

Loaves & Fishes

Volume 4 • Issue 1 • 2006

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*The power of God alone can multiply
these loaves and fishes in your hands
to more than you can contain.*

Morning Prayer

Dear Lord, please take the judgment
From my heart and replace it
With understanding and forgiveness.
Allow for my sorrow to be washed
Away with the pure joy of Christ.
Vanquish all my resentments and fill
My mind with merciful thoughts.
Vindicate me, Lord, deliver me from deceit.
Give me the wisdom to be uninhibited
By selfish desire, so that I can
Administer righteous pleasure to those You choose.
But most important, teach me to be
Selfless so that I may experience
True peace and happiness
In my day-to-day existence.
In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

—Timothy M. Stokes
Fresno County Jail; Fresno, California



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Loaves & Fishes is published quarterly by Lighthouse Publishing as the Lord provides. Our goal is to point those in prison to Jesus Christ and help them experience the life, hope, and freedom of a daily walk with Him.

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From the Editor...

The Return of the Kingdom

J. Anthony Hertzler



There is a society where weapons are forgotten because no one is afraid; where giving is a lifestyle instead of a headache in December; where marriages are full of joyful sacrifice and last a lifetime; where people from all cultures and walks of life have broken down the prejudices between them and have become one.

Perhaps you didn't know such a society exists. That's normal. The society isn't very well known. In fact, it is forbidden. You see, our planet is under enemy occupation. How the enemy took over and how the forbidden society began is a long story, but it's worth telling, so I am going to tell it here, and try to keep it short.

Long ago, before He created our world, God was worshipped in heaven by wonderful beings He had created, known as angels. Our records of what happened in heaven are sketchy, but it seems that one of the finest and most beautiful angels, Lucifer, son of the morning, wished to become God and led many angels

in a rebellion against the one true God (Isaiah 14:12-15). The rebels lost the war and were thrown out of heaven, and Lucifer vowed revenge. Lucifer's grudge twisted him from a glorious angel into the most evil being in the universe, the Prince of Darkness, known as the Dragon, the Devil, or simply the Enemy.

When God created our world and put Adam and Eve in charge of it, the Enemy, out of spite, swindled them into selling out to him (Genesis 3). This gave him power over the earth, and just as you may darken a room by shading the lamp, the Enemy blocked some of God's life-giving influence on the earth, and everything began to die. People and animals got terrible diseases. Animals killed and ate each other. The Enemy made the people his slaves, and he taught them to murder each other, and to gather in groups to murder other groups of people. (This was called war, and the Enemy loved it very much.) He taught the people to

lust for things that were not theirs, and they began lying, cheating, and stealing. Everyone died eventually; if they escaped being killed by war, sickness, or vicious animals, their bodies just wore out and died anyway. But you know this part already, since it is still happening today.

So the Enemy is in charge of the world. Remember, we sold it to him, way back at the beginning. And that would be the end of the story, if it weren't for the King.

Like the light from the sun, the King comes from God the Father. He is known as the Son of God. He actually created this universe, and He is the rightful ruler. Just over 2,000 years ago, He did something amazing. The King came back to earth as a baby and grew up as an ordinary man named Jesus.

The Enemy tried to get Jesus to fall for his tricks, but Jesus obeyed only God the Father (Matthew 4:1–11). When He was about 30 years old, He began defying the Enemy (Luke 7:22). The Enemy had made many people sick; Jesus healed them. The Enemy had sent his demons to control people's minds and make them miserable and crazy; Jesus threw the demons out. The Enemy had taught people to kill, steal, cheat, and lie; Jesus taught people to love everyone, even their enemies. You can see why

the Enemy hated Jesus with a passion. He was losing his grip on the world, so he convinced the people to murder Jesus.

That was his biggest mistake ever, because Jesus didn't stay dead. After three days, Jesus disappeared from the guarded grave and met with His followers. He gave them the best news in history—His death had paid the ransom to buy us all back from the Enemy. Nobody has to be his slave anymore. Then and there, Jesus laid out plans for a worldwide insurrection, or uprising, against the Enemy. Then He went back to heaven, and sent His own Spirit to earth to live in His followers. They began doing all the things Jesus had done (Mark 16:15–20), and more and more people left the Enemy and joined the insurrection. These newly freed people became known as Christians.

The true King was with the Christians, and wherever they lived and worked, they drove out the shadows of evil to let Jesus rule the earth again. They called this the Kingdom of God. Among the Christians, God's will was law and the Enemy was powerless.

The Enemy was also furious. He had his followers threaten the Christians, and when that didn't work, he started killing them. He burned them, boiled



Jesus is building His heavenly Kingdom here in enemy territory.

them, stabbed them, and tore them to pieces, but for every Christian he killed, several more of his followers became Christians. Christians did not fight or make a lot of noise, but the Kingdom of God was taking over the world (Romans 12:21).

After several hundred years, the Enemy shifted his attack. Instead of killing Christians, he had some of his slaves pretend to be Christians. These pretend Christians claimed that you could be a Christian without actually obeying Jesus, the King, and many people believed them. These people lied, cheated, lusted, and even killed people who wouldn't join them. They thought Jesus would like this, even though He had clearly taught that His followers could not do such things. Still, a few Christians kept obeying the true King, and the Kingdom of God has continued right up to the present.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 of Matthew (the first book in the New

Testament) are Jesus' blueprint for life in His Kingdom. If someone told you Jesus doesn't really mean for people to do the things He taught in these chapters, I invite you to read them again and decide for yourself whether Jesus was serious or just daydreaming. Next, read through the whole New Testament. Watch for statements about the Kingdom and see how people lived it out.

Jesus is building His heavenly Kingdom here in enemy territory, and you are invited to join. You don't have to be smart or good-looking. You don't have to attend a certain church. You don't even have to know any secret code words. All you have to do is turn your back on the Enemy and all the evil things you've been doing for him, call out to Jesus, and ask Him to make you a member of His Kingdom. When you surrender your life entirely to the King and obey his commands, He promises to give you the power you need to escape slavery and become His follower (Titus 2:11-14). He will rebuild

your life and heal the wounds of the Enemy.

As the King begins to shine through you, your cell or bunk will become an outpost of a strange new Kingdom—a society where weapons rust away because no one is afraid; where

sharing is a lifestyle instead of a shopping spree in December; where marriages are heaven on earth and last a lifetime; and where people of all colors, walks, and cultures have burned away the prejudices dividing them and have become one. □



Matthew 5:1–16:

¹And seeing the multitudes, [Jesus] went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: ²And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, ³Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. ⁵Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. ⁶Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. ⁷Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. ⁸Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. ⁹Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. ¹⁰Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹Blessed are ye, when

men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. ¹²Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

¹³Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. ¹⁴Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. ¹⁵Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. ¹⁶Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. □



This section of Loaves and Fishes is designed to teach solid fundamental Bible truths that all believers need to know and understand.

God has given us the wonderful gift of His Word. Much blood has been shed over this precious Book that we have so freely available in our country today. The Bible is our guide to know God, to believe on Jesus, and to live the victorious Christian life. We should value it more than our daily food.

Thou Shalt Not Commit Adultery

The Ten Commandments are some of the most recognized words of the Bible, yet these commandments are often broken.

In this study, we want to look at the seventh commandment: “*Thou shalt not commit adultery*” (Exodus 20:14). We will examine three types of adultery—physical, mental, and spiritual.

Physical Adultery

Physical adultery is the most commonly understood and easily recognized type of adultery, yet many professing Christians continue to compromise and make excuses for this wicked practice. Churches all over the world have accepted various forms of adultery in their midst. Whether it is through the movies they watch, the books they read, or the actual practice of people in the congregations, most churches have not stood against this sin. When a preacher can divorce his wife and run off with another woman to start a new church on the other side of town, we need to recognize that there is an immense problem. Sin cannot be excused, explained away, or justified. On Judgment Day, if you are an adulterer, no excuses or notes from your pastor will save you from God’s wrath against those who commit adultery. “*Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge*” (Hebrews 13:4).

In this age of adultery we live in, it would be easy to follow the ways of the world and see things the way the world sees them. Unlike the Word of God, the ways of the world are always changing, and society's views on adultery have changed drastically over the last 60–70 years. In the early 1900's, divorce and adultery were rejected by society as immoral and unacceptable, but today they are considered normal and promoted by all forms of media (television, movies, books, music, and magazines). We should recognize that we may have been programmed by the wrong thinking of our culture, and that we need to change our minds to agree with God.

We must put on the mind of Christ as the Bible tells us to. God's Word must always be our source of reasoning and our guide for thought and morals. Imagine being lied to all your life and then finding a book that not only exposes those lies, but also gives you the unconditional truth. God has given us this Book, and with this great gift comes the responsibility to live according to its teaching. *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven"* (Matthew 7:21).

Now we want to be thorough and look at physical adultery as it concerns the unmarried. The standard of God



**Today divorce and adultery are
considered normal.**

for moral purity is not for the married only, but for all men and women, boys and girls. The principles of moral fidelity are from the very heart of God. The institution of marriage is the only parameter in which a sexual relationship is pure and sanctified. Any sexual relationship outside of marriage is the sin of fornication and is condemned by God. There is no exception or excuse for this sin, and you will face the judgment of God if you continue in it.

“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, ¹⁰Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10).

Bible Word Definitions:

Fornicator (pornos in Greek): prostitute, i.e. (by analogy) a debauchee (libertine).

Fornication (porneia in Greek): harlotry (including adultery and incest); figuratively, idolatry.

Pornography, a modern English word which comes from the same Greek root word, is really another form of fornication and should be abhorred and de-

spised by the believer. There is no place for fornication of any type in a real Christian’s life.

“But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints” (Ephesians 5:3). As believers we are called to consecrate and dedicate our lives and bodies for the glory of God and the furtherance of the gospel. *“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. ²And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:1, 2).*

Mental Adultery

It is essential to recognize that this battle is either won or lost in the realm of the mind (often referred to in Scripture as the *heart*). When a continual defeat in the mind is followed by the physical sin of masturbation or an intimate sinful relationship, we must understand that it began in the mind. God wants you to be victorious, and he has made the provisions you need to be free in Christ concerning this issue.

The first step to victory is to understand that the battle

starts with what we see and how we respond to it. Jesus said, “²⁸*Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.* ²⁹*And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell*” (Matthew 5:28, 29). Jesus makes it clear here that there is no real difference between looking at a woman in lust and actually committing adultery. This also means that the judgment for the two is the same. Jesus implies that the consequence of adultery is hell. This is a serious subject; those who travel this path of unrighteousness will end up in the lake of fire.

We must change our thinking on this matter. The world tells us, “You can look, as long as you don’t touch,” but this is the opposite of what Jesus says. Notice how godly men of the Bible responded to these things. “*I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?*” (Job 31:1). “*Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids*” (Proverbs 6:25). Jesus said, “*Blessed are the pure in heart*” (Matthew 5:8). The call to all of us is to be pure in our hearts. It is right to do as

Job did and make a commitment not to use your eyes for evil or look at anyone in an impure or lustful way.

“¹*Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; ²The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity*” (1 Timothy 5:1, 2). This passage tells us how to look at and act toward people we encounter. The key words are “with all purity” at the end of verse 2. Men and women both need to fully surrender their bodies, thoughts, and affections to God and follow His way to receive His blessings.

Spiritual Adultery

As believers we are the bride of Christ, and as His bride we are to be faithful, pure, and holy. We commit spiritual adultery any time we allow something to have a higher place than God in our lives. Another form of spiritual adultery is to try to justify keeping something in our lives that God condemns. This is also referred to as idolatry.

Idolatry is devotion to an idol. What is an idol? Is it only a statue or a painting? No, an idol is an object of worship that takes the place of God in any part of a person’s life.

When I was a child, people sometimes asked me who my



**There is no place for adultery
in the life of a believer.**

idol was. They were asking which football or baseball player I really liked, or what movie star I wanted to imitate. The world has many idols, customs, and loves, all seeking for a place in our hearts, where they can choke out our love for Jesus. The world's list of idols includes movie stars, sports figures, musicians, money, careers, titles, cars, and much more.

We must turn *from* these worldly lusts *to* Christ alone. Jesus should be the King of your life, reigning alone on the throne of your heart. You can't imagine how much your life will change if you surrender this throne to the Lord and devote yourself

only to Him. *"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God"* (James 4:4).

