his fingers on either side of the baby's waist to pull her out of the womb, while she was still doubled up. Because of this, I decided we should have another opinion before going through with the surgeries. When she was one week old, we took her to our chiropractor, who correctly diagnosed a dislocated hip. Then, in less than a minute, he gently lifted her off the table by her feet, gave a gentle but firm shake, helping the hip to pop back into place. She has had no hip problem from then until now, 17 years later. Wisdom cries for a second opinion.

Sometimes it is said that money talks. I'm not sure that the medical world is any more guilty of this than any other profession. When I was young there were three careers that no one pursued unless they felt a sense of calling to serve the community—the teacher, the preacher, and the doctor—since the income wasn't very good.

This has changed for all three of these. Maybe the greatest amount of increase has been in the medical world. After a recent hospitalization, I looked at the bill and declared, “They make it so that it doesn't pay to live.” (Six days of care for the price of a house!)

Healing Traditions: An Herbal Apology

From ancient times, every culture has identified some of their local plant life that could help them against the onslaught of human sickness, both minor and major. In God's infinite wisdom, He created a huge variety and diversity of plant life

in most micro-cultures. This has allowed both Judeo/Christian cultures and pagan cultures alike to find ways of making medicine long before the industrial age developed. Some of these cures were truly more superstitious than anything, but many of the herbal remedies were actually quite effective and now have been verified by scientific research and double-blind testing* for their genuine healing properties.

Can Herbs be evil?

Come, let us reason together and consider the following points:

1. Satan is the source of evil. Can Satan create life? He is only a creature, not a creator; he can only create havoc.

2. God alone is the Creator of all things living. In the beginning, God created heaven and earth and all that is contained therein.

3. If the Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, and the cattle on a thousand hills are His, is there anything, including herbs, that doesn't belong to God by right of creation?

4. The Genesis account is very clear; God created all things good.

5. The Bible teaches us that God was the very first Gardener, *And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed –Genesis 2:8.*

6. Why did God design the herbs and plants and trees in His creation? *And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat –Genesis 1:29*

7. Since all plants originated from God, it is evident that God lovingly created the plant life for the benefit of man and beast. Maybe Adam and Eve knew how to use every plant that God had made, but somehow over the years much of this knowledge has been forgotten. This is especially true within the last 100 years, as country after country has moved from a



third-world status to join the ranks of the industrialized world. As this shift has occurred, many of the old “folk remedies” have been considered “old fashioned” and thus they were replaced by modern treatments and therapies. It is due to this that we have needed to rediscover the purpose and power contained in the God’s created plant life around us.

8. After God had created all the plants and herbs, the record of Scripture tells us: *And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. Genesis 1:31.* There is no record of any plant life being created later, so ALL plants would fit this category—**it was very good!** Thus, there would be NO plant life that is evil by its very nature.

9. Just because man tries to use something from God’s creation for an evil purpose, does not make it become evil. When some people abuse communion or baptism, we Christians don’t discontinue their proper use and practice. (I’ve seen counterfeit baptism in Voodoo.)

10. The reality is that herbs are amoral (neither bad nor good in themselves); it is what we do with them that determines a good or evil result. A witchdoctor may mix a potion of powerful herbs with the intent to kill someone. Some of her herbs may be beneficial, but not in the specific quantity she has mixed them. At the same time a skilled God-fearing herbalist, may make up a formula using some of the very same herbs to help someone’s body heal successfully from a serious sickness.

- A Haitian or African root doctor may mix his roots and alcohol together, then ring a bell over them to call in a spirit to strengthen them in an occultic fashion. At the same time, an herbal company, using well established science as a foundation, macerates fresh organic herbs to make life-sustaining tinctures that bring glory and honor to God.

- An Oriental Taoist priest may use an herb that actually has true healing benefits, but then he twists his religious beliefs of Chi energy meridian blockages, that have no scientific foundation, in with it. Autopsies have never discovered these meridians. And, all the source of life energy is from heaven, not the earth.

