

The Day I Bought
THE FARM

A compilation of short stories,
poems, and essays

Paul A. Lindberg

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Preface

I got my first computer (a beautiful new Apple II+ with 64K of memory and a single 5 1/2 inch floppy drive) back in 1980. I'll admit, it was just an expensive toy to enjoy with our kiddies. We played Zork, Decathlon, and Oregon Trail – we even programmed our own Zork-like game. It was educational and fun, but that's about it.

Then I seemed to be hearing God telling me to sit down and write for Him. That I did with delight, and I've been writing for Him ever since.

My computers have changed over the years (I'm now on an Apple PowerPC G4 Dual 1.42GHZ with 2 GB memory, a 240GB hard drive, and a CD drive instead of that slow, unreliable floppy drive – quite the upgrade from my Apple II+!), but not my passion for writing.

Now that my latest books have gone public, I have been relaxing and thinking back over the years. I was rather awed at how many things I've written – and how few of them ever actually reached the public. Perhaps I can improve that ratio with this little book.

You'll find here, in no particular order, the best of my writing (not counting the letters or personal exhortations) from the last forty years. Most of it is intensely spiritual (for I'm a rather intense Christian), though not as religious as you might guess. The short stories are often parables like Jesus used to tell His disciples. For example, the first story, *The Day I Bought the Farm*, relates to Matthew 11:12 and 13:44 ff. Some of the other stories also relate to entering the Kingdom of God or developing our love for one another, but I'll leave you, dear Reader, to pray about them to discover their meaning on your own.

I have spent a lot of time in prayer – which I define as listening to God as well as talking to Him. Some of what I've heard from Him (or seen in visions or dreams), I've tried to write down, though bringing it down to earthy words does tend to spoil it somewhat.

So I may write as if I'm hearing directly from God, but I caution you, it is rarely that easy. I'm still human and very fallible, and what I hear from God is certainly mixed with my humanity (and possibly even some of Satan's lies thrown in, too). As proof of that, I'm still finding typos in my books! So enjoy what I write but accept nothing as from God unless and until the Holy Spirit confirms it to your own heart.

If you have read any of my other books, you will know how to do that. My guess is that you would never have picked up this little book in the first place if not for the prompting of the Holy Spirit. As I said in *Volume One of The Feasts of Israel, God's Plan of the Ages*, our God is alive, and He loves to communicate with His people.

My earlier works were actually done by hand, printed out laboriously on engineering graph paper. But my first major work, a book titled *Come Quickly, Lord Jesus*, was originally published in November of 1982 using my venerable Apple II+. That book is now out of print and obsolete. (I actually thought that Jesus would return for His Bride by 1985!) However, looking back all those years, it was a remarkable effort and good training for me.

Now, roughly twenty million keystrokes later, I have to say, it's been a fun and worthwhile journey.

Glad to have you join me.

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The Day I Bought the Farm

Timothy Stephenson and his son Tim Junior stood together leaning on the fence. It felt good – that few minutes of tranquility after a busy day. They were gazing lovingly across the broad, sweeping expanse of their ranch. Not talking, just enjoying. Their eyes fondled the cattle corral, the lines of fences stretching off into the distance, the weather-worn but sturdy barn, the carefully nurtured grove of fruit trees, and the four milk cows grazing contentedly beyond the pig pen. The chickens were scurrying to their roost under the porch of the comfortable farm house, leaving the pair of geese to scratch around the yard alone. The ducks had gathered to their nests by the bullrushes edging the pond. The sun was painting a spectacular flaming backdrop above the hills far off across the prairie, and the crickets were serenading the sheep as they bedded down for the night.

Over two thousand head of cattle out there, Tim Junior was thinking as his sharp eyes scanned the distant hills. “Dad?”

“Yes, son?” His father shifted lazily on the fence rail.

“Is this place going to be mine, someday? After you, uh, after you die, I mean?”

“Do you want it, Tim?” His tall, lanky form had grown suddenly alert.

Tim Junior sensed the change. “Well, sure I want it, but, well, you know... I’d never take it away from you. I’d, uh, I’ll work for you until I can pay you for it.”

His father sighed softly, as if remembering something that hurt him, just a little. Tim waited, wondering if he had said something to upset his dad. The big red orb of the sun touched the horizon, and the fiery brilliance of the high clouds overhead was like eye candy to the soul.

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The silence was just beginning to become unbearable; then the big man smiled at his son. “C’mon, Tim.” He reached out and ruffled his hair. “It’s time you learned how much this place cost.” He turned and together they started for the house.

They passed the cabins Tim’s dad and grandpa had built before he was born. The farm hands were hollering and laughing over a card game, and delightful smells were wafting from their cookhouse. The chickens were now all sleeping under the porch of the farm house, but his dad never slowed his pace as he tromped noisily up the steps.

“Maria, we’ll be in the den for an hour or so. Okay?” he called to his wife.

“Try to make it less. I’ve got dinner ready on the stove,” she responded pleasantly, as one who had often waited dinner for her hardworking but hungry men.

The two settled back on the overstuffed sofa, and their gaze wandered up to the big painting above the fireplace. It portrayed an old cowboy on horseback. The horse was just a common saddle horse – definitely not the focus of the picture. But the man – he was sitting erect and looking straight out of the painting as if his eyes would pierce right into your soul. His hands were gnarled, and his face was wrinkled and creased, but there was a strength in his appearance that transcended time and age.

“Your grandpa was quite a man...” Timothy began. “I’m sorry you never knew him.” He paused, and his eyes grew a bit moist. Then he settled back to tell his story.

“He and Ma moved out here from West Virginia before I was born. The government was giving away free land. He got this twenty-five hundred acre spread just by promising he’d live on it and farm it for at least five years.

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“Well, he almost died trying. This was a God-forsaken desert back then, and what with the dust storms, the locusts, the tornados, the cattle rustlers, the lack of good water, and the barren ground, he and Ma had to fight constantly for their very survival.

“When he finally got the irrigation ditch in, things started to improve. He planted that row of trees all along the ditch. They kept the wind from blowing away the topsoil. Then he managed to get a few head of cattle and got some fences up. By then, my three brothers were getting big enough to start helping around the place.

“We built this house. You should have seen the one-room mud house we were living in before! And we got fences clear out to the gulch. Dad was smart; he knew we couldn’t run a cattle ranch without fences. Then we built the barn and got a few more cows, so we could start selling milk as well as beefsteaks. After that, things really seemed to start going right.

“By the time I was sixteen, we had four hundred head of cattle and six good milk cows, and both the orchard and the garden were producing bountifully almost every year. About then, my brother Joe started bugging my dad about his inheritance. I guess he didn’t like living on the farm and he wanted some cash to take off on his own.

“Well, dad got us kids together and told us in no uncertain terms that he wasn’t giving out inheritances. He said all he had was this ranch, and he wasn’t about to split it up just because he had four sons.

“‘Only one of you is going to get this place, when I get too old to take care of it,’ he stated nonchalantly. ‘But you’ll have to whip me for it.’

“‘Whip you? Why?’ We couldn’t believe it.

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“Just 'cause I said so. The first one of you to whip me gets the whole spread, and the rest of you can fend fer yourselves!’ He stared at us, a slight grin playing at the corners of his mouth, then turned and walked away without another word.

“You can imagine how I felt. I was not only the youngest, but I was also kind of the runt of the family, and I didn’t think I had a chance.

“But not long after that, I saw something that made me change my mind. Ted, that’s my oldest brother, tried to whip Dad over there next to the barn where the pig sty is now. I saw the whole thing. I guess I’d never really realized before how strong Dad was. Ted pounded away at him with all his strength – he was twenty-five, six feet tall, a hundred and eighty pounds, and not an ounce of fat – but Dad didn’t even blink an eye. He just reached out, picked Ted up, and threw him against the barn wall.

“‘It’s going to be a long, long time before anybody whips Dad,’ I told myself. That was the day I began to train. I read up on muscle building, made myself some weights, and started working out every day up in the hay loft. I started running everywhere I went to build up my wind, and I was careful with my diet.

“A couple years went by, but I kept at it. I don’t know what it was – something in me kept driving me. I grew to want this farm more than anything else in the world.

“Joe, my second oldest brother, went off to the city. He got a job and got married. He never did make a try at Dad for the farm. The other two both did, a couple times I think, in those next few years. They didn’t have a chance. All those years of fighting the elements had made Dad as tough as nails, and my brothers were just too soft.

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“But finally I felt I was ready. I’d really changed a lot. Not just the weights and the running, but I’d also studied boxing from a schoolmate’s father and had practiced for many hours on a punching bag I made. I was twenty-one and in the prime of my life. I was quick, while Dad was getting old and slowing down.

“I hated the thought of hitting Dad, but I really wanted this ranch. My brothers didn’t have the motivation to really fight for it, but I did. I had grown to sincerely love this place, but I think my brothers only wanted it for its money value.

“So one day I confronted Dad over by the garden. ‘I don’t want to hurt you, but I really want this farm,’ I said.

“He threw his hoe off to one side and stood there, waiting. To this day I don’t know what I did wrong, but I don’t think I ever landed a single punch. When I woke up, I was in bed with an ice bag on my head, and I wished I’d never woke up. I felt like every bone in my body had been crushed, and I was afraid to move for fear I’d ripple like a bowl of jelly.

“At first I was angry, but you just couldn’t stay angry at Dad. He never did hold a grudge past sundown, and he treated me like it had never happened. In fact, it was after that I grew to respect my dad more than ever. I finally realized how he had gotten so strong, and I really began working with him on this place.

“We built those cabins for the farm hands back then. Dad and I did most of it. I remember working ’til I was ready to drop, but even then I couldn’t outwork Dad. I continued with the weights and all, but I really pushed myself to keep up with Dad. I tried to do everything he did only more, and harder, and better, and longer.

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“A few more years went by, and finally I knew it was time. Age was really beginning to tell on Dad, while with all that extra work I had hardened like fine steel. I could see my two older brothers eyeing him, too, and I knew I didn’t dare wait too long. I worked and planned and trained with a fierceness that amazed even me. And I waited and plotted for just the right moment.

“It came suddenly. Dad had had an exhausting day taking care of some wolves that had been getting through his fences at the calves, and then he’d had to settle a fight among the hired help. When the hired hands fought, it wasn’t any Sunday school picnic, either, let me tell you! Anyway, Dad was worn out, and discouraged, too, while I was fresh and in perfect shape, having spent my day getting lumber and materials in town.

“I met him as he was walking up toward the house for supper. ‘I want this farm, and I’m going to whip you for it!’ I said, and I gritted my teeth and got ready for the first punch. Dad never paused in his pace. He walked straight toward me with his eyes piercing right through me, just like in that picture up there, and the instant before he was in range of my fist, he kicked, hard, right at my groin. As I began to bend over in pain, his knee came up into my chest and his doubled fists came down over the back of my neck, and that’s the last I remembered ’til sometime the next evening.

“When I woke up, I really scared my mom, because before I knew it I was screaming in pain. I couldn’t help it; the pain was indescribable. Besides, I was really angry this time. When Dad came in, I yelled at him about fighting dirty and how unfair that was and a few other things that I’m too ashamed to repeat.

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“Dad never even apologized. He simply said that if I really wanted the farm, I was going to have to whip him, and that he’d never said anything about it being fair.

“That was the real turning point in my life. It wasn’t that I hated Dad; I didn’t. Like I said, you couldn’t hate him. He was too good a man and too good a father. But I started to burn in my desire to own this ranch. It was mine, and nothing in heaven or on earth would keep me from it. I finally realized how much Dad loved this place, I suppose because I began to love it with the same intensity.

“Jim (my third brother, four years older than me) laughed at me. ‘You may as well go get yourself a wife and a job in the city, like Joe.’ he said. ‘It’ll be twenty years before you’ll be able to whip Dad.’ I smiled and said nothing; in my heart the ranch was already mine.

“It wasn’t long after that, maybe two or three months, when it happened. I was up in the hay loft, pitching hay fiercely up away from the door, when I saw Dad walk by down below. I dropped my pitchfork and leaped out the door, like a leopard from a tree. I came from behind Dad, and he had no warning at all. He crumpled under the impact of my hundred and ninety pounds from fifteen feet above him. I guess I sorta’ lost my head, but I was kicking him in the ribs and jumping on his chest, sobbing uncontrollably the whole time, when Ted and Jim both came running in and pulled me off him.

“‘The farm is mine!’ I shouted between my tears.

“‘It’s not either!’ shouted Jim. ‘You cheated and jumped him from behind. Look at the hay on you, and there’s your pitchfork in the loft where you dropped it.’

“I just knelt with my face in the dirt and bawled, the violence of my emotions had so overcome me.

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“I vaguely heard Dad telling my brothers, ‘...I just said you had to whip me – I never said it had to be fair...’ And then I felt him grab my shoulder.

“‘Stand up like a man and look me in the eye!’ he roared.

“I wiped my eyes with my grimy hands, slowly got to my feet, and looked at him. He looked terrible. His face was already getting puffy and turning purple, blood was coming out of one corner of his mouth, and he was holding his side like he had some broken ribs. I just gritted my teeth, blinked back the tears, stared right back into those piercing eyes and spat out, ‘The farm is mine!’

“Then I noticed, through the puffiness, the twinkle in his eyes. ‘Yes.’ He spoke quietly yet with a surprising intensity. ‘I’m proud of you, my son. The farm is yours, all yours, free.’

“All of a sudden, it hit me what Dad had done. I staggered back away from his grip on my shoulder.

“‘Free?!’ I yelled. ‘Free?!’ I surprised myself at how angry I had become. I yelled in his face, ‘Do you realize how much I gave for this farm? I gave my blood, sweat, and tears! I gave my time, my effort, every ounce of...’

“‘I know,’ Dad interrupted softly, ‘You gave everything you had. Just like I did thirty years ago.’ And before I could respond, he turned on his heel and strode off toward the house, limping only slightly. ‘C’mon,’ he called over his shoulder. ‘Let’s get that deed signed off.’”

There was a long pause. Then Maria, who had evidently been listening through the study door, called out, “Come ’n get it, you men. It’s on the table and gettin’ cold.”

Why Do You Struggle So?

My little child, I am right here. Why do you struggle so to reach Me? I heard your prayer before you spoke it, and I will delight in answering it in a way that will be marvelous in your eyes. But why do you continue repeating it day after day with anguish and despair in your heart?

I see your dedication to hear My word and do My will, and I am pleased. But why do you make it such a hard thing? Why do you agonize and strain to hear My word as if it were a thing to run after and try to catch? Stand still. I will write it on your spirit.

Do not be concerned if you don't understand it all at first. Your spirit understands, and it does not forget!

Why do you go about your daily tasks in fear that you will miss My will? Do you think My will is some high and difficult thing far removed from the everyday chores of your life? It is not! For I am working My will within you, and I will go before you, making even your errors and failures a part of My plan.

You see, I've been God for a very long time. I enjoy it, and I'm really rather good at it. In all these many years, I've never failed to keep My promise. I've never been confused or frustrated in My plans. With the end of the age at hand, do not fear that I will lose control now!

Everything, from the tiniest speck of dust to the mightiest mountain, is Mine. I make the mosquito as well as the whale. I take pleasure in each thing that I have made.

But, do you know, you are My chief delight! Of all the things I have made, you alone have chosen to love Me of your own free will. Believe Me, you are precious to Me beyond words.

Why Do You Struggle So?

You earnestly desire to walk with Me, but I am walking with you even now. You long for My righteousness, but it is already yours, bought and paid for by My first-born son, Jesus. You eagerly await your inheritance in My Kingdom, but you already have the title deed to that inheritance, My own Spirit within you.

You hope for a release from the futility of poor health, financial problems, bondage in relationships, oppression of the evil one, and so on – so many problems! Yet you have right now within you the solution to them all: that seed of faith which I planted in the beginning, which I water day by day with My Spirit, which I cause My Son to shine upon. Open your eyes, My child! It is now a mighty oak tree, which nothing in heaven or earth can uproot.

Stand still and know that I am God. All power and authority, all wisdom and honor, all wealth and pleasure are Mine. Now, rise up, My son – take My hand. Just walk with Me and believe. For that faith is a key that will open that door in My entire Kingdom.

It all belongs to you, My son. I gave it to you because I love you.

The Motorcycle

Many years ago, back in the days when I was first learning to know the voice of the Good Shepherd, I needed another motorcycle. My old bike was too small for the freeways, which I had to use in order to work on our new property. So I sold the old one and, without even praying about it, bought a larger one. It was cheap, but it turned out to be a very poor investment because I was constantly having trouble with it. I had to tinker with it nearly every weekend just to keep it running.

In prayer one day, I asked the Lord why He had allowed me to get stuck with such a pile of junk. He reminded me that not only had I not prayed about it before I bought it, but I had deliberately ignored several major warnings He had sent me and had twice argued with His Holy Spirit when He had told me to walk away – when the prior owner hadn't kept an appointment I had arranged to try it out, and again when he couldn't find the title after I had said I would buy it. So I repented, and figured that the constant tinkering was my punishment.

This actually went on for several years. I bore my punishment well, and worked to better know and obey the voice of my King so it would never happen again. One day He clearly said to me, "Get your motorbike cleaned up and sell it." I couldn't believe my ears! I thought I was stuck with that thing forever! But I was learning to obey the Master's voice, so I put a small 'For Sale' ad on the bulletin board at work. Of course nobody responded – who would want a cheap old pile of junk that barely ran?

A full month later, God spoke to me again, this time very sternly. "I told you to clean it up and sell it. Now go home and get everything looking and running its best."

"Yes, LORD!" I hurried home to obey.

The Motorcycle

I spent the rest of the day cleaning and repairing, and got it better looking and running than when I had bought it. The very next morning, a fellow at work called me about the little ad I had posted. We went out at lunch and looked at it, and he bought it on the spot. He paid me cash – every penny I had asked, and offered to take me home from work that night.

The next morning, I awoke to the realization that I had no transportation and had to take my wife's car to work. I couldn't leave her stuck at home, so I immediately began looking for another motorbike. This time, I prayed about it first. Over the next few weeks I looked at (and prayed over) a lot of bikes, but for each one the Lord said no. Then one evening He surprised me. I had just prayed, "Lord, help me find the right one – one that will have Your blessing and protection on it."

He replied, quite distinctly, "What would you like?"

"Well," I responded, having just seen some nice ones in the Honda shop. "I'd like to have one of those Hondas like I saw today, but I know they're way too expensive."

"Be specific," the Lord answered back.

"Uh," I was getting excited. The Lord hadn't talked to me this clearly since He had told me to sell the old bike. "I'd like a Honda CX500 with a Vetter fairing, a safety bar, and a rear carrier."

"And how much would you like to pay?"

"Well," I hedged. I knew those CX500s at Honda were about \$3500, and the Vetter fairing and rear carrier would add another \$1000 – big money in those days. "Two thousand? Uh, maybe twenty-one hundred with the tax and license?" I responded with a gulp, wondering if I was being a bit too bold.

The Motorcycle

I listened intently. No further word from the Lord. No indication He had even heard me. I wondered if that had really been the Lord, or just wishful thinking. I went back to my search. Another week went by. I began to see just how presumptuous was my request. I found nothing like that even close to my price range. What a fool I was.

My search began to get more intense, and more frantic. Then one day the Good Shepherd spoke to me again. “Stop looking.” He was really quite clear, but I could hardly believe my ears. So He reminded me of Psalm 46:10, “Cease striving and know that I Am God.”

Shaken, I obeyed, and for the next week I didn’t go look at a single bike. I didn’t even check the want ads.

What happened next will be hard to believe, but I swear it is all true. I was walking past a filing cabinet at work one day, and out of the corner of my eye I saw a folded newspaper on top of the cabinet. Glancing over, I was shocked to discover it was folded to an inside page, where a picture of a motorcycle happened to be right on top. It was an ad for the Honda CX500! The ad said they had three of them for \$2995 each. Having learned my lesson, I immediately prayed about it. “Lord, is this it?”

“Yes, but no,” the Master responded. That was it.

Not understanding His answer, I called my wife and asked her to pray about it. She called back shortly and said the Lord had given her Psalm 84:11, “No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly.” I took that as a yes and drove all the way up to Green Lake Honda. They still had the three CX500s, and I prayed over each one, getting a definite no for each. I then spent the next hour praying over each motorbike in the store, with the same results.

The Motorcycle

Frustrated, I prayed, “Lord, why am I here? Was this a wasted trip? A wild goose chase? Am I being disobedient looking here after You told me to stop looking? And what did You mean when You said, ‘Yes, but no’?”

“Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.” (Exodus 14:13) came to mind. So I just stood there, prayerfully waiting, gazing out the window. My eyes fastened on another customer’s motorbike sitting in the parking lot. It was a two-year-old Honda CX500. It had a Vetter fairing, a safety bar, and a rear carrier, and it looked like new. I wandered over and checked the mileage. Just over 7000, and it was spotless; beautiful! But knowing it belonged to someone else, I didn’t dare pray about it; I refused the temptation to be covetous.

About then I looked up and saw the owner of that CX500 driving off – on a brand new bike! “Lord, what is going on here?” I prayed.

“He traded it in on a new one.”

“Huh? Then is this the one You want me to buy?”

“Yes.” Instantly. Powerfully. So definite, so clear, it almost bowled me over, especially after all the times I had heard no over the past six weeks. The Good Shepherd reminded me of the verse He had given my wife, “No good thing will He withhold...” and filled me with a joy, a taste of the delight He was feeling as a good Father rejoices to give good gifts to His children. He then reminded me that I had agreed to spend \$2100 on it.

I went to the manager’s office, aware that it was worth at least \$3000. I offered him \$2100 cash, as is, total with tax and license. He sputtered, “It’s not for sale yet. We just got it in on trade. We have to take it in the shop to check it out. I don’t even know what it’s worth yet.”

The Motorcycle

Having the word of the Lord behind me, I stuck to my price. Needless to say, in a short while I was driving off on an almost new 1978 Honda CX500, with Vetter fairing, safety bar, and rear carrier, for a total out-the-door price of exactly \$2100, awed at the power of prayer and full of love for the One who answers prayer.

That was twenty-five years and ninety-thousand miles ago. What can I say? The contrast between the CX500 and my earlier pile of junk was immense. Everything about this bike was blessed! I can't imagine any motorbike so reliable! It has a driveshaft – no drive chain to constantly adjust. It only needed oil changes once a year and almost no other maintenance. The few failures I've had – a cam chain tensioner, a magneto, an oil seal – can be counted on the fingers of one hand. It gets over fifty miles to the gallon and costs only a few cents a mile to drive.

But the best benefit of all is the fellowship I have with my Lord and King whenever I am riding. I am continually reminded of His love, His protection, and His faithful care over me as His child. Everywhere I go, I sense two of His mighty angels flying along, one on either side of me as I ride. And the prayer times, the talks we have together with no radio to distract, no roof over me to block the heavens! Some of my most intimate and precious times with the Good Shepherd have been spent riding to work and back on that motorcycle. Never was a child of God so blessed!

Yes, there has been some discipline too. A few months after I got it, I recall starting to feel a little proud of myself, my riding ability, and the fancy spotless motorcycle I owned. Instantly my rear tire slipped out from under me, and I was falling.

The Motorcycle

A lot can go through your mind in the middle of an accident. Before I even hit the asphalt, I was aware of my sin of pride, I repented, and I entrusted myself into the hands of the Lord. "Lord You gave it to me, and You can take it away. Blessed is Your name forever. I will always love and trust You." The angels were right there, and I knew I would be okay. I was in the middle of heavy rush-hour traffic, going forty miles per hour around a curve. The safety bar hit the asphalt, and the sparks began to fly. I pushed off and tucked into a roll. It seemed to take forever to slide to a stop, with cars and squealing tires all around me. Finally, silence. Everybody had managed to stop. Nobody had hit me, the motorbike, or each other. Some fellows ran from across the street and helped me up, then picked up the fallen motorbike and pushed it over to the side. They told me that the car just in front of me had lost his gas cap and was sloshing gas all around the curve. Gas and asphalt make oil!

I checked myself out. Holes in my pants, jacket, shirt, gloves (not to mention a major hole in my pride); bruises and scrapes all over my body; but I was okay. Praise God! I checked out the bike. A broken brake handle and turn signal. Major scratches on the fairing and the safety bar (which had protected me and the rest of the bike). That's it.

As I rode home, shaken but properly humbled, the Good Shepherd said, "You passed the test."

"Huh?" I didn't know what that meant. I was not even aware that there was a test to be passed.

"I needed to see if you loved My gift more than you love Me. You passed the test. I am very pleased at your response. I accept your repentance. I have forgiven and cleansed you."

The Motorcycle

I'd love to say I learned my lesson and always drove humbly and gratefully from then on, but it wouldn't be true. About fifteen years later I had to go through it all again: the pride and self-confidence, and driving too fast around a corner. This time it was sand causing me to slide out. I hit the curb sideways at thirty-five miles per hour and flew off the bike – one more exhibit in my personal hall of shame. But again the Good Shepherd had mercy, protecting me and the motorbike from serious injury. I again drove home properly humbled and oh, so grateful at a loving heavenly Father who answers prayer, keeps His promises, protects and cares for us, and loves to give good gifts to His precious children.

I still have that motorcycle. I still ride it to work nearly every day. It now has ninety-eight thousand miles on it and still runs perfectly – just as blessed as ever. More importantly, I still have great times of fellowship with the Good Shepherd when I'm riding, at home, at work, anytime. I still listen for His quiet voice in all things and am eager to obey when I hear, knowing His plans, His guidance, His wisdom, is always best.

PS. I bought the motorcycle in mid-1980. I wrote the above story in September 2005. Now, in October 2017, the motorcycle has a hundred and twenty thousand miles on it and is still going strong. I'm seventy now and retired, so I no longer use it to commute to work. I've also stopped riding it in the rain or on cold frosty days. But even as a fair-weather biker, I can still sense the presence and protection of the Lord whenever I ride.

The Living Word

In the beginning, God spoke His Word.
That Word went out with great power and glory.
A world was created, beautiful in perfection.
Mankind was formed in the image of God.
God looked at all that His Word had wrought,
And behold, it was very good!

Satan came to argue with the Word.
“But did God really say...?” he asked,
Planting the seeds of doubt and unbelief
To destroy the Life-giving power of the Word,
To bring delay, discouragement, despair, and death,
And to bind mankind in chains forever.

In love, the Word did not give up.
The Word became flesh and dwelt among us –
The glory of God Himself, bent to meet our need.
He suffered and died to satisfy the law’s demand.
But death could not hold the Living Word.
He rose again! Hallelujah!

Jesus, the Living Word, lives still.
He resides in the heart of each one who believes.
He still speaks to those who are hungry to hear.
He still brings life to those who are willing to obey.
He breaks the chains, restoring all who come to Him.
For the Word is God Himself revealed to us.

Stop and think, my sister – who are you?
Do you think the Living Word would pass you by?
Are you a nobody, born only to pain and struggle?
Be still and hear what the Word would say to you:
“You are precious to Me beyond words.”

The Living Word

Christ, the Living Word, has chosen you.
You shall surely walk with Him through all your days.
Though a humble sister, you are now a saint.
The suffering you've been through now has its purpose.
You have been pruned, purified, and prepared.
You shall clearly hear the Word of God!

God is gentle, trustworthy, and full of love.
He will not give you a Word you cannot obey.
He is willing to confirm every Word He speaks.
His Word is full of life, truth, and unfailing love.
His Word is clear and perfect, in unfathomable wisdom.
For His Word is a revelation of Himself.

Have you heard a Word from God?
Then have you withdrawn, saying, "Lord, not that!
Why, that would interfere with my plans and pleasures!
Please Lord, just give me health and wealth instead."
God, in patience, will not force you to obey,
But you may not hear from Him again.

Or are you, on hearing a Word from God,
Bowed in thankful love, determined to obey?
Then know for certain God will speak again,
Illuminating His Word by the lamp of His Spirit,
Leading you into wisdom, righteousness, and truth
Step by step, with Jesus Christ the Living Word.

Where will He lead you? What will He ask of you?
What if the price is more than you can pay?
It is, you know. He asks for all you are and have.
But willing you are, dear sister, for you know the King.
It is His good pleasure to give you the Kingdom!