This world is not the Christian's home. We are here for God's purpose alone:

- to be an example of Jesus to others
- to preach the gospel message of the kingdom to the lost
- to teach, disciple, encourage, and strengthen one another for the glory of God and the furtherance

of the gospel.

There is no place for adultery in the life of a believer. We are to live by God's Word, and not after the ways of this world. *"⁹Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, ¹⁰Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God"* (1 Corinthians 6:9–11).

God Has a Positive Answer

You Say...

It's impossible.

I'm too tired.

Nobody really loves me.

I can't go on.

I can't figure things out.

I can't do it.

I'm not able.

It's not worth it.

I can't forgive myself.

I can't manage.

I'm afraid.

I'm always worried.

I'm not smart enough.

I feel all alone.

God Says...

All things are possible. *Mark 9:23*

I will give you rest. *Matthew 11:28-30*

I love you. *John 3:16, John 3:34*

My grace is sufficient. *2 Corinthians 12:9*

I will direct your steps. *Proverbs 3:5-6*

You can do all things. *Philippians 4:13*

I am able. *2 Corinthians 9:8*

It will be worth it. *Roman 8:28*

I forgive you. *1 John 1:9, Romans 8:1*

I will supply all your needs. *Philippians 4:19*

I have not given you a spirit of fear. *2 Timothy 1:7*

Cast all your cares on Me. *1 Peter 5:7*

I give you wisdom. *1 Corinthians 1:30*

I will never leave you nor forsake you. *Hebrews 13:5*



continued from previous page...

Time is short and judgment is certain. To die in your sins is to be thrown into the lake of fire forever. If you have been living in adultery, fornication, or any other sin, the call to you is this: Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ today and repent (turn away) from your sins. Ask God to forgive you and to wash you in the blood of Jesus. He gave His life for you and thru His death you can be forgiven, made free from sin, and live your life for Him. "For ye are bought with a



The Clayton Family

price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:20).





“Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established” (Proverbs 16:3).

“Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2).

The Mind Under the Blood

The mind has been likened to the room of a house where visitors are entertained. All visitors to one's three-fold being come in through the mind. They first enter the mind, then drop down into the spirit and get root. Finally, they possess the whole man.

Thoughts are bold and daring things—strong and persistent. Like armed men, they force themselves into the mind. They come enticingly. They come insinuatingly. They come threateningly. They come in a thousand ways. They come sin-

gly, and they come in droves. Some wait at the door of the mind, pushing and crowding to get in while the room is full. They keep up a din and chatter, straining the nerves and chilling the heart. Fear dashes into the mind. It captures us and holds us fast.

A thought knocks at the door of the mind. It is admitted and entertained, then passion enters the mind. It is looked at for a while, until finally it possesses the whole being, leading to sin and shame.

Anxiety and nervousness appear and drive off rest, keep-

ing one sleepless all night for nothing.

Doubt, as full of death as hell itself, is let in and consulted with. Once inside, it blows out every light and fills the room with darkness.

Trouble, many-faced, many-handed, big, and squatty fills the mind and stays all day, and in the morning, it rushes back by the time you open your eyes.

Cares, weighing a thousand pounds each, come to unload in the room.

Old Self, writhing under God's judgment and refusing to die, wants to stay on hand all the time, holding a ready sword of protection and keeping pitying attendants on hand with fans and camphor bottles in case it is hit, wounded, slighted, or knocked down. It wants the best chair in the mind and the most attention; notwithstanding, it is the most unwholesome visitor on hand. It has been dethroned of God and is under His everlasting curse, yet it wants to lurk around all the time.

If allowed, friends, foes, husbands, wives, children, what may occur tomorrow, houses, lands, the work on hand of whatever nature, what was, what is, and what is to be, this, that, and the other, demon impressions and suggestions, and the thoughts of friends and foes

toward you, coming to you as swift messengers while awake and in dreams while asleep, whether real or imaginary, will come in different shapes, sizes, and sounds to harass, possess, occupy, and claim all the attention of the mind possible.

Thousands are in the grave and in the madhouse, and thousands more are in physical torments and sickness because of the mind being thus occupied. Many honest souls are craving deliverance. How is it found? These visitors cannot be humanly driven off. They are too many and too strong and too smart for us. They have neither shame nor feeling. Kick them out, and they are right back. Throw them out, and they get right up and come in again. Lock the door, but everyone has a master key.

But thank God there is a way of deliverance from these tormenting thoughts, spirits, and things! And that way is through the precious blood of the Lamb of God once slain.

When my eyes opened from sleep, these thoughts of past, present, and future trouble were on hand to torment me. They had made an early start. They came trooping in, and I was helpless. I knew not what to do with them. Then the Lord showed me that door in Egypt with the blood

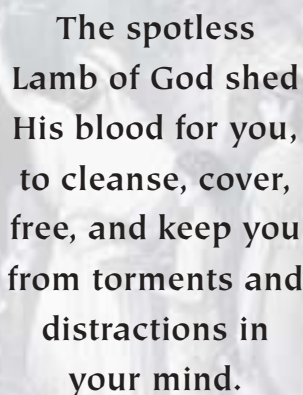
sprinkled over and around it (see Exodus 12:21–24), into which no evil, tormenting spirit could come. He wanted me to simply be willing to commit my mind unto Him in helplessness, and then to claim, believe, and see the blood of Christ over and around it, just like that door—that room in Egypt.

It was a new and blessed thought to me. I did so. They came again, so I said, “The blood is over the door. The world is dead to me, and I am dead to the world. You cannot enter under the blood.” They backed off. Again and again they would come, but I simply pointed to the blood over the door of my mind. I thought on the blood whenever they came. Soon their power was gone, and they ceased their visitations. My torments ceased, and my mind had rest as I committed all to God and thought on the blood.

The spotless Lamb of God has shed His most precious blood for you, to cleanse, cover, free, and keep you, not only from sin and

sickness, but also from torments and distractions in your mind.

The blood is your only safety. Not a death-dealing, troubling, tormenting, fearful visitor could enter the room that night in Egypt where the blood was on the door. And dear, tormented soul, a thousand-fold more real and powerful than the blood of that little lamb is the precious blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God.



**The spotless
Lamb of God shed
His blood for you,
to cleanse, cover,
free, and keep you
from torments and
distractions in
your mind.**

See by faith His blood sprinkled over your mind, the door to your being, and when these things appear and knock for attention, throw up your hands, helpless soul, and point them to the blood on the door. By faith, put death between them

and you. Consent to your death in that blood, and take your place definitely and continually under its protection.

Say to thoughts and all other visitors to the mind that hinder its focus on God and peace, “I am dead to you, and you are dead to me.” Say it in faith; say it over and over; say it persistently. Believe that the blood is on the door of your mind and

that it is protecting you as God said it would.

(Copied from "Triumphs of Faith" and condensed.)

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5).

"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 bringing into captivity every **thought** to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

"And they overcame him [the accuser of our brethren] by the **blood of the Lamb**" (Revelation 12:11a).

"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, **think on these things**" (Philippians 4:7-8).

The blood of Christ and the protection of His guardian angels is more powerful than any demons. Why then are you so afraid of demonic attacks?



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**God hath not
given us the
spirit of fear;
but of power,
and of love,
and of a
sound mind.**

2 Timothy 1:7





Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge

Meditating Day and Night

Lavern Gingerich

Moses the servant of the Lord has died and Joshua has taken his place in leading the nation of Israel. The long-awaited day is finally nearing for Israel to cross over Jordan and inherit the land God had promised to them.

Think of Joshua and his awesome responsibilities. Leading a group of 2½ million people is not an easy task, and Joshua desperately needed something more than he had to accomplish what God had called him to do.

But the Lord is always faithful to give us the necessary provisions in every calling He gives us. In Joshua 1:2–9, the Lord spoke a comforting message to Joshua. He said in verse 8, *“This book of the law shall not*

depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”

God gave Joshua responsibility and with that, God showed him the path to success—“Meditate on my words day and night.” True prosperity comes when we are completely in the will of God. And to avoid a distorted view of God’s will, we must go to His words, meditating on them day and night.

What does it mean to *meditate* on Scripture? It’s more than simply reading the Bible. It means to take what you read and think

about it, rolling it around in your mind; to ponder what God's message is to you; to have a deep love and affection for God's words. This devotion is manifested by a constant attention to His words. We need times of quiet when we can muse and reflect on what God is saying, and we should also learn to meditate during the daily activities of life.

Jesus said, "*A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh*" (Luke 6:45). You may not be what you think you are, but what you think—you are. It's impossible for you to hide your thought patterns from people who know you well. Every thought you choose to dwell on plays an important role in molding your character. And your character, good or evil, is on display for those around you to see.

Psalms 1 describes the blessedness of a man who is walking with God and meditating on His words:

"¹Blessed 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. ²But his de-

Every thought you choose to dwell on plays an important role in molding your character.

light is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. ³And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. ⁴The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. ⁵Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. ⁶For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish."

This man does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of the scornful. He takes delight and pleasure in the Scriptures. They are his treasure, and he just can't get them off his mind for long. He reads the Bible, and then he ponders what he has read, rolling it around in his mind. He stands in awe as he beholds the beauty

His affection is turned from sinful desires to God's message for him in the Bible, and he meditates in the law of His God all the day long.

of the gems he has discovered. His heart thrills to think that God Almighty is speaking personally to him.

This man puts down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and takes every thought captive to the lordship of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). Thoughts of lust, hate, selfishness, or any other kind of sin are not allowed to live in even one small corner of his heart. Yes! His affection is turned from sinful desires to God's message for him in the Bible, and he meditates in the law of his God all the day long! (Psalm 119:97).

What is the result of this man's godliness? He lives a fruitful life. He is like a tree firmly rooted in a place where there is plenty of water. He bears fruit in his season. His

leaves never wither. And everything he does prospers!

But the ungodly man is not so. He is like worthless chaff, floating along in the wind. There is no fruit for God. His life is barren. His leaves are brown. And his future is dark, for God says his way shall perish. Proverbs 24:1, 2 says, *"¹Be not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them. ²For their heart studieth [meditates] destruction, and their lips talk of mischief."*

Jesus said, in His parable of the seed and the soils, *"He that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty"* (Matthew 13:23). This man is like the fruitful man in Psalm 1. He hears the word of God and understands it. And what comes out of his life? Much fruit adorns his tree.

Jesus also said, *"When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side"* (verse 19).

God longs for each of us to hear the word and to understand it. It is not enough to be a hearer. The word *understand* in this parable means to comprehend the word and to apply it to one's life.

We must not only read the Bible, but also learn to meditate on the words until we comprehend what God is saying to us personally, and then act on what we comprehend.

The seed of the word is being sown today, and it's being scattered on the soil of your heart. What kind of soil do you have? Is it wayside soil? Is it thorny or rocky soil? Or is it that beautiful soil that is of value to God? The only way to have that good ground is by *hearing* the word and *understanding* it.

Your degree of fruitfulness depends on how much you hear and understand the word. Seek with all of your heart to hear and understand the word. Jesus said some bear thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred. Are you content to bear thirtyfold? Sixty? Let's fix our eyes on an hundred-fold! It's available for those who will hear and understand.

Do you have questions without answers? Go to God. Many times, He gives answers to His children through His written word, the Bible. Are you

hungry? Is your soul starving for lack of nourishment? Go to the Bible and meditate on God's words. I long for the Bible to be your treasure, your answer book, and your food day and night.

In a letter to Timothy, Paul wrote, "*Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all*" (1 Timothy 4:15). Here is a promise for you! As you meditate on the words of Scripture and apply them to your life, you will grow in your walk with Jesus, and everyone around you will be able to see your progress. And you will be like a tree firmly rooted by the rivers of water, and you will bear fruit for God. The things you do will prosper because you will be building the Kingdom of Jesus Christ! □

Lavern also has a discipleship web site, encouraging disciples of Jesus Christ to pursue God and treasure His message to us in the Scriptures.

www.pursuinglife.com

**“O how love I thy law! it is
my meditation all the day.”**

Psalm 119:97

Soul Nourishment First

George Müller

May 9, 1841

Spiritual Breakfast

It has pleased the Lord to teach me a truth that has benefited me for more than fourteen years. The point is this: I saw more clearly than ever before that the first thing I should do every day was to get my soul happy in the Lord. The first thing to be concerned about was not how much I might serve the Lord or how I might glorify the Lord; but rather how I might get my soul into a happy state, and how my inner man might be nourished. For I could attempt to set the truth before the unconverted, to benefit believers, to relieve the distressed, or to behave myself in other ways as a child of God in this world should; yet I might do all this in a wrong spirit if not happy in the Lord, and not being nourished and strengthened in my inner man day by day.