- A homeopathic apothecary, following the teachings of C.F. Samuel Hahnemann may use an herb that has true healing benefits, but then dilute it 100,000 times until there is no material presence of that original herbal compound remaining. The reality is that herbal extracts are strengthened by concentration, not dilution.

11. Conventional medicine is the newcomer. Herbal remedies have been successfully used for some 6,000 years. Both herbal and conventional medicine are learning new things all the time. Remember, it was the mainstream medical thought that promoted “bloodletting” and the use of leeches back in the early 1800s. Why should the use of herbs be automatically linked to false religion or witchcraft? Isaiah 38:21 says that

Isaiah had told Hezekiah, to wear a poultice or plaster of figs for their healing benefits—to recover from a deadly boil.

12. If you look into it, most conventional drugs that are developed, have started by observing an herb, identifying which of the properties in the herb make its potency, and then finding a synthetic way to produce that constituent in a highly concentrated form. That is what conventional medicines are. That is also why they must normally have pages of warnings of side effects—because they are now being used out of the natural balance that God designed in the plant—and our bodies may not be able to handle them as well in that way.

13. Many of our early Anabaptist forefathers, settling here on the colonial frontier of what today is modern Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, would have perished if it had not been for some wise grandmother or midwife who knew how to use herbs appropriately. (see the article: Mennonites, Misunderstandings and Herbal Medicines in the Summer 2023 magazine).

14. Both herbs and conventional drugs can have their appropriate place. When I suffered with pneumonia from COVID 19, I was glad for strong IV antibiotics. But it is a fact that antibiotics are routinely overprescribed and there are herbs that could treat lesser illnesses better without killing our healthy microbiome (gut bacteria) to accomplish healing.

15. Did you know the general words herb or herbs are used in the Bible 37 times? These words often simply mean *a plant or a vegetable*, which is what herbs are. It could be anything from an onion in the garden, to a lowly dandelion in your yard, or even an exotic desert tree.

Specifically mentioned in the Bible are: hyssop, garlic, onion, spikenard, balm, camphire, cinnamon, calamus, frankincense, saffron, rue, mint, cumin, anise, olive, myrrh, aloes, and mandrake. Some of these are both culinary and medicinal, but most are the names of medicinal herbs.

16. The Greek word in the Bible for sorcery, *Pharmakia* (where we get our word pharmacy) cannot be easily separated from either conventional medicine or herbal medicine. Is God opposed to all medicines? It would appear the term involves more than just medicine. It likely infers witchcraft and placing trust where it does not belong. Whether it is a Taoist priest and his medicine or a conventional doctor and his medicine to which a person gives the trust and faith that only God deserves, both can become a form of idolatry. Medicines, conventional or herbal, can only assist the body with its healing, but God must do the healing. We must admit that it is not just Haitians, Africans, and Taoists who can put their faith where it doesn’t belong.

17. The Greek word *magos* means *oriental scientist, a magician, sorcerer, wiseman*. Like in the English language, one word may carry several uses. God-fearing Daniel, who was



the head of the Magos in Babylon, certainly was not a sorcerer! Interestingly, of the three gifts brought by the Magos that visited the baby Jesus, two of them were herbal resins, namely myrrh and frankincense. Would we have rejected them because they had come from Oriental Magos? Would we have also rejected the gold they offered? We don’t have record of Jesus’ parents rejecting the proffered gifts, so we would expect that they received them with thanksgiving.

18. Some try to use the average life expectancy of the population in developing countries to prove the superiority of conventional medicines. Average age is a very unreliable way to evaluate the success of drugs or herbs, as there are many factors such as national famines, political upheavals, cultural changes, etc. that affect the average age of a population and rarely do all but one of those factors remain the same.

When I moved to Haiti in 1997, the average age was 39. By the time I came back to America in the year 2000, it had risen to 54. Why? It wasn’t because I had lived there. Nothing had changed except a major push for birth control and a national childhood vaccination program. Births had slightly decreased in number, along with the deaths of new mothers and infants. The vaccinations prevented some child deaths. These minor changes threw the average up a lot as the few deaths prevented were all young people, which always results in pulling the average down.