He Who Must Die

This is a true story, as far as I know, although it has been told and retold so many times that I'm sure the details have been embellished over the years. But I'll try to tell it just as I heard it from the old country, and leave it to you to decide how much of it to believe and how much to consider merely interesting folklore.

It all started back in 1633 in a small Bavarian village called Oberammergau, which is cradled peacefully in the foothills of the rugged Tyrolean Alps between Germany and Italy. Oberammergau is situated in a lush green valley, with spectacular mountain views on three sides. A sparkling Alpine stream flows gently through the village on its way north to the Danube River in Germany.

However, in spite of the glory of God's creation all around, the prosperous people of Europe had become self-centered and hard-hearted. They were too busy to worship God, too busy to stop and give Him thanks.

So, on that dreadful summer of 1633, God turned His back. What had been a land of peace and beauty became a land of terror and darkness as a deadly plague raged from village to village. A spirit of fear flooded the land.

The old burgermeister of Oberammergau had been raised a Christian but had drifted away from God over the years. He called the frightened townspeople together.

"We have no answers, no easy solutions," he said. "There is no cure... except... unless..." He bowed his head, "unless God has mercy." His eyes grew moist, and his lip began to tremble. "I'm sorry. I have led you wrong. I've been so busy helping to make this village prosperous, that I've forgotten the One who is the true source of our prosperity." He paused, and a hush fell over the crowd as each one realized that he, too, had forgotten God.

He Who Must Die

“I called you together to beg your pardon,” the old man continued. “I don’t deserve to be your burgermeister anymore. I resign, and may God forgive me.” He knelt to the floor, put his face between his knees, and wept.

Now the spirit of fear that had taken over the village was forced to flee before the spirit of true repentance that swept through the crowd. Within minutes, everyone was on the floor weeping, crying out to God for forgiveness.

God heard, and He turned again His face to them. Reaching out His hand of love and mercy, He stopped the plague, right there in Oberammergau. Though many were sick and the death rate had been terrifyingly high, yet after their prayers, the sick slowly recovered and their death rate dropped to zero! The spirit of repentance led to a spirit of praise and thankfulness, as the townspeople realized that God had answered their prayers.

Again they gathered together, this time with joy and thankfulness in their hearts. The old burgermeister who had resigned was given back his job. In fact, he was proclaimed a great hero for leading the village into the repentance that had proved to be their salvation.

“No, no,” said he. “I’m not your savior. From now on, we must remember to give God the thanks and praise that is due unto Him.” He paused, struggling with the words. He was no preacher, but his life had been changed, and he knew he had to do something to ensure that it stayed changed. “Look. I’m just a man, understand?” He shook his head. “I can’t always be trusted to lead you right. Only Jesus can always be trusted! He’s the one who died for us so that God could forgive our sins and heal our village. We have got to remember that, somehow. We don’t ever want to go through...” His voice trailed off.

He Who Must Die

“I have an idea.” He said softly, praying silently that God would give him the right words. “I think I know how we can always remember, and help others to remember too. We could get the whole village together, study the Gospels, and work up a play for the surrounding villages to come and see. The play would simply tell the story of the ministry, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus. We could commit ourselves to performing periodically, using people from the village in the various parts.”

The people loved the idea. They tried it the next year, and it was well-received. So they vowed before God to present this Jesus Play (as they called it back then) every ten years. They have kept this vow without fail, except for delays due the two world wars and once in 1770 when it was banned by the catholic church.

Thousands of eager tourists now flock each decade to Oberammergau to enjoy the play and to buy souvenirs the villagers make. The people of the village have based more than their economy on the production of the play; it is as if their whole lives revolve around it. Those who go there often note that the spirits of fear, anger, and hate have no home there, and that the Spirit of love, joy, and peace still reigns supreme among a gentle and thankful people.

So, you see, the old burgermeister’s plan did work after all. The play has been a continual reminder of the One to whom they owe their lives, the One who is really their Lord and God, their Savior, and their Friend.

~

But that is only the prelude to this story. As I’m sure you are aware, that self-centered human nature is strong and does not give up easily. And the younger generation does not automatically inherit the faith of their fathers.

He Who Must Die

The way I heard the story, many in Oberammergau had grown self-serving and calloused again in the early 1700s. Their drama of the life of Jesus had become more of a commercial enterprise. People of the village competed against each other for the key roles. A town committee selected actors for their talent and beauty instead of any spiritual virtues. The Lord had blessed Oberammergau, and its Jesus Play was becoming quite famous, so many villagers didn't even seek a part in it, choosing instead to turn a profit on religious trinkets and accommodations for the burgeoning tourist trade.

However, some still remembered the story of the terrible plague, and raised their children with a specific part in the play in mind. They, at least, worked diligently to develop into each child's character the godly virtues of the apostles or of the Savior Himself.

One of these was a devout couple whom I know only as Mary and Joseph, since they had taken these parts in the play over two decades before. They had lived their parts so deeply that following the play they had gotten married, and had dedicated their marriage to the raising up of a son who would be worthy to play the part of Jesus when he was of age. Joseph and Mary could not bring themselves to actually name their firstborn son Jesus due to the holiness of that name in their eyes, so they named him Joshua, which in Hebrew is the same as Jesus.

At the time of which I now write, Joshua was twenty-three, unmarried, had several younger siblings, and had become the man of the house since his father had died ten years before. He knew the Gospels and most of the New Testament by heart. His godly heritage had served him well. He was gentle, loving, thoughtful, and courteous.

He Who Must Die

Joshua worked hard and took good care of his mother. He also loved nothing better than to help the poor, the discouraged, or the stranger. Though his family was poor since his father's untimely death, he always gave freely of whatever they had when he saw needs around him.

In short, Joshua was aware of his destiny to become Jesus in the village drama, and he had dedicated every aspect of his life to not just acting the part, but to actually becoming Christlike in all he did and said.

Unfortunately, Joshua had two problems. First, he was homely. Even his mother had to admit that. She had cried out to God, "Oh Father, You know we dedicated him to represent Jesus in the play. Then why oh why did You make him so homely?" The only answer she received was Isaiah 53:2-3. She determined to be content with that, trusting that God would somehow make a way for her son to be chosen for the fast-approaching drama.

But there was another problem. He stuttered. No amount of careful training seemed to help the stuttering in the least; even knowing exactly what he wanted to say, it still came out broken and difficult to hear. Those who were close to him didn't mind; his gentle character more than made up for his awkward stuttering. But deep down, Mary knew it would take a miracle to enable him to take his destined part in the village play.

Three years before the play, the town committee selected the candidates for the leading parts. A handsome young man named Clyde was picked for the leading role, that of Jesus during his earthly ministry. Clarence and Hector were selected as his backups. Joshua did his best but was ruled out early in the competition, of course, due to his stuttering and his undeniable ugliness.

He Who Must Die

Over the next two years, the leading players could often be seen and heard around the village, perfecting their parts among their fellow townsfolk. And yes, there was no doubt about it, Clyde was very good. He was often seen dueling brilliantly with Satan in the local ‘desert’, vehemently putting down ‘Scribes and Pharisees’ in the elegant structure they had built to be the temple, and preaching with power and eloquence his sermon on the village ‘mount’. He loved to spontaneously practice his miracles on anyone who would let him. Though they didn’t need the healing, they admired his beautiful style and the authoritative way he cast out their ‘demons’.

Joshua accepted his loss gracefully. He didn’t seem a bit upset, though it would be ten years before he would get another chance and by then he might be considered too old. He continued taking care of his family, helping the sick and needy, and delighting himself in prayer and the Scriptures. Oh, he was laughed at a bit by some who thought he shouldn’t have even entered the competition for the leading role, but not by any who really knew him. His mother Mary, especially, wondered how God could tolerate Clyde’s arrogance for so long, and waited for the miracle that she knew in her heart was coming.

Mary thought the miracle had begun one stormy winter night when Joshua woke up shouting, “Mother! Mother! The a-a-avalanche is going to c-c-come down and d-d-destroy part of the village! I saw it in my d-d-dream!” She knew about ‘the avalanche’. A mountain peak near the town often built up quite a heavy snowbank during the winter. Crews from the village would go up several times each winter to set it off before it became so big as to be dangerous.

He Who Must Die

Joshua ran out into the storm to tell the village elders, but sadly came back an hour later.

“They w-w-won’t listen to me,” he explained quietly. “They had j-j-just checked it. They s-s-said it was f-f-fine and p-p-promised to ch-ch-check it again after the storm.”

Joshua dressed as warmly as he could and filled his canteen with hot water. “I’m going out to p-p-pray,” he announced as he walked out into the storm.

Three hours later, Mary, still on her knees beside her bed, heard the rumble and roar of the avalanche coming down. Fifteen minutes later her son returned, covered with snow and shivering from the cold.

“We s-s-stopped it,” he said as he warmed himself by the fire. He told his mother how he had knelt in prayer between the last cottage and the avalanche, so that when it came, God split it to the left and right around him, causing it to flow harmlessly into the fields on either side.

When his mother asked how he knew that God would not let it go right over and bury him, Joshua explained, “It’s n-n-not yet my time to d-d-die.” He crawled into bed and fell sleep. Mary also went to bed, but she lay awake for a long time, pondering that strange statement and wondering who really was this child of hers.

The next morning, the storm had passed. At dawn, the village turned out to assess the damage the avalanche had done. “It’s a miracle! It’s a miracle!” they were all saying. Joshua’s mother saw for herself that it was true. The snowpack had been far heavier than the village elders had thought. The avalanche could easily have destroyed a third of the town and buried many people. But it was as if a huge hand from heaven had reached down, causing it to split and flow harmlessly past on either side of the town.

He Who Must Die

“You see, Joshua,” intoned the village elders, grinning triumphantly, “God is pleased with us. He takes care of us in spite of your stuttering prophecies of doom!”

Mary started to tell them what had really happened, but Joshua gently took her hand and lead her away.

Walking back toward their cottage, Joshua explained, “They c-c-c-can see with their eyes, but not their hearts. B-b-but they will. I have p-p-prayed that God would open up their hearts j-j-just once before I d-d-die.”

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So Mary knew this was not the miracle that she had been hoping and praying for. Yet it encouraged her, for now she was sure that the miracle was indeed coming. But at the same time, she wondered, why all the talk of dying? She could not understand; all she could do was continue to pray that God’s will would be done in and through her son, for that was their dedication even from the night of Joshua’s conception.

The miracle came in a way that nobody expected. It was four months before the drama opened to the public. Group dress rehearsals had been scheduled. The morning the great Sermon on the Mount scene was to be practiced, nearly the entire village put on their homespun robes and walked out to the traditional village ‘mount’ to hear Clyde deliver his powerful and well-practiced oratory.

But when they got there, a caravan of Gypsies had cluttered up the area with their gaudily painted wagons blocking our paths and their tents pitched half way up the mount. A layer of blue smoke filled the valley from their campfires. They were even washing their clothes in the ‘Sea of Galilee’ and hanging them up to dry all over the bushes and trees on the side of the mount.

He Who Must Die

Clyde and his friends were furious! Harsh words were hurled, and even some sticks and stones were thrown at the poor Gypsies for violating the sacredness of the mount on this special day.

But Joshua was also in the crowd, and at this he ran forward, shouting, “Stop! Stop! These poor strangers have never done you any harm! Let them remain here. You can rehearse on the top half of the mount. Maybe the Gypsies will enjoy listening to it too.” He turned and walked into the Gypsy camp and, as those who knew him expected, Joshua lovingly began touching those who had been hit by the sticks and stones and praying over them.

The crowd from town began to jeer and shout, with words like “the stuttering Jesus” and “he still thinks he’ll get to be Jesus!” More sticks and stones flew as the crowd surged forward, led by Clyde, Clarence, and Hector. “Who does Joshua think he is, interrupting our rehearsal? Get ’em all off this hill! We have a lot to do today!”

And no one except Mary noticed that the miracle had already occurred. Joshua had just spoken more than four sentences in a row without stuttering once, for the first time in his life. As Mary looked closely, she saw that his face shone with a glory and a beauty that she had never seen before. She then noticed the Gypsies Joshua had touched; they were beaming joyously at him, with no trace of the bruises and bleeding cuts she had seen before.

“Stop everyone! Look what Joshua’s doing!” Mary cried out. But the crowd ignored her, intent on driving out the invaders. She saw large rocks being picked up, and she was horrified by the murderous look on the faces of the enraged mob. “Oh God, help him!” she sobbed, dropping to her knees with her face in her hands.

He Who Must Die

At that moment, the scene suddenly grew quiet. Mary glanced back up to see her son with arms outstretched, standing on top of the hill above the Gypsies.

“Peace,” Joshua breathed. A hush settled over the area as if it were a divine command – to Gypsies and villagers alike. He started to talk to the gathered crowd, gently, but with startling intensity so that every ear could clearly hear. As he spoke, the sticks and stones dropped to the ground and a single awed cry rang out from one of the village elders, “Hey, listen! He’s not stuttering!”

Indeed, he was not stuttering. Words flowed from his lips with a glory and an authority to surpass even the most polished orator. His words made music to every ear; they untied the strings of every heart; they brought tears of joy and of repentance to every eye. His were words of deepest love, words of peace, words of hope, words of truth, words of Spirit, words of life.

It was finally time. In a miracle of grace, God had stopped the rage of the murderous mob and had replaced it with His Spirit of peace, peace beyond understanding. In answer to Joshua’s prayers, God had touched the villagers’ hearts so they could see with their hearts as well as their eyes.

The people settled down all over the hill, some sitting down, some kneeling, and many even lying flat as they listened. Joshua spoke past lunch time and on into the afternoon. And yet they listened.

He first spoke of times past – of God’s grace to their forefathers at the time of the plague and how it had called them to repentance, and of the blessings God had poured down upon the village and the whole surrounding area as a result of their faithfulness in keeping their vow.

He Who Must Die

Then he spoke of the present – how some remained true to the spirit of the vow but many were keeping it only for their own profit. He explained how God had again provided an opportunity for repentance when the avalanche had fallen, but no one had even noticed God's call in it, presuming on God's grace instead.

And he spoke of the future – reminding them of the narrow steep road leading to life, requiring constant prayer and vigilance lest the pleasures and cares of the world cause us to drift from the path, in contrast to the broad level road leading to destruction, requiring no particular effort on our part to reach its goal, death.

Joshua explained God's ways and principles that they had been violating. He talked about the poor, who are really God's opportunities for us to invest in the riches of the Kingdom, and about the strangers, the sick, and the oppressed, who are tests from God Himself to see if we are willing to humble ourselves enough to minister to Him in His precious little ones. He shared ardently with them how important it was for everyone in the play, from the leading roles to the smallest part, to be aware that they were being used by God to spread His good news to a hungry and needy world. He impressed upon them the necessity of having a message full of life, full of Spirit, full of love, truth, and grace, rather than merely an accurate and entertaining but dead story recounting facts long past.

He reminded them that the story told in the four Gospels is not just for our amusement, but is the power of God to change lives. He showed how so many of the villagers knew the gospel story with their minds but not their hearts, and how this blocked God's message from reaching through to touch the hearts of others.

He Who Must Die

“What is the gospel?” Joshua asked. “It’s easy to say, ‘Jesus died to forgive my sin so I can go to heaven when I die,’ but that is only half the gospel. Jesus died to forgive our sin, yes, but also to set us free from the bondage of sin. When Jesus rose again, He won the victory over Satan! Satan has no more power over us unless we give it to him. *Jesus is no Savior to you until He saves you from the power of sin, gives you the power to walk in God’s righteousness, and restores you to a living, loving, growing relationship with a holy God!* We don’t have to wait for heaven; we can have sweet fellowship with a holy God right now, by faith in Jesus Christ. That is the gospel, the good news.

“That is the message we have been chosen to present to a hungry, needy world through the Jesus Play,” Joshua continued earnestly, his voice rising slightly. “There are millions of people who are groaning under the bondage of sin and Satan with no hope for deliverance except through death, and we have the answer. Jesus Christ is the answer! These people were not created to serve Satan. They were created to walk with God, whether they know it or not. They come here because they are hungry for fellowship with God’s Holy Spirit, hungry to become what they were created to be, hungry for God’s righteousness!

“Only when we present His story prayerfully, with God’s Spirit guiding us, with God’s nature and character displayed through us to all who come, will the people go away satisfied, having heard and seen the message of salvation in a simple, graphic way that they could finally understand.” Joshua paused and smiled. “Jesus didn’t just tell us the way to Father God. He showed us the way. Everything He did told the story, so clearly that even a child can understand. That’s what we also must be doing.”

He Who Must Die

Joshua started down the hill toward the town elders. “You selected Clyde for the leading role because he was handsome and an accomplished speaker, and he certainly does know how to play the part of Jesus well. But tell me, which is better: to know the part like a good actor, or to know Jesus Himself like one of His disciples?”

“Clyde has demonstrated this morning that he does not know Jesus, for he did not recognize Him in these strangers, these Gypsies, whom God sent to test him. Instead of showing God’s love and inviting them to hear the gospel through this rehearsal of the Sermon on the Mount, what did Clyde do? He demonstrated that the spirit of Satan lives in his heart instead, by pouring out his anger and bitterness and viciously attacking them for not bowing to his own supposed lordship of this time and this place. You committee members selected Clyde because you didn’t recognize that his spirit was wrong, since it was the same as your own!”

“You tried to remain neutral in your selection of the leading roles, not realizing that there is no neutrality in the Kingdom of God. If a person’s soul is not filled with the Spirit of God, growing in the ways of God’s Kingdom, then it is filled with the spirit of Satan, growing in his ways of deceit and perversion. The sons of the evil one may have an outward appearance of beauty and goodness, but they hide a heart filled with all kinds of evil!”

“You did not recognize me as the one chosen by God for the leading role in this play, though you knew my parents had so dedicated me from my conception and though I demonstrated before you the character of Jesus in all my ways since I was young, because you could not see beyond my physical ugliness and stuttering tongue.”

He Who Must Die

Joshua had been walking as he talked. By this time he had passed through the Gypsy camp and had reached the base of the hill. Some of the townspeople shifted uneasily away as he got close. Joshua's words grew softer but even more intense. "I'm not really blaming you. You couldn't recognize me, because you are of a different spirit than I. I am of my Father who lives in heaven."

"Why, that's blasphemy!" someone murmured.

But Joshua continued on without a pause, "I am of my Father God, our creator and the source of all life, and all who are one Spirit with Him do recognize me for what I am. But you are of your father, the devil." Joshua had reached the elders, and he now pointed directly at them. "You recognized Clyde only because he is one of you, and you are perpetuating your father's lying ways by covering up the truth of the gospel with an outward show to tickle people's fancies and make money for yourselves."

Gasps of indignation rose from the crowd, and one of the village elders shouted, "Just who do you think you are, anyway, Jesus Himself?"

"No, but I am sent by Him to restore His leadership over this His ministry through this village. From this day forth, no longer do you elders or committee members have any authority in the Jesus Play, nor does anyone who is not filled with the Spirit of God have any part in it. Jesus Christ Himself is Lord and Master over the entire production, and only His humble ones, His bondservants, His loveslaves, will work with Him to minister the truth of His gospel to a needy, hungry people."

Joshua now turned his back on the village elders and faced the rest of the townspeople. He held out his arms to them in a gesture of love and acceptance.

He Who Must Die

“I entreat you all, my brothers, my sisters, by the love that almighty God has given me for you. Kneel with me and repent for tolerating the evil one in our midst. We all need to repent and seek the Lord Jesus Christ with all our hearts, that He may forgive and cleanse Oberammergau and recommit us to His effective service.”

Then Joshua knelt there in front of the townspeople, lifting his hands and face toward the heavens in prayer. Many in the crowd began to follow his example.

But Clyde and his friends, together with the village elders and committee members, were filled with rage and fury. They began screaming out insults against “this young upstart who thinks he can take over the whole village with a fancy speech!” and shouting, “Who gave him the right...? So now he thinks he’s going to run the whole play by himself? What utter gall to claim to be God over us! Let’s get rid of this guy before he tries to take over the world, too!” So they picked up their sticks and stones again and aimed them at him.

He just continued kneeling in prayer. At first the stones were small ones, doing little damage. But anger is catching when feelings are running high. Soon the stones were getting larger, and some who had been kneeling were jumping up to yell and fight with their neighbors, so that in the noise and confusion, it was difficult to tell who was for whom anymore.

Then a high-pitched scream rose above all the rest, “Stop it! He’s right! We all need to repent!”

But it was too late. A large rock hit Joshua in the side, knocking him over, and another fell directly on his head, cracking his skull open so that his blood was gushing out on the ground.

He Who Must Die

“*God! No!*” It was more of a shriek than a prayer from the crowd, then silence.

Those who were near heard him breathe his last with the words, “F-Father, f-f-forgive them. They d-d-don’t know what they d-d-do.”

An awesome stillness came over the crowd as they became aware of the terrible crime they had committed. Then the Spirit of true repentance fell once again, as it had back in the days of the old burgermeister. Soon nearly everyone on the hill was on his face before God, weeping bitterly and crying out to God for forgiveness.

What a time it was! Even the Gypsies joined in. The Spirit of God moved powerfully among them, forgiving, cleansing, healing, and restoring the joy of their salvation for all whose hearts were broken and open before Him. Their eyes were opened to the truth, and many received Christ into their hearts for the first time, especially among the Gypsies. They became traveling ambassadors for God.

Those few whose hearts were hard, recognized their defeat and slunk back to their cottages in shame. I would like to say that they never were heard from again, but it wouldn’t be true. Most remained in the village, seeking other ways to distort the simple truth of the gospel with their lying schemes. They continued their efforts to regain control of the village and of the Jesus Play for themselves, never realizing that it was their father, the devil, trying to regain control for himself through them.

Clyde, the way I heard the story, packed up and left the village permanently. He became a very successful preacher at a huge East German cathedral farther down the valley. Hector probably went with him, but no one seems to know for sure.

He Who Must Die

But the majority in the village were truly changed. By the leading of the Holy Spirit, they began to rebuild the structure and script of the Jesus Play to better emphasize the gospel, and they carefully sought His guidance to find His perfect choice for each person in each role.

Clarence, after much repentance and heart searching, finally did accept the commission for the leading role. Though he felt unworthy after what he had done with Clyde, yet the Holy Spirit clearly led that he be chosen.

I am happy to say that he went about it humbly and meekly, and that as a result, he did a remarkably good job. Though no one could say afterward what was so good about it, many who came to see the play that summer were deeply moved by the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Attendance was higher than ever, and hundreds of people found salvation and deliverance from sin for the first time. Many were filled with the Spirit of God and returned home with a joyous, growing relationship with our loving heavenly Father, eager to spread the good news to others.

And Clarence? Well, he felt that the least he could do after his part in the death of Joshua was to take care of Joshua's mother. He became like a son to her, supporting Mary and her family and carrying on Joshua's habit of ministering to the poor. They all learned to love him, and it wasn't long before he fell in love with Joshua's younger sister Purity. So Clarence and Purity married, with a vow to raise up other children of God who would spread His gospel through the Jesus Play in Oberammergau.

Even now, hundreds of years and thousands of script revisions later, Oberammergau's Passion Play (as it is known today) still retains a little of the influence of that great revival following the death of Joshua.

My Heart's Desire

The other night in a dream, a dark and evil-looking man came to me in my sleep. He asked me a very simple question, "What is your heart's desire?"

He then placed before me visions of what I suppose were grand and glorious things. But I did not see them, for my eyes were filled with tears. I stood tall and straight before him and tried to answer, but at first I could not, for my throat was choked with emotion.

He pressed me closer, claiming that I had won the 'world sweepstakes', and I could have anything on earth – I had only to state my heart's desire.

With tears streaming down my face, I looked him in the eye and began to voice the intense longing in my heart. As I talked, he strangely disappeared, taking with him the visions of this world's glories.

I kept on talking into the blackness. And then, to my delight, you, my brothers and my sisters, appeared in his place. You were standing before me, your eyes staring intently into mine, your faces reflecting the intensity of my speech, and your hearts sharing the longing of my own.

"I want to stand in the presence of Jesus my Lord," I said. "I have tasted of the glories of my Creator / Redeemer God, and nothing else in heaven or on earth could ever satisfy me now."

My Heart's Desire

“I must be righteous. My soul hungers for perfection like a baby hungers for his mother’s milk. My heart yearns to be cleansed, sinless, holy – so that I may dwell forever in His presence and worship continually before His face.

“I want to **see** Him – with the eyes of my spirit I must see Him, for as my eyes gaze into His, I shall be changed into His likeness and swallowed up into His glory.

“I want to **hear** Him – with clean spiritual ears I must hear His voice, for as I clearly hear, I shall not fail to carry out all He purposes for me.

“But most of all I want to **know** Him – with spirit-illuminated mind I must know Him, for as I begin to comprehend the surpassing greatness of His majesty, His lovingkindness, power, glory, dominion, wisdom, justice, and mercy, then I shall worship Him as I ought. Then I shall adequately reflect His love back to Him.

“Then I shall have what is truly my heart’s desire: To stand in the presence of Jesus Christ, unashamed, without fear, receiving and returning His love for all eternity.”

Whom Do You Love?

I had a dream last night, a detailed, vivid, beautiful dream. When I woke up, the Lord encouraged me that it was from Him and that I should write it down. I trust it will be a blessing to you as it was to me, for it shows the difference between human love and divine love.

The first thing I remember in the dream was being in a parking area, standing next to my car. Coming toward me was a woman whom I do not know in real life, but whom I knew and loved in this dream. I don't remember anything about her personally, even her name. Though I recall that she was beautiful, this was certainly my own spiritual perception – all God's children are beautiful in His eyes. Physically, she could have represented anybody. I'll call her Grace, for it is only by God's grace that any of us can be delivered from the chains of our sinful human natures and receive the power to walk with God according to His divine nature.

I asked Grace to hurry, for we had an important early-morning appointment to keep. She had an open heart to me and sweetly responded, breaking into a run as she greeted me. Her love for me was immediately apparent, and she was aware of my love for her as well, though neither of us did or said anything about it at this point.

We jumped in the car and began a long drive through the nearly deserted streets. As I drove, we talked freely and happily about many things as good friends do, though avoiding the subject of our appointment. Again, our love for each other was clearly recognized but not discussed. We neither touched, nor sat close together, nor looked deeply upon one another. I began to realize at this point in my dream that ours might be a different kind of love from that which is commonly understood today.

Whom Do You Love?

We finally reached the parking lot of a small religious edifice (again, which I do not recognize in real life). It was still very early, and there was only one other car in the lot. We parked one stall away from it and stepped out into the mild summer morning. As we did, a tall and handsome young man stepped out of the other car, smiling happily to us and showing no irritation at our being late.

Again, I was aware of a deep and beautiful love in my heart for this man, and we both knew that this love was shared mutually without reservation. In the eyes of the world this might seem odd, since we are both male, but to us in my dream it was a natural and comfortable thing. Comparing it with the love I had for Grace, I realized that neither one was mere human love, but rather divine love, a gift from the heavenly Father to be shared among all His precious ones regardless of gender, race, or age.

In the dream, I knew him well. He was quiet, kind, gentle, and loving, as well as faithful and true. He showed a saintly maturity in many of the character qualities of Jesus Christ Himself. However, upon reflection after the dream, I don't remember any of his physical features – his height, handsomeness, youthfulness, and maturity were all spiritual qualities. Physically, he was probably very plain. He could represent any true child of God. For this reason, I'll give him the descriptive name, Christian.

We greeted each other cheerily. I knew in my dream that Christian was acting as a pastor in the sanctuary just behind him, that it would be time in only a few hours for the Sabbath morning worship service, and that he was already well-prepared and not at all anxious about it, though none of those things had any relevance to the subject of our meeting.

Whom Do You Love?

The three of us strolled over to a tiny round outdoor table which conveniently had three chairs around it. Christian and Grace sat down, but I remained standing. From this point on, my dream was mostly talking. I pray that God's Holy Spirit will help me recall all the words, because they were full of the wisdom and love of God.