For at least ten years before this, my habit was to pray after dressing in the morning. Now, I saw that the most important thing for me to do was to read the Word of God and to meditate on it, so that my heart might be comforted, encouraged, warned, reproved, and instructed; and

that, while meditating on the Word of God, my heart might commune with the Lord.

Strength From Each Bite

So I began to meditate on the New Testament from the beginning, early in the morning. After asking the Lord's blessing upon His precious Word, I would meditate on the Word of God, searching into every verse to get blessing out of it, not for the public ministry of the Word, not for preaching what I had meditated upon, but to obtain food for my own soul.

I have found that almost always, after only a few minutes, my soul is led to confession, thanksgiving, intercession, or supplication. I begin in meditation, yet it turns almost immediately into prayer. After spending some time in prayer, I go to the next words, turning them into prayer for myself or others, as the Word leads, yet remembering that I am meditating to get food for my own soul. As a result, there is always a good deal of confession, thanksgiving, intercession, or supplication mingled with my meditation. By

this, my inner man is usually nourished and strengthened, and by breakfast time, with rare exceptions, I am in a peaceful, if not happy, state of heart.

Also I have found that the things the Lord gives me as food for my soul, often become food for other believers even though I did not meditate for the sake of others, but for my own inner man.

The difference, then, between my former practice and my present one is this: Formerly, when I rose, I began to pray as soon as possible, and generally prayed until breakfast. Most times I began with prayer, except when I felt my soul was barren, in which cases I read the Word of God for food and refreshment, and for renewal of my inner man before I prayed. But what was the result? I often spent fifteen to thirty minutes, or even an hour, on my knees, before knowingly receiving comfort, encouragement, and humbling of soul. Often my mind wandered for quite some time before I really began to pray.

I rarely struggle with this anymore because my heart is first nourished by the truth and brought into personal fellowship with God before I speak to my Father and Friend (though I



am vile and unworthy of it) about the things He has shown me in His precious Word.

Daily Soul Food

Looking back, it often astonishes me that I did not see this point sooner. I never read about it in any book. No public ministry ever taught me this. No conversation with a brother ever inspired me in this direction. Yet since God has taught me this lesson, it is as plain to me as anything, that first of all every morning, the child of God has to obtain food for his inner man. Just as your physical body takes in food in the morning because it

needs food to stay alive, so each of us must take in food for their inner man.

What is the food for the inner man? Not prayer, but the Word of God. Here again, not the simple reading of the Word of God, so that it only passes through our minds, as water runs through a pipe, but meditating on it—considering what we read, pondering it, and applying it to our hearts.

When we pray, we speak to God. And in order to pray for any length of time, we must have at least a small amount of godly desire. And the best time to pray is after our inner man has been nourished by meditation on the Word of God, where we find our Father speaking to us to encourage us, comfort us, instruct us, humble us, and reprove us. Therefore, we may profitably meditate with God's blessing though we are weak spiritually. In fact, the weaker we are, the more we need meditation to strengthen our inner man.

If you take time for meditation before praying, it will be much easier to stay focused. I am emphasizing this point because of the great spiritual profit and

refreshment I have received from it myself. By applying myself to this practice, God has given me help and strength to peacefully go through greater trials than I had ever known before.

I affectionately and solemnly urge all my fellow believers to ponder this matter. After having tried this way for over fourteen years, I can most fully, in the fear of God, commend it.

In addition to this, I generally read larger portions of the Bible after family prayer. During this time I pursue my practice of regular reading in the Holy Scriptures, sometimes in the New Testament and

sometimes in the Old, and for more than twenty-six years I have proved the blessedness of it. I also take time for prayer either then or in other parts of the day.

How different it is, when the soul is refreshed and made happy early in the morning, from what it is when the service, trials, and temptations of the day come upon one without spiritual preparation. □

**Every morning,
the child of God
has to obtain
food for his
inner man.**

Adapted by
Lighthouse Publishing.



Too Busy Fishing

It was a warm, windy afternoon on the east coast of China. A breeze rippled the blue waters of the China Sea into little waves that lapped against the muddy shore.

Here and there, boats bobbed on the waves. There were tiny letter-boats, which darted swiftly along, paddled by two men. There were sampans, houseboats where whole families lived and worked and slept in small cabins under the sail. There were little fishing boats, full of dark-winged cormorants with rings around their necks, trained to catch fish for their masters.

Down a little farther along the coastline was a larger fishing boat, where half a dozen men worked with their net. Biggest of all, though, was the hong-boat, a Chinese passenger junk.*

As the brawny boat man stood at his tiller, guiding the ship, his passengers sat comfortably under the shelter of the awnings drinking tea and chatting with one another.

At first glance, all of the passengers appeared to be Chinese, too. But a closer look showed that two of the men, though dressed in Chinese clothing and speaking Chinese, were certainly white men. Hudson Taylor, one of the two missionaries, was talking earnestly with the Chinese gentleman beside him.

“You say you have heard the story of Jesus, and you think it sounds like a good teaching,” said Hudson Taylor. “But it is not enough to think on Jesus in

*a flat-bottomed sailing boat, popular in Chinese waters, that is high at the stern and has squarish sails, each supported on several battens

your mind! You need to let him into your life, my friend.”

Tears stood in the eyes of the Chinese man. “I must have more time to think of these things,” he murmured. “I am not yet ready to decide. I will listen to you preach when we arrive at Sungkiang.”

“I can see Sungkiang up ahead!” called John Jones, the other missionary. Several of the passengers stood up to look. Sungkiang was a large city and there were crowds of people to be seen on the shore, streaming toward its gates.

“I’m going down into the cabin, to get our tracts and books ready,” Hudson told his fellow missionary. “We will soon have a chance to preach for many people!”

Hudson Taylor was just opening the boxes of Gospel tracts which he carried, when suddenly he heard a tremendous splash and a scream. Dashing out of the cabin, he sprang back onto the main deck. “What happened?” he asked.

“That man fell overboard!” the other missionary cried. “The man you were just witnessing to! I don’t think he can swim! Most of these people can’t.”

The other Chinese on the boat stood looking helplessly over the edge. Would no one even try to save the drowning man?

“Stop the boat!” exclaimed Hudson. He struck down the sail and leaped overboard into the deep water. The Chinese man had sunk from sight, and the missionary was not sure where to find him. Diving repeatedly below the surface, he searched frantically for the man in the murky water.

“I must find him!” Hudson gasped as he came up for air. “He was not ready to believe in Jesus, so he isn’t ready to die!” Shaking away the water that streamed into his eyes, Hudson saw the hulk of the large fishing boat approaching. *That net!* he thought. *The net would find him!*

“Hey!” he shouted, beckoning to the men on the fishing boat. “Come quickly and let down your net over this spot! There is a man drowning here!”

The Chinese fishermen stared at him. “It’s not convenient,” one answered lazily.

“Don’t talk of *convenience!*” cried Hudson, horrified. “A man is drowning, I tell you!”

“We are busy fishing,” another man told him with a scowl. “We cannot come, we would lose a lot of time!”

“Never mind your fishing!” Hudson called desperately. “I will give you more money than many days’ fishing would bring. Only come quickly!”

They will not try
to save dying souls,
because they are
too busy with their
own lives...
too busy fishing!



“How much money will you give us?” a fisherman asked, interested at last.

“I will give you five dollars,” promised Hudson, knowing that the fishermen seldom saw such a large sum in those days. “Only come, before it is too late!”

“We won’t do it for that,” responded the fishermen. “Give us twenty dollars, and we will drag with our net.”

“I don’t have that much!” cried Hudson in agony. “I only have about fourteen dollars, but I will give *you all* of it! Please come at once!”

Finally, the fishermen paddled their boat over, and the net was let down. In less than a minute, the body of the missing man was brought up and dropped upon the deck of the hong-boat. He lay very still. Was it too late?

“Give us our money!” “Pay us what you promised!” clam-

ored the fishermen, but Hudson knelt first over the body of the man he had tried to save. Vainly he tried to resuscitate the drowned man, but it was no use. Life had already fled.

Rising to his feet, the dripping wet missionary looked sternly at the fishermen. “Here is your money,” he said. His voice was sad. “I will pay you as I promised. But if only you had come at once when I called! This man’s life could probably have been saved.”

After changing into dry clothes, the weary missionary lay shivering with the strain and shock of what he had just seen. *Those fishermen were guilty of a man’s death*, he thought. *All because they were too busy fishing! They would not leave their fishing even to save a life!*

In the stillness, a new thought came to Hudson Taylor. Those Chinese fishermen were cruel and heartless. But how many Christians are no better? How many Christians

have no time to go tell others about Jesus? They will not try to save dying souls, because they are too busy with their own lives... too busy fishing!

Hudson bowed his head. "Lord, help me," he prayed. "Help me to bring the Gospel to as many Chinese people as I can, since You have called me to this

country. I pray that You will speak to other Christians everywhere, that they must obey Your command to bring the Gospel to all!"



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From Your Fellow-Prisoners...

"I really enjoy this magazine, especially the poems."

—*Monica Reed; Montana Women's Prison; Billings, Montana*

"Your magazine... is helping me and my cellie progress in our walk... I enjoy reading the testimonies of other brothers and sisters. It gives hope to us just starting our walks... Your magazine is a tool I use in sharpening myself and growing in God's word."

—*Antonio Sanchez; Wasco State Prison; Wasco, California*

"[*Loaves & Fishes*] is encouraging and gives Bible truths for the spiritually starving Christian. God has used you to grow me! Thank you."

—*Michael Keen; Tracy, California*



"I have read *Loaves & Fishes* and loved it! I love the articles and poems, and I have learned a lot from the stories and lessons about God. God bless you!"

—*Heather Gray; Henrico County Jail East; Barhamsville, Virginia*

"I'm really enjoying reading [*Loaves & Fishes*] and find it very helpful in my walk with the Lord, as I'm a new Christian."

—*Robert Sakis; Dallas, Texas*



Free on the Inside!

*A place where prisoners can proclaim Jesus,
the Deliverer Who sets the captives free.*

Delivered From Distress

Testimony of Albert Pugh

St. Clair Correctional Facility, Springville, AL

As I leaned against the back stop of the prison's softball field, the sounds of the ball cracking against the bat and the cheering inmates took my thoughts back to when I was five and the thing I wanted most was to play baseball. But my thoughts quickly returned to the reality that the only ball I would play would be on a prison exercise yard.

In many ways, I felt life itself had been a prison. When I was six, my dad died of diabetes. Later that same year, our house caught fire and burned to the ground, leaving us with nothing but the clothes on our backs. In one year, our happy middleclass family was left without a father, a house, or even clothes or shoes to wear.

My mom had never had a job before, so the only employment she could get was as a waitress in a café. Her income was hardly enough for the six of us children plus the one on the way.

My mom remarried after about a year and a half. I was happy until my sisters told me this wasn't our real father and I wasn't to call him dad. It turned out that he didn't like me much, and never showed me much love although I always looked up to him.

Baseball was a big part of my life in school, and I treasure the memory of the time my mom brought my little sister April to a game. She was three or four years old and still couldn't talk plainly. When I went up to bat

she was in the stands behind me hollering, “Hit a home run, Albert!” I’ll never forget that time when I had someone in the stands cheering me on.

One year I played football on a church team, but I never received any encouragement in school or about my ball playing, and I eventually lost interest. I became a bully in school. I also started stealing things like cigarettes and tape players from cars.

My mom wasn’t able to buy me nice clothes, and most of the time I had to wear second-hand things. I now know that she was doing the best she could, but I resented it at the time. I wanted to look nice, like other kids, so I stole clothes. After my mom found them and made me take them back, I was mad at her for a long time.

My criminal behavior quickly increased. By the time I was fifteen, I had six charges of car theft against me. I managed to get out of that, only to end up in the county jail at age sixteen for stealing a gun. Before the year was out, I was charged with several more felonies and went to prison with a three-year sentence, leaving behind a young pregnant wife. Later that same year, my son was born, making me a deadbeat dad as well as a criminal. Thanks to God and his mom, my son has

turned out very well in spite of his dad.