19. There are many dark practices right here in America. Ancient powwowing and “saying words” or incantations, water witching and divination, hexing, fortune telling, astrology or following the signs of the zodiac (even used in the Farmer’s Almanacs), psychic readings, Ouija boards, tarot cards, palm reading, seances to call the spirits of the dead, spell casting, etc.— all are motivated by the desire to have power that God did not intend man to have. These practices are

supposedly a two-billion-dollar-per-year industry in our “enlightened” country.

20. We do need to be aware of probing into the “darkness” with other questionable practices such as reflexology and use of the black box (radionics). There are some chiropractors who simply adjust to un-pinch nerves in the spine; others use a form of spiritism. Beware of kinesiology, homeopathy, and psychedelic drug use. There are others that practice various forms of meditation to try to attain peace and healing. Meditation will only truly help us when we meditate on the living and written Word of God.

21. Notice the beautiful picture of heaven that John gives us in the last chapter of Revelation 22:1-3 *And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him.* I wonder why in the end, it doesn’t say “the pills shall be for the healing of the nations”?

AHPA (American Herbal Product Association), the experts looked to by the FDA as well as many other universities, have done extensive testing on different herbs, using double blind clinical testing with placebos to establish efficacy.*

***Dietary supplements are very highly regulated under the FDA, much more than the food industry is, with many checks and counter checks and an incredible amount of paperwork for accountability. Always purchase herbal products from companies that are FDA registered and inspected, as there are some companies who are not.*

Whose God Is Their Belly?

by Lee Rufener
Athens, WI

For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things –Philippians 3:18 - 19

Perhaps there is no more frequently tolerated sin in America than gluttony. Its gigantic presence is manifest in every church culture from the Catholics to the Anabaptists. It stands as a proud and daunting giant in the valley of intemperance, mocking the sons of grace in their weakness to overcome him. I say this, not as someone who is immune to the attractions of a potluck or buffet line, but as a fellow soldier who needs all the help he can get.

Gluttony is the worship of food. It is an idolatrous tableland where King Stomach rules voraciously and our best intentions too often bow to his mandates. Paul gives direction specifically in regard to food that he *...will not be brought under the power of any –1 Corinthians 6:12*. The picture presented is that of being sold into slavery. Paul had but one master—Jesus Christ.

Gluttony, then, is submission to a craving for food that conquers you. Over 2/3 of the population in America is overweight, and over 1/3 is considered obese, costing Americans an estimated 147 billion dollars annually. This is not just a mere weight problem or dysfunctional disorder toward food, but a sin problem. We often find ourselves careening between stuffed stomachs and crash diets, while our waistlines show relentless vigilance in extending their borders. The foolish farmer, who, upon expanding his barns, chose to take his *...ease, eat, drink, and be merry –Luke 12:19*, will doubtlessly soon need to buy bigger clothes for himself as well. This that some call 'fat and happy' is a myth.

While the grossly obese stand ashamed of their intemperance, there are many who are not obvious food felons yet who also worship the god of gluttony. We are a social people and eating is a wonderful way of spending time together, yet our feasting does not need to be gluttonous. How ironic that the season during which many celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus provides the perfect invitation to idolatry. Who hasn't

come away from such splendid entrees feeling as stuffed as the turkey we just ate?

I recently stepped on the scales and was surprised to find myself weighing 15 pounds over the weight stated on my driver's license. The kind folks of Toledo unselfishly gave us the "no strings—honest weight" invention, but we struggle to be thankful at the times we find courage enough to climb aboard. While most would not consider me overweight, I am hard pressed to state how I put on those pounds without partaking in gluttony. While this may not be the ugliest and most dangerous giant in our spiritual world, it certainly ranks among the largest.

While many would rather regard it as only a small crime-against-one's-body, the Bible defines gluttony as an idolatrous sin against God. Paul describes perilous times that shall come in the last days when *...men shall be ... lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God –2 Timothy 3:2-4*. Food and wine are pleasurable, but they are also bosom partners in the destruction of man's body and soul. *Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty... –Proverbs 23:20-21*.