"Grace," I said. "Thank you for being so willing to come with me this morning. I earnestly desired this time for you and Christian to renew the relationship you once had for each other as husband and wife." I knew in my dream that they were still legally married though they had separated. I talked for a while, exhorting them to remain true to the faith I knew they both had. I encouraged them to relate together as children of God, forgetting their past relationship problems and looking to the Lord to give them a whole new love for each other.

They were nodding happily, so I then turned to leave, trusting the Lord to continue working the oneness in them that He had allowed me to have a part in restoring. But Grace stopped me. "Paul," she said. "Don't leave me. I love you. I need you." I then for the first time sensed in her feelings of human love for me, as though she looked to me rather than Christian as her husband.

I realized in my dream that my job here by the Holy Spirit was not done. I offered up a prayer for wisdom as I returned and sat at the table. "Grace," I looked at her with compassion. "I love you as well, with a love that is deeper and stronger than you know. But my love for you cannot allow you to be hurt by a relationship that is not what God ordained." I spoke quietly but firmly. "I am not your husband, Grace. Christian is. It is right that it be so, for God showed me that He created you for each other.

Whom Do You Love?

“God has given me a great love for both of you, and that love wants nothing but your best, your happiness, your fulfillment of all that you were created to be. I love you best by helping you and Christian develop the right relationship with each other as God intended. Anything else would only bring you sorrow and pain.”

I could sense Christian’s acceptance of what I was saying and his desire to obey God. But Grace still balked. “But Paul, you don’t know all that Christian did to me. Why, he even...”

“Excuse me, Grace,” I interrupted. “I don’t need to know Christian’s faults. We could spend the rest of this precious time together merely listing each other’s faults and sins against the other, for we’ve all sinned in our relationships in the past – even you.” I paused, and in the openness of her heart to me, she was able to acknowledge that I was right. “But we both know that Christian has suffered under the Lord’s discipline because of his faults. He has repented deeply before God and before you, and has turned completely away from them.

“Remember when he asked your forgiveness?” She nodded, recalling our previous meeting here, months ago. “Did you forgive him?” I added to press the point.

She nodded again. “Yes, Paul. I forgave him, but I just don’t love him anymore. I love you, now.”

I noticed that Grace was avoiding Christian’s gaze, so I turned to him. “Christian? Did God forgive you?”

“Yes,” he responded. “I know He forgave me because He restored the joy of my salvation. He cleansed my heart, corrected those bad habits, and filled me with His love.”

“But what about the sins?” I asked. “Do you think God still keeps a big list to pound over your head?”

Whom Do You Love?

“Isaiah 43:25,” he answered like the preacher he was. “I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake. And I will not remember your sins.” He smiled, and I could see that he had a clear conscience before the Lord. He was a changed man.

I turned back to Grace. “Have you forgiven him, like God has, to the extent of forgetting all his faults and how he hurt you, and seeing him as he is now? In a sense, Christian is a different person now, you know.”

She looked at Christian for the first time since we’d sat down. I waited. Christian waited. I could sense the Holy Spirit working on her heart. Finally she turned back to me. “Okay. I forgive him, and I’ll try to forget his past faults. But I don’t have to love him, do I? He’s so much different from you, and I love you so much that I really don’t think I can love anybody else.” She smiled at me.

I had to resist the temptation to shake my head in exasperation. She was certainly open to me – she responded to me with a sweet wholeheartedness that amazed me, yet she doggedly persisted in holding on to a relationship that I didn’t even know existed before today. I again offered up a quick prayer for Holy Spirit guidance, leaning forward to look into her bright blue eyes.

“Look carefully at me,” I said, as if I even needed to ask. I waited. “Now tell me, whom do you really love?”

“That’s easy. You!” She responded without a moment’s hesitation, flicking back her long hair with a giggle of amusement.

I leaned back again and crossed my arms. “I don’t believe it. You don’t even know me.”

“I do know you!” Her response was too quick. “You are the kindest, gentlest, most thoughtful...”

Whom Do You Love?

“Like I thought!” I interrupted. “You don’t know me. I’m mean, angry, proud, deceitful, selfish, and a few other things I don’t dare mention.” I paused to let it sink in.

Her mouth dropped open, and she stared at me in surprise. Finally, she shook her head. “I’ve known you for a long time, Paul. You’ve never been that way around me.”

“I wish that were true.” I dropped my gaze. “But I can think of several major times when I was that way to you. I had to come ask your forgiveness. Had you forgotten?”

I looked up at her again, in time to see the faint look of horror on her face as she remembered, then realized she’d been trapped. She was no dummy. It only took her an instant to see that she had accorded to me that true forgiveness that forgets completely, while she had clearly never really forgiven Christian.

She glanced furtively at Christian to see if he had noticed her predicament, but he didn’t let on. She was on her own. Again we both waited, allowing the Holy Spirit time to do His precious work in her heart.

I half expected her to change the subject, as people often do when trapped. But instead, she surprised me by her honesty and forthrightness. My heart leaped with joy when she turned to Christian with a look of repentance on her face and said, “Paul is right, you know. I had enough love to forgive him so completely that I forgot all about it, but I never had enough love to forgive you. I’ve been holding those things against you all these years. Will you forgive me for being so bitter and unloving?”

Christian smiled broadly, and I could see the high walls between them begin to melt. His handsome face literally glowed as he assured her that she was already forgiven and needn’t give it another thought.

Whom Do You Love?

I considered leaving right then and letting the love of God take its course. But again the Holy Spirit bade me stay. I found out why when, after a few minutes of conversation with Christian, she turned back to me with a question she really should have asked of him had their relationship been right.

“Paul,” she asked. “Why didn’t I have enough love to forgive him? When we first married, I thought I had all the love in the world for him. Yet whenever he hurt me, I just held it in my heart and got bitter, until I had lost all my love. But with you it was never that way. I always had enough love to forgive your mistakes.” I noticed that she was still looking at Christian’s faults as ‘hurts’, and at mine as ‘mistakes’.

Lord, fill me with Your Spirit, I prayed silently once more as I looked into her sparkling eyes. “Grace, look at me again. This time look deeply. Tell me what you see.”

She sweetly returned my gaze. After a lengthy pause (too long for my own comfort, I might add), she said slowly, “I honestly don’t see any of that anger or pride or any of those other things you mentioned. All I see is a loving concern, and gentleness and thoughtfulness and honesty and kindness ...” She hesitated. Now she knew what I wanted her to say, but she was a little bit afraid of another trap and wasn’t quite sure she wanted to say it. Then the love she had for me won out, and I could see her mental choice to be willing to be trapped even a thousand times by me out of the greatness of the love we shared. “...and all the godly character qualities there are! You really are the most godly person I know, and in seeing you, I know what it must have been like to walk and talk with the Lord Jesus Christ, for you are just like Him!”

Whom Do You Love?

Wow! That was way more than I had expected her to say, and my eyes filled with tears of joy. “Thank you, Grace. That’s the most wonderful thing you could ever say to me, for it is indeed my lifelong goal to be filled with the nature and character of Christ and to allow His life to shine through me. But do you realize how that is the answer to your question? The one about not having enough love to forgive Christian?”

“You mean, I didn’t have enough love for Christian because he wasn’t really trying to live like Jesus, but I had enough love for you because you... uh...” She ran down. It still didn’t make sense.

“Not quite. You can’t blame Christian for your lack of love. Christian belonged to God even from the beginning. If you had stood firm in love and faith for him, God would have dealt with him on his faults and made him all he was created to be. Look at the difference between your perception of me and how you viewed Christian back at the beginning. When you saw ‘me’ just now, all you were really seeing is the Lord Jesus living through me. You know that my flesh nature is evil, but you agree with me that it is also crucified, dead, and buried with Jesus. So you see me by faith, as being made righteous and pure before God, with my flesh nature being powerless to affect our relationship. In other words, you never really loved ‘me’ at all. You only loved Jesus living in me.”

Here a glimmer of recognition glowed in Grace’s eyes. I got up and stood behind Christian. “Now think back to your original relationship with Christian. You said you had all the love in the world for him, but wasn’t that just a human love, because he was so handsome and strong and treated you so gallantly?” Grace nodded hesitantly.

Whom Do You Love?

“Then when he stopped treating you gallantly, your love flew out the window. That’s because it was based only on his human characteristics, easily acquired and easily lost. You never really saw him as precious in God’s eyes, as a son of God in the making, as a vessel for the Lord Jesus to purify through the fire so He could dwell in him and be glorified in him.”

The Holy Spirit through me waxed eloquent. Her heart was more open than ever. I walked around to her, put my hand on top of her head, and turned it to face Christian, pointing at him with my other hand. “Look at Christian now, Grace. Open up the eyes of your spirit and see him for what he was created to be in God. Forget all you ever knew about him in the flesh and see him as God intended him to be. You were able to see Christ in me; I promise you that it will be just as easy to see Christ in Christian once you open up your heart to believe that he too is God’s own child, infinitely precious in His eyes and destined to be a clean, pure vessel in whom God can live and move. Why do you suppose Christian was under God’s discipline all these years if it wasn’t so God could change him, purify him, fill him, and use him to speak His Words of Life and accomplish His will on the earth?

“You never saw my sinful flesh nature because you chose to see Jesus working in me instead – that’s all you saw and loved. Now forget all you’ve seen of Christian’s flesh nature – you’ve seen too much of that! – and see him as God sees him. His flesh nature is crucified, dead, and buried with Christ. His true nature is refined in the fires of God’s discipline, making him a pure temple where the Spirit of Jesus loves to dwell. I know you love Jesus, Grace. Now look at Christian – *love Jesus in Christian!*”

Whom Do You Love?

My thoughts ran dry at that point. I probably could have rambled on, but I'm learning that when the flow of the Spirit stops, it's usually best to just shut up and see what He will do next. So I slid my chair back a bit and sat down, waiting quietly and watching their faces.

Grace was really looking at Christian now, and he at her. I could clearly see the question all over Grace's face, *Does Jesus really live in you?* And I could see the response on Christian's face just as easily, *Yes, Grace, He does. Oh, please open up your eyes to see Him here and to love and trust Him in me, where you could never really love or trust me before.*

I had time to reflect on how incredibly precious were these two children of God, how deeply I loved them both, and how earnestly my spirit was interceding for them to open up their hearts to the oneness God had ordained for them to walk in.

I thought I was ready for just about anything, for I knew the Holy Spirit was working mightily in both of them, but I wasn't ready for this. Grace dropped her face into her hands and began to weep.

I glanced at Christian and he at me. We shrugged our shoulders as if to say, "Yes, anything can happen when the Spirit of repentance is at work." Grace was crying openly now, sobbing as if her heart were broken.

I was sorely tempted to try to comfort her, but I knew by the Spirit that this was not the time, nor was I the one.

I glanced again at Christian. I could see in him a compassion and yearning to slip around the table and be the strength and comfort that God had called him to be. But he also waited. He was not going to get ahead of God this time.

Whom Do You Love?

Somewhere about this time the dream began to fade, and I began to waken. There was so much more I wanted to say, so much more council, love, and encouragement I wanted to give, but it was clear I was being withdrawn by the Holy Spirit, and I knew my job was done.

I never actually saw them finish tearing down those walls and mending the relationship of love that God had given them. But I knew by the Spirit that it was done and that their unity in God and in each other was being restored on a higher and more beautiful plane than most have ever known. I knew by faith that God had worked a miracle of love in both their hearts, that He had taken their inadequate human loves and given them His gift of divine love for each other, and that their marriage would from then on be a living example of the great love of Jesus Christ for His Bride, the church. I knew that they never again would stoop to criticize and condemn their human faults. Instead they would look on the faults as golden opportunities for standing firm in faith and ministering the unconditional love of God – seeing those very faults become areas of divine deliverance, resulting in growth and maturing in the wisdom and character of God.

I almost cried when I woke up, it was all so beautiful. I wanted to just lie back and replay it over and over in my mind so I wouldn't forget it. But the thought that hit my mind was, "Get up and write it all out. That dream was not just for you." Since it was the Sabbath, I was able to do that. It is now sundown, the Sabbath is over, and I'm finished. May it bless you as it has me.

Paul A. Lindberg of the Lord Jesus Christ
– Oct. 4, 1986

The Sky Is Falling!

The sky is falling all around you.

The earth quakes and shivers in response.
Mountains roar out in pain and brimstone.
The four winds are unleashed in wild abandon.
The whole world has gone crazy in anger and fear,
But it does not touch you,

Oh My beloved!

Do not be afraid of the falling sky –
It only falls according to My Word.
Do not fear the violence of the earthquakes –
They are entirely under my control.
Do not be anxious in the midst of the storms –
For my hand is over you,

Oh My beloved!

The world must be destroyed by fire.
I cannot stand its evil any longer.
I have sent out My judgments in My wrath:
Worldwide war, disease, famine, economic chaos.
But you shall flourish within My fortress,
Which I have built for you,

Oh My beloved!

For you have placed your trust in Me,
And have dared to believe My Word.
You have set your ambitions on My Kingdom,
And have refused to love this world and its ways.
You have determined to reflect My love,
So My love covers you,

Oh My beloved!

The Sky Is Falling!

The hope of righteousness burns hot within you.
You long to be recreated in My image.
You give all you are and have to your brothers,
Earnestly desiring that you all may be one.
Your lifelong goal is to walk as one with Me,
So I walk as one with you,
Oh My beloved!

For you have put on My clean white bridal dress,
My righteousness and purity, which I provided.
You have made yourself ready for your wedding,
To become one with My firstborn Son.
With tears of joy, I bestow your wedding gift:
The Kingdom I establish for you,
Oh My beloved!

The Wicked Princess of Kathmandu

An ancient legend from Nepal concerns the City That Isn't There, sometimes called the City in the Sky or simply the High City. According to this legend, it is the city of the gods, and thus invisible to the casual observer. But every thirty years or so, a young prince of the High City is sent to the realm of men for a time, perhaps a year. When he leaves and again when he returns, this glorious city briefly becomes visible, but only to one who is worthy. It has been the goal of many throughout the centuries to recognize this young prince, aid him during his sojourn among men, befriend him, gain his confidence, and demonstrate a worthiness to accompany him as he returns to the High City, hoping to at least catch a glimpse of the City That Isn't There as the prince enters its gates.

This High City is said to be a place where no citizen has ever learned to lie, cheat, steal, or hate. Its king is said to be the wisest of wise men, who cares for his people with true justice and goodness, and who enforces its laws with great compassion and faithfulness. No one really knows why anyone would want to leave this paradise, or even worse, why its king would send his own son, the young prince, down to dwell among the children of men. Some think it is to teach the prince humility, or give him an understanding of the misery and suffering that results from wickedness, or give him a better appreciation for his own realm. Others believe it is for our sakes, to give us a vision for what we could be, or perhaps inspire us to long for the legendary truth, justice, and goodness of the High City. Maybe it is a combination of all of these things.

Regardless, I will relate the legend of the High City and leave it to you to decide how much of it you care to believe and what, if any, value to place on it.

The Wicked Princess of Kathmandu

No one, of course, knows exactly where the High City is, though this has been the subject of much discussion and speculation. However, it is generally agreed that it is roughly halfway between Annapurna and Mount Everest in the Himalayas. Locating it in the middle of this two hundred mile unbroken range of majestic mountains would place it near the border between Nepal and Tibet about thirty miles north of Kathmandu. That trip would require at least three grueling days for a strong hiker.

These mountains are the highest and most rugged and inaccessible in the world, with few roads or trails and fewer villages. With thousands of peaks above 20,000 feet in elevation and many above 25,000, even the mountain passes are rarely lower than 15,000 feet above sea level.

Somewhere, it is said, right in the center of these highest of the high, lies a nearly impenetrable ring of incredibly steep mountains that surrounds and protects the High City. Within this ring of mountains, the elevation drops dizzyingly down to under 5,000 feet, where it levels off to form a lush green valley. It is warmed by bubbling hot springs feeding a spectacular year-round steaming stream that rushes through the valley, through the city itself, and then gently relaxes into the most beautiful lake on earth. The mountains are so steep that no rain or snow can get past them to fall on the High City, and no wind can blow in the valley to cause ripples which might mar the beauty of the reflections on the lake. Yet the valley is well-watered by steam from the stream, and filled with a profusion of vegetation and wildlife. In winter when the sun is low, reflections off the surrounding icy peaks still flood the valley with light each day. That and the soft mist of the steam give it a surreal, other-worldly appearance.

The Wicked Princess of Kathmandu

The city itself, though large by Nepalese standards, is so built as to blend in with the beauty of the valley. This leads some to believe that it is not really invisible at all, merely difficult to see through the mist unless one knows precisely what one is looking for.

It is here that one wise king is said to have succeeded another for hundreds of generations since time began. And it is here, in the legendary City in the Sky, the City That Isn't There, that our story unfolds.

According to this ancient legend, wise King El-Amin called the city to gather for the coming-of-age celebration for his first-born son and sole heir, Prince Johar, who was now twenty and nearly ready to succeed his father as king.

That evening, as the festivities began to wane, King El-Amin put his trusted prime minister in charge and crossed the lake alone with his son. There he spent a week in deep fellowship, instructing Johar in words of wisdom, impressing upon him the importance of the leadership burden he was to carry, inspiring him with the greatness of the task by telling him of the greatness of those who had gone before, and preparing him to accept with grace and faithfulness the destiny to which he had been born.

The midsummer days were warm. Prince Johar delighted in this special time with his father, camping beside the lake. However, in excited and impetuous youthful bravado, he grew eager to get back to the castle and take over the kingdom, though of course secretly glad that his father would still be there to give him counsel.

Finally the week was over. King El-Amin had said all that was to be said. He stood in silence, staring down at the young prince. Johar was grinning broadly with sparkling eyes and a rapidly beating heart.

The Wicked Princess of Kathmandu

“Are we finished, Father? Am I now ready to rule? May we go back today?”

“No, my son. There yet remains one more thing.”

King El-Amin bowed his head as if in sadness, or perhaps it was concern with just a touch of apprehension.

“What is it, Father? Anything! I’m ready. Just tell me.”

He sounded a bit impatient, rather like an energetic puppy whose master is about to let him loose for a romp.

“Yes, Johar, you are ready. Yet this will be the most difficult thing you have ever done. Look at me, my son. Look deeply into my eyes...” He paused for emphasis. “Do not fail me in this, or all is lost.”

“I will not fail you, my father!” Prince Johar took a deep breath and stood tall in front of El-Amin, looking unblinkingly into his eyes. “I am a man now, Father. Whatever task you assign, I will do with all my heart, so that you and all the city may be proud of me.”

The king nodded. “Here. Take my jade.” He took a green jade pendant from around his neck and put it on his son. “Wear it over your heart. Guard it with your life. It is your key back into the valley. Once you leave this valley, you cannot return without it, for this key unveils the secret passageway to and from the world of men.”

“Leave the valley...? But Father...!”

“Yes, you must go. You must spend a year among sinful men. There you must find the wicked princess, the daughter of the King of Kathmandu. Teach her the folly of her father’s ways and show her how to love the ways of our city, court her, and finally, after the year is passed and next fall is upon you, bring her back here as your wife.”

Prince Johar staggered and almost fell. The sunshine in his face turned ashen. “The wicked princess...?”

The Wicked Princess of Kathmandu

Nodding again, King El-Amin bowed his head and let his shoulders sag. “Remember all that I have taught you, my son. There are many temptations in the realm to which you go. Guard your heart. Guard your eyes. As you lift the wicked princess up from her temptations, do not fall to temptation yourself. You must teach her the ways of our city, but be careful not to learn the wicked ways of her city. When you return, you must bring only perfect purity in yourself and in your bride. Any less than that would destroy this city and us all.”

King El-Amin walked over to the boat, took out a large package that Johar had not seen there before, and handed it to him. “Here is a heavy coat, food, and water for your journey. Look into the jade; it will guide you down to Kathmandu. When a year has passed, just before the fall storms begin to blow, it will guide you back to the secret passage. Farewell, my beloved son. Farewell.”

And with that, King El-Amin gave Prince Johar a tight embrace, a kiss, and then was on his way back to the High City, paddling silently across the misty surface of the lake.



Badjhatt, King of Kathmandu, was in a rage. He was the king! King! Unquestioned sovereign of the realm! Yet his own daughter, his first-born no less, had defied him and had spent the night who-knows-where in the city, drinking and carousing with the peasants again and committing who-knows-what vile abominations to make him the laughingstock of the surrounding city kings. King Badjhatt tried to control his anger, straightened his crown and stood tall in order to appear more kingly, put on his most stern and regal face, and addressed his daughter.

The Wicked Princess of Kathmandu

“Lilly, you know I promised you to Prince Edman of Patan. We need this alliance to ensure the peace between our cities. You are a princess, Lilly! If you defile yourself with the peasants, Prince Edman will not want you, and I might lose...”

“I do not want him! He is cruel and hateful and ugly! And why do you care if I defile myself with the peasants? You’ve done some of that yourself. I like the peasants. Some of them are more honest and friendly than you. They make good beer. I like their music and their parties. They’re better than the stuffy, formal whitewash that covers all the intrigues and deceits at your dinner table. I’m not stupid, Father. I see right through your lying charades. You don’t care about me; you only care about your royal image and your power and prestige among the surrounding cities. Well, I’ve listened to you long enough; now you listen to me. I will come and go when I please, and I will spend all the time I want with whomever I want. If you try to restrain me, I will howl bloody murder until all your people realize what a bad king you are. But I’ll make you a deal. If you let me do whatever I please, I promise to say nothing bad about you, so maybe you can keep up your pretenses and your honor as king. Deal?”

King Badjhatt considered the offer. It clearly was a bad deal, based on emotional blackmail. It could cost him the alliance with Patan he had worked so hard on. Yet, she certainly did know enough to bring him down, and was just stubborn enough to do it, even if it brought her and the entire royal family down as well. And who knows, maybe she would grow up soon enough and learn to restrain herself, at least outwardly, in time for him to announce her engagement to Edman a year from now.

The Wicked Princess of Kathmandu

“I accept your deal, Lilly.” King Badjhath reached out his hand. “You speak well of me and at least outwardly respect me as your father and your king, and I will give you the freedom to be with your friends whenever you wish. But please, Lilly, come back to the safety of the castle at night; don’t let yourself get pregnant before...” he checked himself, thinking of Edman’s rage if he were to hear that news.

“Don’t worry about me. I can take care of myself.” And with that, Lilly gave her father a haughty and slightly wicked smile and tripped gayly out the throne room, leaving King Badjhath standing there with his empty hand stretched out.

~

Johar stood with his back to the tiny crevasse through which he had just come. He shivered with the unexpected cold. His head swam with the vastness of the panorama spread out before him. Mountain ridges, valleys, peaks, high passes, and sparkling snow everywhere he looked, as far as the eye could see. It was spectacular, especially for one who had never seen beyond the circle of mountains around his own valley. He quickly put on the heavy coat and took a few steps away from the passageway, but when he turned back to memorize the shape of the entrance, it had already faded away. He fingered his jade and tuned his heart to hear from it as his father had taught him, and the entrance appeared again. Relieved, he squared his shoulders, took a deep breath (which came more like a gasp in the icy mountain air), and turned resolutely toward Kathmandu. Briefly checking the jade again, he began to make his way through the mountains.

The Wicked Princess of Kathmandu

~

Lilly was in deep trouble, and she knew it. She had gotten drunk and ended up fighting with some of the peasants. There had been rude remarks and name-calling, both against her and against her father. Remembering her deal with her father, she had lied to defend her family's good name. But the peasants had seen through her lies. They had mocked her and thrown her out. In a fit of anger, she had been careless as she raced back toward the castle in her father's carriage. It had slipped off the roadway and tumbled down a steep ravine. The horses were probably dead, and the carriage was smashed beyond recognition. She was likely injured as well; in her drunkenness, she could not tell how much. She shook her head to clear the pain and tried to think. There were bandits along this road at night. Could she risk calling out? But it was cold, and she had not put on her coat in her haste. It had been in the carriage, which was now strewn all over the steep hillside. She groaned and tried to rise, but it only resulted in her vomiting convulsively all over herself and her beautiful gown. Every bone in her body ached. She sank back to the ground and began to weep uncontrollably, partly from the pain, but mostly from the shame.

~

Johar was whistling happily as he strode along. It had been another glorious day, and he had made the best of it, barely reaching Kathmandu by nightfall. Doubly thankful now for the warm coat his father had given him, he had decided not to spend the night in the city. He pressed on toward the king's castle itself, eager to begin his mission.

The Wicked Princess of Kathmandu

With visions dancing in his head of the grandeur of the high mountain passes he had crossed and the splendor of the green valleys surrounded by jagged peaks all around, he now strode along by the light of the moon on the road heading toward the castle. It was level and easy, though the hills rose sharply on his right and dropped just as sharply into the darkness below on his left. Reaching his hand under his shirt for the hundredth time that day, he fingered the jade, which had safely guided him this far.

Hush! the jade seemed to say. *Stop whistling. Listen.* Prince Johar blinked in surprise and skidded to a halt, listening, mouth still half open on an unfinished note.

Sobbing. A woman. It sounded like... no, not cries of pain as from an injury. It was more like sobs of anguish as if her heart were broken. The sound came faintly from somewhere far below him. But he saw no path beyond the edge of the road, only a deep ravine, which the moon transformed into a pit of black shadows.

“Fear not, fair maid! I am coming to help you! Only call out and let me hear where you are.” Johar cried out as he began a careful descent down the steep hillside.

“Who are you? How can I trust you?” he heard a frightened voice call. The voice was heavily slurred; she was probably dazed by her fall. So Johar, heading in the direction of the sound, began to talk comfortingly to her. He told her that he was a stranger from a far-off city, come to offer service to the King of Kathmandu as an overture of friendship from his own city. He assured her that his intentions were only honest and benevolent, and that he would respect her, care for her, and take her quickly to her home and family.

The Wicked Princess of Kathmandu

But even as he talked, he began to have suspicions. He was now close enough to smell the beer and the vomit. The night? What was she doing out on the road at night? A drunk prostitute, no doubt. Should he even help her? Did he want to get himself entangled in her wickedness? He recoiled in disgust and loathing at the thought.

Johar reached instinctively under his shirt to touch the jade. *The wicked princess... why do you think I led you here?* came firmly to his mind, and he staggered with the thought. Kneeling quickly, he bowed his head and quietly prayed, "Father, help me. Keep me true to my mission. Don't let me be overwhelmed by the horror of her sin."

Then Johar stood and called, "I am here, fair princess. Let me take you in strong arms of love and bear you safely to your father's castle ere the moon sets."

But as he reached for the pitiful, smelly bundle on the rock ledge, she shrank back. "How do you know who I am?" She demanded, her voice now fearfully alert though still slurred. "You said you were a stranger from a far city."

"Indeed I am, but my father knows your father the king, and you. He told me about you. In fact, my father asked me to come here to help you, and to continue to serve you in any way I can. He loves you, fair princess! He sent me to share with you his love. You don't think it was just chance that led me along this road at night, do you?"

"Why, that's impossible! How can I ever believe that? How can I trust you? Who is your father? How can he know anything about me? What else did he tell you about me?" Her questions were many, but her resolve was weak. Johar covered her with his warm coat and scooped her up into his arms, holding her closely and speaking softly, lovingly, forgivingly, encouragingly into her ear.

The Wicked Princess of Kathmandu

“I am Prince Johar from the High City. Surely you’ve heard of it? My father is El-Amin, the High King. He knows about many things, for he has the wisdom of the ages. You must trust me and believe me, for I cannot lie or deceive. In the High City, no one has ever learned how to lie or deceive.” Johar started up the steep slope, his youthful strength encouraged by the feeling that his mission was all but complete – or so he thought.

Lilly sank back into Johar’s strong arms, her cold heart calculating, “Cannot lie or deceive, indeed! Two can play this game. If he wants to serve me, let him, and if he thinks himself a prince, all the better. Maybe he will last longer than the last three servants I had.” With that, she relaxed into the warmth of his heavy coat and fell asleep.