There is an old saying, “Corruption breeds corruption,” and this was true for me. For the next fifteen years, I was in and out of prison four times. Drugs, gambling, and loan sharking became my way of life. Finally, in 1983, I was faced with two counts of first degree robbery. I was convicted and given two life sentences without parole as a habitual offender.

After arriving at one of the State’s maximum security prisons, I was placed in isolation for an observation period. I remained there for ninety days. My family was very supportive, and my sisters sent me Christian literature and a Bible. They were persistent, and I began to study the material. As I studied, I began to reflect over my life and realized how much of it had been wasted. After being released into the general prison population, I continued to study, my sisters continued to send inspiring material, and for the next eighteen months, I grew in the knowledge of God.

One weekend, while attending a service sponsored by a ministry known as Kairos, something wonderful happened to me. As the weekend progressed, I experienced God’s love in an overwhelming way. Each person I spent time with shared things



Hallowed Be Your Name

O Lord, hallowed be Your name
On which we can depend.
O Lord, hallowed be Your name
From which we get our strength.
O Lord, hallowed be Your name
Unto which every knee shall bow.
O Lord, hallowed be Your name
Every tongue shall confess, somehow.
O Lord, many people despise Your teaching.
O Lord, many more Your words are reaching.
O Lord, in You I trust with no shame.
O Lord, hallowed be Your name.

—*John C. Coker • ECI West, Westover, MD*

that ministered to me. Much of the hate and resentment I'd carried from my past was overcome by the love of God through my new friends. Because of the love I found at Kairos and the continued support of my sisters, I was finally able to make a commit-

ment to Christ about six weeks later. It seemed to be the hardest choice of my life, but once I made it, I knew it was the best choice I could have made.

I was literally transformed. My experience is summed up by the words of David in

Psalm 119:130: *“The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.”* All the bitterness and negative attitudes I had held were now being replaced by the sweetest peace and joy I had ever known.

A few years later, God put it in my heart to write my testimony. It is amazing how God took me to the scriptures that fit my circumstances and from those scriptures gave me the title to my testimony, “Delivered From Distress.”

Psalm 107:10–16: *“¹⁰Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron; ¹¹Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High: ¹²Therefore he brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and there was none to help. ¹³Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses. ¹⁴He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder. ¹⁵Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! ¹⁶For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.”*

These scriptures confirm what God has done in my life. He has delivered me from the darkness and gloom of my sin and from the distress of two life sentences without parole. I know that He

Who promised is faithful and will do what He said He'll do!

It has been many years now since my commitment; and although there have been some hard years, I have come to realize, as the disciples did, that there is nowhere else to go; that Jesus is the only One Who has the words of life; and that God is faithful to finish the work He has started in me.

These years have been the best years of my life even though I have been in prison ever since my salvation. I believe that it took all the pain and heartache, the jails and prisons, the criminal acts, and the drugs and alcohol, to bring me to the point in my life where I could look up to find Christ.

Today I have many family members and Jesus Christ Who sits at the right hand of God, all in the stands cheering me on. It is a wonderful feeling!

God will do the same for you as He has done for me; will you make a commitment to Jesus Christ now? According to Romans 10:9, 10, *“⁹If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. ¹⁰For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”*





Before All

Where was my soul before the sun,
Before the waters were loosed to run,
Before the mountains and valleys were made,
Before the grass was even a blade?

Where was the love that fills my heart,
Before the earth and heavens did part,
Before the rains could cool the land,
Before the trees could take a stand?

Where was the passion that comes with grace,
Before there ever was this place,
Before the stars could kiss the night,
Before we knew of wrong and right?

Where was the hope that comes with faith,
Before there was a human race,
Before the birds were made to sing,
Before the winter or the spring?

Before the light could shine the way,
Before the dawn could bring a day,
Before there was a you or me,
Before all that was God, you see.

—Brady Byrd

Century Correctional Institution, Century, Florida

Blessings Today

Ted Hubble

STSRCF, Unit 6 • Pikeville, Tennessee

We may think that the Lord doesn't concern Himself with the little potholes in the road of our everyday lives, but every now and then something happens that we can only give the Lord credit for. When these little things happen, we are usually surprised or shocked. They will always put a smile on our face, and give our heart a jumpstart.

I have a friend that I had not heard from for a long time. I wrote him a letter about a year ago, but I never got an answer. I assumed he had bigger fish to fry, or too many irons in the fire to be concerned with an old prison inmate.

This week, many of my fellow inmates were busy, preparing Mothers' Day cards, some hand made, others obtained from a prison ministry. The problem came when many of these men didn't have stamps to mail their cards.

Most of the men in my unit know that I usually have several stamps on hand, as I am always mailing letters and answers to Bible studies, so they came to me to borrow stamps. These borrowed stamps never seem to come back home, but I don't mind, and the Christian thing to do is to give them a stamp and tell them not to worry about it.

One man came to me, having borrowed stamps before, telling me that his wife had apparently abandoned his children, who are scattered among church homes and other relatives. He had written a short letter to each of these children and needed three more stamps to mail them. I gave him the stamps.

Later, having depleted my supply, I went to another inmate, who I knew usually has several stamps on hand, to see if I could trade him out of a few.



My Guiding Light

The hand of the Lord is guiding my life
Down a road I've never been before.
But it's through trust and faith that I'll receive
Any blessings that God has in store.
Truly He is the light of my life, guiding me
To the place He wants me to be.
And it's in carefully following His steps
that I make my way,
For without Him I can't see.
What's down the road for me?
What kind of blessings will I find?
It doesn't really matter, because
Whatever blessing awaits me will be better
than the trash I left behind.

—Fredrick McCraney • PVSP, Coalinga, California

But he was out of stamps too. “Well,” I thought, “it will take more than a week to get some from the commissary, but that is all right because the Lord knows why I ran out of stamps and can't mail my letters.” No harm done, no big deal.

That is when the Lord stepped in. Surprise, surprise! At mail call I had a letter from the man I had not heard from in over a year. As I opened the letter, I wondered what kind of shocking news would make him write to me. A smile drifted

across my face as I read the one line letter which said, “Ted, thought you could use some stamps. Jim.” In the middle of the page was taped a book of postage stamps.

Yep, my heart got a jump-start.

I sat down and wrote Jim a letter, thanking him for the stamps and telling him this little tale about a small blessing from the Lord. I also told him I intended to share it with the world, beginning with you. □



Private Conversations

Father,
As I take a close view of the world around me,
The presence of Your unfathomable
Awesomeness surrounds me—
Leaving me speechless.
Yet, the more I stare
Into the fine detailed prints of life,
The more evident it becomes to me
Just how complete Your creation truly is.
The work of your hands is like a mirror
Which reflects back at me
And unlocks the boundaries of your artistry.
What man can compete with You?
No matter how far my imagination will stretch,
I'm unable to conjure up anything close to what my eyes see;
Leaving You to be the best.
You have presented the ultimate artistic expression
The day that You decided to insert Yourself
Into the mannequin which You formed out of the soil,
Who became animated the moment he felt Your touch.
You are the hammer and chisel which sculpts man
Into that eternal image which You have originated
Within the depths of Your spirit.
In my deepest search for meaning,
I have been given the privilege of discovering You—
The supreme Creator.



Who indeed is greater?
You could have existed alone;
Instead, out of the one, you brought forth many;
Even a multitude.
Nevertheless, this has become my destiny:
To reign beside you throughout all eternity!
Words will never adequately describe the feelings
Which I feel inside.
Although Your gentle hand slowly rids my soul
Of that evil trait common to every man known as pride;
Yet shall my years remain within the palm of your hands
As I learn to trust more in You;
After all, who else can I turn to?
What else am I to do?
When all else is said and done,
My only alternative is to bow myself before You and worship;
With this purpose in mind did you create—
Therefore it is my fate.

—*Francisco Prieto • McConnell Unit, Beeville, Texas*



We Want to Hear From You!

If God has done a great work in your heart, share it with others! Send us your poems, testimonies, articles, and stories, etc., and we will consider them for publication in “Free on the Inside.” Any material sent to us will be used at our discretion. (Please be patient. We have received a large number of writings.) Any material sent to us becomes the property of Lighthouse Publishing.

THE PUZZLE CORNER

Answers will be in next issue.



In the puzzle below, highlight or circle the words listed taken from the story of Esther, an Old Testament Bible character. They can go forward, backward, up, down, or diagonally.

Esther

AHASUERUS	FAVOR	KINDRED	QUEEN
BANQUET	GALLOWES	KING	REQUEST
BEAUTY	HAMAN	MAIDEN	SACKCLOTH
DELIVERANCE	HANGED	MORDECAI	SCEPTER
DESTROY	HONOR	MOURNING	UNCLE
ESTHER	JEWS	PURIM	VASHTI

D I A M I R R V P B F A V E R Y
E K H O Z J H U M E Q T U C E B
N I A R R O N O H A N E O N X F
I N S D N C L S U R E U S A H A
K D N E E U Q E T N A Q R R P V
G A R C A S N N L I U N E E U O
V S F A Q U T C H E Q A T V R R
C A S I B X U R L A R B P I U R
V C S L Q E T F O E N M E L M W
E K W H I U A A Q Y O G C E E G
I C J O T L E U E H A N S D O V
A L I N G I E O T D F T O L A H
M O Z O B S C R J Y H X L S V T
O T D R T A S T I E A O T E N O
R H E D V M Z P R S W I R S E L
D C G A U P U V W G B S H T D C
E N N V U R M O A D E R D N I K
K J A S I Y L L R C A O R Z A A
A I H M R L O G N I N R U O M S
I F N U A Y E S M W N Y S J P W
D Y P G E H Z D B A Q G E T S E

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“Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.”
Phillipians 1:29



The apostle Peter died as a Martyr, crucified upside down.

The Martyr's Pledge

I take a stand to honor the Lord Jesus Christ with my hands to serve all mankind. I take a stand to honor the Lord Jesus Christ with my feet to spread the gospel to all the ends of the earth, no matter the cost. I take a stand to honor the Lord Jesus Christ with my lips by proclaiming the Good News to all who hear and by edifying the body of Christ. I take a stand to honor the Lord Jesus Christ with my mind as I mediate upon His word and promises to me.

I give my earthly treasures and all that I possess to follow the way of the cross. I commit to love my family, orphans, widows, lepers, the wealthy, and the poor the way that Christ loved the church. I surrender my will and life to His will and life. I commit to the service of the Lord by being a good steward of my time. I surrender this body on earth to the perfect will of Jesus and should my blood be spilled, may it bring forth a mighty harvest of souls.

I pledge allegiance to the Lamb. I will seek to honor His command. I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. As a soldier of the cross I stand with the Apostle Paul in stating, “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” Lord Jesus, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.

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The Spiritual War

Doctrines to Die For



Nathan Stille

*Volunteer Assistant Chaplain at Southeast,
Tennessee Regional Correctional Facility*

War is the choice to sacrifice some human life for the benefit of a people as a whole. It is hard to understand why people would sacrifice their lives in this way until we see the underlying cause of war. War is the last resort when all other means of settling a conflict have failed. Since no one ever gives life without a fight, the greater the change desired, the more costly the war must be to achieve that change. Only truly great men ever find the greatest reasons for war. And they know that the greatest wars are not won by killing men.

When conflict arises, a solution is needed. How can the conflict be resolved? If it is merely a physical or a national conflict, it could be resolved by killing or subduing the opposition. But force is not always the appropriate last resort. An ideological conflict (a conflict of ideas), without physical or na-

tional boundaries, may be impossible to solve by physical means. The remaining options usually involve teaching through school, media, politics, religion, or culture. Real solutions to conflict must come through solving the root problem, and the root problem is always ideological.

Physical conflict results from ideological differences that have not been recognized in time to prevent excessive damage. In today's world, many people use the terms *secular* and *religious* to differentiate between what is and isn't acceptable in politics. However, moral or legal ideas can never be truly secular. Our moral understanding of what is acceptable is learned; no one comes into this world already knowing what is right and wrong.

War, as I am using the word, is to fight for a cause, whatever

that cause may be. A cause becomes religious as soon as you begin to fight for it because religion, in the simplest terms, is those values which you are willing to fight for. You may think that only organized churches are religious, but *everyone* lives by a set of religious values, even if their religion is nothing more than a hodge-podge of ideas picked up everywhere from the church to the barroom. Thus, all fights are ultimately religious.