If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear –Deuteronomy 21:18-21. Fortunately, since Christ, we have stepped away from this merciless treatment of sinners. Unfortunately, we have similarly stepped away from honestly dealing with sin.

Some eat to live; some live to eat. The latter are *...they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly... –Romans 16:18*. It is a matter of servanthood. Food is created to serve the body. The body is made to serve the Lord as the

temple of the Holy Ghost—*What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you... –1 Corinthians 6:19-20*.

The body cannot wholly serve the Lord when it is following the dictates of the belly. Therefore, gluttony is more about the addiction of our affection than about the contents of our cupboards. Our conscience should rebuke us with how often we fall short of glorifying God with our stomachs. But our aim is not to shame ourselves into injecting more kale chips and chia seeds into our system; *...For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats... –Hebrews 13:9*.

Both alcohol and food have a profound effect on our mental state. While God created food for us to enjoy and doesn't forbid the use of alcohol, moderation is the key. The problem arrives in that both are prone to abuse and therefore, difficult to control. Some wisely deem alcohol as unnecessary for good living and prefer not to partake in the temptation at all, but abstinence from food is not so accommodating. We do not overeat because we need that much food or like getting fat, but rather we overeat to comfort ourselves. Restaurants advertise "comfort foods" and make no apology for it. Eating is comforting and medicating, but it is also habit forming.

Raynald III was a fourteenth century duke in what is now Belgium. Grossly overweight, Raynald was commonly called by his Latin nickname, Crassus, which means "fat." After a violent quarrel, Raynald's younger brother, Edward, led a successful revolt against him. Edward captured Raynald but did not kill him. Instead, he built a room around Raynald in the Nieuwkerk castle and promised him that he could regain his title and property as soon as he was able to leave the room. This would not have been difficult for most people since the room had several windows and a door of near-normal size, and none was locked or barred. The problem was Raynald's size. To regain his freedom, he needed to lose weight. But Edward knew his older brother, and each day he sent a variety of delicious foods. Instead of dieting his way out of prison, Raynald grew fatter. When Duke Edward was accused of cruelty, he had a ready answer: "My brother is not a prisoner. He may leave when he so wills." Raynald stayed in that room for ten years and wasn't released until after Edward died in battle. By then his health was so ruined that he died within a year ... a prisoner of his own appetite. –Thomas Costain –The Three Edwards –The Life of Raynald III

Many of us are prisoners of our appetites as well. We are digging our own graves with our forks and spoons. After excessive eating, we become overwhelmed with shame, guilt, and regret. We may feel frustrated and depressed, wondering why we seem able to control every other area of our life but this one. It impacts our spiritual life, and we begin to make excuses or perhaps deny our gluttony, but peace is ebbing away like the sunset. In an ever-deepening darkness we return to our



convenient and comforting idol again. As the cycle begins to spiral out of control, in desperation we reach out for the next new, exciting, liberating, breakthrough ... diet plan. But even as a fifty-billion-dollar industry, the latest and greatest diet can never fix the tendency toward gluttony. It is an external solution to an internal problem. Like the drunkard, the fornicator, the sluggard, and the thief, the ax must be laid at the root of the problem. Nothing will be different until we think differently. We can submit to a food intake restriction, but unless we learn to exercise self-control at the mental level, a relapse is nearly inevitable.

God is our Refuge and our Food

At the foundation of most modern weight loss attempts is a selfish focus. We want to look better, feel better about ourselves, be healthier, or not be judged as lacking self-control. These may provide enough motivation for some to regulate their food intake, but for those with a more acute habit, it often isn't enough incentive. Our cause must be eternal, just like ... Jesus ... who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross... -Hebrews 12:2.