~

King Badjhatt was angry again. His daughter had promised to try to protect his reputation, yet last night she had been brought back drunk and sorely abused in the arms of some peasant. “What happened last night, Lilly? And who is this... this peasant who brought you home? And what happened to my royal carriage?” he demanded, trying hard to control his anger.

“I was ambushed by bandits on the way home last night. They blocked my way, so I hurried to drive around them, but the carriage wheels skidded off the roadway and I flipped over the edge. I fell hundreds of feet down a rocky cliff. Your carriage rolled over and over and smashed to pieces at the bottom of the hill. The horses were killed, and I was wounded and bruised. The bandits must have thought I was dead, and recognizing me as the princess, they got scared and drove away.”

The Wicked Princess of Kathmandu

She glanced over at Johar to see if he bought the lie, but he simply stood there with his head respectfully low and made no response. “A long time later, as the moon was high, this peasant was passing by on the roadway. He heard my crying and carried me up and brought me to you. He has treated me well, Father, with respect and honor, and has vowed to serve me as long as I needed him. His name is Johar. He saved my life! I want you to honor him for his service with a room in your castle, and appoint him as my personal servant and protector.”

King Badjhatt raised his eyebrows, then sighed. More demands. It just didn’t seem proper to give his daughter a male servant, much less such a young and handsome one. People would talk. And what would Prince Edman think? Nevertheless, he would have to find some compromise. He sniffed. It seemed all he did was compromise with Lilly. *Aha! He had an inspiration.*

“Yes, Lilly, I will gladly honor such a faithful and caring young fellow. Johar, come forward.” Johar respectfully drew near, then knelt at King Badjhatt’s feet. “First, I offer you my royal thanks for protecting my daughter and bringing her back to me. My castle is yours for as long as you wish to stay. When you decide to leave, I will honor you with gifts to speed you on your way. But is this true that you volunteered to serve my daughter?”

Johar nodded, “Yes, Your Majesty. It is quite true.”

“You understand that before I can trust you to serve my beloved daughter, I must test your loyalty? I have four tasks that require a faithful and capable servant. I will give them to you if you wish to earn my trust. If you succeed, I will be happy to trust you with anything in my kingdom, including my daughter and all I own. Will you agree?”

The Wicked Princess of Kathmandu

“Yes, of course, Your Majesty. I am glad to serve.”

“Then rise, friend Johar, and come with me into my chamber.” And with that, King Badjhatt stood, took Johar by the hand to pull him up, then put his arm around him like a long-lost friend and walked away with him, leaving Lilly standing there with her mouth agape, wondering just what her father was trying to pull.

~

For nine long months, Lilly saw almost nothing of Johar. When she asked her father where he was and why he had not been given to her as her servant and protector, King Badjhatt only said, “Be patient, my daughter. I am testing him to be sure that he will really protect you and not take advantage of you. When he has passed the tests, I will bring him to you.” And Lilly, not willing to divulge that she was beginning to care more than casually about this mysterious stranger, had to leave it at that.

After summer had ended, he came to dine with them in the great room at a feast given in his honor. Evidently, Johar had successfully penetrated the dungeon of the Castle of Bhadgaon, where old King Gurkham had imprisoned five of King Badjhatt’s emissaries while on a peacekeeping mission. The emissaries had been brought back unharmed. There was great rejoicing throughout the city. Only once during the feast did Lilly catch his eye; then he only smiled and nodded noncommittally toward her, and resumed his conversation with the king.

When fall had passed and the winter snow lay heavily about, King Badjhatt held another grand feast. Again Lilly attended, trying to catch a glimpse of her elusive friend. When she saw him, her heart leaped within her.

The Wicked Princess of Kathmandu

But he never seemed to notice her, leaving her arguing within herself as to why she gave him a second thought. Sure, he'd make a good servant, even a great one, and would certainly increase her status among her friends. But she could have as many servants as she wanted, so why was she so interested in Johar? Besides, he probably wouldn't like her other friends or her late night drinking and carousing. And since he "never learned to lie," he probably wouldn't approve of the finer points of deceit she had so carefully cultivated.

She stalked out in anger: angry at Johar for his impossibly arrogant claim to have never learned to lie or deceive, and angry at herself for wanting so desperately to believe him and even to become more like him.

The next day, she learned that this feast too had been given in Johar's honor; it seems he had been successful in cleaning out the whole gang of bandits who had been plundering the countryside. Some said that he merely walked into their hideout unarmed and talked them into surrendering their arms. That seemed to be stretching it a good bit, of course, but the fact remained that many came to the king in public repentance, promising to labor with their hands and restore what they had stolen. Gossip swept across the land about husbands restored to their wives and fathers reunited with their children.

Lilly wouldn't have believed any of this, except that she saw what her father did to the bandits who came to him. One year ago he would have angrily locked them in the dungeon. Now he told them, "As Johar has forgiven you, so do I. Now go and honor your vow to labor and repay as you are able. May no man further condemn you as long as you are working to repay your debt."

The Wicked Princess of Kathmandu

Lilly could not understand. She had never worked a day in her life and had never seen the consequences of her misdeeds or been forced to repay. But she wondered, her heart ever warmed within her, as she heard Johar's name and saw the transformations in the lives he touched.

Yet he would not come to her. He would not even look at her or try to pass a message to her. Johar had promised to serve her! She petulantly stamped her feet at him in the privacy of her bedroom, angrily cursing him with nasty names that I must not repeat here, trying to convince herself that she was quite happy without him. She still had her friends at the tavern, her drinking and partying, her music and dancing. So for a while she would plunge herself back into that world, torn in indecision between her waning desire for such sensuous pleasures and her ridiculous attraction for the mysterious stranger.

With spring came a third feast in Johar's honor, for successfully completing the king's third task. Lilly never knew what it was about, but she saw a dramatic change in the people's attitude toward their king. When he went into the city, they lined the street cheering wildly for him, and gathered enthusiastically to listen to his speech. Lilly couldn't believe it. She didn't hear much of the speech – she had heard too many of them in the past – but she did see people who had always despised her father listening, smiling, and clapping. The only part she did hear was at the end when her father held out a hand to Johar, pulled him up beside him on the platform, and publicly praised him for teaching them all how to repent and forgive. She shook her head in amazement. She had never heard her father praise anyone but himself before. What could Johar have done to effect such a change?

The Wicked Princess of Kathmandu

~

“Well, Lilly my daughter, what did you think of my speech?” Her father seated himself beside her on the couch, rather closer than she felt comfortable with.

“Hey, a speech is a speech. It must have been good; ya sure did get the peasants t’ cheering and clapping for ya!” She chanced a glance up at her father’s face. His eyes were sad and his face lined with grief. She realized this was not the time for a flippant answer. “Uh... I’m sorry, Father. I guess I didn’t really hear much of what you were saying. I was having too much fun watching the peasants.”

“That’s okay. I understand. I’m happy to repeat the parts that were meant for you. I’ve not been a very good king, and I’ve not been a very good father. I’ve been a terrible example to you, expecting you to be good and to make me look good while I’ve been wicked myself. I’m sorry, truly sorry. Even worse, I was not very kind or understanding toward your dear mother, and I’m afraid I drove her to an early grave by my thoughtlessness and self-centeredness. So I ask for your forgiveness, for my anger, for my unjust and inconsistent discipline, for my selfish attitudes, for my waywardness and unfaithfulness, and for my pride and unwillingness to see things from your perspective. Will you forgive me? I promise to do my very best to change and to be all to you and your brothers that a good king and a good father should be.”

Poor Lilly was not ready for that. She should have been, after all she had seen the last nine months, but she was not. She just sat there with her mouth open for the longest minute, then turned and fled to her bedroom, bursting into tears as she went.

The Wicked Princess of Kathmandu

~

“Johar, you have successfully completed three of the four tasks I had planned for you. You have more than accomplished them; you have fulfilled them beyond my wildest dreams. You have already proved yourself faithful, loyal, and true in more ways than I could have imagined. Now, uh... about that fourth and last task... uh... well... I had planned...”

“Yes, Your Majesty? Your wish is my command.”

“No... no. I can't do it. I can't let you do it. Not any more.” King Badjhatt hung his head and closed his eyes.

“Johar, if nothing else, you have taught me that the truth is the best policy, so I will tell you the truth. I had arranged for Prince Edman of Patan to announce his engagement to Lilly next month. Your final task was to escort him here and to somehow convince Lilly to accept his proposal. Their marriage was to cement an alliance with the King of Patan... It really was all his idea... Huh. Stupid idea... It would never work anyway. They both hate each other... I should have learned from my own marriage that political marriages don't work very well.” He cringed as if reliving a bad memory. Then his eyes brightened. “I have it, Johar, a new fourth task for you.”

“Yes, Your Majesty?”

“Help me get out of this silly agreement with the King of Patan. I don't even want Lilly to marry Prince Edman anymore. Surely there is some other basis on which to form an alliance, particularly if you can teach him the value of honesty and forthrightness, just keeping his promises, as you have me. That would leave you free to... I mean, I want you to... uh, I ask... er, hope that...”

The Wicked Princess of Kathmandu

“Yes, Your Majesty?” Johar dared a smile. He knew what was coming. The jade had told him this would be the result if only he was faithful.

“I know you’re only a peasant, and Lilly is a princess. But maybe we could make you an honorary prince. The people all love you. It’s never been done before, but I’m sure they’d go for it. But I wonder how... royalty doesn’t usually mix with... do you think you could figure...”

“It’s all good, Your Majesty. I am a prince. I am the son of King El-Amin of the High City.”

King Badjhatt’s eyes widened, and he let out a gasp. “B-b-but you never told me,” he stammered. “A prince! The prince of the legendary High City? And here I’ve been ordering you around like a common servant. Why didn’t you tell me?”

“You never asked. And I came to be a servant. Remember? I was the one who asked to serve you.”

“Yes... yes... so you did. But a prince! I should have guessed. You always behaved so humbly and yet so, so royally. So nobly! I should have known...”

“Your Majesty, now that you know I am a prince, what is your request?” Johar said it gently, lovingly, with a twinkle in his eye and a warmth filling his heart.

“Well Johar, er, Prince Johar, I...” King Badjhatt gulped, stood a little straighter, and finally it all came out. “I want you to court my daughter. I know that’s asking an awful lot. She is fierce and strong-willed, like a wild mare – no, like a whole herd of wild horses. And stubborn! Once she gets some stupid, perverse thing into her head... She needs someone strong and good to tame her. You are the only one I know who might be able to keep her from destroying herself with her own selfish pleasures.”

The Wicked Princess of Kathmandu

King Badjhatt stood up from his throne and stepped off the dais. He slowly reached out a hand to rest it on Prince Johar's shoulder and looked him in the eye. "If you can win Lilly, if you can reach her heart like you have mine, I would like nothing better than to have you for my son-in-law. Would you... might you be willing..."

"Yes, of course, Your Majesty. I will be glad to court your daughter. That is why I came. Indeed that is why my father sent me to Kathmandu, to win the heart of your daughter and to bring her back to the High City. She shall be my beloved queen when I take my throne as High King. I only needed your permission before I could begin."

~

Everything her father had said was running circles in Lilly's mind. She finally realized she had to get it resolved. She dried her tears, repaired her makeup, and returned, uninvited, to the throne room. She went straight to the point. "Yes, Father, I forgive you. You've already become a better father. I can hardly believe the changes in you! You actually listen to me now, as if you cared about me."

"I do really care, Lilly. I have always cared, but before Johar came, I just didn't know how to show it. I was too preoccupied with... ahh... with myself... and my own power and prestige."

"Yeah, you sure were!" Lilly choked on a laugh and then started to snifle. She covered her tears by burying her face in her father's massive chest. He stroked her long golden hair and waited, one arm gently around her waist.

Lilly wanted this hug to never end; real hugs from her father had been so rare. It felt good. But something was on her mind, and finally she could wait no longer.

The Wicked Princess of Kathmandu

“Father, you keep mentioning Johar and all the things he’s done. Remember last year you said you’d test him with four tasks, and then you could assign him to be my servant and protector? Whatever came of that? Didn’t he pass your tests?” She tried to make it sound like casual curiosity.

“He passed the first three, Lilly.” Here King Badjhatt grew serious and chose his words carefully. “I must tell you the truth, my daughter. Johar has been teaching me that truth is the best policy. His fourth task was to escort Prince Edman here and to convince you to accept his proposal of marriage, to cement the alliance between our two kingdoms.”

Lilly strangled a shriek, a look of horror on her face.

The king hurried on. “But I knew that you don’t want to marry Edman, so I changed Johar’s fourth task.”

The look of relief on Lilly’s face spoke volumes.

“He is right now on his way over to Patan to negotiate with Edman and his father for a different solution to our alliance. I really think he can do it, Lilly. Edman frankly hates you as much as you hate him. I don’t think Johar will have any trouble convincing them that there are other ways to cement an alliance. Especially now that news has reached them about my public repentance and my new emphasis on truth, integrity, justice, keeping my promises, and accepting my responsibilities. But... why do you ask? Do you still want Johar to be your servant?” He pushed her back so he could look into her eyes.

“Well, sure, Father. I mean, he was really nice to me. Don’t you remember last year? Johar cared for me when no one else did, not even my friends at the tavern. And he was so gentle and strong, and respectful, and...”

The Wicked Princess of Kathmandu

She paused and again her face started to flush, for her father was looking at her strangely. “Father! Don’t look at me like that! I’m a princess, while Johar is just a peasant. He only wants to be my servant – he said so himself.”

“No, Lilly, he is not just a peasant. He is the prince of the legendary High City, the City in the Sky.”

“Oh, Father, surely you don’t believe in those old legends. Why, that’s just a fairy tale!” Even as she said it, Lilly remembered that Johar had claimed that very thing when they had first met. She hadn’t believed it then. Could she believe it now?

“Search your heart, Lilly. Search your heart, and you will know it’s true.”

~

“I have come to be your servant, Princess Lilly, just as I promised. I have successfully concluded the four tasks given me by your father the king and have earned his trust. I now have his permission. How may I serve you?”

Lilly stood there with her mouth half open. She had rehearsed this moment in her mind a hundred times over the last year, but now that it had come, she was speechless. Johar stood quietly, patiently, with his head respectfully bowed. This was the chance of her lifetime! All she had to do was reach out and take it.

But was she willing to give up all she knew she would have to give up if Johar came into her life? She thought of her friends at the tavern, the blissful drinking and parties, the songs and dances. Then she recalled the playacting and deceitful charades, the bitter arguments and flaring tempers, the cruel gossip and name-calling, the drunken stupors, angry brawling, and her own shameful conduct.

The Wicked Princess of Kathmandu

That led her thoughts to the fateful night when her carriage had slipped off the roadway; she might have died! But this man, this mysterious stranger – he had seen her at her worst. He knew her wickedness, but still he cared! The warmth of his heavy coat, his strong arms, his loving embrace, protecting her while she slept, carrying her home even while she was smelly with drunkenness and vomit... All the good he had done flooded her memory.

At that moment, her decision was forever made. Lilly took a step closer and shook her head. “No. No, **Prince Johar**. You cannot be my servant. You are a prince! A prince of princes! Will you be my... my friend?”

~

The next month was busy as Prince Johar patiently, gently courted Lilly as he taught her the ways of the High City. She repented quickly of her old ways, and learned eagerly of the laws of love and righteousness and of the joys of truth and a clear conscience – for she had fallen deeply in love with Johar and everything he stood for.

As the time neared for his departure back to the City in the Sky, she gladly, gratefully accepted his proposal, her heart thrilled to think of spending the rest of her days with this handsome, brave, strong, and kind prince.

Everyone in Kathmandu, as well as many from Patan and miles around, came to the grand wedding celebration. The speculation and gossip abounded when they learned that Johar was the prince of the legendary City in the Sky. They all wanted to question him and see his jade pendant. And of course they all wanted to accompany him to find out where the High City was, and perhaps even catch a glimpse of it as he returned through its gates.

The Wicked Princess of Kathmandu

To answer their questions, Johar gave another speech. He explained that the High City itself was not open to casual visitors or curiosity seekers, but that the ways of the High City were open to all. He told them they could establish another High City right there in Kathmandu if they would only forgive one another and practice ways of truth and love and justice and kindness and peace. “Just learn from your own king,” he insisted. “I’ve taught him to love righteousness and hate evil. He will teach you.”

Finally, all the preparations were made, all the goodbyes were said, and thousands of happy people thronged the hillside, waving and cheering wildly as Prince Johar and his new bride made their way up the rugged mountain trail. But suddenly they stopped, and every one grew silent as they made an obviously frantic search and then headed rapidly back down the path.

“My jade pendant! It’s been stolen!” Johar shouted from high above. Then again as they drew closer to the crowd, “My jade is gone! I know I had it right up until we all were hugging and saying goodbye. Someone in this group has stolen it! I must have it to find the High City! Without it, we are doomed, and my mission has failed!”

“Don’t let anyone leave! Search everyone! We’ll find it for you!” Pandemonium broke out as everyone began searching everyone else. “Hey! There he is! Don’t let him get away!” A shrill woman’s voice screamed, and sure enough, someone was trying to sneak off the side of the hill through the trees. Two dozen strong men quickly caught him and dragged him back before Johar.

“I’ll give it back if you promise that I can go with you to the High City!” the disheveled and panting peasant cried out.

The Wicked Princess of Kathmandu

“I am sorry, my friend. I cannot make that promise, for thieves and deceivers have no place in my realm.” Johar gently replied.

“Then no one shall have it!” he yelled, and before anyone could move, he spun it around on its leather thong like a sling and sent it flying far out over a rocky gorge where it smashed into a million pieces sparkling in the sunlight.

A shout of horror and rage went up from the crowd, but Prince Johar was down on his knees weeping quietly, with Lilly by his side trying to comfort him. Only those closest to him heard him cry out, in deepest anguish of soul, “My father, my father, why have you forsaken me? I have served you perfectly with my whole heart. Why have you left me alone to die among sinful men?”

~

All afternoon and through the night, blackness and mourning filled the city of Kathmandu. Johar remained inconsolable. King Badjhatt even promised to retire that very day and grant Johar and his new bride the entire kingdom of Kathmandu, to no avail.

But at dawn the next morning, Johar suddenly stood, wiped his eyes, and spoke. “I must go now. Though I die on the mountain, I must go. My father is waiting for me. He gave me one year. It is passed. I can delay no longer. I’ll take only my heavy coat, the one my father gave me, and some food and water. I must travel light and fast.”

“No, let me help you. I’ll send fifty porters with you, with mules, heavy sleeping bags, and enough supplies for a month. They’ll protect you as you search. You can have my flock of homing pigeons for communication, and...”

The Wicked Princess of Kathmandu

“Thank you, Your Majesty; you are most kind. But no. I must go alone with only that which I can carry on my back. But your homing pigeon is a great idea. I’ll take one to let you know when I... uh, we... safely arrive...” And here he looked questioningly down at his new bride.

Lilly stood slowly, her eyes fixed on his, then smiled and softly replied, “Where you go, I will go; where you die, I will die; never, never will I leave your side.”

“The trail is steep and icy. The way will be cold and hard. We may get lost on the mountains. The summer is gone, and you know how quickly the fall weather can turn treacherous up there. We may run out of food and water. There are wild animals and dangers of many kinds. I have nothing but my memory to guide me, and I have no jade to reveal the secret passageway. There is a very real possibility that we will die up there. You’ve lived your entire life here in the valley and have never faced hardship or suffering. Are you sure you want to come? I can go before you, and return for you once I find... if I find...”

“Never, never will I leave your side!” she repeated, clasping him tightly around his waist. “I’m stronger than you think! I’m still all ready to go.” She giggled and flicked her hair playfully at him as she turned and ordered her maidservant, “Quickly. Get my heavy coat, my boots, and my rucksack that I packed yesterday.”

~

It was the morning of the fourth day since they had left Kathmandu. The dawn was spectacular over a high mountain pass, awakening the two cold and tired bodies on the rocky ledge. They were lying together on top of Lilly’s coat, with Johar’s big heavy coat over them both.

The Wicked Princess of Kathmandu

Johar quietly slid out away from his wife and scanned the area again, slowly turning 360 degrees. It seemed right – it looked like the mountainside where he had started his journey – but the entrance to the High City was simply not there. They were lost. He had trusted in the jade to guide him, and the jade was gone. “Father, please make a way,” he mouthed for the hundredth time, then bent over to see if there was anything left for breakfast.

Yesterday’s hike had been brutal. Lilly awoke, her face buried in Johar’s coat. The crisp mountain air had turned bitterly cold during the night. An icy fall wind was threatening to blow them off the ledge. She wondered if she could survive one more day of this. Then suddenly she sat bolt upright with a gasp, eyes wide with mystery. “Johar! What’s this in the collar? It feels like your jade!”

Prince Johar nearly dropped the water jug. Quickly he stepped to her side and felt the collar, then with trembling hands carefully pulled open the seam. Yes! A beautiful carved jade tied to a leather thong slid into his open palm. “There is a note here too.” Lilly said. She pulled it out and read to Johar, “This jade is for your new bride. She will discover it when it is needed, and she will learn to use it as you use yours. Happy trails, and success to your mission! Your loving father, King El-Amin.”

Johar shook his head in awe. His father had thought of everything! He reverently handed the jade over to Lilly, who slipped the leather thong about her neck and then stood beside him, looking up at him questioningly. “Look into it...” he whispered, giving her a gentle kiss on the forehead. “Or even just touch it, and try to sense what it is saying. The words are very quiet, but if your heart is at peace and your soul is willing, you can hear it easily.”

The Wicked Princess of Kathmandu

Lilly held the jade up in front of her, looking first at it, then at the mountains beyond. Slowly she turned in full circle, then a second time. Then she closed her eyes, holding the jade close to her heart, concentrating.

“I don’t know, Johar. I can’t understand it. It seems to be chiding me – telling me to just trust that we’ve arrived and to stop fretting about being lost in the mountains.”

Johar kept silent. He knew better than to interpret the message of Lilly’s jade by his own understanding.

Again Lilly closed her eyes and held the jade next to her heart, slowly, slowly turning. Suddenly she stopped and opened her eyes. “Thank you!” she said to the jade. Then she pointed to a place near by and smiled at Johar. “Right there, in the side of the mountain. Don’t you see?”

Johar couldn’t see it, but he knew. He gave her a long, tender hug, grateful, oh so grateful, that she had chosen to come with him. They both wrote notes to King Badjhatt announcing the glad tidings that they had safely reached the High City, tied them to his pigeon, and freed it. After circling once, it flew straight toward Kathmandu. Finally, gathering their things, they headed hand in hand for the secret passage into the valley of the City in the Sky.

~

“Welcome, my son, and congratulations on the success of your mission. And welcome to you as well, my daughter. All of us here in the High City are happy to receive you and grateful that you have come. As of today, you are no longer Prince Johar and Princess Lilly, but King Johar...” There was a long pause while the people all cheered and clapped wildly. “... and his lovely Queen Lilly! Long live the king! Long live the queen!”

The Wicked Princess of Kathmandu

The noise grew even louder as the people took up the chant, “Long live the king! Long live the queen!”

Overcome by joy, Lilly wiped away a tear and looked again at the beauty all around her, lovingly caressing it all with her eyes: the high mountain ridge surrounding and protecting the lush green valley, the steaming stream flowing into the misty lake that softly reflected the spectacular mountain peaks beyond, the glorious city blending seamlessly into the surrounding mountainside, the happy and beautiful people, and up into the face of her beloved where her eyes stopped to gaze contentedly.

How little she had given up and how much, how incredibly much, she had gained. It was beyond her wildest imaginations, beyond any conceivable hopes or dreams or ambitions. What if she had chosen her own pleasures and her own friends at the tavern, her own silly songs and dancing and sensuous, deceptive playacting, along with all that stupid bickering and fighting and drunkenness... and missed out on all this?

Or what if she had chosen to stay behind in the comfort of her father’s castle, too cowardly to face the dangers of the unknown, to let Johar try to find the High City without her, unwilling to suffer with him, hoping that he would find the entrance and then return for her? Why, he would have died on the mountainside, and she would have lost everything!

Her focus came back to Johar. What a handsome face! What a strong, loving, gentle, and good face! And now he was hers! And she was his, forever!

Oh! Johar was speaking... He was talking about her!
Lilly shook her head to clear away the daydream. She had never been very good at listening to speeches.

The Wicked Princess of Kathmandu

“... and she kept pace beside me, and suffered the hardships of the trail with me, never complaining, lifting me up as oft as I lifted her up, giving every last bit of her energy to support me and keep up with me. We were lost, and we both knew it, yet I never heard a cross word. She was willing to walk to the end of the earth with me. Yes, she was even willing to die for me! Then this morning at dawn, with our food and our strength nearly gone, she found the jade my father had hidden in the collar of the heavy coat. And she learned to use it, too, right there on the spot! She led us to the secret passage and all the way up to the palace, even though she’s never been here before! Lilly is one of us! She is one of us!”

Again the city erupted with the spontaneous cheering and clapping of a people gone wild with joy. Lilly realized the applause was for her. She curtsied... and curtsied... and curtsied... but the cheering went on, until it dawned on her that they wanted her to speak. Lilly – the one who hated speeches and had never given a speech in her life – raised her hands for silence.

“Thank you, thank you. You are very kind and generous. I am more happy to be accepted among you than I can possibly tell. All I can say... all I can really say, is that I owe it all, all I’ve done, all I am, all I have, anything good that could ever come from me...” she turned toward Johar and took his face in both her hands, “... to this man, my husband, whom I adore now and forever, my handsome prince, my beloved, my king, my lord...” and she paused to kiss him full on the mouth, while the entire gathering unraveled with shouting, cheering, whistling, jumping, dancing, and joy that simply could not be restrained.

Christ in Me

When I first got to know you, I was amazed –
So many sick! So many poor! So many problems!
My heart cried out to God for His healing to flow,
And everything got worse.

New people came, each with more troubles than the last.
“I know the good news is for the poor, lame, and blind.
But God, I can’t find anything in Your Word that says
They have to stay that way.”

God’s Word flowed among us in power and authority;
We were sorely dealt with, devastated, and destroyed.
The Refiner’s fire burned hot throughout the body
And seemed to have no end.

“You see, there is no response to prayer,” the devil said.
“No divine love; no real hope; no reason for your faith.
Walk away from that group of sickies and social misfits.
You can make it on your own!”

Spirit responded, “Stand firm in faith in My promises.
You shall yet see glorious salvation from the Almighty.”
“Yes, Lord,” I said in humble worship, as with the rest,
I bowed down to dig my foxhole.

Months became years. The testing grew more severe.
A quiet miracle of faith was wrought within our hearts.
“God said it; I don’t see it, yet I will believe!”
Became the cry of my heart.

Christ in Me

I gazed deeply into your eyes and you into mine
As for the first time, I began to really comprehend
The depth, power, and beauty of the oneness between us.
I saw Christ in you!

I lifted my hands, my voice, and my heart to God
In a violent all-consuming shout of joyous praise.
Everything within me, heart, soul, mind, and strength,
Cried out to God, "I love You!"

Something broke with the violence of that shout,
Like chains snapping apart or a wall crashing down.
Something died within me in that terrible moment.
I think it was my flesh.

Yet I still live! Do you think this could be
The "Salvation of the Almighty" He had promised?
Look closely at me, my brothers and sisters.
Do you now see Christ in me?

Hallelujah!
It is finished!
Now I understand...

God allowed the sickness, devastations, and poverty
So He could bring forth His faith, His love, His oneness,
To create the nature and character of Christ in us,
To the praise of His glory and grace.

Christ in Me

By faith, I now look up and see
God's answer to our prayer:
A flow of healing washing o'r
Each member of Christ's body.

It has started in our spirits, so
No man receives the glory.
Look up, my brothers and my sisters
and you will see it too.

I bless you, O Lord my God,
for in Your wisdom and Your love,
You hid from me the answer
'til I was ready to receive.

Please give me grace and wisdom,
patience, faith, and love
To present Your answer
to all those You send my way.

For now, O God almighty,
I finally comprehend,
Your answer is not the miracles
I long had sought.

I praise You, Lord Jesus Christ,
for in love You come down,
Filling us with Your answer:
"Christ in Me."