Conflicting religious values are the basis of war. For example, one man's religion may demand that he be allowed to own another man as a slave, while another person's religion forbids anyone to own humans. Only when we recognize that all value judgments are religious can we measure true justice. The Bible teaches that there are only two value systems: good and evil. The turmoil and conflict caused by these two powers is staggering. Secularism, which teaches that religion must be silenced to eliminate conflict, becomes meaningless when we define religion properly.

A religion is the set of moral values or beliefs that guides a person. Everyone has such values and beliefs. Therefore, the root cause of war is always religion. There are no secular reasons for war. Our moral



Nathan Stillely

value system (religion) is what guides us through life. The truth of the matter is that everyone is religious. (For many decades, our schools of lower and higher education have taught that humanism is an alternative to religion, but this is a deception. Humanism, secular or religious, is a religion, and must be treated as such.)

Throughout the ages, religious conflict has caused many wars. These wars have been international (world wars), internal (civil wars), interfamily (Hatfield's and McCoy's), and even personal (Burr and Hamilton). In each of these wars, loyalty led someone to sacrifice all for a cause, often a cause they did not personally understand. The root cause of war is seldom clear. For example, what is the true cause of the American Civil War? Today many believe the Civil War was



**The greatest wars are not fought with guns.
They are won or lost in the heart of a child.**

fought over slavery. But is that really true? Notice that there was no war until states began seceding from the Union. Possibly the loss of power was more of a catalyst of the war than the issues most associate with it. In fact, this is usually the case in such wars. Have you ever seen a rock fight another rock? People fight one another when they feel their rights have been crossed.

“From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not... even of your own lusts?” (James 4:1) When we strongly desire to have something that has not been granted, we often fight for it. The root cause of the fighting is desire. Is it always our fault when we are involved in conflict? Not always; Jesus

had conflict, although He was perfect in every way.

The greatest wars are not fought with guns; they are won or lost in the heart of a child. Teach a child to be in submission to the power of God, and you have won that child for the highest place in life. In the children of today, you can build the fabric of a strong society for tomorrow. Guns can destroy physical life, but careful teaching can destroy hatred itself. Destroy pride and hatred, the fabric of war, and war will cease. Destroy as many men as you will, and you will lose the real war if you do not destroy the ideas that make them evil. To win the war on evil, you must change the minds of those who are fighting.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, many great men from the Anabaptist movement died for their faith, refusing to defend themselves with physical weapons. These people suffered for many years, but eventually their teaching and example, contrasted with the ruthlessness of their persecutors, became the foundation of modern religious tolerance. The religious freedom we enjoy today was paid for by the death of these innocent people. The Anabaptists fought a war for the freedom to believe and worship according to one's conscience, and they won without using physical force. They won by changing the way people thought about them, and educating the masses concerning freedom of religion.

What do you believe? Would you die for your beliefs? You are fighting on one side of the war or the other. You are building in the lives around you to make a society that will improve or degrade the coming generation. We must not wait to fight until it is too late. Let us begin the offense against sin and destruction today, by fighting first against the sins in our own bodies, then in our children, then in the lives of others around us. As we destroy sin, we can begin to build the values necessary for success. Truly, we are fighting a spiritual war that can prevent many physical wars. Which side will you fight for—Satan and his kingdom of darkness, or God and His Kingdom of light?



Searching

I sought what I thought I needed in **others**;
I sought what I thought I needed in **drugs**.
I sought what I thought I needed in **stealing**,
And **none** of these remedies were ever fulfilling.
It wasn't 'til I sought within
That I discovered what I was missing.
I sought God out of desperation,
Because I was tired of my pathetic situation.
The Bible says in Psalm 34:4,
**"I sought the Lord, and he heard me,
and delivered me from all my fears."**

—Rhonda Jones • Niantic, Connecticut



Honeybees are a fascinating tribute to the greatness of our Creator. Recently, I acquired a couple of hives of bees to promote better pollination in my orchard. I've been impressed with all that these little insects get accomplished. "Busy as a bee" appears to be quite busy indeed. Each individual fills its place in the colony, even sacrificing its own life, if necessary, to ensure the survival of the group.

There are three classes of bees in a hive: *workers*, *drones*, and a *queen*. The worker bees are by far the most numerous. They make foraging trips for nectar and pollen, carrying it back to the hive for storage or to feed young bees. Aptly named, these worker bees may roam up to two miles from the hive in search of the precious treasures. Unerringly, the tiny

creatures fly back home without the aid of a GPS, map, or compass. The drones are the male bees. They cannot gather food, even for themselves, and are left to die in the winter when food is scarce. There is only one queen bee, a fertilized female, in a colony. Her job is

continued on next page...

Brother Andrew has had an avid interest in science since he started studying it in his early years of school. In more recent years, he has been blessed by studying the work of creation scientists such as Henry Morris and Ken Ham. Because of his interest in science and his belief in a literal six-day creation, he enjoys telling others about creation science. He lives in southern Mississippi with his wife and nine children.

to lay eggs. She may lay as many as one to two thousand eggs in a single day, a million eggs in a lifetime.

Bees provide a number of benefits for mankind. One of the most important is *pollination*. As they move from flower to flower gathering nectar and pollen, they transfer pollen from one flower to another, enabling the plants to reproduce. Many important food crops of fruits and vegetables depend on bees for pollination.

Of course, everyone knows that bees make honey. Who hasn't tasted the sweet goodness of honey on a biscuit, or licked it from their sticky fingers? Until modern times, honey was the only sweetener readily available. *Beekeeping*, or the care and management of honeybees, has been practiced for hundreds of years. Beeswax, which the bees use to build the honeycomb, is used in making candles, adhesives, and other products.

Let's take a look at the various stages in the life of a worker bee as it develops from an egg into an adult, capable of flying miles to bring home the nectar. First, the queen lays a tiny, white egg in a six-sided cell in the honeycomb. About three days later, a larva hatches. The larva is a tiny, worm-like crea-



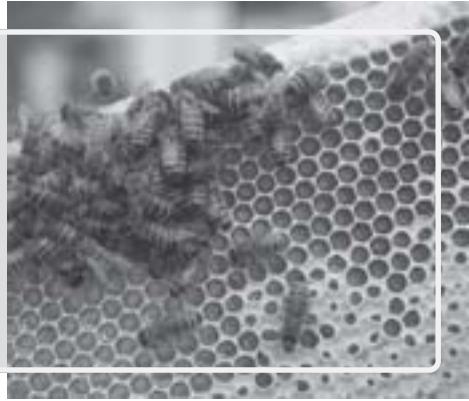
Honeybees are a fascinating tribute to the greatness of our Creator.

ture also known as a grub. Young worker bees feed the grubs a creamy substance, called *royal jelly*, formed by glands in the worker bee's head. When the larva is three days old, the workers begin feeding it a mixture of honey and pollen called *beebread*. If the larva is to become a queen bee, it is fed royal jelly the entire time it is in the larva stage.

When the larva is five days old, the workers seal the cell with a wax cap. Now the grub becomes a *pupa*; somewhat like a caterpillar ready to change into a butterfly. A metamorphose takes place; the grub is transformed into an adult worker bee! Three weeks after the egg was laid, the adult worker bee bites its way out of the cell and takes its place in the colony's work force.

The new worker doesn't immediately get the fun job of flying outside to find nectar. It

The honeybee is a small, intricate part of nature and willingly fills the role God gave it.



needs to start out with more mundane tasks. (Isn't that how it is for people, too?) A young worker bee begins with the job of cleaning the hive. After all, someone needs to sweep the floors. After this it feeds the developing grubs for several days. Then it starts producing beeswax and building honeycomb. It does this by eating large amounts of honey. Special glands in its abdomen produce wax, which oozes from pores on the bee's body. With its legs, it picks off flakes of wax, chews the wax in its jaws, and places it where needed on the honeycomb cell wall. This is built in the classic hexagonal (six-sided) cell structure. There are about twenty-five cells in a square inch. After the construction job, the worker bee stands guard at the hive entrance and receives nectar collected by other bees.

When a bee is three weeks old, it begins to hunt for food. It sticks to this job for the rest of its life. Scout bees search for food sources. Flowers provide both nectar and pollen. The pollen is the young bees' source of vitamins, minerals, fats, and proteins. Nectar provides sugar, a source of energy.

When scout bees find food, they return to the hive and perform a special dance to tell the other worker bees where the food is. They move in a figure-8 pattern, which gives the direction to the food in relation to the sun. The faster the dance, the closer the food source. By communicating this information to the other workers, the scouts make the process of collecting nectar much more efficient for the colony.

Worker bees suck nectar from flowers with their long tongues, and store it in their honey stom-

achs. When the bee decides it has enough, it flies back to the hive. There it regurgitates the nectar from its stomach into a cell in the honeycomb, or gives it to another bee.

Nectar is stored in cells of the honeycomb. Special enzymes are added to the nectar. As water evaporates from the nectar, it becomes honey. The cell is then capped by a worker bee, preserving the honey as food for the winter. Or maybe as honey for your bread!

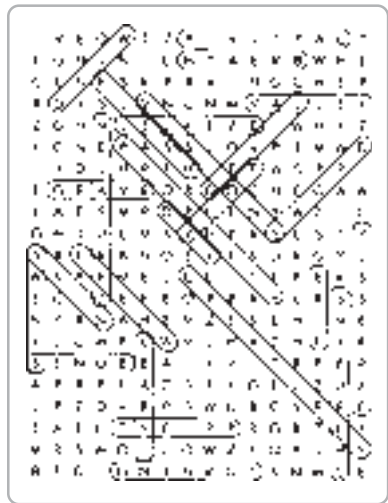
Bees use their sting to defend the hive, and drive away intruders. When a bee stings someone or something, the bee dies. The bee is sacrificing itself for the protection of the colony.

A *beekeeper*, one who takes care of hives of bees, performs a variety of tasks to keep the colonies strong and healthy. He feeds them corn syrup when they're running out of food. He divides the colony and starts a new hive when it becomes crowded. He may treat the hives to prevent disease and to control pests. He provides frames and foundations on which the bees build their honeycomb. He takes honey from the hive when there is an excess. Bees will continue to store food as long as it is available and there is space in the hive. The beekeeper may wear a special suit with a veil to protect himself from bee stings. He uses

a smoker to make the bees drowsy and easier to manage.

Who taught the bees how to govern a colony? Who taught them the figure-8 dance? Who taught them their navigational skills? Our great God and Creator designed them and created them, every detail. The honeybee is a small, intricate part of nature and willingly fills the role God gave it.

The next time you see a honeybee or spread honey on your bread, think of all the work that goes into producing honey. Think of all the miles the bees travel to transport the nectar to make honey. Above all, think of the Creator Who designed the bee and its intricate lifestyle. What a mighty God we serve!



Answers for puzzle in last issue.

The Pursuit of Godly Seed

Denny Kenaston

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Denny and Jackie Kenaston were saved in 1972 out of the “hippie culture.” The Lord Jesus delivered them from drugs, drinking, and many other things that go along with that lifestyle. They have raised their eight children in the rural setting of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania for the last 23 years. In this setting, they find many opportunities to extend their home school far beyond the classroom.

They were first called to this location to help start Charity Christian Fellowship where Brother Denny serves as an elder. He also travels extensively in a church planting and preaching ministry. God has placed an anointing upon him to call the church back to a burden for the family, and through this, many families have fallen on their faces in repentance and received a new vision for a godly home. Our prayer is that your heart and home will be challenged and changed by this section taken from his book *The Pursuit of Godly Seed*.



I never cease to be in awe as I gaze into the face of an innocent child. When God gives them to us, they come as a blank sheet of paper—clean, pure, and waiting to be inscribed upon. They trust us, open themselves up to us, and receive whatever we give them, whether it be good or bad. Lord, teach us how to guide and train them!

A Godly Heritage Today

“Thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations” (Isaiah 58:12).

“They shall repair... the desolations of many generations” (Isaiah 61:4b).

My heart thrills as I ponder the implications and the potential of the ancient promises and commandments that we considered in the last chapter. Although these words were written 3,000 years ago, they are full of life, vision, and hope to them *“which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit”* (Romans 8:1b, 4b). It is a blessing to see how God honored the faith of these men who lived long ago. But what about us? Is there hope for the coming generations of our descendants?