He set not the constraint before His eyes but the positive: the joy of helping others and the blessedness of pleasing God. It is very interesting to me that there are so many food and taste analogies in the Bible relating to God Himself:

- ...taste and see that the Lord is good... -Psalm 34:8
- ...desire the sincere milk of the word... 1Pet 2:2
- And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst -John 6:35
- Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.
- Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness -Isaiah 55:1-2

If we give our minds to being satisfied with spiritual bread, wine, and milk, then our physical desire to be comforted by food will lose its supreme power over our bodies. *For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost -Rom 14:17*

Jesus saith unto them, *My meat (food) is to do the will of him that sent me...* -John 4:34. For many, the thought of curtailing their appetite seems impossible, believing that their fate is to be fat. This is their first mistake. God has given us His Spirit without measure so that ... *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me -Philippians 4:13*

If God has forgiven us of our sins and fills us with the power

to overcome sin, then surely, He would like us to conquer our appetites. Though it may take years to restore what the glut-ton hath eaten, we start by repentance and reprogramming our minds with the truth that we can lose weight and keep it off because it is God's will and Christ lives in our hearts.

The Truth

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free -John 8:32. There is no more liberating antidote for a besetting habit than the truth. Most obese people have been relentlessly filling their minds with untruths concerning their infatuation: I can't lose weight—My body won't cooperate—I don't have enough will power—I must eat because I am stressed—I need a new diet plan—My metabolism is off. These misbeliefs come in all shapes and sizes, and some may even bear a small percentage of truth. But it is eating and exercise that governs our weight. No matter how many fat cells you have nor how fast you get hungry, nothing causes you to overeat and under-exercise except the very decisions you make. If we were asked to spin straw into gold, we could rightfully declare our inability, but willpower is not a substance you inherit. It is the exercise of truth in the inward parts. There is no easy way to lose weight. Weight loss happens as a result of eating less than you want to eat and exercising more than you want to exercise.

We must understand that the battle is not between us and food. It is between the spirit (what we stand for) and the body (what we crave for). The soul (our mind and emotions) vacillates between the two and makes the final decision. In the wilderness temptation, the hungry Christ was confronted with the thought of turning the stones into bread. The temptation was not gluttony, but that of whose will He would follow. His spirit ruled His flesh, and His spirit was subject to ...*every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God -Matt 4:4.* The reason we fall victim to temptations is failure to make a distinctive difference between our thoughts and our imagination in these destructive thinking habits. Tempting thoughts are not sin, but here is the critical point: the mind must decide if the thought is truthful or deceitful, upbuilding or destructive. As our imagination takes the thought, it expands it in one direction or another - either the truth that our spirit holds, or the emotions dictated from the feelings of our body. Gluttony not only does injustice to our body, but it quenches our spirit as well, determining which God or god we will serve. This is universal for any sin of the body.

- ...*whosoever* looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart -Matthew 5:28
- Thine eyes shall *behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things -Proverbs 23:33*

The eyes see the woman and the imagination breeds the desire - the desire influences the decision - the decision

prompts the act. This is true for alcohol as well. *Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright -Proverbs 23:31* Those who allow their imagination to follow their feelings are bound for failure. The longer our imagination is left to bask in the temptation, the more the will is broken down. An attempt to curtail decisions by self-control and a diet plan after arriving at this stage is too late. It is the reason that most diets fail. Once the habit is formed, we may not even be aware that we go through these steps, for it naturally becomes instinctive.

The Temptation

The temptation must be confronted at the primary level where the rubber meets the road, and the thoughts arise: "I am starving; That dessert looks so good; I am so discouraged; I need to eat something." ...*feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint...Behold, I am at the point to die...* -Genesis 25:30-32. We must recognize that this is the deceptive voice of our body and feelings. But what does the spirit say? ...*My... body is the temple of the Holy Ghost ...For I am bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's -1 Corinthians 6:19-20.* "Will eating this really satisfy my craving, or will it bring me regret? This promises me pleasure, but I love God more. If this is really so wonderful, perhaps I shall wait until I get to heaven and stuff myself there." We must tell ourselves the truth about the consequences of eating more calories than we burn, and the guilt associated with it afterward. We act according to what we believe. When Adam and Eve believed the devil, they literally ate themselves out of house and home. When we look up into heaven and ask God what to do, the grueling decision has been made and we obey the mandate of the Master. This is how we, ...*through the*

Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body... -Romans 8:13

The Triumph

But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof -Romans 13:14. Recognizing our gluttony is only half of the answer. Many people turn to food because they are emotionally 'starving'. Christ wants to fill that void. We need to cultivate a range of appetites for great and good things: prayer, good literature, Christian fellowship, Bible reading, nature, helping others, etc. As we become 'other' minded, old habits and appetites are replaced by new affections and inner peace. No longer must we be slaves to our appetites and bodily whims. We are no longer moved by every body-inspired notion that comes across our mind.

We should be ordinary people, who learn to eat ordinary food, at ordinary meals, governed by the Spirit of God. We shall possess the fruit of the Spirit by the virtue of temperance in regards to our daily bread and thus join ranks with the great apostle who says, *I beat my body and make it my slave—But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away -1 Corinthians 9:27.* Moreover, with the giant lying dead at our feet, we can look up into the heavens toward the God of the universe and hear Him say, ... *Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord -Matthew 25:23* Rest assured, those who secure God's principles to conquer this colossal foe will possess the grace to rule over many others as well.

I saw few people die of hunger—of eating, a hundred thousand. -Benjamin Franklin



Blessed Assurance

by Joel A. Hostetler
Coshocton, OH

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water –Hebrews 10:22

Imagine with me what it would be like to be blind. You would live life in the shadows, or perhaps even in complete darkness. You might be able to tell the difference between light and dark, but you couldn't see any objects. There would be little difference between your day and night, except for the change in the shadows that surround you. You could hope and wish and even try your hardest to see things and still only see nothing but a blur. To your physical eyes, what a sad and stark reality—no eyesight—no ability to see anything, no hope of seeing like a normal person. But to your spirit:

...Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!

...Oh, what a fore-taste of glory divine!

...Visions of rapture now burst on my sight!

...Watching and waiting, looking above!

...Praising my Savior all the day long.

This was the life story of one of the world's best poets and hymn writers. She had a full and blest life of nearly four score and fifteen years in service for the Lord. It is estimated that she wrote more than 8,000 gospel song texts in her lifetime. The hymn "Blessed Assurance" is considered by many to be among the top 10 hymns ever written. "The hymns she wrote have been and are still being sung more frequently than those of any other gospel hymn writer," as quoted from 101 Hymn Stories. Her contribution to modern hymnity has been a great and important part of sacred worship for the past one and a half centuries.

Fanny Jane Crosby, born on March 24, 1820, in southeast Putnam County, New York City, was the only child of her parents, John and Mercy Crosby. Her father tragically passed away when she was only six months of age, leaving her mother alone to support the family working as a maid. Fanny was primarily raised by her Christian maternal grandmother, who played a significant role in her upbringing and education. Her beloved grandmother devoted much of her time to reading the Bible and sharing selected poetry and literature with her. As a

result of this, the young Fanny developed an impressive ability to memorize lengthy passages from both the Old and New Testaments by actively listening to her grandmother.

She also began writing at a young age and penned her first poem at the age of eight:

Oh, what a happy child I am,
Although I cannot see!
I am resolved that in this world
contented I will be.
How many blessings I enjoy
That other people don't!
So weep or sigh because I'm blind,
I cannot, nor I won't.

Her blindness began when she developed inflammation in her eyes at two months of age. Their family physician was unavailable at the time, so a stranger, who claimed to be a medical professional, treated her. This quack doctor applied poultices to her eyes in an attempt to eliminate the infection. Although the infection was successfully cleared, the poultices left behind white scars that caused damage to her vision. They sought the help of a renowned surgeon in New York, but he was unable to restore her sight. As a result, Fanny could only perceive the presence of absence of light and could no longer see physical objects.