Global Warming A Historical Perspective

Abstract: Today's global warming debate seems to be neglecting some important evidence from the past, such as the worldwide tropical temperatures before the Flood and the causes of the Flood and ensuing Ice Age. Once these are better understood, our current recovery from these cataclysms will also be better understood.

Essay: Global warming alarmists are missing a few items that I believe are important to the debate.

They obviously are aware of (and have tried to hide) the medieval warm period, and the fact that the entire earth was significantly warmer then than the average temperatures today. Of course they try to hide it. It does not fit their false narrative of our industrial age causing the global warming. But everyone seems to be missing the fact that even warmer periods fill our distant past. A case in point: study the worldwide coal deposits and you will discover a lengthy period of earth history during which the entire globe was not just a degree or two warmer, but tens of degrees warmer. Flora and fauna grew at prodigious rates and to gigantic sizes. Dinosaurs flourished. Mankind was stronger, taller, longer-lived, and smarter than anyone today. The greenhouse effect created a tropical paradise all over the earth, including around the poles.

There was no salt water. Much of Earth's water was stored in a vast subterranean fresh water sea and in a thick, transparent vapor barrier protecting the earth from solar and cosmic radiation. We lost our vapor barrier when the earth turned cold at the Flood. A warm earth means the air can hold more moisture. Maybe if our earth warms up, the moisture now locked in ice on the mountains will flow to the sea, evaporate, and go up where it belongs.

Global Warming A Historical Perspective

Why is nobody talking about this? We should be hoping for and working toward more global warming! Our vapor barrier is so impoverished that the earth is filled with cancers and other radiation-induced diseases. The entire earth would benefit from a good greenhouse effect again. It would even out the temperature extremes, reduce the storms and hurricanes, decrease the rains while increasing the evening dew to water the vegetation, and make the earth more pleasant for everyone. Poverty and food shortages would be a thing of the past.

There is another factor that nobody is talking about. Our pseudo-scientists never even consider it. They can't. They are so heavily invested in their ultra-long ages of evolution (and the uniformitarian theology it requires), that they can't consider great cataclysms such as the worldwide Flood. But the fact remains that our tropical paradise came to an abrupt end about 3400 to 4000 BC. An unimaginable amount of gigantic vegetation was washed into massive piles and compressed into the coal seams we find today all around the world.

The Flood was quickly followed by a terrible and lengthy Ice Age. Great glaciers covered roughly three quarters of the globe. Together, these two cataclysms nearly wiped out all life on earth. Why? How?

Without going into all the details of my theory (for that, see my book *The Feasts of Israel – God's Plan of the Ages*), I believe that Mars used to be on a cataclysmic orbit in resonance with Earth, passing near every thirty years. About 3500 BC at the time of Noah, a large ice moon of Mars came within the gravitational well of Earth and shattered. The shards of ice seeded Earth's thick vapor barrier, causing it to come down as rain all over the earth.

Global Warming A Historical Perspective

The generating effects of Mars cutting through Earth's strong electromagnetic field (many thousands of times stronger than it is today) charged the shards of ice, so that most of it followed the Earth's magnetic lines of force down to the poles. This resulted in mountains of super cold (-250°F) ice five to ten miles thick at the poles, creating our polar ice caps. In addition, the closeness of Mars broke Earth's crust, causing the subterranean sea to gush up and some of the continental plates to sink.

Of course all that rain and water from below ground flooded the entire earth, like the Bible says. But then the mountains of super cold ice at the poles began freezing all that water into the glaciers that nearly covered the planet, beginning the great Ice Age. In a way, this ice was a good thing. On its next pass, Mars stole a lot of our liquid water and flung it out into space, but left the ice behind.

The Ice Age lasted seven hundred years. Life was only possible near the equator, which then went across Sumer. Then about 2700 BC, Saturn (also on a cataclysmic orbit) passed too close to Earth. It stole nearly half our crust, but also warmed the Earth, ending the Ice Age. Glacier melt filled the hole left behind by Saturn (creating the Pacific Ocean) and also pushed the Americas westward (creating the Atlantic Ocean), thus not flooding the land.

Earth has been slowly recovering ever since. The 'refrigerator' of super cold ice at the north pole is now exhausted (though the south pole still has some left). The ice melt has now replenished the oceans (which are now on top of the earth rather than subterranean) and partially replenished the vapor barrier. If we will just leave things alone and let nature take its course, we may begin to approach the paradise we had before the great Flood.

Global Warming A Historical Perspective

Of course, with the northern polar ice pretty much gone, the poor polar bears will just have to adapt. It is laughable to me that those same pseudo-scientists who worry so much about the polar bears are the ones who claim to believe in evolution and the survival of the fittest. I know that to be hogwash, yet I have no trouble believing in the ability of the polar bears to adapt. They certainly adapted well to the Ice Age! Creatures unable to adapt to changing conditions die off, like dinosaurs, mammoths, and sabertooth tigers did at the beginning of the Ice Age. My own grandfather has fed his dogs with meat from woolly mammoths dug out of the permafrost in Alaska. How do you freeze a mammoth quickly enough to keep all that meat fresh? By the super-cold space ice falling on the poles, such that even the delicate tropical plants found in their mouths and stomachs are still preserved. If that super-cold at the poles hadn't come so suddenly, the mammoths might have adapted and survived.

So bring on the global warming. It is certainly a lot better than the 'coming Ice Age' that eco-alarmists and pseudo-scientists were screaming about thirty years ago. The only carbon dioxide control we really need to impose is on the hot air being blown about by our ignorant and self-serving politicians. Somebody really ought to tell them that the carbon dioxide they are so frantic about is actually essential to life on earth, is a natural byproduct of many common processes (including breathing, volcanoes, forest fires, etc.), and is pretty well kept in balance by plant respiration. But I won't tell! It's too much fun laughing as they make fools of themselves.

Paul A. Lindberg 12/10/2009

Global Warming A Historical Perspective

Update 10/1/2016: Since the above essay was written, earth's global warming has stopped (and even slightly reversed), so our beloved Chicken Littles have stopped using the term global warming. But they don't dare start screaming about the 'coming Ice Age' again, because we've heard that one before. Honest people at this point would apologize for their hysteria and go away quietly. But these are not honest people. They have a secret agenda, and that is to gain control over the world's energy resources and thus exert tyrannical control over people who need energy.

So in spite of the fact that all their bold predictions have failed and their sophisticated computer models have been proven faulty, they continue to insist that we stop using fossil fuels (coal, oil, natural gas, even firewood) and shift to bulky, unreliable, and expensive wind or solar power. Just not in their own backyard.

What do they call it now? Climate change. That's a good one. Brilliant. Nobody can argue with it because the climate has been changing ever since the Flood. They claim it will cause an increase in the number and severity of storms worldwide. The reverse has actually happened since they made that claim, but it doesn't deter them, since they are blinded by their theology that somehow the earth needs saving, and they are the gods to save it.

Knowing the God who is really in control and who keeps His earth pretty well balanced for the comfort and safety of His people, I am unimpressed. Eventually, their own foolish lies will catch up with them. But in the meantime, remember their hypocrisy and don't allow yourself to be swept away by their hyperbole.

The Company Store

Tim sensed the commotion before he heard it. Something had gone wrong again over in the mill. He lifted his head from the history book he had been studying and listened intently. Yes, there was a cry, somebody running, some shouts.

Tim hoped his dad could handle it this time. These problems had been happening too often. Several times they had called the police, and the last time, Tim had seen an ambulance come wailing in through the big front gate.

Tim looked back at his book and tried to concentrate. Homeschooling does have its benefits, but distractions like this were not among them. Then he heard someone running up the stairs and pounding on his door.

“Massa Tim! Massa Tim! It’s yo’ dad! Come quick!”

Tim was off the chair in a flash, and he flew down the stairs ahead of Sam. They ran together through the company store and out into the mill. It wasn’t hard to see where the problem was: everyone had stopped work and was gathered around the office. As Tim and Sam ran up, the others became silent and stepped respectfully back.

“Oh God, no!” Tim’s heart faltered as his worst fears flooded his mind. There was his dad, lying flat out on the floor in front of his office, with Big John, the lead shop supervisor, kneeling beside him. Ted, another supervisor, was sobbing on the floor nearby.

“What happened? What happened?” Tim cried out as he ran through the circle of workers.

John stood suddenly and wheeled around to face Tim. He looked him square in the eye, and there was steel in his voice as he spat out, “He’s dead!” No explanation. John just stood there, unflinching, towering over Tim, and Tim’s knees felt like water.

The Company Store

Tim couldn't face Big John, so he turned toward Ted. There was accusation in his shrill question, but his voice wavered and cracked. "Ted! Give me the truth now! What happened?"

"I din't do nothin'! He was tryin' to get me to work the guys harder, 'n I tol' him we was workin' jus' as hard as we could, 'n he yells at me like he all'uz does, and I jus' tol' him I'd had about enuff o' his yellin', 'n he start cussin' me out, 'n I jus' turn 'n start t' walk away, 'n all'a sudden his cussin' stops... an' I hears this thud..." Ted stopped for a few quick breaths of air. There was terror in his face as he resumed his narrative. "... 'n I turn back 'n there he is on 'a groun', grabbin' his chest, 'n double' over like 'is heart..." He ran down and bowed his head.

A murmur rippled through the crowd. Tim swung his gaze around the shop. Grim faces met his, and he saw numerous nods of confirmation. Big Mammy and Bertha, two more shop supervisors, started talking, fast, and both at the same time.

"Ted's right. – We saw the whole thing. – He didn't do nothin'. – Ted didn't even argue with 'im much. – Ye'r dad was really angry. – Boss always get angry. – But this was worse. – He was shakin' his fist at Ted. – Look like he was gonna punch 'im out. – I thought there was gonna be another fight. – I was so proud of Ted when he jus' turn an walk away. – Then Boss jus' stop right in the middle of a big cuss, an'... – Yeah, he... – Jus' like Ted says... – Boss jus' grab 'is heart and sorta' topple over, 'n... – He all red 'n puffy in the face. – But not with anger anymore. – More like he got powerful scared o' somethin'." Bertha started to sniffle and Big Mammy took her huge sleeve and wiped it across her face as they both kinda' petered out together.

The Company Store

Waves of emotion flooded over Tim. He swayed and nearly fainted. But from deep inside, he knew this was no time for weakness. He took a deep breath, stood up to his full five foot eleven, and spoke with a firmness he didn't feel. "Okay everyone. Back to work. I believe you. There'll be no charges pressed. John, you call the coroner, then you and Ted take his body back in the office 'til he comes. Sam 'n I will take over the... uh... no. Later. We first have to go break the news to Mom. It's going to hit her pretty hard, her being an invalid and all."

Tim turned to leave, then swung back again. "Ted..."

"Yes, Massa Tim?" There were still tears in his voice and fear in his eyes. He instinctively raised a hand up to his face, cowering.

"I forgive you, Ted. You didn't make him angry. He was just, well, he was just an angry man. He's been working toward this heart attack for a long time. He earned every bit of it. He was my dad, and I loved him and want to speak respectfully of him, but I can't deny that he... well... Let's just say that I don't blame you. It wasn't your fault. Okay?"

The relief on Ted's face spoke volumes. "Yes, Massa Tim. Thank you. Thank you."

Tim turned again and walked slowly back toward the store, thoughts whirling through his head. He half heard the bustle of the crews getting back to their work, and half sensed them watching him out of the corners of their eyes as they did. He knew, and they knew he knew, and he knew they knew he knew, that he was Boss Man now. His mom was in no condition to take over the mill, and he was an only child. It was a heavy thought. He had been training for this, but it had come too soon. Way too soon.

The Company Store

Entering the company store, he saw all the shelves filled with food and supplies – now his food and supplies. His mind's eye returned to the mill just behind him, with all its carding machines, spinning machines, weaving machines, dye vats, cutting machines, sewing machines – his machines, his mill. He glanced over to the lunchroom, empty now but soon to be crammed with workers. No, not just workers, not anymore. Now his workers. His people. People, families with children and babies, over which he had the responsibility of life or death with just a word.

Tim's shoulders sagged with the weight. He paused and bowed his head. "Oh God. Help me, please. I'm not big enough, or strong enough, or wise enough, or mature enough. I can't be Boss Man. You be Boss. I'll do my best to follow." And once again, Tim took a deep breath, stood tall, squared his shoulders, and resolved to be strong.

~

Tim was not used to getting up early. He hurried out to the mill. Everyone was already there, standing, waiting. A quiet murmur filtered through the crowd as he walked out on the mill floor and up to the platform in front of his dad's office. He scanned their faces, fearful faces, sullen faces, grim, angry faces, hopeful faces – the silly thought crossed his mind that at least they were all punctual.

He didn't dare take a look at his watch, but he knew he was at least five minutes late, and that was no way to start out being boss. Pushing that thought aside, he stood tall, squared his jaw, and realized that all the fine words he was going to say about continuing on with their jobs, keeping up the good work, nothing changing just because they had a new boss now, were meaningless, pure vanity.

The Company Store

He would forever lose their respect if he denied that things had changed. Big time. Possibly for the better if he didn't screw this up. Or maybe for the worse if he couldn't get the crews – at least their supervisors – behind him.

They were all staring expectantly at him. He had to say something. “God, what do I say?” Tim's thoughts frantically searched and came up empty. Nothing. He was close to panic. He forced himself to think. Still nothing.

He took a deep breath and looked at John. Big John. Dad's right hand man. Faithful, strong. Tim didn't remember ever seeing John smile. His jaw was set, and he stared unblinkingly back. Tim took a step toward him, a question on his face. John's face answered back: faithful, yes, he'd stay faithful, and he'd work hard and be strong like he always had, but he didn't have to like it.

Tim scanned over to Ted, still fearful, but hopeful, question marks written all over his face. And there was Bertha and Big Mammy, arms akimbo, stern, hoping for the best, but ready for the worst. And his faithful Sam. Tim instinctively took a step toward them but again found only questions, no answers there. He scanned the other supervisors – leads in charge of the big machines – all looking at him, grim faces, not a smile in the place. The horrid thought ran through his mind that they'd been here for years, but he didn't even know all their names.

Suddenly, Tim made his decision. He didn't have to tell them. They knew their jobs. Instead he would humble himself and ask them. He stepped off the platform and walked in among them, looking into their faces and wondering whom he should ask first. Again, Tim saw the grim faces, the angry faces, the hopeful faces, the sullen faces, the questioning, not-quite-daring-to-trust faces.

The Company Store

There he was: Jake, big old ornery Jake. He'd been around a long time – he was the maintenance chief – and Tim knew that if he could trust anyone to tell it like it is without beating around the bush, it was old Jake.

In a sudden inspiration, Tim commanded, “Jake, com'ere! Step up on that platform and tell me what's in your head. I wanna hear what you think of all this.”

Jake's eyes opened wide, and he nodded slightly and strode toward the platform. “It's pretty simple,” he started even before turning around. “You're Boss Man now, and that's that. We gotta have jobs, so we'll work for you like we worked for your dad. We just want to know if you're going to be like your dad or if you're going to listen to us sometimes instead of just ordering us around like slaves.” He paused, and a glimmer of the first smile of the day crossed his lips. “I guess you chose to listen. I just hope to God you can hear.”

“Thank you, Jake.” Tim knew what to do now. He looked for the angriest face he could find. Bill, hot headed, fightin' Bill, who ran the big weaver. “Bill, you're next. Come up here and tell us all what you're thinking.”

“You bet I will!” Bill charged up to the platform. “Nobody oughta' speak bad of the dead, but your dad, well, he jus' made me mad. I work hard, and every time I thought I was startin' to get ahead, Boss 'd change the rules. He didn't care how good I was at my job. It just seemed like he'd change things to make it tough on us all. He'd tell us how to do it when we knew doggone well how to do it better than him! We were just, well, his personal slaves, that's all! He never knew or cared that we've got families, a life to live, other things to do besides slavin' away here at the mill 'til our dyin' day.”

The Company Store

“Thank you, Bill. I hear you. How about you, Jenny? What are you thinking?”

“You don’ wanna’ hear what I’m thinkin’, Massa Tim.”

“Yes, Jenny, I do. And I promise you I won’t treat you the worse for whatever you say.”

Jenny nodded her okay, her angry face softening a bit, and stalked up to the platform where Bill was stepping down. She looked down at Tim for a few seconds before opening her mouth. When she started talking, her voice was like cold steel. “Your dad made himself rich offa’ us. He abused us. He treated us like cattle; no, like pigs. If I’d a had any place to go, I’d a gone long ago. And if you’re gonna be like your dad, I’m outa’ here, even if I got no place to go.” Then her voice softened a little. “But if you’re really gonna hear us and work with us and give us half a chance, we’ll be the best workers this mill ever had.” There was a murmur of assent as she stepped down.

“Thank you, Jenny. I hear you. At least I’m trying.”

Jenny’s friend had her hand up. Tim didn’t want to call on her because he was embarrassed that he didn’t know her name, though she’d been here as long as Jenny. He thought briefly about pretending he didn’t see, but no. That would be an obvious snub and would surely cause offense. Once again he humbled himself. Nodding to her, he admitted, “I’m sorry, miss. I don’t know your name.”

She grinned, like this was a small victory for the crew. “I sorta figured you didn’t know my name. I’m Genevere. And that’s really all I was gonna say. You know some of the supervisors, but most of us you don’t know at all.” She paused for a big smile, pearly whites glistening out of her black face. “At least now you know my name. Yer dad never did. In thirty years he never once spoke my name.”

The Company Store

“I’m sorry, Genevere.” Tim was about to try to make excuses for his dad, but he checked himself. His dad had no excuse. He had treated his work crew like machines – no, worse than machines. At least he knew the names of all the machinery! He wanted to say more, but before he could think of anything to add, Genevere started again.

“Don’t apologize to me. Apologize to them.” She waved a hand around the group. “Bet you don’t know the names of more ’n ten of ’em. Just like your dad. But now you know eleven. Like Jenny said, if you’re gonna treat us like people instead of property, we’ll be the best workers the mill ever had.” Her smile grew. It was beautiful.

Tim scanned the group. Genevere was right. He knew very few of their names besides the ten supervisors. Now all he saw was a sea of featureless faces, mostly black. He had never seen them as people, only as the work crew. He hung his head and admitted, “Genevere is right. I don’t know you. I’m sorry...” He was about to offer the quite legitimate excuse that he had been busy with schoolwork, so all he knew about them was what his dad had told him while teaching him the business. If his dad hadn’t known them, how could he? But it sounded so lame in his mind that he shut up before saying it.

Tim glanced over at Big John again, and then over to Ted. He knew them. Ted looked even more hopeful and less fearful; he was almost smiling. And John, well, it was hard to read Big John’s face. Strong, inscrutable John. Stern, unreachable John. Tim realized that of all people in this mill, he needed John the most. Tim made the quick decision to try to soften him up one more time before letting him talk. “Ted. May we have your perspective? And after you, I’d like to hear from Big John.”

The Company Store

“Thank you, Massa Tim. I been wantin’ t’ say som’m. I do agree with all that the rest have said, an’ I sure ’v had my share o’ hard times wif yo’ dad, ’n I could be angry ’n bitter ’n all that, but what you’ doin’ now, lettin’ us talk, ’n jus’ lis’nin’, ’n not cussin’ us out ’er nothin’... Wal, I want you t’ know I’m not a’blamin’ you fer nothin’ yer dad did. You got a clean slate in my book. Like Jenny ’n Genevere said, if’n you gonna listen to us and care a little bit, we’ll all be the best workers you ever had. Big John, you tell ’im. You ala’s was a better talker ’n me.”

Tim allowed himself a secret half-smile. This was really going his way. And he hadn’t had to say a thing yet. Now for the payoff. Big John, like a lumbering giant, stood tall on the platform and turned slowly around. His steely gaze swept the room and settled right on Tim.

“I’ve worked here for thirty-eight years. I’ve done all Boss asked of me and more. I never lied, cheated, or stole so much as a pencil from the company store. I kept the mill going when Boss was sick or gone. I’ve been stern, but always fair. When Boss was angry or unreasonable, I just shut up ’n took it and never so much as raised my voice at him or blamed someone else. Instead, I helped everyone fix the problems, so’s we could get the job done. But y’know what? After thirty-eight years, yer dad still never trusted me. ’Til the day he died he never trusted me. I got the feeling that he was using me, like y’use a sewing machine, and when I broke down, he’d throw me on the trash heap and get another. I really thought I could earn his respect, but Tim, he never respected me! He just couldn’t see past this dark skin of mine and see that my heart is the same color as his.” He looked down at his big hands, black as the ace of spades, and shook his head.

The Company Store

“Massa Tim, you asked me to talk, so I’m gonna say it. Everyone else has been beatin’ around the bush ’cause you’re the new Boss Man. But I see you around here now and then. So far, everything I’ve seen of you says you’re growing up to be just like your dad. Oh, you’re listening now ’cause you know you need our help to run this place. But you’re white. And most of us here are black. I know you keep busy with your studies and all, but you act like you just don’t want to get your lily white hands dirty along with us blacks.” He paused, and Tim furtively glanced at Ted and Bill, then over at Sam, Big Mammy, Jenny, Genevere, and Bertha. They looked a little horrified at what John was saying, and the whites of their eyes looked huge in amongst their dark faces.

“Massa Tim, blacks are people, too. Some of us even have an education. We’ve got hopes and dreams and cares and problems and loved ones just like you. Give us a little respect and trust, ’n we’ll work for you ’til the day we die, but if you’re gonna be a racial bigot like your dad...” he spat it out passionately, “we’re outa’ here.” Big John strode off the platform like a storm cloud passing overhead.

That was not what Tim had hoped for. He had totally misjudged John. Though his words were entirely justified, John’s tone was stern and harsh, and the stinging rebuke had hit home. He realized to his shame that John was right. Nobody had ever dared to actually speak the term ‘racial bigot’ before, but it surely was true of his dad. Was it true of him, too? He had been aloof from the blacks – aloof from the mill entirely – working on his studies as if he was a higher social class. What John said about not getting any respect from his dad because he was black... Tim shuddered reflexively and wondered about himself.

The Company Store

The air had turned cold and harsh. Tim needed to soften it a bit somehow. So he looked around once more and noticed a tear in the eye of little Martha. She was the wife of one of the workers; Tim didn't know which one. But everyone knew Martha. She had such a tender heart; she was always helping someone with something. "Thank you, Big John. And Martha, you're next. What's going on in your head?" Martha looked startled, gave a little cry, and started to step back, but those around her propelled her toward the platform. Tim could see they all loved her. She was weeping profusely by the time she turned around. Tim didn't think she'd be able to say a thing, but she wiped her face on her sleeve and bravely began.

"Joe works awfully hard. So do I, with our kids 'n all. But we keep going deeper into debt. I've almost given up hope. It's like we owe our souls to the company store." She paused and looked directly at Tim (who was trying to figure out which one was Joe). "Master Tim, I don't want to sound ungrateful because I know that without that store, we'd have to walk all the way into town to get groceries, but, well, it's so expensive, and the credit is so easy, and the interest rates are so high; I think I'm paying more on interest now than on groceries. We can't stop eating – Joe 'n I got six kids to feed now, you know, with our three and Mary Lee's three – but we can't live under this burden of debt! Master Tim, we're drowning! Can't you see? Can't anyone see?" Martha looked wildly around the crowd. Many nodded, and a few even started to clap.

Tim was incredulous. Martha was always so generous he'd had no idea that she was in debt. He jumped back up to the platform with a soft, "Thank you, Martha, for being so honest with us all," and lifted his arms for silence.

The Company Store

“Thank you, Jake, Bill, Big John, Ted, Genevere, Jenny, Big Mammy, Bertha, and you, Martha. Thank you all. Thank you for telling me what I needed to hear and for caring enough to tell the truth. I admit that in my seventeen years, I haven’t spent much time helping you or getting to know you. Sam here is the only one I ever took the time to get to know. I’ve been off in a world of my own, studying, playing... yes, being a self-centered, foolish, and rather spoiled little boy. Sam’ll vouch for that. Your turn, Sam. Anything you want to add?”

“No. I’m just the housekeeper. I don’t know much about what’s going on in the mill.” He thought for a long half-minute. Tim waited. He did know Sam. “I... don’t think you’re foolish or self-centered, Tim. You’re young, but you’re growin’ up. You’re not like your dad. Not at all. I... I think you’ll do just fine as Boss Man.”

“Thank you, Sam. You’re very kind. I want to tell you all, I grew up a lot last Friday when I came in and saw my dad dead on the floor. There are going to be big changes made. I know I need you. I need you all. I don’t know yet what changes to make. I need time to think it through, and I need to talk more with some of you. But there’s one change that’s got to be made right now.”

Tim stepped down and walked over to Big John. He spoke loudly so everyone in the room could hear. “Big John, I’m sorry Dad never trusted you. I didn’t know. I’ve always looked at you as the best employee this company ever had, and I mean that. I want you to know that I do trust you, and I respect you. You’re not only educated, you’re smart, kind, honest, and... everything a good boss ought to be. I respect you more than I ever respected my own dad. Here’s the key to the office.” He handed it over.

The Company Store

“You’re Boss Man now for the next two months until I learn the ropes, and I want you to teach me all I need to know to be a good boss here. Now, will you let this weak, little white hand shake your big, strong black one?”

At first John just stood there, his mouth half open and his eyes big and very white. Time stood still, and every worker held his breath. Then the faintest glimmer of a smile twitched the corners of John’s face, and a tear actually glistened his eye. “You bet I will, Tim.” He firmly took Tim’s hand with both of his, then suddenly reached right around him and enveloped him in a huge bear hug. “I don’t know as I’ve ever seen anyone grow up so fast. You’re going to be the best boss an outfit ever had.”

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“Remember I said we’re going to make some changes? Well, John ’n I have talked it over, and I’ve made some decisions. This probably isn’t everything that’s going to change, but I think it will make a good start.

“First, I need to know how many of you owe a debt to the company store that is more than, let’s say, a month’s wages?” More than half the workers raised their hands. “More than two months’ wages?” Only one or two hands went down. “Three months’?” Tim didn’t see anyone move. “Four? Five?” All the same hands.

And yes, there was little Martha, hand still held high, her faced pleading up at him. A tall black man standing next to her, who also had his hand still up and the same grim look on his face, slid his arm around her waist. So that must be her husband, Joe. Martha sighed and leaned her head on his shoulder. Seeing them, Tim’s heart melted. He stiffened in his resolve to make this right.

The Company Store

As he had found when going over the books of the company store, those who had allowed themselves to get into debt had been so trapped by it that they could never escape. There were no small debts. His dad had charged such exorbitant interest rates it had literally enslaved the debtors. That was wrong. It had to be corrected.

“I have good news for you all. Your debt has been paid, cancelled, erased. You’re free, and I plan to do my best to see that you never have to go into debt again. You can stop by the store anytime to pick up your balance sheets. I’ve already signed them all marked, “Paid in Full.”

There were some gasps, a few shrieks of joy, and then a hearty round of applause and a lot of beaming faces.

However, Tim noticed a few grimaces among those who had not raised their hands, and quickly continued with his plan. “Now, how many have struggled hard to never go into debt at the company store and have had to scrimp or go without just to keep out of debt?”

“Yeah, a lot of times!” He heard someone mutter, and just about every hand that had not been up before shot up this time.

“Just as I thought.” Tim said, smiling. “I knew you were struggling, and I admire your dedication to not go into debt, even when it meant doing without. You have worked harder and suffered even more than those who just let themselves sink deeper in debt. You refused to mortgage your souls to the company store. You stood firm on wise principles and remained faithful, even when you were sick or nearly starving. That is commendable. I have a gift for you, too. I’m giving you the company store!”

There were more gasps and grins and also a lot of bewildered looks as Tim continued.

The Company Store

“This is your store from now on. You are going to run it like a co-op, and the store profits will be for your own benefit. The total amount necessary to retire all the debts of those who did get trapped by debt was about a hundred thousand dollars. Well, the store inventory right now sits at eighty thousand dollars, so I am giving you about the same as what I gave the debt group. You have earned the right to own it and manage it by being frugal and faithful with your money. However, there are some conditions:

“First, only one or two of you are needed to manage your store. The rest should continue to work in the mill as always. But I’ll pay the store managers the same wage as if they were working in the mill. Those who work hard will get the same bonuses as those in the mill. You get to decide who will work in your store or drive into town for supplies. Or you can rotate the jobs if you wish.