Sometimes I feel we are so modernized that we can hardly think in terms of many generations. Families are splintered and scattered all over the country, and this hinders the vision. Even the basics of a unified family are fast eroding in our society. Yet in spite of all these negative influences, God's Word comes back, clearly speaking words of promise that cover many generations. Yes, there is hope for our generations. By grace through faith, we

can take our homes far beyond what is called “normal” today.

A Living Inheritance

There was no godliness passed down to Jackie and me from the generations before us. We had none! We are first-generation Christians. A good portion of our past is not lawful to think about. *“Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest... just... pure... lovely... of good report... virtue, and... praise, think on these things”* (Philippians 4:8). Much of our heritage we have had to forget. In fact, we have had to ask God to help us forget it at times.

However, although we look back with regret at our wasted lives, we look ahead with faith and confidence to a better way for our children. Our testimony and vision is this: By the grace of God, our children will have a godly heritage. My heart is fixed, and Jackie's heart is fixed. Our children will have a godly heritage. We want them to have something to remember, something that will stay with them



**pick up the torch,
stoke up the fire, and
pass it on to your
children**

and influence them all their lives, and for all eternity. We want to put some holy foundation stones under them that hold them and guide them long after we are gone.

What do I mean when I say a godly heritage? Let me give some brief definitions that are expanded throughout the remainder of this book.

- Thousands of family devotions in which singing, teaching, and prayers prevailed.
- Hundreds of verses from the Bible stored away in their hearts by many different methods.

- Sweet times of doing God's work together, building the Kingdom.

- Memories of growing up in a home where there was a Spirit-filled atmosphere most of the time.

- Volumes of memories of godly living, holy activities, and heartfelt love for one another.

- A multitude of prayers stored up in vials in heaven, waiting to be poured out in later days when we are gone.

- A deep assurance that Grandpa and Grandma Kenaston loved God with all their hearts, and that they went to heaven, where we also are going some day.

- A clear record before God of love and obedience to Him.

I am sure we would all agree that an inheritance like this cannot be measured in money. Leave your children this rather than ten million dollars. As we scan over the preceding list, it is easy to see how many generations will be affected by this kind of heritage. I want this for my children. The very failures of our past can be a motivation to press on to higher ground for the next generations.

I have seen families whose memories of their godly grandparents sanctified them for generations. Maybe you

have a heritage like the one listed. Praise God if you do. You are very rich. For you who have this treasure, there is a danger of taking it for granted and becoming complacent. It is not wise to hitchhike on your heritage. Rather, pick up the torch, stoke up the fire, and pass it on to your children. Let us all rise up and say, "By the grace of God, we are going to leave this in our will when we die."

We can do it. We can change the entire direction of our family simply by submitting ourselves to God and obeying His Word. Remember, our God is the God of Abraham. He calleth those homes which be not as though they were. Let us against hope for our family, believe in hope, and not consider how it looks today. Let us stagger not at the generational promises of God through unbelief, but be strong in faith, giving glory to God. Let us be fully persuaded, that what He has promised, concerning my family, He is able also to perform. This is the nature of faith. Follow Abraham. Can you envision yourself, seventy years old, sitting in a chair with all of your grandchildren gathered around you listening to godly stories of old? We shall have it if we faint not.

The Test of a Man's Christianity

It is said that the test of a man's Christianity is his children, and this is a right statement. Paul tells us the same thing as he gives the qualifications for a church leader in 1 Timothy 3. Many of the qualifications are given in one word, but not so when he writes about a man's home. He focuses on the home much longer. The reason is very clear: The test of a man's true character will show in his children. Although this is true, there also are verses in the Bible that carry the test one step further.

"Children's children are the crown of old men" (Proverbs 17:6a).

"The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children" (Psalm 103:17).

These verses as well as others we will study bring the third generation into view. When a man's Christianity is deeply ingrained in his heart, he will propagate it so thoroughly into the hearts of the children, that they will be stirred and motivated to do the same with their children. His life will reach out into the lives of his grandchildren through his children. Therefore, it is also right to say that the test of a man's Christianity is his children's children.

Let's study a few examples of this parental influence in Christian history. My heart has been challenged many times as I have seen reality fleshed out in the lives of godly men and women, and the effect this had on their children.

William and Catherine Booth

"The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee" (Psalm 102:28).

This verse is one precious and powerful promise in the Scriptures, and the Booth family is a beautiful example of its fulfillment. William and Catherine were dedicated servants of the most high God. Both of these choice servants had a godly heritage that would be worthy of some study. However, they are such a good example of the parental generation in this promise that I have chosen to focus on them as the first generation.

William Booth was the founder of the Salvation Army. It was, for decades, a mighty force for the salvation of multitudes. He was all out for God and all out for lost souls. O God, give us more men like him! His dear wife was the same. She gave herself continually as a sacrifice for the Kingdom. God blessed their union with eight children.

It seems they had the proper balance of the two methods for building God's kingdom I mentioned earlier—pursuing the lost and pursuing a godly seed. There was no question in the hearts of the children about their parent's dedication to the Lord. The atmosphere of the home was contagious. The example in the home was clear, and the training was filled with the purposes of God. The children grew up and chose to walk in the steps of their father and mother—all eight of them. The Lord scattered them around the world as missionaries preaching in some of the largest cities of the world. They went for the down-and-out part of society, just as their parents had done.

Well, from those eight children came over forty grandchildren, and what do you think those grandchildren did with their lives? They watched their parents wholly follow the Lord. They saw that Mom and Dad loved God. The children saw a real Christian life in their parents, and those grandchildren chose the Lord. Every single one of them rose up and said, "I'm going to follow the faith of my father and mother!" They all went out and scattered themselves across the world on mission fields to do the work of God.

I visited with a born-again Salvation Army lady on a flight to Kenya some years ago. I began to share with her my appreciation of William and Catherine Booth. Our conversation progressed to their home, and she told me that she went to Bible school with some of the great-grandchildren, who are out on the mission field this very day.

This is what God wants us to do: Pass on a vibrant, living Christianity to our children, a Christianity that will cause them to rise up and go out and do the work of God. Then, as their children see and hear that their parents are serious about God, they will rise up and do the same thing. This should just keep going on and on from generation to generation. The only thing that breaks the chain is lukewarmness and sin in the lives of God's people. Let's look at another home.

Hudson Taylor

Here we have another example of a godly heritage today. Hudson Taylor was the founder of the China Inland Mission. Much of what is happening in China today can be traced back to this man's pioneering labors. There are tens of millions of Christians in China today because of one

The only thing that breaks the chain is **lukewarmness** and **sin** in the lives of God's people.

godly family that passed the torch on to their children.

Three generations of fiery Methodists preceded him. As I study the heritage of this famous missionary, I again see the promises of God being fulfilled. Great-grandfather James Taylor laid a many-generation foundation as he established his home. He was converted on the day of his wedding after hearing John Wesley preach a sermon on godly homes. The text was, "*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*" (Joshua 24:15). There in his barn on the day of his wedding, he got on his knees and yielded his life to Jesus Christ. He was late for his own wedding because he was on his knees praying that God would bless his home. (I don't recommend that you be late for your wedding. However, I can't think of a better reason to be late.)

In time, great-grandfather James became a Methodist lay preacher. He had several sons, and they all rose up after the zeal of their father and became

Methodist lay preachers. Then those sons had several sons who rose up and became Methodist lay preachers. Do you see the pattern? Isn't it a beautiful picture and example to follow? Out of those sons, one was the father of Hudson Taylor.

The home in which Hudson Taylor was raised would take a whole chapter to describe. It is one of the most Biblical examples of a Christian home that I know of. (I hope to publish the testimony of this home in a book on "Home Histories" some day.) When Hudson was a little boy, his father used to pray with zeal, every day, "O God, would you send missionaries to China?" There were very few missionaries in China then. The little boy heard those prayers day by day, and they fell like mercy drops upon his tender heart. When he was six years old, he got alone with God and said, "God, I'll go to China." From the day of that prayer, his heart was set, and his life was set apart for the Lord's work among the heathen in China.

The "His-story" doesn't stop there. The generations of preachers keep right on going, up to this generation. There are now nine generations of preachers in the Taylor heritage. One is a missionary in Thailand today. Nine generations of

preachers! This is a staggering example of a godly heritage. May the Lord inflame us with the same kind of vision and empower us to raise up generations of soldiers for Christ. We need to see the potential at our doorstep. God is no respecter of persons. These men were not special men that God chose to bless above all others. No, they were ordinary men who obeyed God, believed His promises, and received the fruit of their obedience.

O God, Give Us a Vision
One that consumes us
One that drives us to action
One that changes our priorities
One that draws us back
when too busy
One that cannot be dimmed
by this world

Jonathan Edwards

Let us focus on one more historical account of a godly heritage. God used Jonathan Edwards for revival in the eastern part of the United States 250 years ago. He is one of the most prominent men in revival history. Jonathan and his wife Sarah were dedicated to the Lord. Their Christian heritage can be traced back three generations. They began their life

together with a solid foundation and a vision for a house full of godly children. God gave them eleven children and they gave them all to the Lord.

Jonathan and Sarah were anointed with the Holy Spirit. This fact is evident as you study their lives. The fruit of that anointing was manifested in their home, as well as in other areas of life. The order of the home and character of the children were examples followed by many. When George Whitefield came to their home on one of his American preaching tours, he changed his mind about marriage. David Brainerd, the famous missionary and prayer warrior for the Indians, was planning to marry one of their daughters, before he died of pneumonia. The posterity of the Edward's home is astounding. It is a powerful example of a many-generation household.

Five Generations of Light

Some time ago, the state of New York did a study on five generations of the Edward's family. I have read differing reports on the number of influential family members, so I will generalize it a bit. In those five generations that were stud-

ied, the researchers were able to trace 729 male descendants. Out of these 729, a couple hundred became preachers, 65 became Bible college teachers, 13 were university presidents, and 60 were authors. Scores of them held public office, and more than 100 were lawyers and judges. 60 were doctors. A few were senators and governors, and one was a vice president.* All this issued from one man and woman who loved God and set themselves to raise their children for God. We can see from these statistics how many sanctifying seeds were sown from that determined couple.

Five Generations of Darkness

At the same time, the state of New York did a similar study of an ungodly posterity. This study is worthy of our focus because it is a good example of what happens if we neglect our responsibilities. Max Juke and his brother married sisters. They were not Christians and rejected the teachings of the Bible. They believed in living their lives for themselves and going their own way. Five generations of their descendants also were calculated. They had 1,026 descendants, both male and fe-

**While we believe that Jesus taught His followers to avoid political involvement, these examples are given to show the contrast between the descendants of the godly and the ungodly.*

male. Of those, 300 died an early death because of a hard life. 140 spent an average of 13 years each in the penitentiary. 190 of their descendants became public prostitutes and 100 were alcoholics. It was calculated, back in 1900, that it cost the state of New York \$1.2 million to take care of all these wayward people. What a different group of people this is! Truly, truly, *“Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people”* (Proverbs 14:34).

6 x 6 x 6 x 6 x 6 = More Than 10,000

Allow me to give you one more exercise with statistics. Some time ago in our homeschool, we were discussing the blessing of having many children. Someone had the bright idea of investigating the potential number of descendants, from those who believe in having large families. It was very interesting, and the children had a ball calculating it all out.

We put two marks on the board, to represent a father and a mother. Then underneath those two marks, we put six marks, and said, “Now the father and mother have six children.” We chose the number six, which is a little low, so that we could be more realistic. Then we went to the next generation

and said, “All right, now if each one of these children will have six children, that would be 36.” We followed this pattern out for five generations, and we added them all up, counting their spouses also, and came up with more than 10,000 descendants. The children sat speechless for a moment, and so did I, as I realized the possibilities revealed in our little project.

Now, maybe that doesn't do anything to you. I know that these are only statistics, and that there can be a lot of breakdown between the imaginative and the real. Even though this is true, I still am greatly moved by these numbers.

I'll tell you somebody else who is moved by these numbers. His name is Satan. He knows that there is some truth in these statistics. He knows if he gets the father and mother at the top of the chart, he will get most of the rest of the generations that follow, with very little added work. I think the surveys cited earlier in this chapter prove the reality of the potential.

Our heavenly Father also knows these statistics, and the tremendous effect five godly generations could have on the world around us. God knows that if He can get a hold on some parents' hearts and set them in the right direction, it could in-

With a **vision**, God's work prospers unto the **third** and **fourth** generations.

fluence many generations for His kingdom. I give this hypothetical illustration only to help you see the potential you as a father and you as a mother have with your children. Cut the figures in half if you want to. Make it 5,000. Still that is a tremendous amount of godly influence for one couple to have.