It is amazing that anyone, and especially a blind person, could write on such a vast variety of experiences and spiritual truths with such skill, speed, and proliferation. There is no doubt in my mind that the blessing of God was on her life, as she responded in such a positive way to the devastating physical handicap she lived with every day. There is also surely no question in anyone's mind that Fannie had a tremendous gift of verse, that very likely was strengthened by her inability to see.

For a considerable season of her life, while working with a music publisher, she wrote three new hymns each week. She used over 200 pen names besides her own as a humble way to conceal her identity. Although she has been gone for over a

century, some of her original hymn texts have continued to be uncovered up to the recent past.

At the age of 38, in the year 1858, Miss Crosby married Alexander Van Alstyne, a music composer, who, like her, had vision problems. Despite being married, Fanny continued to use her maiden name as her signature when publishing her hymns.

Fanny Crosby's hymns came about in a variety of ways. Often, the theme for a song was inspired by a suggestion from a visiting minister desiring a new song on a certain subject. At other times, musician friends would compose the music first, then ask her for the words. This was the case for the hymn, "Blessed Assurance."

One day, in 1873, when Fanny was 53 years of age, Mrs. Joseph Knapp, a close friend of hers, and one who loved composing music as a pastime, played this melody for her and

asked, "What does this tune say?" Fanny responded immediately, "Why, that says 'Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine.'" She proceeded to add words to that phrase, until she had the words of this classic hymn completed.

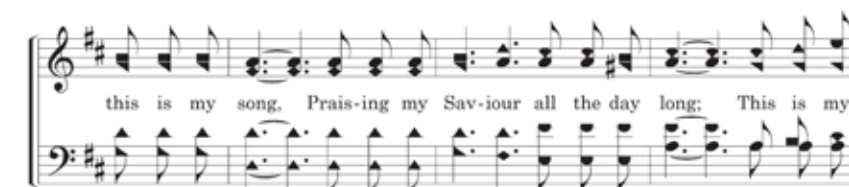
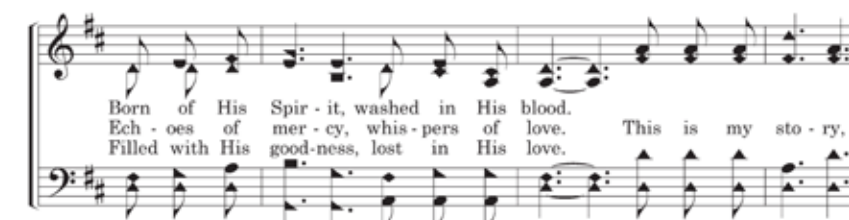
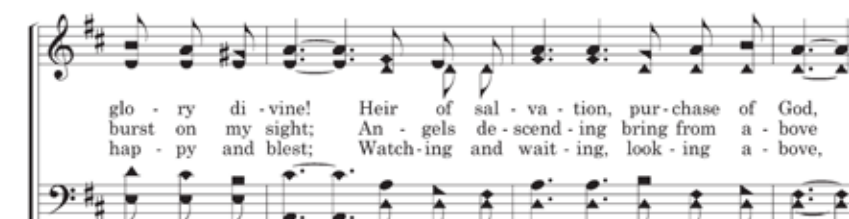
Fanny Crosby died in 1915, just 40 days before her 95th birthday, leaving behind a wealth of spiritual encouragement, exhortation, and consolation that has touched hearts and continues to change lives. Engraved on Fanny J. Crosby's tombstone at Bridgeport, Connecticut, are these significant words taken from our Lord's remarks to Mary, the sister of Lazarus, after she had anointed Him with costly perfume: "She hath done what she could." Only eternity will reveal the multitudes of people who have been won to a saving faith in Jesus Christ by one of her hymns.

Other hymns by Fanny J. Crosby include "All the Way My Savior Leads Me", "Jesus Keep Me Near the Cross", "My Savior First of All", "Rescue the Perishing", and "To God be the Glory."

Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine

Words:
Fanny J. Crosby, 1873

Lyrics:
Phoebe P. Knapp, 1873



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**While the earth remaineth, seedtime
and harvest, and cold and heat, and
summer and winter,**

day and night shall not cease.

GENESIS 8:22