“Second, this is not to make yourselves rich at the expense of the debt group. You must always sell groceries at a fair price to any of the workers. And when you buy your own groceries, you must pay the same price as any other worker. That’ll encourage you to keep prices low.

“Third, you obviously will set that price to make a profit, but as in any co-op, all profits will go to the benefit of all the store owners – your entire group. You can work that any way you want, like a year-end rebate, maybe a company party – whatever you want – it’s your store.

“Fourth, I want ten percent of your profits – the tithe – set aside to help out those with emergencies. Things like sickness or accidents, or perhaps the birth of a new baby – the reasons that those in the debt group got there in the first place. Nobody wants to go into debt, but things do happen. We need an emergency fund.

The Company Store

“I don’t ever want anyone to be forced into debt at the company store again. I’d like to call this the Martha Fund in honor of Martha. You all know her. Com’on up here, Martha.” He paused while she came to the platform.

“You ’n Joe didn’t go into debt for not being frugal. You’re only trying to help those in trouble. Like raising Mary Lee’s kids. I want you to keep doing that. You’re the perfect one to manage our Martha Fund. Will you do it?” She indicated her assent by giving him a spontaneous hug. Tim saw tears of joy in her eyes as she walked back to Joe.

“And finally,” Tim grinned, pausing for effect. This had been a hard decision, but after talking it over with his mom, he knew it was right. “I’m going to sweeten the pot with a little gift. You told me Dad made himself rich off of you? Well, I’m giving back a hundred thousand dollars of it, in the form of improvements to your living quarters – remodeled kitchen, new furniture, and a big new addition with a lounge, a huge playroom for your children, and a schoolroom where everyone who wants can learn to read.

“These are my conditions. What do you think? Can you all live with that? Anybody have any objections?”

Tim paused for breath, but the spontaneous applause and shouts of joy prevented him from continuing. Finally Big John stepped up on the platform and raised his hands for silence. As always, one look at his stern face was all it took. But then this giant of a man tenderly reached out one arm, draped it over Tim’s shoulders, and broke out into a broad grin. You never saw a bigger contrast, as his white teeth blazed forth from that dark face! They say it was the first time anyone there had ever seen him smile.

Regardless, they all knew what it meant. They now had a Boss Man they could work for.

What Is Prayer?

Prayer Is Not

Squealing to God when I'm in trouble,
like a pig caught in a fence.
Trying to twist God's arm to do what I want.
Telling God how I think He ought to run His world.

Prayer Is

The attitude and expression of reverential awe
and joyous praise of our glorious God.
Constant communion with the heavenly Father
in the secret place of His presence.
Tuning my mind to be aware of the Holy Spirit's
communication with my spirit.
Seeking to know the Father's will
and actively conforming my will to His.
Actively, intensely, waiting on God,
so that the Father's perfect will becomes clear.
Proclaiming the will of the Father,
that it be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Believing that His will is accomplished as we pray,
and giving Him heartfelt thanks.
Doing whatever the Holy Spirit shows me is right
at the time and in the way He leads.

To Become Prayer

“Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17) is another one of those ‘impossible’ Bible verses – along with the insane, “Rejoice always” (vs 16) and “Love your enemies” (Matt. 5:44). Sure, the great saints of the past could do it, maybe. But little old me? Forget it.

Surely He couldn’t have actually meant that. He must have meant, “Pray whenever you find the time,” or “Pray whenever you are able.” I mean, He couldn’t really have expected us to pray while we’re working, or while we’re eating, or while we’re talking with a friend, or while we’re playing with our kiddies or reading them a bedtime story, or, for heaven’s sake, while we’re sleeping, did He?

Did He?

Maybe we don’t understand what He means by “Pray without ceasing”? Could it be that our concept of prayer is different from His?

I happen to believe that the Bible is verbally inspired by the infinite eternal God who makes no mistakes. By that I mean that, though He used fallible humans to write in their own style, His Holy Spirit not only gave them the message, but also prevented them from writing any errors into the Scriptures. After all, it is His Word!

So, when something seems to be wrong, I have to believe that either I don’t understand what He is saying, or there is an error in translation. Well, I just checked the translation by looking at Jay Green’s interlinear Greek New Testament. It says, “Pray without ceasing.”

Huh. No errors in translation.

I must conclude that I misunderstood what He means by prayer. To pray without ceasing, I have to become prayer – to walk prayer, eat prayer, sleep prayer, talk prayer, sing prayer, think prayer, and even work prayer.

To Become Prayer

How can this be?

I once thought prayer was talking to God, telling Him my needs, asking for His help, trying to find His wisdom and guidance, seeking His protection and blessing on my family, and thanking Him for the results.

That is not a bad start, but I now believe prayer is a great deal more than that. Let's review this whole prayer thing. I'll start with the kind of prayer that at least most of us already understand, and work up from there.

The Sinner's Prayer

A sinner is anyone who is spiritually far from God the Spirit. He is focused on self, and out of communion with the One who loved so much that He gave Himself.

Now, be honest. Whether saved or unsaved, that has described every one of us at times, has it not? The sinner's prayer usually begins by our loving heavenly Father allowing a problem, sickness, or other minor catastrophe into our lives, at which point we are humbled enough to acknowledge our need, turn to God (or return to God if we are already saved), and cry out to Him for help.

God hears and answers, though frankly I believe He is more interested in establishing (or restoring) communion with us than in fixing our problems. God's holiness does not allow Him to 'hear' the prayer of the sinner ruled by pride and self-centeredness, but He wants to! He is very creative in arranging ways to humble us and turn our attention back to Him, to break our pride so He can restore a sweet-smelling attitude of repentance and acknowledgment of our dependence on Him. *Once that relationship with God is established (or restored), it is amazing how quickly that sinner's prayer is changed to...*

To Become Prayer

The Prayer of the Saint

First, who is a saint? Don't look around – look at yourself. Some around you may look so saintly, better than you, but you cannot judge their heart relationship with the Father. But if you are a Christian (Christ-in-one), you do have the Spirit of the living God dwelling within you. (Rom. 8:9) He makes you a saint. And though you may run from Him at times and have to return via the sinner's prayer, He never leaves you nor forsakes you! (Heb. 13:5–8) Even if the young saint falls, he has this promise: "...stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand." (Rom. 14:4) "Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power [the Holy Spirit] that works within us, to Him be glory..." (Eph. 3:20–21)

So, how does this saint pray? Without ceasing! If the Spirit of Christ lives within us (and He does), then there must be constant communion with Him in the Spirit, which results in our "being led by the Spirit of God." (Rom. 8:14) This is not just theory – it is practical reality, though sometimes we aren't aware of this Spirit-to-spirit communication and therefore fail to take advantage of it. Here are a few reminders to aid the prayers of the saints.

The Fear of the Lord

This is where it all begins. (Prov. 1:7; 2:5 ff; 19:23)
True saintly prayer begins with the worshipful attitude and expression of awe and reverence of the infinite almighty God. Learning the proper fear of the Lord is a lifelong objective, and well worth the effort. Our God is an awesome God! Only by the fear of the Lord is a saint able to establish the two-way relationship that God desires and requires.

To Become Prayer

Even the best of us saints still falls short of His glory. It is the fear of God that allows us to walk in repentance and humble awareness that only He is worthy. Those are the attitudes that we must have to establish the two-way love relationship, Spirit to spirit, that God desires.

Communion with the Heavenly Father

Prayer is two-way communication with almighty God. *True saintly prayer is constant communion and dialog with the heavenly Father in the secret place of His presence.*

Since He is so great and we are so small, this may end up being more listening than talking, but after all, He is our Father! He knows what our needs are before we ask, but He loves to hear us anyway. And more than anything, He loves for us saints to be in His presence, aware of His indwelling Spirit, delighting in His nearness, and allowing our spirits to touch His in a two-way communion that is beyond words. Ours is a love relationship, you know, and true love has no greater joy than being close together in communion with our Beloved.

Tuning My Mind to the Holy Spirit

Awakening my spirit to commune with the heavenly Father is the greatest joy of the saint, but there is much more. *True saintly prayer is also tuning my physical mind to be aware of the Holy Spirit's communication with my spirit.* Though He is Spirit, He has given me a physical body and placed me solidly within this space-time realm. It takes time and effort, but no prayer is complete until I begin to understand it with my mind, so that I can say, "Amen!" to what the Father is saying and doing. Prayer is training my mind to hear what God is saying to my spirit.

To Become Prayer

Aligning My Will with the Father's Will

Once the saint begins to understand what the Father is saying, a conflict is initiated. The flesh nature is hostile toward God. It cannot subject itself to God's law. (Rom. 8:7) The saint, aware of this, reckons his flesh (sinful, fallen) nature to be dead and buried with Christ (Rom. 6) so that, risen in Christ, his true nature (which is created in God's image and designed to walk with Him) can find and appreciate the righteous will of God. (Rom. 8:10–11)

True saintly prayer is seeking to know the Father's will and actively choosing to conform my will to His.

Waiting on the Lord

Even the most humble among us saints has trouble with pride. We can even become proud of how humble we are! That is why God seems at times to be very sparing with His revelations to us. I know if He gave to me as much personal revelation as He gave to the apostle Paul or Moses or Elijah, I would face a serious (and possibly fatal) temptation to pride.

God knows our weakness, yet He does not condemn. Rather, He often makes us wrestle with Him for a clear understanding of His will, or even waits until we step out in faith before He makes His will clear. Sometimes He even (heaven forbid!) allows us to get it wrong and do something really stupid, to teach us cautiousness in confirming His word to us through the Holy Scriptures, through others in His body, and/or through more waiting on the Lord.

True saintly prayer is actively, intensely waiting on God, so that the Father's will becomes clear.

To Become Prayer

Proclaiming the Will of the Father

Prophecy in general has received a lot of bad press lately. Satan will most viciously attack that which is most precious and important in the Kingdom of God. But the truth remains that God already knows everything we could ever ask or say, and there would be no need for prayer if it were not for this: God has chosen to use our prayers to accomplish His will on the earth.

True saintly prayer is proclaiming the will of Father God – prophesying that it be done on earth as it is in heaven.

“...God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ...” (2 Cor. 5:19–20) All creation is eagerly waiting to be released from its slavery to corruption by the revealing of the children of God. (Rom. 8:19–22) To reconcile means to set things right, as in correcting the checkbook to match your bank balance. “...God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.” (2 Cor. 5:18) Even a child can prophesy, “Thy Kingdom come! Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven!” The saints have a job to do. It is to see the wrongs in this world and prophesy to them the will of God, that they be reconciled to God’s original design and intent. “Whoever speaks, let him speak as it were the utterances of God...” (1 Pet. 4:11)

The Faith Factor

Without faith it is impossible to please God. (Heb. 11:6) God knows our faith is small. He understands and does not condemn us. But He will not allow our faith to stay small! That is why He gave us prayer.

To Become Prayer

We must not get so proud as to think that God needs our prayers. He can get along fine without us, thank you. He can, but He doesn't want to. God is love, expressed toward us. He wants our participation with Him in everything He does, for our sake, to bless us and mature us. As we share His labors and sorrows, we also share His divine nature, His glory! (1 Pet. 1:7 ff; 4:13 ff; 5:1; 2 Pet. 1:4 ff) So He gives us a way to participate – prayer! And in the process, He builds faith in us as we recognize the hand of God at work, accomplishing His will through us.

True saintly prayer is believing that the Father's will is actually accomplished as we pray, and giving Him thanks.

Thanksgiving for answered prayer is common. True faith gives thanks for unanswered prayer as well, knowing that God always answers His saints, though His answer may not always be visible or according to our own timing or desires. True faith sees with the eyes of Spirit strictly according to God's promise, and simply reckons it done.

Faith without Works is Dead

Prayer goes way beyond spiritual activity, though it always starts in the spirit realm. But in the same way that the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead. (James 2:26) *True saintly prayer is doing whatever the Holy Spirit shows me is right, at the time and in the way He leads.*

Everything done by the leading of the Holy Spirit is prayer. When the Father says, "This must be done. Who will go for Me?" the saint responds, "Here am I. Send me." One of the joys of the Kingdom of God is the sense of accomplishment at the end of the day, knowing that at least today, I found the will of God for me and did it.

To Become Prayer

“For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.” (Rom. 8:14) “If we live [receive our life] by the Spirit, let us also walk by [in harmony with] the Spirit.” (Gal. 5:25) Every saint knows how essential it is to wait on the leading of the Holy Spirit for the major decisions in life. The more important the decision, the more important it is to wait on the Lord for confirmation until our will becomes objective, and His will becomes very clear. But what about stopping to wait on the Lord for every little decision too, like brushing your teeth or picking up that penny on the ground? I know that seems a bit silly, but let’s analyze it. We are talking about prayer without ceasing, after all.

God has already given each of us saints a measure of His wisdom and knowledge of His ways. He expects us to use that for our routine tasks. For example, we wash our hands and brush our teeth because God has taught us the importance of personal hygiene to care for this body as His temple. Does this mean we have stopped being led by the Spirit on routine things?

Not at all. *True saintly prayer is keeping in tune with the Holy Spirit in everything, every second of every day.*

Even in the routine things, the Spirit is free to check us, at which point we would pause, toothbrush in hand, and ask, “What is it, Lord? Is there something else You’d rather have me do now?”

Miracles have been wrought through saints who were willing to stop whatever they were doing and follow the Spirit’s prompting at a moment’s notice. Many saints have been awakened from sleep and told to pray, later to find that their prayers helped someone get through a crisis. That is being led by the Spirit – prayer without ceasing.

To Become Prayer

Becoming Prayer

We have seen how saintly prayer is listening and obeying more than talking. It is learning to keep in tune with the Holy Spirit, always listening for His quiet voice, eager to do His will, willing for Him to interrupt what we are doing with what He wants us to do. Please don't be discouraged if you are not there yet. We've all had our share of lapses into carnality! God does not condemn us for where we are, but neither does He want us to 'sloth' there. We are growing, changing, "...beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, we are being transformed into that same image from glory to glory..." (2 Cor. 3:18)

"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren." (Rom. 8:29) The God of love is communicating His glory, His wisdom, even His very nature and character, to His beloved – us saints – so that we can communicate it to the world around us. As awesome as it may sound, we are being transformed into God's image, so that the world who in their spiritual deadness cannot see or hear God, can see and hear Him through us. That is prayer.

As we are transformed into the image of Christ, we become the greatest prayer of all: the very heart-cry of God Himself interceding for a lost and dying world.

Be not anxious, young saint. "...The Spirit also helps our weakness. For we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." (Rom. 8:26–27)

The Scared Dragon

Once upon a time, there was a frail old man and his frail old wife who lived together in a deep dark woods. The old man went out every day to search for berries or edible plants for their dinner.

But one day as he was digging up a particularly nice-looking wild root, he found something else, too. It was a great green dragon with real live fire coming out of his mouth and an honest-to-goodness full set of plate armor. It came charging up and deliberately stepped right on top of the root he was digging.

The old man was not a bit impressed. He politely asked the dragon to move aside. The dragon, of course, was furious.

“How dare you speak to me in that way?” the dragon said, standing up straight and singeing the old man’s eyebrows with his breath.

“How dare I?” the old man responded. “I’m old, and I’m tired, and you’re standing on my supper. I asked you politely to move; if you chose to blow fire and drive me away instead, I suppose that’s just as well, though how you can get to sleep at night after bullying people around like this is beyond me.”

Now at this, the big green dragon felt ashamed of himself, so he stooped down to get a better look at the old man who wasn’t afraid of him. He was careful not to breathe out as he looked the man straight in the eyeballs. The man just stood there, waiting for the dragon to get off his supper.

Finally, the dragon straightened up again, turning his head slightly so as not to burn the man’s clothes off, and asked his name.

“I’m Edgar. How do you do?” responded the man.

The Scared Dragon

“Well, I’m Horatio,” returned the dragon, “And you have something I want. If you will give it to me, I will help you get this root and many other suppers besides.”

“What is it?” asked Edgar. “I’ll help you if I can.”

“It’s your complete lack of fear,” responded Horatio. “You see, everyone else I’ve ever met is afraid of me, so I can’t tell them my problem. But you have no fear, and that’s what I want. I want to be brave like you.”

Edgar was very surprised to find out the dragon was scared, so he asked, “What in the world do you have to be afraid of? You’re larger and stronger than all the other animals, you have fire for your breath and heavy armor plates for your skin. I’m afraid I don’t quite understand.”

“No, I don’t suppose you could understand, could you. Frankly, I don’t understand myself. All I know is, wherever I go I’m scared, and ashamed of myself as well. And besides, it will be my one hundredth birthday in two days, and... and nobody ever celebrates my birthday any more, and ... sniff... sniff...” Horatio began to cry.

Edgar stepped back quickly when a hot teardrop drenched his hair. “I think I know what the problem is,” he said. “Come with me.” Forgetting about the wild root, he started walking through the forest.

Horatio followed, hanging his head slightly and dragging his big, beautiful, green tail on the ground. As he walked under one big maple tree, the squirrels chattered and scolded him, throwing acorns down on his head. A little further on, a band of monkeys saw him; they squealed in rage and chucked a heavy coconut at his face. Horatio started to get angry. He lifted up his head and blew a long tongue of fire at the monkeys, but they had expected it and already were out of sight in the treetops.

The Scared Dragon

“It’s as I thought,” Edgar said. “I think I can help you. You just revealed why you are afraid.”

“I did?” the dragon asked. “All I did was to blow smoke at a few mangy ol’ monkeys.”

“But that’s exactly your problem,” the wise old man said. “You’ve gotten into a bad habit of being mean to the animals who are smaller than you, like you just did to me. That’s called being a bully. You’re not afraid of a few monkeys or squirrels, but since you’ve treated them so poorly all these years, you know they hate you. You are afraid that someday they might all gang up against you.”

The dragon had to stop and think about that for a while. “You mean....” he finally said, “that even though I’m not afraid of any of them, I’m afraid of all of them because I’ve made them all hate me?” He knew it was true even as he said it. All of a sudden, he began to shake all over as he thought of all the animals in the forest and how much they hated him. He thought of the times he had stepped on their tails, or blown smoke in their faces, or scorched their fur, or broken their houses with his big green tail. He thought about the time he singed all the hair off Missus Zebra’s mane when he was angry with her baby’s silliness, and the time he burned the whiskers from Missus Lion’s face just because her hunting roar had wakened him from his nap. And worst of all, he thought of the time he burned down part of the forest when he got too angry at the chattering monkeys.

Then he remembered his dream. It was a nightmare, and it had been bothering him for too many nights now. He would wake up in a cold sweat, but all he could remember of the dream was the animals in the forest all gathered around glaring hatefully at him.

The Scared Dragon

“Yes, Edgar,” he said at last. “I’m afraid you’re right. The only real fear I have is that someday they may all gang up together against me. But that’s a mighty big fear, and I have to carry it with me everywhere I go.”

“No, you don’t.” said Edgar. “I have a plan. You see, if you could get all the animals to like you, then you would have nothing to fear. But how to get them all to like you, that is my plan. Now, tell me where your lair is, and I’ll meet you there when I’m ready.”

Horatio wanted to get rid of his fear so much he was even willing to tell Edgar where his secret cave was. Then he rambled off slowly, shaking his head and muttering, “I sure hope this works...”

Edgar was whistling to himself as he walked back to finish digging up that root for supper. He hadn’t felt this good in a long time. “Teena!” he called out when he reached home. “We’ve got a project to work on!”

As they ate their supper, he told his wife of the plan. She was delighted. “You always did feel better when you were helping someone,” she said, grinning broadly at him.

“So did you,” he responded. “And you look ten years younger with that cute grin, too.”

They had a good sleep that night. By sunrise the next morning, they were both out in the woods, calling all the animals to a council meeting. “What for?” they asked.

“It’s about the dragon,” was the only answer they got. “Meet at noon at Council Rock on the High Plateau.”

Sure enough, by noon they all were there. As Edgar had figured, they were all so curious that not even wild dragons could keep them away. Edgar climbed slowly up to the top of Council Rock while his wife watched from a distance, humming cheerfully to herself.

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Edgar lifted his hands for silence, and the animals all crowded around to listen. “Horatio, the great green dragon,” he began, “is not very well liked around here...”

He heard growls and hisses. The lion with the singed whiskers called, “That’s the understatement of the year!”

“Well, today we’re going to do something about it!” he called in his loudest, most important sounding voice. The animals quieted down. This, they wanted to hear!

“You’ve all been a little afraid of him, because he’s so big and because he’s got a campfire in his throat and green turtle shells all over his skin,” he went on. “And besides, he’s been a bit of a bully, and he seems to get cranky at the slightest irritations. But do you know why he’s so grumpy when he’s around us?”

“Grumpy? He’s downright mean!” he heard Missus Zebra mutter under her breath.

“It’s because all these years you have been forgetting his birthday! And dragons just hate celebrating their birthdays alone. Besides, his one hundredth birthday is coming up tomorrow, and he’s just sure you all will forget it again. He’s really sad. Hundredth birthday celebrations are supposed to be a grand, happy party, especially for dragons.”

“But as I said,” Edgar continued, “this time we’re going to do something about it!” And before anyone had a chance to argue, Edgar started directing animals on their preparations for the big party. The elephants were to mix the punch; the zebras and monkeys were in charge of the entertainment; the lions were to plan some good games that everyone could play; the bunnies were to get together on making a big, crisp tossed salad; the deer and elk were to gather different kinds of fruit; the giraffes, tigers, and

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buffalo were to gather lots of other kinds of food for the party, so no one would go hungry; the birds would put decorations in all the trees; the bears were to gather dry wood for a big friendly campfire; the foxes would think of some songs and tune their instruments together so they could all sing around the campfire; and the busy little weasels and chipmunks and squirrels were to make a present for Horatio. Edgar had even thought of a good present they could make: a huge ball woven out of long stiff jungle grasses. Then they were all to meet up by Council Rock at noon tomorrow for a grand time.

The animals were soon so busy with preparations for the party, they forgot about being scared of the dragon. Just before noon the next day, they were all up on the High Plateau, finishing the decorations, arranging the food, and finding good hiding places so they could jump out and surprise Horatio.

As they were hiding, Edgar and Teena visited the dragon at his secret cave.

“It’s all fixed,” Edgar said. “The animals have forgiven you, and they’re going to throw a big party for you at noon today to show you they want to be friends.”

“You’ve got to be kidding!” Horatio exclaimed. “A party? For me? That’s... that’s... that’s amazing!” He shook his great green head slowly from side to side.

“Come on, let’s go. You don’t want to keep your new friends waiting, do you? Follow me,” Edgar yelled as he ran gayly up the hill toward the High Plateau.

His wife watched the two of them run, and chuckled softly to herself. “Just like kids,” she thought. “And to think my husband is eighty years old.” She turned toward home to get the present she had prepared for Horatio.

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She pushed it in their wheelbarrow because it was big and heavy. Being an old woman, it took her a long time to reach the High Plateau. So by the time she got there, the party was in full swing; singing, dancing, games, cheering, and laughter filled the whole plateau. She had never seen all the animals so happy. And there, right in the middle of it all, was Horatio, having the time of his life. He had his big woven grass ball, and he was gleefully batting it up over everyone's head with his huge green paws. The lions and tigers were then chasing after it to roll it back to him.

But what really surprised Teena was the monkeys. They were climbing all over the dragon, pulling his ears, sliding on the scales of his great green back, and swinging from his huge beautiful tail! And Horatio was loving every minute of it! Teena shook her head in wonder. "Horatio is one changed dragon!" she said softly to herself. "He never, ever would have let them do that to him before!"

When Edgar saw Teena trudging up the hill with the wheelbarrow, he ran down to her. "What in the world have you got there?" he exclaimed.

"A cake, of course." She smiled. "What's a birthday party without a cake?"

Edgar grinned sheepishly. He'd planned his party so well he'd forgotten the most important thing. "Thank you, dear wife! Whatever would I do without you? Let's put it on top of Council Rock. They're starting to get tired, so maybe now is a good time." He helped her push the heavy wheelbarrow up beside the big flat rock.

When the two of them lifted out the huge cake and slid it onto the rock, a loud cheer went up from all the animals, and they crowded around to see. Horatio was grinning from ear to green ear.

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“A birthday cake? For me? You’ve remembered my hundredth birthday! Wow! This is the happiest day of my life!” And he started to snuffle.

“Now, now, let’s not start that,” Edgar said quickly. “You’ll wash the frosting off the cake. Here now, step back, make a wish, and blow carefully on this candle.” And he took a tall dry branch and stuck it firmly right in the center of the cake. “One big candle for one hundred years!” he shouted.

Horatio made his wish thoughtfully, then blew on the top of the branch. Sure enough, the “candle” caught fire, and all the animals clapped and sang happy birthday to the dragon.

As Edgar and Teena were busy cutting the cake and passing out pieces to all the animals, Missus Zebra and Missus Lion came over and smiled at Horatio. “What did you wish?” they asked.

Horatio put one great green paw gently on each of their heads. “I wished,” he said softly, “that you would all forgive me for being such a bully, so I would never again have to be afraid of you.”

“You? Afraid of us?” They looked surprised.

“Yes, afraid. I was afraid of you because I had made you hate me.” His eyes twinkled. “But never again! From now on I plan to make sure I have no enemies, only friends like you! Thank you, thank you for such a good party and for being my friends.”

The Bride

“... as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels... so the Lord Jehovah will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.” (Isa. 61:10–11, emphasis mine)

“And now, little children, abide in Him, so that whenever He should appear, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming... everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself just as He is pure.” (1 John 2:28 – 3:3, emphasis mine)

“Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His Bride has made herself ready. And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.” (Rev. 19:7–8, emphasis mine)

As we approach the end of the age, it would be easy for us to look around and fear. Surely the nations rage, the earth groans and travails, and evil principalities and powers of the heavenlies have great wrath, for they know their time is short. Among the heathen, men’s hearts will indeed fail them for fear, and rightly so.

But Christians have a different focus. Though we do try to be at peace with those around us and to reach out in love and compassion to those who are lost, if that is all we did, we would be like the blind trying to lead the blind.

Our gaze is set higher; our focus is fixed on what is eternal, not on what is passing away. We are “strangers and exiles on the earth” (Heb. 11:13) because we are “...fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith...” (Heb. 12:2)

The Bride

Have you ever watched a young bride-to-be as she shows off her engagement ring? Her single-mindedness is almost embarrassing, yet you cannot help rejoicing with her. To hear her talk, her groom must be the finest, most handsome and talented man on earth. Her whole world revolves around him! Everything she thinks, says, and does can have only the two-fold purpose of pleasing him and honoring him before others. Her only fears are that she might somehow offend him or fail him by not being all that she could be for him.

As the date for their wedding draws near, the joy, the anticipation, the eagerness grows, until she finds it nearly unbearable to be apart from her beloved for a moment longer. How silly. They will spend a lifetime together! So, what's the hurry? Doesn't she know they'll probably get tired of each other after a few years?

No, and you can't possibly tell her, either. For her, forever isn't nearly long enough to explore the joys of togetherness. And this is how it should be, for God gives us this bridal love as a picture of His love for us and what our love for Him should be.

“On my bed night after night I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought but did not find him. I must arise now and go about the city; in the streets and in the squares I must seek whom my soul loves...” (SoS. 3:1–2)

The Song of Solomon is a very graphic picture, really a love poem, of a young, dark-skinned Egyptian bride who cannot tolerate being apart from her beloved, the great King Solomon himself. It is a romantic love song, a mushy, gushy one. It becomes a little embarrassing in its

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flowery descriptions, but God made no mistakes when He had it included in the canon of Scripture. He wants to give us a taste of the incredible passion of His love for us, and He wants us to return it to Him with the same intensity of passion and longing.

A young lady may meander casually about in her play, her studies, her friends and pursuits. But just watch her change of focus when she falls in love. When she gets engaged and sets a date for the wedding, there is no more time for frivolous fun and games; her whole life becomes focused on the goal of becoming the perfect bride.