The Work of the Ministry

Can you see the potential ministry we have before us? Many are looking for ministry opportunities when right here is one of the most far-reaching ministries you will ever find. God is calling you as parents to your responsibilities, but you have to be willing to be real Christians, full-time. You have to be the real thing at home. You must be one who walks with God when the doors are shut and no one is watching but your children, one who will live a godly example, with a fire in your bosom, at home. If you will get consumed with raising your children and living out the principles of the Word at home, God can do something just as I have

described. He is no respecter of persons. You could have a ministry that reaches much farther than you ever imagined possible. You do not have to be a preacher to do it. It is a great burden to me when I see preachers sacrificing their children and the time it takes to raise them right to be famous preachers. A godly home has a much more powerful effect than good sermons do. Some of you may have a hard time believing that God would work in this way with you. Without a vision, the people perish, but with a vision, God's work prospers unto the third and fourth generations. □



Prayer

Father in heaven, we have heard with our ears, the fathers have told us and showed us what great things you have done in days gone by. Now, make good Your promises, Lord. Truth has fallen in the streets, and truth has fallen in our families. Have mercy on us. Amen.

Pilgrim's Progress

Part 10

Welcome to John Bunyan's classic story of Christian's journey from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City!

Pilgrim's Progress was written over 300 years ago by a faithful street preacher, who was confined 12 years in a loathsome British prison for preaching without a license. As you read this allegory, remember who wrote it—a man who was free on the inside. God could use him in a great way even while he was in prison!

What Happened So Far...

In his journey from the city of Destruction to the Celestial City, Christian has already had many adventures and narrow escapes. From the Gate to the Cross to the fearsome journey through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, Christian has continued to learn new lessons in obedience, faith, love, and courage.

Christian and his friend Faithful have traveled together for some time now, encouraging and helping one another along. In the last issue, they are joined by Talkative, who seems to be full of zeal for God and knowledge of the scriptures. Yet Christian warns Faithful that Talkative is a fake. In the following pages, Faithful asks some prying questions and reveals Talkative for who he really is.

Faithful and Talkative Continue

After talking with Christian, Faithful rejoined Talkative and greeted him, “Well, how is it going by now?”

“Fine, thanks,” said Talkative. “Of course, I *had* expected us to have had plenty of good discussion by this time.”

“Well, we may as well get started now,” remarked Faithful. “Since you left it up to me to pose the first question, here it is: “How does the saving grace of God reveal itself when it is in the heart of man?”

“Ah, we’ll be discussing the power of things then,” said Talkative. “That is certainly a good question, which I’ll be glad to answer. My answer in brief is as follows: Firstly, where the grace of God is in the heart, it causes the heart to make a great outcry against sin. Secondly—”

“Wait,” said Faithful. “Let’s consider one point at a time. I

think you ought to have said, 'Grace shows itself by causing the soul to abhor its sin.'

"Well, crying out against sin, abhorring sin—what's the difference?"

"There's a great deal of difference," answered Faithful. "Any person may have a policy against sin and so cry out against it, but the only way to truly abhor and hate sin is by God's grace, which gives us such a love for righteousness that we find sin disgusting. I have heard many preachers cry out against sin from the pulpit, and yet allow it in their hearts, houses, and behavior. Joseph's mistress cried out with a loud voice, like a model of chastity, when she had just attempted to seduce him (Genesis 39:15). Some people cry out against sin in the same way you may have seen a mother cry out against the child on her lap, calling it 'brat' or 'monster,' and immediately cuddling and kissing it."

"I can see you're just trying to trip me up in my words," said Talkative.

"No, I'm not," Faithful replied. "I just want us to get it right. What is your second indicator of a work of grace in the heart?"

"Great knowledge of Gospel mysteries," answered Talkative.

"This sign should have been listed first," said Faithful. "But first or last, it is false too, for a person can obtain great knowl-

edge in the mysteries of the Gospel, without a work of grace in the soul (1 Corinthians 13:2). Indeed, even if a man has all knowledge, he may still be nothing, and therefore not a child of God. When Christ asked, 'Do you know all these things?' and the disciples answered, 'Yes,' he added, 'Blessed are ye if ye do them!' He taught that the blessing is not in the knowing, but in the doing. For there is a knowledge that is not accompanied by action—'he that knoweth [his Master's will] and doeth it not' (see James 4:17). A person may know like an angel, and yet be no Christian; therefore, your sign is not true. Knowing is good enough for talkers and boasters, but doing is what pleases God.

"Not that the heart can be good without knowledge, for without knowledge the heart is nothing. There are two kinds of knowledge, however—knowledge that is based on mere mental speculation about things, and knowledge that is accompanied with the grace of faith and love, which causes a person to do the will of God from the heart. The first type of knowledge is sufficient for a talker, but a true Christian is not content without the second type. 'Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart'" (Psalm 119:34).

Do you have a talent for drawing? Send us one or two examples of your drawings on white unlined drawing paper, and if we choose your work, we will send you a future installment of *Pilgrim's Progress* to illustrate for *Loaves & Fishes*.

"You're trying to trip me up again," said Talkative. "This isn't edifying."

"Well," said Faithful, "if you'd like, you may propose another sign to show us how grace is revealed in the heart."

"No, I don't believe I will; I can see we won't agree on this."

"Well, if not, will you give me permission to do so?"

"Feel free."

"A work of grace in the soul exposes itself either to the person who experiences it or to bystanders. To the one experiencing it, the results are thus: it gives him conviction of sin, especially of his own defiled nature, and the sin of unbelief, which will destroy him if he does not receive mercy from God by faith in Jesus Christ. This awakening produces sorrow and shame for sin; he finds the Savior of the world revealed within him, and he sees the absolute necessity of becoming one with Him in order to live. This causes him to hunger and thirst for Christ, and he then receives

promises of satisfaction for this hunger and thirst. Now according to the strength or weakness of his faith in his Savior, so are his joy and peace, his love of holiness, and his desire to know and serve Christ more in this world. (John 16:8, 9; Romans 7:24; Mark 16:16; Psalm 38:18; Jeremiah 31:19; Galatians 2:16; Acts 4:12; Matthew 5:6; Revelation 21:6; Romans 10:10; Philippians 3:17; Matthew 5:8).

"A work of grace in the heart of a person is also revealed to others, first, by an experimental confession of his faith in Christ, and second, by a life that matches that confession. This means a life of holiness—heart holiness, family holiness (if he has a family), and holiness of conduct. This is a life of learning to inwardly abhor secret sin in himself, to suppress sin in his family, and to promote holiness in the world. He does not do this by talk only, as a hypocrite or talkative person does, but by truly submitting in faith and love to the power of the Word (John 14:15; Psalm 50:23; Job 42:5, 6; Ezekiel 20:43).

"Now that you've heard this brief description of the work of grace and how it is exposed, you may raise any objections you have. If you have none, please let me pose a second question."

Talkative answered, "My part now is not to object, but to

listen. Let's have your second question."

"Here it is," said Faithful. "Are you experiencing this evidence of grace in your own heart? Does your life and conduct give evidence of it? Or is your religion in word or in tongue only, and not in deed and truth? If you choose to answer this question, be careful to say no more than what you are sure God above will agree to, and nothing but what your conscience justifies, for it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends. Besides, to say you are so and so, when your actions and all your neighbors say you are not, is great wickedness."

Talkative blushed, but quickly recovered himself and replied, "Now you are discussing experience, conscience, and God, and appealing to God to justify what is being said. I didn't expect this kind of dialogue, and I really don't feel like answering such questions unless you've decided to be my Sunday School teacher or something; even if you have, I'm not required to have you for my judge. But really, what are you after? There must be some reason why you're asking me these questions."

"I'm asking you because I noticed how eager you were to talk," said Faithful, "and I didn't

know if you had anything besides good ideas. And frankly, I've heard that you are a man whose religion is all talk, and that your actions prove your words false. People say you are a stain on Christianity, and that true religion is hindered by your ungodly conduct. They say that some people have already stumbled because of your wicked ways, and that more are in danger of destruction. Your religion and a beer joint and covetousness and uncleanness and swearing and lying and hanging around a bad crowd all go together. As it is said of a prostitute that she is a shame to all women, so you are a shame to all who profess Christ."

"Well," said Talkative, "Since you are so ready to believe rumors and make rash judgments, I must conclude that you are a peevish and melancholy man, not worth talking with. Goodbye!"

Christian now came up to his brother Faithful and said, "I told you how it would go; your words and his lusts could not agree, and he would rather separate from you than reform his life. Now that he's gone as I predicted, let him go. It's no one's loss but his. He's saved us the trouble of leaving him, since if he had continued as he is (which I expected him to), he would have only been a blot among us. The apostle says, 'From such withdraw thyself.'"



Talkative leaves Christian and Faithful.

“I am glad we had this little discussion with him,” said Faithful. “Maybe he will think of it again. At any rate, I’ve been honest and frank with him, so I am innocent of his blood if he perishes.”

“You did right to talk to him as clearly as you did. There is not much of this faithful dealing with people these days, and it’s making religion stink in the noses of many people. These talkative fools, whose religion is only in word, and whose conduct is im-

moral and frivolous, are often allowed into fellowship with the godly, where they stumble the world, blemish Christianity, and grieve those who are sincere. I wish everyone would handle such men the way you just did; either they would start lining up their lives with true religion, or they would find the companionship of the saints too hot.”

Then Faithful said, “How Talkative at first lifts up his plumes! How bravely does he speak! How he presumes to drive down all before him! But as soon as Faithful talks of

heart-work, like the moon that’s past the full, into the wave he goes; And so will all but he who heart-work knows.”

So Christian and Faithful walked on together, discussing their experiences on the journey, and although the route would otherwise have been tedious, since they were now passing through a wilderness, their pleasant conversation made it seem easy.

—*to be continued*

Above drawing by Katura Williams
Lehigh County Prison • Allentown, PA.

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THE UPWARD CALL

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Answering the upward call brings us into the way of discipleship. The way of discipleship is a process that takes time. It calls us to stop, step out of hurry, sit down, meditate, and study. This book, The Upward Call, is not a three-hour miracle course. Much rather it is a tool to help you grow and to apply the principles of God's Word to the challenges of real everyday life.

In the first three lessons, we explored God's call to follow Jesus. We studied what the call is and what it means to us. In Part 2, we considered some practical issues that face anyone who is serious about following Jesus. Lesson 10 brings us into Part 3, a study of our responsibility to work with other members of God's kingdom, passing on the gifts He has shared with us.

Will you rise to the challenge of this upward climb with Jesus? It calls for courage. It demands discipline. But this walk also has a destination. Up there, forever with Him, we will seize the prize, and every difficulty we faced here will seem as nothing!

Part 3 **Understanding My Responsibilities**

Lesson 10: Developing a Servant Heart

Lesson 11: Serving the Church

Lesson 12: Reaching the Lost

“Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?... Feed my lambs... feed my sheep” (John 21:15, 16). This interchange between Jesus and Peter was charged with meaning and feeling beyond what we can easily recapture. Peter had denied Jesus. Jesus had died, had risen again, and had appeared to His disciples several times. Now, Peter had gone fishing for reasons we can only guess at, and Jesus had appeared to His night-weary, bewildered, but believing dis-

ciples with a miraculously prepared breakfast. He singles out Peter with this poignant question, thrice-repeated, “Lovest thou me?” and follows it with the commission, “Feed my sheep.”

Here is Peter—so like us in weakness, in spite of having been disciplined—and Jesus gives him a work to do. The disciple is called to disciple others.

This is the pattern the Master established. As we grow in our spiritual walk with Him, we are to become agents helping others. The blessings we receive are turned into responsibilities.

The three lessons that follow explore the responsibilities that come to us as we walk this road with Jesus and His people. All who sit at His feet must sooner or later learn to take the hand of others—lift the young, strengthen the weak, nurture the lambs, and feed the sheep. Every disciple of Jesus becomes a member in His great body, and as a member, he must learn to make his contribution, take his responsibility, and share of his time and energy for the good of others and for the glory of Christ.

Lesson 10

Developing a Servant Heart

INTRODUCTION

Self-centeredness has always stood crosswise to genuine discipleship. Since serving is a very integral part of discipleship, we may be assured that self will oppose the path of true service, sticking up its head for recognition, balking at following instructions, disdaining certain duties, complaining that others are not doing their fair share, offended at the slightest suggestion of criticism, and offended if a word of thanks is missed or goes to another person. As Christians, we would not likely have the nerve to stand and say, “Here am I, serve me,” but often that is exactly what we intend when we have an opportunity to do something in the church or the community.

Disciples of Jesus are called to repent of self, whether it wears filthy clothes or beautiful religious garb; we are called to kneel before the majesty of the Lord of Hosts until we see ourselves utterly undone. When the coals from His altar have touched our self-centered lips and purged our self-centered ambitions, we are ready to say with Isaiah, humbly and genuinely, “Here am I, send me” (see Isaiah 6:1–8).

PERSONAL INVENTORY

1. In what specific ways are you serving God's people?
2. Are there things the church has asked you to do that you resent (or have resented)? Exactly why have you resented this? (Did you feel unqualified? Did you feel that others could do it better? Did you feel that it was a task no one else wanted? Did you want to be free from obligation?)
3. Are there people in the church whose job you wish you had?
4. Have you prayed for the Lord's direction in how to better serve in His kingdom? Have you offered yourself to Him for any service He wishes to assign to you?
5. Who in the Bible are outstanding examples of servants? What qualities do they have that you admire?

UNDERSTANDING THE SCRIPTURES

"Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:25–28).

OBSERVATION #1: A servant heart is not natural to us; our inclination is to rule.

The setting for these instructions of Jesus included an ambitious mother, two aspiring disciples, and ten indignant disciples. None of them had yet the heart of a true servant. The mother wanted her sons in high places, not lowly. Her two sons wanted the same. And the ten were upset likely because the aspirations of these two mirrored their own secret feelings. (*The audacity! To ask to sit on the right and on the left hand of the Messiah! So they want to be lords over us, too! The upstarts! They don't deserve it any more than we do.*) Whatever were the exact thoughts and mutterings of the ten, their hearts were no more inclined toward true servanthood than the hearts of the two.

Our natural inclination is to want to be first in line, to be on the top of the pile, to be looked up to by others for our position, to be able to tell others to do what pleases us, rather than them telling

us what to do. We naturally disdain the low rank, look down on work that has no distinction, and avoid putting ourselves at the call of others.

To develop a servant heart means something needs to happen in us that causes us to live above our natural inclinations. That something is both negative and positive: negative, in that self must die; positive, in that a new nature must emerge out of our living union with Jesus. The old “me first” mentality must be replaced with the new “Jesus first” and “I live for the good of others” mentality.

Because something is unnatural for us, does not mean it will be unenjoyable. Servanthood, in the manner of Jesus, is in fact rich with meaning, purpose, and joy.

Study Questions

1. Check the context of this incident. At what stage in Jesus’ ministry did this occur?

2. With His impending crucifixion, Jesus no doubt had weighty things to think about. What does His patient response to the disciples teach us about servanthood?

3. How might the disciples have ministered to Jesus at this time?

4. Can you think of Biblical examples of the Gentile concept of servanthood?

5. How do these examples stand in contrast to the life of Jesus?

“Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us” (Psalm 123:2).

“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ” (Colossians 3:23, 24).

OBSERVATION #2: The focus of a servant spirit is ultimately on God.

The actual service of Jesus’ followers is usually among people—taking time and doing tangible acts of kindness and love. But

ultimately, we do not serve people; we serve God. People will change. People will sometimes be unattractive, undeserving, demanding, and thankless. If we serve people, we will soon be given over to confusion, compromise, frustration, and burnout.

Our eyes must be on the Master. What He says, we say. Where He sends, we go. What He commands, we do. He is the One on Whom we wait. Our delight is in knowing and doing His will. Our minds and hearts are set on discerning His purposes, extending His Kingdom, and accomplishing the work He entrusts to us. From Him come our orders and from Him comes our satisfaction in doing them. To Him our lives have been given and to Him goes all the glory forever. *“For in him we live, and move, and have our being”* (Acts 17:28).

Study Questions

1. Consider the Lord-servant relationship described in Psalm 123:2. What can the Lord expect from His servants? What can the servants expect from their Lord?

2. How does a focus on serving the Lord change the perspective for those serving earthly masters?

3. Can you give Biblical examples of a person trying to serve people instead of God?

4. What were the results?

“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. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:1, 2).

OBSERVATION #3: True servanthood requires a total yielding to the will of God.

A servant heart is a yielded heart. It has gone to the altar and is wholly consecrated to the Lord. This does not mean it does what everyone demands of it. It does not mean the servant is continually under overload, trying to do more than he can and feeling guilty that there is always work to do. It does mean that he is fully

He Is Here and He Is Real

In the darkness of this prison, though I cannot see Him,
He is my light.
In the loneliness and pain that only a prisoner can know,
He is with me.
The sound of His voice I don't really know,
Yet He speaks to me.
When I call out to Him, He always answers;
He is here.
He is not just a vision or an old prisoner's dream;
He is real.
He is the love I cling to, my assurance and my hope.
He is Jesus Christ, my Lord!

*“And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end
of the world” (Matthew 28:20).*

“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Hebrews 13:5).

—William Cox • Daniel Unit, Snyder, Texas

and unreservedly at the call of God, that the only reasonable response to God's will is a ready, humble yes.

Servants who have been to the altar have an inner brokenness. The stubbornness, the self-will, the self-aspiring marks of the ego have passed into the fire and have gone up in smoke; and the spirit that has come through the flames is pure. There is an earnestness in the service and yet a meekness in the manner in which it is done. There is a quietness and humility in the servant and yet a strength and certainty.

Yieldedness at the altar of God is an absolute surrender. It is not the surrender of a particular item. It is not merely quitting a certain carnal activity. It is not confessing an obvious attitude of carnality. One may do any or all of these and still on the bottom line retain control. The man on God's altar yields the whole life. Every item, every activity, every attitude comes under the sway of God because the whole life is given up as a living sacrifice.

Those who try to serve the Lord and His church without the altar experience will be frustrated and they will be frustrating. They may offer themselves for ministry, and they may know the right words, but there is a giveaway in the heart. Underneath the words, behind the lip service are the marks of the unbroken self-life—an unbending spirit, a critical attitude, an indifference to spiritual growth, an independence in brotherhood, a resistance to authority, a personal agenda to pursue in the “ministry.”

For those who are serious about serving God, *there is no substitute for the altar.*

Study Questions

1. What is the significance of giving ourselves as a “living sacrifice”?
2. How do other translations render “reasonable service,” and what does this tell us about service?
3. How do the following expressions bear upon service?
 - a. “be not conformed to this world”
 - b. “be transformed by the renewing of your mind”
4. List the three things that are said about the will of God.
5. Why is it that “proving” is necessary for us to discover that the will of God is this way?

“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).

“If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you” (John 13:14, 15).

OBSERVATION #4: A true servant of God is humble.

Service may easily be used for personal advantage—to gain status, to build reputation, to influence decisions, or to control other people. The servant of the Lord serves for love and for the glory of his Master.

How easy it is to be sidetracked! When the servant has done the will of God, he is tempted to dwell on his accomplishments. When he has been humble and unassuming, he is tempted to smile with secret satisfaction on his humble manner. When he has been faithful, he is tempted to view that as giving him certain rights with God or greater clout among his fellow servants.

Nothing substitutes for a focus on the glory and worthiness of the Lord. That alone will keep a servant humble, and that is fully enough.

OBSERVATION #5: A servant is obedient.

Some service is hard. Some tasks are such that our natural inclination is to shrink from them. As Christians, we glory in the cross of Jesus, but for Jesus, it was agony. And every follower of Jesus, every servant of God, will face tests of obedience. We will struggle sometimes with accepting the will of God.

It is all right to groan in the garden, as long as we emerge willing to bear the cross. The servant may pray for the situation to change, he may legitimately ask for someone else to do the work, but only if he concludes his prayer with the words of resignation, “Nevertheless, not my will but Thine be done.” The bottom line is always, “Yes, Lord.”

OBSERVATION #6: Jesus is our perfect example as a servant.

Every teaching on true servanthood is exemplified in the life of our Lord. He kept His focus on the Father. He was totally yielded to the Father’s will. He was humble. He was obedient.

The night Jesus washed His disciples’ feet, He gave them a tangible demonstration of servanthood. He laid aside His robe, took the towel, and washed their feet. What a parallel to His whole lifework! He laid aside the glory of deity to become a man, took up the ministry of walking up and down the roads and through the towns of humanity, and with His hands He touched the sick and sinful and brought healing.

Then He says simply, but powerfully, “Do as I have done.” Before that example, what robes dare we hang onto? What roads do we have reason to refuse? What people are too low, too vile, or too backward for our service?

Study Questions

1. List as many characteristics as you can of a good servant.
2. Can you find an incident in Jesus' life that matches each of your answers to the above question?
3. What attitudes in us are hindrances to a servant spirit?
4. List examples of God's servants who were obedient unto death.
5. Reviewing the list (for Question #4), what did these people have in common, and in what ways did their situations vary?

"So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do" (Luke 17:10).

OBSERVATION #7: Service, no matter how noble or how much superior to that of others, does not put God in debt to us.

One of the traps of effective service is that it can make us uppity in the church. We observe that we do more than Brother Joe, and we observe furthermore that we do it better than anyone we know, and we observe in addition that we have done it longer than anyone else, and we observe beside all this that people don't appreciate what we have done.

We are ready to set a few things straight. In such huffing around, we do well to sit at the feet of Jesus again for some solid discipleship. When the disciple has done everything he possibly could for his entire lifetime in the best way possible—when he has done all that and more—he has done only his duty. His service does not make him eligible for heaven; only Jesus can do that. His service does not obligate God to do anything for him; God acts toward us out of His own mercy and upon the merits of His Son Jesus.

Does this mean our service means nothing to God? No. It is our reasonable response, and it is an important one, but our service can never obligate God. If a billionaire gave a starving bootblack five million dollars, could the bootblack earn the gift by blacking the rich man's shoes? If he polished them until they shone like chrome, he could never by his service change the reality that the gift of five million dollars was an act of mercy. So with us and God. We may shine His shoes for our entire lifetime, but in the glory of what God has done for us through His Son, we will wisely confess, "We are

servants who have cost God millions more than we will ever give back by our service.” Hallelujah! The glory be to Him!

Study Questions

1. What teaching was the context for Jesus' statement in Luke 17:10?
2. How is the reasoning of this parable similar to the reasoning of the parable in Matthew 18:23–35?
3. What are the consequences of developing haughty ideas about our service? How will this affect our thoughts toward God? How will it affect our thoughts and actions toward our fellowmen?

APPLYING THE SCRIPTURES

1. How do “Gentile concepts” of servanthood crop up in the church? What is the best way to go about helping “Gentile servants” become more Christlike?
2. What are Biblical motivations for service? How does motivation affect the quality of the service?
3. What are the characteristics of a person serving people instead of serving God? How should a church leader respond when he sees people servers in the congregation? How should the people in the congregation respond when they see people servers in the pulpit?
4. When we see carnal servant attitudes in ourselves, how do we go about developing a true servant spirit? In other words, how do we move from being proud to being humble, from being jealous to being generous, from being a people server to being a God server, etc?
5. What are practical ways we can exercise humility?
6. What happens when our service is not geared toward genuine need? What is wrong when we try to serve people and they don't want our service? Is it ever right to push our service onto others?
7. What happens when service becomes an end in itself? Is it possible for people to be more devoted to their ministry than to God?
8. How much should rewards enter our minds and motivate service? Is it wrong for our hope of heaven, for example, to inspire our service? Is it wrong to be pleased when our service is appreciated? How do we graciously give and receive approval for service without fostering pride?



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Because my faith in God is strong,
My life is filled with hope.
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He gives me strength to cope.
I don't lose heart when things go wrong,
For God will make it right.
I know He always understands
And protects me in my plight,
For He sees all and truly cares,
And knows my every need.
If I keep faith and hope in Him,
Jesus will intercede.
He'll calm my troubled spirit
And smooth my wrinkled brow;
He'll fill my heart with peace and joy;
His love on me bestow.
I won't lose heart or be depressed
Because God's love is true,
And He will help me find success
In everything I do.

— Markendrick Al-Ghane
St. Clair Correctional Facility
Springville, Alabama

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