We Christians Are the Bride.

Jesus, the Christ of God, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, is our Groom. We are the young black girl in the love poem, and the King of all creation has chosen us to reign with Him as His queen. We are not yet married, but our Groom has given us His engagement ring (His Holy Spirit within us) and has set the date for the wedding, though He hasn't told us yet – He wants to surprise us! All we know about the date is that it is very soon, and He has given us signs along the way to excite us and delight us as to how soon it really is.

Do we look at those signs and worry, get anxious, or fear? No, no, no! The world does, as they certainly ought to. About the same time as our wedding feast, the birds of the air will be feasting on their flesh! (See Rev. 19:5–18) Instead, we look to our Groom to learn what He is doing so we can follow Him. What is He doing? He is wrapping up this age of sin and preparing for our wedding.

Are we preparing for our wedding? Or are we so busy arguing about the technicalities of the pre-trib vs post-trib

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or mid-trib rapture that we have forgotten what rapture means? – the superlative of joy, the ecstasy, the heights of passion we will experience when the heavens open and we see our Husband, standing arms outstretched for us, eagerly beckoning us to run to His embrace never to be separated from Him again!

How much that we value so highly now will we think of then? All the earthly treasures that we spend so much time and effort on – for what? Are they helping us prepare for our wedding? Are they pleasing or honoring our Groom? I hope so, for, just like that young bride in the Song of Solomon, nothing else matters any more.

How do we prepare for our wedding? Of course we prepare ourselves: physically, by caring for this body that is the temple of His Holy Spirit; mentally, by guarding our minds and hearts from impure thoughts and developing the kinds of godly character traits that delight Him; and spiritually, by learning about Him from His Word.

However, it is inconceivable to me that our Groom should not personally communicate with us until the very wedding day. He does indeed speak to us, but softly, and He often hides Himself from us so that, just like that young bride in the love poem, we will long for Him and eagerly seek Him with hearts that will not be denied.

Of course we must also be preparing our wedding dress; it must be of purest white and exquisite beauty – we are sewing it day by day, stitch by stitch in the deeds of righteousness that we do for one another out of our love for Him. When we are finished, we will find that these deeds of love have knitted us together into one body – a many-membered body – fit for the King of Kings. Thus the Bride will have “made herself ready”!

Freedom from Smoking – A New Lifestyle

(I wrote this outline for a single mother who had failed many times before but was willing to try again. The principles apply to anyone determined to stop smoking.)

Day 0

Preparation day. After today you will smoke no more. Tell your children you're going to quit smoking and ask for their help. Put away all smoking material out of sight. Eat moderately – good, nutritious foods all three meals.

For supper, no meat. Also limit the cellulose (lettuce, etc.) because they will be hard to clear from your system. No coffee, tea, or soda pop; herb tea is okay. Minimize sugar; no sweet dessert. Relaxing with a little wine after dinner and/or before bed may be good.

Use focused, slow, deep breathing, if necessary, to control the smoking urge. (Laugh if you want; it works!)

Day 1 through 3

Absolute fast for three days. Nothing but pure warm water. No coffee, tea, juice, gum, mouthwash, toothpaste. Start the day with a full mug of warm or almost hot water. Continue drinking all day. Aim for ten full mugs per day.

Your body is eliminating many poisons through the tongue and skin. Bathe daily. Scrub all over with brush or washcloth. Brush your teeth two or three times a day with water or salt/soda. Brush tongue (as far as you can reach) each time. Rinse mouth and spit out (don't swallow).

Be conscious of your breathing. This is important. Treat yourself often to a few cleansing breaths: Inhale deeply through the nose, fully expand the chest, hold briefly, then consciously relax your neck, shoulder, and

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back muscles as you exhale completely by blowing out the mouth first, then finishing through the nose. A lot of toxins can be eliminated by this type of breathing.

If stressful situations arise (children fight, car breaks down, etc.), pause and take a couple of good, relaxed cleansing breaths first before reacting. Try to react calmly.

Conserve your body's energy. Consciously direct your body's vital life forces more toward the healing/cleansing process and away from outward bursts of emotion or physical activity. If you must react during this time, try collapsing and weeping rather than anger, violence, or fierce determination. Don't feel you have to bear all your problems on your own shoulders – you focus your energy on getting healed and let your children and friends bear as many of your problems as you can share.

Worry saps your strength. Try to take one day at a time. Laughing/joy/pleasure increases your body's energy. Keep your sense of humor, laugh as often as you can, be alert for enjoyable, pleasurable things, and be grateful. Don't be afraid to laugh at yourself and your children. Don't take yourself or them too seriously for a while. It's okay to goof off! Enjoy your children, your friends; even little things can be a source of strength, like a beautiful flower, a sunset, a fresh spring leaf, a child's toothy grin.

Don't be afraid to love and be loved. I'm not talking about sex; I'm talking about the love that cares, that is concerned and wants to help, that gives, that bears you up and believes in you, that receives joy in seeing your joy and is willing to share your sorrow, not out of morbid sympathy, but out of faith that a burden shared with a friend is a burden more easy to bear. That kind of love gives energy, strengthens, and aids in healing.

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True love is patient and kind, gentle yet enduring and faithful with no desire to take – only to give and be a blessing. Yes, there are people with that kind of love. Break your physical / psychological / mental / emotional bonds with those who have only a selfish love – avoid them, don't think about them, don't eat with them, and don't let their thoughts / words affect you. Seek out those who have real love and make them your friends – they are easy to make friends with because their love is inclusive, not exclusive (without jealousy or selfishness). You know them as the ones you always feel comfortable being around and the ones you know you can trust.

This point is more important than it may seem on the surface. It's hard to stop smoking (or any bad habit) unless you replace the habit with something better. Your loving friendships can fill your life with a joy that will naturally tend to fill the void left by old habits, old wrong relationships, old bitternesses and hurts. Also, you have already found that you cannot bear all of life's problems alone, but with a few loving friends, the same problems that seemed so mountainous before seem to shrink down to manageable proportions. Even if they didn't change, your new perspective makes them smaller.

End of Day 3

Your body has eliminated a lot of the chemicals, toxins, and drugs (nicotine, caffeine, preservatives, etc.), and it is very sensitive. Be careful with it! This is the most critical time; be careful to control your emotions / desires. If you pig out now, you could destroy all that you've accomplished. Try to ignore the pain and focus on all the things you are thankful for. "Count your many blessings!"

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Don't worry if your skin is a bit yellowish or your circulation seems poor (cold fingers and toes). That's normal at this stage. Improve circulation by rubbing, hot water over hands, hot baths with a good scrub down, or (if you have the energy) some mild exercise.

Your eyes are a little clearer, your taste, touch, and smell are greatly improved, and your non-physical senses are enhanced. Be aware of this as you get ready for your evening meal.

Don't prepare a big meal. Keep it simple. For the first month or so, you will be avoiding all prepackaged foods so your body can continue purging the toxins, so prepare in advance and have only nutritious natural foods in the house. Eat no meat/fish/fowl the first month.

On your first meal, be aware that this is the first day of the rest of your life, the first step on a road of your own choosing, to be what you want to be inside and out, to know yourself, and to respect what you know of yourself. You have often looked in disgust at what you don't want to be (that's why you stopped smoking). But now, you don't focus on that – you focus on what you do want to be for the rest of your life.

Make the meal. I suggest clear vegetable soup. Easy on the legumes the first day. No spices and very little salt (remember, you have new taste buds). No wheat products, dairy products, or eggs at first. No added sweetening at all – you will be amazed at how much natural sweetening is in vegetables like carrots, beets, or corn. Maybe eat some lettuce/spinach salad topped with fruit or yogurt (not mayonnaise) for dessert. If you feel like it, you might want to take a couple of acidophilus pills an hour before each meal for a few days to restore the digestive flora.

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Be especially careful the first week to not introduce new toxins into your system. Give your body a chance to adjust to pure, natural foods. Though you're eating now, your body continues to eliminate a lifetime accumulation of toxins and chemicals. There is no need to eliminate them totally, but give your body a chance to get used to staying on top of things. I suggest washing all vegetables in biodegradable soap unless they're home grown.

Don't eat too much the first night – if you eat slowly, your body will tell you when it's comfortable. If you eat too fast, you will be too full before the hunger pangs have a chance to go away. Make it a habit to eat slowly, chew thoroughly, and be sensitive to your body's needs and reactions. You will learn to trust your body to tell you not only when you're full, but also when you've eaten enough of each item on the table, what it still lacks for balanced nutrition, and what it would rather you didn't eat again for a while. A meal does not have to be balanced, but a week's worth of meals should be.

Day 4 through Forever

Make a search of the house and collect all smoking materials, ashtrays, lighters, etc. (Remember, you put them away on Day 0.) Make a pile somewhere. Collect your children, neighbors, friends, anyone who will watch, and methodically (yes, right in front of everyone) destroy the whole pile. Break the ashtrays, smash the lighters, crush all the cigarettes. Make this ritual a big deal; you are breaking a bond that enslaved you in the past, and you are creating for yourself a new image. Your family and friends will remember that. It will make a big impression, and they'll thank you for it.

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Do not succumb to the temptation to sell (or give away) the materials – no matter what they're worth, it doesn't compare to the value of this ceremony. Everyone who watches will gain a new respect for you. Any smokers among them (who wished you would give them the stuff), will probably thank you for it later, too.

Make it a habit to eat three times a day for at least the first month. Regular, wholesome nourishment is important to reestablish the effective working of all your body systems on this new drug free level. Continue to avoid foods with toxins and drugs. For example, coffee, drugged meats (sodium nitrite, hormone drugs, etc.), all pig/pork products, pre-prepared foods (TV dinners, sweetened cereals), and soda pop should probably be avoided or severely restricted forever.

In addition, for the first month or two, I recommend no meat, no (or very little) bread with preservatives, limited condiments, and severely limited refined sugar (including anything made using refined sugar). Personally, I have found refined sugar to be addictive, mildly toxic, and damaging to many of the body's natural functions.

Here are some eating suggestions, especially for the first month, but good to continue forever with other things added in to increase the variety as time goes on. Keep meals simple – the traditional multi-course feast is actually hard on digestion, plus you get more nutrition out of your food if you can focus all your attention on one or two main items plus maybe fruit or a salad.

Breakfast (your most important meal). Two or three glasses of warm (hot) water when you first wake. Sip it as you have your morning devotions. It is like a cleansing shower getting your digestive system prepared for the day.

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When it's time for breakfast, try:

Granola (rolled oats, rolled barley, sunflower seeds, banana flakes, dried fruit bits, nuts, or whatever, mixed with honey and browned lightly in oven), sweetened with raisins and lots of fresh ripe raw fruit. Aim for more fruit than 'nola.

Good hot cereal (rolled oats, cream of wheat, three grain cereal, etc., sweetened with raisins, dates, and/or honey) with milk. Again, fresh fruit always helps.

Many people can't digest cow milk, especially if it's not raw. You'll know if you're not properly digesting milk if these symptoms get chronic: congestion, runny nose, sore throat, or constipation. Goat milk is easier to digest. Try alternate milks like soy, cashew, almond, or coconut milk. I often use fruit juice on my cereal instead.

Eggs and toast or muffin (learn to eat eggs lightly-cooked on low heat – better for you and more flavorful as well. If you can get fertile eggs, they're more nutritious and tastier.) Also, don't clog your digestive system with white bread. Try to get a good multi-grain bread or 100% stone-ground whole wheat with no preservatives, or somesuch. I know it's more expensive, but good bread goes further and, believe me, it's worth it.

Vitamin supplements may or may not be needed, but at the very least take 500 – 1000 mg. vitamin C with your breakfast. This helps (more than most people realize) the body tissues to cleanse and heal themselves. Take with milk, juice, or water, but don't drink too much during the meal – your digestion will work better.

Mid-morning. When breakfast has digested, try to remember at least once during the morning to drink a full glass of warm (or hot) water. If that smoking urge pops

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up, change the subject with something healthy, instead. Snacking could get to be a bad habit, but vegetable or fruit snacks or juices are certainly better than smoking.

Lunch. Choose from a wide variety of raw vegetables (carrots, celery, broccoli, cauliflower, zucchini, tomatoes, rutabagas, turnips, green peppers, etc.), raw seeds, nuts, and fruits (dried or fresh). Ensure vegetables are well washed. A small handful of nuts is nice; a good source of protein – better if unsalted or lightly salted. A dip made with vinegar, lemon juice, olive oil or salad oil, and a little garlic is good. Raw sauerkraut, raw kefir, or other raw fermented foods are excellent. Prepare enough to engage you in nibbling happily for a half hour or so while reading or talking with friends.

If you want to make sandwiches that's fine, but only use good whole grain bread. Or maybe a slice of cheese spread with sprouts, lettuce, green pepper, etc.

Cheese, cottage cheese, cream cheese, and yogurt are good sources of protein too, instead of the nuts. But don't overdose on the protein – the body needs less than you might think. Be sensitive to your body, especially if the cheese seems to be congesting you.

Mid-afternoon. Don't forget that good full glass of water. (If you are warm and your circulation is good, cool or cold water is okay by now, just not ice water. Even a little ice water can wipe out your digestive system for an hour or two.) Also, fruit or vegetable juices are excellent now. Just try to stay away from the coffee and soda pop (especially the first few weeks).

Supper. Salads are important – be creative, there are a billion things to put in them. It's possible to make the salad the whole meal. Some supper suggestions:

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Sprouts (wheat, alfalfa, barley, etc). Different lettuces and raw spinach (darker colors are better). Tomatoes, celery, radishes. Seeds (sunflower, fennel, sesame, etc.). Cottage cheese or yogurt on top. Raw broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, zucchini, green peppers, etc. Strips of cheese and/or nuts. Cooked (blanched lightly) carrots, broccoli, asparagus, etc. cooled before making salad. Cooked beans or beets, soaked in vinegar or pickle juice if you like. Mushrooms, medium. Hard boiled eggs, sliced.

For dressing use the oil / vinegar / garlic / lemon juice (see Lunch) or yogurt (plain) / garlic / dill weed dressing at first. After a few weeks, other dressings will be okay (like Uncle Dan's or other healthy package mixes).

A vegetable dish – cooked lightly in a *non-aluminum* dish and served with the cooking liquid. You don't have to drink the liquid, but it does contain 10% (to as much as 50% if you overcook the vegetables) of the nutrients, and I hate to just waste it. It's also good to make gravies/sauces with. Stick to the easy-to-digest vegetables (carrots, green beans, cauliflower, beets, etc.) for a few days, then move up to the heavies (lima, soy, or pinto beans, corn, and the starches – squash, potatoes, sweet potatoes, etc.), as your digestion is ready for them. Try to make your vegetable dish the center of attraction – maybe a cheese sauce or white sauce with mushrooms (perhaps made from a can of mushroom soup mix) or even strips of melted cheese on top, or sometimes baked into a souffle or omelet.

Bread or muffins (especially home-baked with fresh ground whole wheat) add to the complete feeling of a meal, but I recommend holding off for a few days after the fast. Sprouted grain bread (if you can get it) is healthier than baked bread.

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Try to limit drinking during the meal to less than one cup – a large volume of liquid in the stomach while eating makes digestion less complete, and you get less nutrients from your food. One-third cup or so of wine during or right after the meal is good. Sipping herb tea right after the meal is also good. Wine or hot tea helps you to relax, which improves digestion and nutrient absorption. (Note: many things such as anger, worry, fear, strife, and tense movies have the opposite effect.)

Dessert – does not have to be full of refined sugar (contrary to popular opinion). Also, doesn't have to be part of every meal, and can be nutritious. For example:

- Custard or rice pudding made with honey.
- Peanut butter and honey on celery sticks.
- Mixed fruit dish with yogurt or cottage cheese.

Don't be afraid to relax after dinner with a good hot cup of herb tea or a little wine for ten minutes or so – if you jump up and charge right into the housework, you lose some of the benefits of that good meal. Teach the kids to enjoy sipping with you – it's good for them too, especially the chatting and family time. As long as you teach them moderation, a little wine will not hurt them. There are many valuable life-lessons to be gained while eating together with your children, talking about what you are doing and why, and inviting them to talk, too.

I hope you realize that concentrating on these special foods is not merely a diversion to get your mind off the cigarette urge (though it is that, too). But more important, it is a way of cleansing and strengthening your body's immune system and internal healing mechanisms, so that your own body will help you get off and stay off tobacco (and other drugs).

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There are a lot more things I haven't covered – I'm really not trying to limit you, but to set you free to really enjoy your life and health to the fullest. Once you become aware of the things that are harmful (the addictive drugs, preservatives, and foods with the nutrition refined out), you'll be able to avoid them most of the time without it ever becoming a strict fanaticism or a heavy burden. After you've cleared your body of the nicotine, you'll be able to tolerate moderate amounts of most substances (except, of course, nicotine). The key is strict abstinence of the bad, wise moderation of the questionable, and developing a real enjoyment of the good things God made.

Don't forget to continue your periodic cleansing breaths – you can reduce the frequency when you no longer need them to control the urge to smoke, but don't ever stop them entirely. They help to control stress, aid digestion, promote healing (of the headaches / muscle pain / joint stiffness), aid clear logical thought processes, and assist all-around general good health.

One last thing (I didn't forget it. I deliberately saved it 'til last because I wanted to really impress you with it):

Exercise!

From Day 4 through forever, you need some exercise every day. Start with a few stretching exercises (especially when you first wake up) like a cat: first extend toward the ceiling, then bend to the floor; add jumping / twisting / toe touching exercises; finally, do at least a few minutes of some vigorous heart-warming stuff like jogging, skipping rope, running in place, etc. You don't have to own any exercise machines, but if you have the room, your two best investments are a bouncer (mini-trampoline) and/or

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a treadmill. They make it easier to get good, regular aerobic exercise inside during inclement weather.

This is especially important at first, because it works the nicotine out of your system much faster. It improves your blood circulation, and it's the blood that carries the impurities from the cells.

More importantly, exercise makes you hungry, so you'll feel like eating all this good nutritious food which won't do you a bit of good if you don't eat it. Try to get in at least fifteen minutes of exercise a day – maybe spread into five to ten minutes before breakfast, plus ten or more minutes before supper or before bed. Also, several times a week, increase the time to thirty minutes or so, trying to keep your heart rate above 120 bpm most of the time.

Be careful at first – start gently and build up to it so you don't hurt yourself. If you jog, get good shoes and be careful – it's kinda dangerous. And always stretch before the vigorous aerobic exercise, so you won't pull a tendon.

This regular, balanced exercise routine will turn out to be at least as important as the cleansing breaths, the warm water between meals, or the nutritious eating, and maybe as important as all of that put together.

Guarantee: If you are willing to make even a half-hearted effort to work through this with me, I guarantee I'll work with you, encourage you, give you advice, listen to your problems, help where I can, and generally provide the moral support you need to become the kind of person you really, deep down, want to be – the kind of person that God made you to be.

Only One

Abe Josephson rose early. A wave of exultation swept over him. The day had come! He was immensely proud of himself. For forty years he'd been working toward this day. Not once had anyone else discovered what he was doing. Now his preparations were complete. His eyes closed briefly as he gave thanks to his creator.

Quickly dressing and deciding to skip breakfast, he strode out into his woodsy backyard. Habit forced him to carefully scan in all directions as he mentally went over his checklist to be sure nothing had been forgotten. He felt a bit like a martyr as he reached up to the twig on the side of the laburnum tree. He had burned all his bridges behind him. From this day on, there was no turning back. He pushed up on the fake twig, and with a soft whirring sound, the ground around him swept swiftly downward.

Stepping off the elevator, Abe flipped a switch and began walking hurriedly down the corridor. His elevator returned to again become part of his backyard landscape.

Abe's heart beat faster as he unlocked and entered a massive portal and turned to face what he liked to call his office. It was a huge underground cavern, now pleasantly lighted with a soft luminescence on the ceiling and walls.

Though there were many other things in the room, at first Abe saw only one; a tall, slender, gleaming metal cylinder dominated the cavern. It was pointed at the top and reached from the rock floor to the roof of the cavern. To an outsider, it may have looked uninteresting, as it was featureless – no fins, windows, markings, nothing. But to Abe its essence radiated power and purpose. He gazed at it fondly with a laughing sparkle in his eyes.

The Reformer, he had named it; a fitting name for a beautiful ship, encapsulating its purpose.

Only One

He turned to his desk, now for the last time, and quickly make a final check on all the provisions stored in the ship. Then he methodically brought all his papers, his tools, and anything else that might have given himself away, and stowed them in the hold of the ship, leaving the room bare save for the ship and the heavy metal desk.

All was ready. Abe took one last look at the cavern he had grown to love, then closed and secured the air lock. Purposely he moved through the ship to the captain's seat in the control room. Sighing happily, he pressed a small orange button. A fine ray of pure energy spewed out, and twenty feet of solid rock above the ship disintegrated, leaving the way clear.

Abe laughed as he engaged the main drive and, with a tremendous surge of silent power, the ship was gone. Only a gaping hole in the earth and the fused remnants of his metal desk remained as evidence of its existence.

~

Dal Simmons stomped out, mad. He knew how to drive, but as usual, his father would not let him use the family spaceship unless a licensed pilot was along. This time Dal was angry enough to do something about it. "Dad never needs to know," he thought as he pressed his thumb into the lock on the door of the garage. Still, he was fighting butterflies in his stomach as he crawled into the cockpit and signaled for the airlock to close.

Soon he was off. The thrill of the limitless spaceways filled him as he scanned the remote stars toward which he was headed. If only he would never have to return! His wicked heart was giddy with the feeling of power – power nearly unlimited in the starship he was operating.

Only One

For hours, Dal roamed the galaxies and the barren wastes of space with a sense of unsurpassed freedom.

“I guess I know as much about astrogation as any of those old fogies,” Dal said to himself with pride. “But I’d better get home before Dad tries to go to work tonight and finds out his ship is missing.” Reluctantly, he turned the vessel toward home, his mind yet reveling in the wonders of the universe he had explored, never once recognizing God as the creator and sustainer of those marvels.

Suddenly his ship began veering sharply off course and a red warning light began flashing in front of him. *That’s funny. It’s never done this before*, Dal thought. The viewscreen revealed only blackness, even at the highest magnification. He tried to compensate. But the more he fought it, the more confusing and disorienting it became.

~

Dal awoke, dazed and bruised, but amazingly unharmed. He had realized, too late, that the warning light was his auto-collision-avoidance system, and in fighting it, he had crashed on the huge rogue planet it had been trying to avoid. He had not seen it because it was totally dark, far from its home star. His instruments had seen it, but he had not trusted them enough to let them do their job.

He unbuckled himself and forced his shaken body up from his seat, straining against the extreme gravity. Waves of shock rolled through him as he surveyed the crumpled remains of his once-beautiful spacecraft. His mind was stunned by the immensity of the catastrophe. The ship was totaled; it could never be made spaceworthy again. Great cracks in the hull were open to the dirt ploughed up by his crash. He stumbled and fell on his face, cursing.

Only One

Worn out by struggling against the powerful gravity, Dal lay there and collected his thoughts. A planet this large surely had some sort of an atmosphere. It would be very cold; any surface water would be ice. But he might be able to find a subterranean thermal vent or hot springs somewhere. He might be able to survive until his parents managed to trace his automatic rescue beacon and find him. How long would that take? A day? Two? No, it would take longer than that just for his dad to realize his son could be in real trouble – after cooling off from his anger at Dal for stealing his ship!

He was young, athletic, and slender, but he felt like he was three hundred pounds overweight. At least he had been wearing his space suit as his dad had insisted whenever they went exploring. It had kept him from freezing.

“Panic will never get me anywhere,” he quoted. “I’m stuck here now. I may as well go out and see if this place is habitable.” Even in his heated space suit he could feel the bitter sub-zero temperatures as he climbed through a big gash in the hull and began laboring along, fighting to keep his balance. The rogue planet was totally dark. It was good thing his suit had headlamps, as the distant stars gave him no visibility at all. He finally sat down on a large stone, panting as he came to a realization of the truth.

“It’s no good,” he sobbed as he got up and turned back toward the ship. “This godforsaken place is totally unlivable. The gravity is too strong, I have no food or water, and I don’t stand a chance against this cold. The batteries in this suit will only last twenty hours, max, and I’ll freeze in seconds without it.” His eyes clouded over with tears, and his thoughts broke into cursing, half in self-pity and half in anger at his incredibly bad luck.

Only One

Again he tripped. The fierce gravity threw him into a shallow ravine, knocking him unconscious. It was a long time before he revived and again forced himself to his feet.

Though sobered by his fall, his mind was still clouded nearly to the point of hysterics by fear and shock. All he could think was to get back to that faint gleam of metal in the distance. He could not afford another fall. He focused his headlamps on his feet, and plodded carefully along. Still he fell once more, exhausted, but by crawling on his hands and knees, he finally neared the base of the ship.

The gravity was too strong. It had won. Dal gave up and lay there on his face. For the first time in years, he thought about praying. His mother had taught him how when he was little, but he had never needed God before.

Well, he sure needed a God now! A God who could just undo the last eight hours! *That's stupid. God doesn't undo things. He just makes you pay.* Scenes from his life began to flash before him, and suddenly the direction of his life became clear. All the anger, rebellion, bitterness, hatred, cursing, the callous self-centeredness, the hurtful thoughtlessness – now it was payback time. He was getting exactly what he deserved. He began cursing again.

God loves you.

Huh? Where did that stupid thought come from?

“If there even is a God,” Dal responded angrily, “He obviously hates me and is about to annihilate me.”

But then a scene from his childhood came to mind: his mother kneeling by his bed, kissing him tenderly, and repeating, “God loves you, Dal. Always remember that. God loves you.”

“So, God, if You exist, if You love me, I'll make You a deal. Get me out'a this jam, and I'll believe in You.”

Only One

Look up.

He looked up, blinked, and stared in open-mouthed wonder. His spaceship was standing tall and straight, again pointing proudly toward the stars!

~

As his amazement wore off, Dal realized that this was not his ship. Nor was it like any other ship he'd ever seen before. But the outer door of the airlock was wide open, beckoning him to enter. Forgetting his deal with God, Dal crawled in, pulled himself to his feet, and closed the outer door, then heard the whistling of air in his headphones.

The inner door clicked ominously and opened, and he whirled to face the occupants of the ship. The terrors ahead resolved themselves into a bare room, featureless except for a small red handle on the wall. He stepped through the inner door of the airlock and pulled the lever. He thought he was ready for almost anything except for what happened: absolutely nothing. In sudden panic, he rushed back through the inner doorway and tugged with all his strength at the outer door. It wouldn't budge. He was trapped. His strength exhausted, he slid to the floor. Beads of sweat ran down his forehead. His hands shook. Then he realized the obvious. Of course the outer door wouldn't open; he had never closed the inner door.

Feeling very foolish, he pulled himself up to shut it, again spotting the red lever. *How quaint. This airlock's controls must be totally manual.* His mind had not been thinking very clearly. He gingerly stepped through the doorway once again, pushed shut the inner door and locked it, and lifted the red handle. Instantly there was a soft hum and the room began to accelerate upward.

Only One

Weakened as he was, Dal began to fall, but grabbed desperately for the red handle. The hum stopped, the room stopped, and again Dal felt foolish. The room was only an elevator to the top of the ship.

Sweating profusely, he lifted the lever again and was relieved as the elevator resumed its upward course. When it slowed and stopped, the wall to his left slid silently back, as he expected. Dal turned to greet the occupants of the ship with as much dignity as he could muster.

The control room, Dal thought as an empty cushioned chair and a few simple dials and buttons met his gaze. He was halfway to the chair when he saw the man. A bolt of fear shot through him. He turned to run, but his feet got tangled, and he fell heavily, painfully, to the deck. He cursed aloud and looked up to where the man was sitting beside his desk. He hadn't moved.

Dal's fear melted to a shudder as he realized the truth. The man was dead, frozen solid and perfectly preserved to look just as he had looked the day he had died. His icy hand was held out over the desk, resting on two books: a logbook and a red manual explaining the ship's controls.

Glad I got my heated suit, Dal thought as he painfully dragged the body into the elevator and shut the door. Picking up the books from the desk, he turned again to the control panel and sank happily into the luxurious cushions. With no thought of regret for the other man's death, he opened up the red manual and followed the simple instructions for turning on power, lighting, heat, and air. Everything worked perfectly, and Dal laughed out loud as he shut down his space suit heater and lights. Still ten hours left on his batteries. *God? He didn't need God. His own incredibly good luck had saved him.*

Only One

Continuing in the red manual, Dal soon was up to his ears in physics. The principles were simple yet elegant, making his dad's modern ship seem almost old fashioned. The manual told it all, as if to show him how to build it.

Hours later, he sighed and closed the book, amazed at the genius of this forgotten man. Then out of curiosity, he picked up the logbook and began to read. In between all the flowery words, he pieced together this basic story:

Over nine hundred years earlier, in the year 1944 while the planet Earth was in the second of its string of world wars which finally destroyed it, Abe Josephson had received a special revelation from God. With the help of an amazingly simple atomic theory, he had built this ship. He called it *The Reformer*. It used light for fuel, giving it almost infinite power. With it, Abe had planned to show the world God's power and glory, so that all humanity would become Christians through him. But his conceit was his downfall. Hoping to surprise the earth at his own glorious return, he had left no records behind him and had told no one of his going. He had never gone back. After landing on this rogue planet to make adjustments to the drive, he had made a mistake and exposed himself to lethal radiation from his ship's reactor core. He had barely been able to bring his logbook up to date before he died.

Dal read the last part with disgust, barely skimming over the parts that told of the intense emotional struggle Abe had gone through during that final hour of his life. In one paragraph, he had pleaded with God for, if not the whole world, even the salvation of just one soul. "Only one, Lord? Only one?" he had written. "But I trust You fully, O God. I believe You will answer my dying request. With You, nothing is impossible."

Only One

Dal swore and threw down the logbook, spitting out the word 'religion' as if it were a dirty word. "If he hadn't been such a genius, I'd think he was utter nuts!" Then suddenly, he remembered his own deal with God.

I did My part, now you must believe. You are the one!

Isn't it funny how easy it is to argue with a God in whom you don't believe? Dal did that now. "You didn't do anything for me, God. This ship was right there all along; all I had to do was look up. If I'd only seen this ship earlier, I never would have made that deal." Then he shook his head and picked up the red operating manual again, thinking, *I'm going crazy here, talking to myself. I've got to get out of here.*

Soon, in a surge of silent energy, *The Reformer* rose in a breath-taking arc, once again entering familiar skies.

~

"Holy cow!" Dal exclaimed as he opened the throttle and was flung back deep into the cushions. He grinned triumphantly, thinking about how lucky he was and how pleased his dad would be with the trade of ships.

He pulled the throttle open to the last notch to see what it could do. Since theoretically *The Reformer* had infinite power, it kept accelerating faster and faster, far beyond any speed that even Abe, its builder, had ever dared to attempt. At first Dal's first intention had been to head straight home, but his excitement over the new ship and its capabilities led him to plot a wide, roundabout route, clear out to the edge of the explored universe and back. *With the incredible power of this ship, he thought, I could go further than Dad and I have ever explored and still be back by supertime!*

Only One

At a thousand 'c' (the speed of light), he had reached the edge of his home galaxy. By a million 'c' new galaxies were streaming past like water, and he had nearly reached the apogee of the trajectory he had plotted toward Vega II, his home planet. Noting his speed at the halfway point on his course between the rogue planet and Vega II, he was so amazed, he almost forgot to begin deceleration.

After reversing the ship for the deceleration phase of his plotted trajectory, Dal's mind returned to the logbook. His disgust for Abe's religion was by then more than offset by his awe for the man's genius. *Maybe he was right? And maybe his God did have something to do with this ship being there at just the right place and time for me.*

But then his love for the world and all its pleasures reasserted itself, and he tried to rid himself of the notion by rationalizing and telling himself he was just lucky. "Wasn't it proved?" he proudly assured himself. He talked out loud, trying to drown out his unwanted thoughts. "Another man wouldn't have stood a chance to survive a crash in a starship, but I made it. I don't need religion."

You're wrong! Deep inside a voice seemed to say,
You're wrong! Wrong! Wrong!

He automatically rejected it, as he had learned to do to his conscience many times before. Still, the voice persisted. He tried to concentrate on the control panel, but even his heart seemed to beat the blood to his brain in time with the words: *Wrong! Wrong! Wrong! Wrong!*

It grew louder, until the steel of the ship seemed to vibrate with the sound, throwing voices back and forth across his brain like tumultuous waves of the sea. Dal continued to resist. And yet it grew louder, clouding his vision and sending chills up and down his spine.

Only One

Then, like a curtain being lifted, his mind cleared and the voice changed to a tone, to become a clanging bell – ringing as if it had been ringing for a long time without his having heard. A warning bell. Loud. Insistent.

Horrified, his head jerked up to scan the unfamiliar instruments. Though he was far from any galaxy, there on the radiotelescope viewscreen was the image of a dead star on collision course with the ship! (Automatic collision avoidance was a more recent innovation. When Abe had designed his ship, computers were pretty primitive, so it relied mostly upon manual astrogation.)

Dal grabbed for the controls, but quickly discovered that his speed was far too great to change course now – way too much momentum and inertia. Death was inevitable, and only seconds away. He dialed the radiotelescope's magnification way down to make the dead star appear far away and less menacing, and tried to think.

In an instant, his whole life again stood before him: his sins, rebellion, pride, selfishness – everything. He knew he had no hope. But then, like a clear sunny sky after a storm, the words of the logbook rang out in his mind, “Only one, Lord? Only one?”

Dal cried out, “Oh God, have mercy! Forgive me! Please, make me that one!”

I love you, Dal.

Immediately his chains fell from him – the bonds chaining him to his anger and bitterness and self-centered arrogance – and a great peace flooded his soul.

Then he was gone.

How to Love Spirit

God is Spirit. How can I love Him with my whole heart, mind, soul, and strength? (As commanded in Deuteronomy 6:4–9 and Matthew 22:37.)

How does a young bride love her new husband?

1. She loves his beauty. But I can't see God's beauty!

Yes, you can. He pours out His glorious beauty in the spectacular beauty, orderliness, variety, and balance of the universe. Your pleasure and gratefulness in enjoying His creation is received by Him as love.

2. She loves to listen to him speak. But I can't hear a spirit speak!

Yes, you can. You love His holy Word. More than that, you love to hear Him speak to your heart through it by the still, small voice of His Holy Spirit. In fact, you can hear Him speak to you anytime, Spirit to spirit, about anything that you may ask, if only you are willing to take the time to wait on Him and confirm His voice, making sure it aligns with what He has already given in His written Word.

3. She loves to spend time with him. But I can't spend time with a spirit!

Yes, you can. He promised to send His Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to live within you and guide you into all Truth. He also promised that He will never leave you nor forsake you. You love it when you become aware that He has kept His promise and that His Holy Spirit really is living inside you. You spend time with Him whenever you become aware of His presence within. Even that "I'm glad You are here with me" feeling is received by Him as love.

How to Love Spirit

4. She looks to him for council, guidance, protection.

Your greatest joy is when you do sense the leading of the Holy Spirit, you follow it, and you find that it was right – it really was Him! By your obedience, you found strength when you were weak, deliverance from your trouble, and practical guidance on how to live. You discovered with joy that He is not just a Spirit away up in heaven, but a very real comforter and helper living within you. That is what He has always wanted, and He receives that from you as love.

5. She loves his nature and character.

God's Word reveals His nature and character, and you love what you see there about Him: His gentleness, His goodness, His joyfulness, His longsuffering mercies, His kindness, His faithfulness, His everlasting love... The more you learn about Him, the more you love the way He is and strive to become like Him in all these ways. You discipline yourself to become more like Him. He receives that as love.

6. She loves his virtue.

God the Spirit is the very definition of good. All that is virtuous is found in Him. You recognize His virtue in others around you, and you instinctively love them because they are like Him, in His image. He receives that as love. On the other hand, you see those in whom the image of God is warped and twisted by sin, and you recognize the horror of the sin and hate it because it is so opposite of God. You are sorry for the poor trapped sinner and long to see him set free from sin's bondage and its painful consequences. God the Spirit also receives that as love, for He, too, hates the sin but loves the sinner and longs to set him free.

How to Love Spirit

7. She loves his wisdom.

You love the wisdom of God the Spirit. You pattern your life after it, eagerly learning more every day about living in harmony with this incredible wisdom from above. He accepts that from you as love.

8. She loves to do things for him, deeds of kindness. But how can I do anything for God the Spirit?

You do all the time. Every time you do anything in love for your brother or sister, your neighbor or friend, and every time you help a stranger out of compassion for the needy, you have done it for Jesus, who is the source of your compassion. He who sits in heaven at the right hand of God the Spirit sees, knows, and promises to reward you.

8. She entrusts her life to him, resting on his integrity.

You have taken your stand on Him as Truth with a capital T, and have entrusted not only your life, but also your eternal destiny on the Truth of His Word. You accept by faith all of His precious promises, and live your life in that blessed hope of spending eternity with Him. He accepts that as love, and He is pleased.

Thus by His Spirit within you, you are keeping the first and greatest commandment, to love Him with all your heart and mind and soul and strength, as well as the second commandment, to love those around you as you love yourself. In the process, you discover that you have far more than just a knowledge about the infinite, eternal, almighty God. Now you have a love relationship with the God of infinite love who dwells within you and desires this relationship as much as you – perhaps even more!

Turning Fifty, Sadly

I was born in 1947. Turning fifty has given me cause to reflect on all that I've known and done, been and seen. I consider myself an American patriot, but sadly, that term has come under suspicion lately by the liberal press as someone advocating overthrow of our government by force, so I'd best not use it. I also consider myself a good Christian, but that term seems to have been somehow twisted to mean an ignorant, intolerant bigot who hates 'gays' and get's upset when women demand the 'right to choose' to kill their babies, so I guess I can't use that term either. In fact, I use to think of myself as a pretty gay and happy fellow, but words change – now I'm castigated as 'straight', as if I am limited, narrow minded, and missing something because I have always been (and intend always to be) faithful to my beloved wife of twenty-eight years.

I was raised to love my country, and I love her still: America the beautiful! From sea to shining sea, wherever I see Old Glory wave, a proud tear still comes to my eye. Then a little anger rises against those who defend the 'rights' of those so-called Americans who in the name of free speech burn or trample on our flag, a symbol of the freedom they so sorely abuse. Maybe I am a bit intolerant. I still believe that this is America, land of the free and home of the brave, and you ought to love it or leave it. Free speech? I guess I should be careful what I say here. When I was growing up, there was no question that those who spoke out most boldly against the evils in our land did so out of their fervent love of God and country and the freedoms bought by the blood of our forefathers. But nowadays, I think we're a dying breed. It seems you can't speak out against anything wicked anymore without that 'intolerant bigot' label being vigorously applied.

Turning Fifty, Sadly

And God – did I say God? I guess that’s another no-no in this land-turned-upside-down. Strange how when I was growing up I remember being so proud of living in a land where freedom of religion was so intricately woven into the fabric of our society and was so carefully guarded by every law, every public institution! It was unthinkable that in only a short thirty years, God would be entirely thrown out of the public arena, the Ten Commandments would be taken off the courthouse walls, the Bible and prayer and the story of the creation would be prohibited in public schools, public debate would heap scorn upon anyone ‘unscientific’ enough to believe that the miracle of human life didn’t evolve from pond scum, and our precious constitutionally defended freedom of religion would be rewritten by activist judges to give us a new-found right to freedom *from* religion in the public arena.

Yes, I’m sad. Sad that the “In God We Trust” on our coin has become a hypocrisy, and the “One nation under God, indivisible, with freedom and justice for all” has turned its collective back on the God who taught us about freedom and justice. This fifty years, sadly, the nation so blessed by God, the nation that defeated the mightiest empire on earth to become the first world superpower, the richest and freest nation in the history of mankind, the nation that had never lost a war, lost at least two wars in my lifetime: Korea and Vietnam. We lost a lot of our best and bravest to the communists and accomplished nothing for the North Koreans or the Vietnamese. We also lost the war on poverty, the war on unemployment, the war on drugs, the war at our nation’s borders, the war against poor health and expensive health care, and it seems, the wars for truth, justice, and basic morality.

Turning Fifty, Sadly

I fought in Vietnam. I saw a lot of brave men (yes, men; we didn't put women on the battlefield back then) who fought and died there to preserve the Far East (and the free world) from the evils and slavery of communism. I was there right after the communist Tet Offensive of '68 was decisively stopped, when the saturation bombing of Hanoi and the Ho Chi Minh Trail had brought Viet Cong supply lines to a virtual standstill. I cheered and wept tears of joy as the communists and their sympathizers ran out of ammo and food and began surrendering in droves, knowing that at least we would feed them and care for their wounded. We knew, yes I said knew, that it was only a matter of weeks before the war was over. Communism would have lost, and the Far East would be liberated for another generation of freedom-loving Vietnamese people.

The colonel in charge of communications security for South Vietnam assigned me to prepare and present his reports to the other colonels and generals of every phase of the war. With my top secret clearance, I heard their presentations, too. Your news reporters deliberately lied about the war, always putting the politically correct spin on events, but I was there; I knew. When our foolish politicians (driven by our traitorous, lying, anti-American, socialist press) stopped our bombing of Hanoi and the Ho Chi Minh Trail and tied our soldier's hands behind their backs, allegedly for 'peace with honor' at the conference tables, I immediately realized that the war was lost.

I knew that as soon as we let up the pressure, the Viet Kong would be resupplied by the USSR and resume the war more vigorously than ever. I saw to my horror that liberal socialists in America didn't want us to win. They wanted us to get out and let our enemy take over.

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I fell on my bunk and wept bitterly, thinking of all the brave men who had died for freedom, now to be casually thrown away by those who would rather play war games and politics and who care not a whit for truth and freedom and the Vietnamese who had fought by our sides.

So we left Vietnam, with a promise to train the South Vietnamese and give them the means to defend their own country. But that, too, was a lie. We betrayed them. They were being slaughtered before we even finished leaving.

I came back home to a different country. Or maybe my eyes were just newly opened. I had always trusted and honored our president, Congress, military leaders, even the press. As Americans, why would they, how could they, so blatantly lie to their own? During the Watergate coverup, at least President Nixon had the moral courage to admit he had lied, repent of the coverup and resign his presidency. Some people even went to prison. But now it seems that lying and coverup are expected of our elected officials as long as the economy is up. They learned from President Clinton, who can commit whatever deception, moral perversion, or treason he wants and the Democrats will rush to his defense, or if someone doesn't, let him take warning from Ron Brown or Vince Foster.

Strange how that lawless philosophy has now filtered down to the rest of us. America used to be a nation under law. Remember? We older codgers felt pretty comfortable knowing and respecting the law of the land. Maybe not college students, but most of us adults preferred living as law-abiding citizens in a land of justice and freedom, to living as rogues in a land of anarchy and tyranny. Back then, laws were pretty fair, too, as they applied equally to the rich, the poor, even the politicians who made them.

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That was then. Now, law is whatever whim the courts feel like twisting it, depending on their personal ideology and the wealth of the defendant, even if it turns the US Constitution on its ear. Equality under the law is gone, as politicians exempt themselves from the laws they make for us peons. Those in power act like tin potentates, from the US Congress to the petty bureaucrat in town hall. This new ruling class churns out thousands of new laws a day, such that no one, not even lawyers, have any idea how many laws they are breaking this very second. How convenient for the Establishment. Whenever someone or some group is politically incorrect, such as at the Branch Davidians at Waco or Randy Weaver at Ruby Ridge, they can easily find a few broken laws to justify the massacre.

I used to view a policeman with a sense of pride and security, knowing that he was on my side if I ever needed help or protection. Anymore I'm not so sure. I've heard too many stories of unwarranted break-ins, confiscations, and police abuse against honest citizens, all justified or covered up by the powers that be under the guise that they were drug dealers with a few marijuana plants someone had planted in their back woods, or had more money than they should have had and some of it had traces of cocaine on it (30% of our paper money does, you know), or they had harmed an eagle or a protected rat or snail, or cut a tree or filled in a swampy area in their backyard, or owned guns (or the wrong kind of guns), or haven't paid all the IRS claims they owe in taxes, or refused to rent their basement to a couple of homosexuals, or spanked their kids, or tried to teach them at home because they learned that government schools were indoctrinating their little ones with politically correct propaganda.

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Of course, when I was young we didn't have to fear. We knew that we were considered innocent unless proven guilty, that the burden of proof would be heavy on anyone trying to falsely accuse us, and that a jury of our peers would be ready to stand impartially on our side if anyone, government official or not, tried to pervert justice. Justice back then was real, tangible, and strong. The American system of justice was revered all over the world, American integrity was proverbial, and American courts were the model of the free world. Americans were honored and taken at their word as a result. I have lived in countries where corruption and bribery were a way of life but where I as an American was honored, respected, and trusted. As I looked at the national tragedy that their corruption had caused, I took pride in knowing: not in America, not in our government, not among our elected and respected leaders, not among my bosses at work. If it existed at all, it would soon be discovered and appropriately punished.

But things have somehow changed. Now Americans are distrusted and despised all over the world, and our leaders are laughed at and scorned. Now an American's word is worthless, and we've become a nation of legal weasels, inundated by contractual fine print and lawsuits. Now American citizens seem always to be guilty unless we can prove ourselves innocent, and the cost is very high. Not just the cost to those trying to defend themselves against unjust seizures, but the cost to all of us in privacy, in constant surveillance, in tax forms we must fill out and permits we must get. It's a cost in fear – fear that we didn't fill it out right, or that we misread the fine print, or that we didn't know about some new law, or that we threw out the wrong records, or any of a thousand other fears.

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Sad that we should have to fear our own government when “We the People” wrote our Constitution with the specific intent to bind and limit our government to always and only serve the people. After all, a government truly “of the people, by the people, and for the people” should rightly fear the people, not the other way around. But we have been brainwashed, indoctrinated into believing that the federal government is our master and we are their slaves, bound by ‘the law of the land’ (which turns the Constitution upside down). We used to be the masters. Now our masters are an ultra-rich ruling class, made of professional politicians elected by unions and wealthy bankers through tightly controlled news organizations rather than through any informed vote of the people.

Speaking of indoctrination, my America, the land I love, used to have the best educational system in the world. Back in the '60s when I went to high school and college, I expected to work hard for my grades. I expected to be (and was) stretched to my limits time after time as my limits expanded. The result was, when I graduated, I knew how to read and write and was well grounded in English grammar, spelling, and such basics as library research and report or speech writing; I knew math (algebra, geometry, trig, statistics, and calculus); I had a broad education in the sciences (physics, chemistry, electrical and electronics, computers, programming, thermodynamics, and biology); I had read most of the classic American and English literature and had training in art, music, and poetry; I was trained in independent thinking, logic, and problem solving; and I was well-acquainted with American, world, ancient, and modern history – among many other fun things I did in school.

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Such a well-rounded education is nearly impossible today. The modern teacher must waste most of his effort trying to keep order in the classroom, trying desperately to convince everyone that they evolved from monkeys (rather than the more obvious and easily proved alternate: that they are devolving into monkeys), and trying to frighten his or her students into a reactionary fear of the latest environo-crisis, politico-crisis, or socio-crisis.

I know, there was some of that in the '60s too, except back then it was global cooling and the coming ice age instead of global warming and holes in the ozone layer. The political pseudo-scientists are always changing but always the same. Nobody seems to remember the stupid things they were pushing last or to question the new stupid things they are pushing now. But back then, too many teachers were focused on educating to take much time out for ridiculous theories. Sad, isn't it, that such a fine educational system could have been demolished in one generation by those who feel it is more important to enslave our youths' thinking to the current politically correct model than to teach them to think for themselves.

When I went to college, nothing was more jealously guarded on the campus than free speech and free thought as long as it was reasonably clean and not libelous. Now days you can say any filthy, immoral, violent, hate-filled, perverse thing you want (as long as your target is white, male, and straight), except don't dare mention God or the Bible or the God-given standards of right and wrong or any of a hundred other politically incorrect taboos or they'll crucify you. Even our Supreme Court now seems to think our God-given unalienable freedoms can be taken away by the almighty state, which has become our god.

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Several godly, twenty year plus tenured professors at respected colleges recently lost their jobs when they dared question politically correct ideologies of a women's right to kill her unborn baby, a black's right to be admitted to any job or educational post regardless of his qualification, an illegal alien's right to benefits from our welfare system, the fed's right to confiscate a citizen's land to 'save the ecology', or the school's right to teach the unproven and improvable theory of evolution as if it were scientific fact. Most of our older public schools were started to teach America's youth to read the Bible or to become ministers. What happened? Does the Supreme Court throwing God, the Bible, and prayer out of public schools correlate with the fact that so many high school graduates now need remedial courses in reading, writing, and math?

Back when I went to grade school, the major discipline problems were chewing gum and parking it under the desktop, pulling the little girls' pigtails, passing notes in class, recess scuffles, and talking out of turn. Now the major problems are rape, murder, armed gangs, and teen suicides. Why? Can you expect a teenager to retain any self-esteem after he learns in class that they evolved from and will soon return to pond scum, have no purpose in life and no hope after death, and have no higher authority or better example to follow than a president who gets elected with illegal foreign contributions, rewards those nations by building up their military strength while weakening ours, cheats on his wife, blatantly lies to the public, takes bribes and crafts legislation to benefit the lobbyists who bribe him, writes his own laws and signs executive orders as if he were a dictator, and uses the power of his office to eliminate his political opposition?

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We used to call political leaders our ‘public servants’. Remember? We understood the term ‘statesman’, and we knew the difference between a statesman and a politician. George Washington was a statesman. He served; he gave his life, his fortune, and his sacred honor for his country, as he pledged in the Declaration of Independence. He did it for peanuts at great personal sacrifice. Modern ‘history’ books denigrate him, but the facts remain for any willing to look in books written before today’s politically correct revision of history. In contrast to statesmen like George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and the Adams family (John, John Quincy, and Samuel), our modern politicians use their office to make themselves rich. They put much of their efforts toward the causes of contributors to their election campaign with little regard for what is good for the nation unless it serves their reelection image. And no amount of sleaze can tarnish that image because their lap-dogs in the press cover for them. How far we’ve come.

Yes, how far we’ve come. The classic Virginia Slims cigarette ad, “You’ve come a long way, baby!” is certainly true. But in which direction? I held open a door for a female coworker one day on the way in to work, but she turned up her nose at me and went in the adjoining door. I realized to my horror that the modern American woman doesn’t want to be treated like a lady. She wants to be treated like a man (except, the men I hold doors open for just say thanks). She no longer wants to be cherished, nurtured, protected, provided for, respected, and admired for the beauty of her character. (Though for some reason she still loves to be lusted after by the dirty old men in the office – that’s the way I interpret those tight fitting, short, sensual things they wear nowadays.)

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This I cannot understand. Are modern American women really so dense that they don't know when they have it well off? It doesn't take a rocket scientist to realize that women are different from men, that some hard and dirty jobs really are a man's work, and that a woman loses more than she gains by competing with the men. I know, women should have the freedom of choice to work, and they certainly ought to make wages commensurate with their strengths and abilities. But for a mother to actually want to dump her children, her own flesh and blood, off at a day-maybe-care and enter the constant stress and grind of the workplace... I don't understand.

The crowning blow came when I heard that some 'ladies' were trying to make it through boot camp and get into the military. Now, I went through boot camp in the '60s, and I know that no lady could ever make it through; most of the men in my company nearly didn't make it. But all that did came out tough as nails, proud of themselves, their new strengths and abilities, and the opportunity they had earned to fight for their country's freedom. I could run all day in combat boots carrying a forty pound pack and a heavy old M1 rifle and still have the energy to sing and shout and lift up my brother when he slipped and fell. Yeah, but that was then; this is now.

Nowadays they have gender integrated boot camp and a zillion restrictions on what a drill sergeant can and can't do and say. I think we're now down to no more than fifteen minutes of continuous running, no heavier than twenty pound packs, no cussing or yelling at the laggards, and God help us if we ever have to fight a real war.

Maybe we won't ever again have to fight a real war. We just love everybody and talk through our differences

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as if diplomacy can solve everything. But back when I grew up we had real national enemies: communism (or its little brother, atheistic socialism) had enslaved half the world to its oppressive totalitarian control. President Reagan correctly recognized it as “the evil empire.” We hated it, isolated ourselves from it, built up our military defenses, and stood firm for freedom and democracy while it came crashing down under its own weight.

Yes, the cold war was a real war, and we won it. Cheers to President Reagan, the truest American patriot in my lifetime. So now we don’t have any national enemies. Every government in the world is honest, trustworthy, and working toward democracy and freedom. *Ha*. And our politicians are falling all over themselves to provide financial aid, military aid, high technology aid – every conceivable kind of aid to the very nations that used to be our enemies on the grounds that now all of a sudden we can trust them. *Ha Ha*. Maybe I’m just an old cynic, but I don’t trust them. Oh, and concurrently with aiding and abetting our erstwhile enemies, our government is busy defunding, disabling, disbanding, and demoralizing our own military, opening up our borders to free trade with these godless countries, prohibiting any kind of rational missile defense and closing down our military bases all over the world, and justifying all this on the basis that the new world government and world standing army under the United Nations will take care of us. *Ha, Ha, Ha*.

Mmmm. Now that I think about it, the UN probably will take care of us, and we probably won’t ever have to fight another war because we will be totally disarmed and so enslaved that we won’t even be able to lift a finger to blow our nose without official government permission.

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I still remember (and believe) the old adage that power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. An all powerful New World Order under the already corrupt United Nations literally scares the hell out of me. Our forefathers weren't so stupid when they founded this land on the Constitution with its careful division of powers and checks and balances, and when they reserved all powers to the states that were not specifically enumerated by the Constitution to the federal government.

It's a war of worldviews. If you really hold to the worldview that we are just more-evolved monkeys, then it's simply survival of the fittest, and the Golden Rule becomes he who has the gold, rules. It's all a power play, and those with the power have the right to control the rest of us. There is no such thing as absolute right or wrong; whatever the rich or powerful say and do is right, and the rest of us are scumbags. Under that worldview, the United Nations really ought to take over. They need to confiscate all guns, knives, and weapons of every kind; take the wealth from us rich Americans and give it (at least the small part they don't keep for themselves) to poor third-world nations to squander within their corrupt governments; prohibit private ownership of land and nationalize all the means of production and commerce; control every transaction, every movement, every thought to conform to its politically correct ideology; and install monitoring systems in every home and tracking devices in every human body to ensure that their control is never challenged. Or did you not know that was their actual goal? You didn't actually believe their media drivel, did you? If you did, then you must be a less-evolved monkey, and you deserve to be enslaved.

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I don't happen to hold to that worldview. I'm still old-fashioned enough to believe in the God who created us and who gave us an owner's manual to tell us how we ought to live. I believe that in this owner's manual, He stated certain non-arbitrary, non-disputable rules, which both individuals and nations either keep and live by, or break and suffer under. Among these rules is:

The sanctity of human life: You don't murder a human being (even one still in the womb), or if you do, the state has the duty and responsibility to take your life in return. (Please note that while individual revenge is not permitted under God's law, using deadly force to protect one's family or property from criminal abuse is.)

The sanctity of marriage and the sexual relationship: sex is for a husband and wife within the bond of marriage. Abuse of this ideal is always shameful and harmful.

The sanctity of one's word: you don't tell a lie and still retain your honor and respect within the community. Trust is earned. A liar should never hold any public office.

The sanctity of personal property: everyone must be free to enjoy the fruit of his own labors and not have it confiscated (stolen), whether by bandits or bureaucrats. Further, a thief doesn't rot uselessly in jail; he works hard and repays three to five times what he stole.

The sanctity of one's personal relationship with God: freedom of conscience to believe (or not believe) in one's heart and act on those beliefs. (Only if your actions do not infringe on another person's life, liberty, or property. This does not negate the first four!) If you live under a false conception of God and His laws, He won't condemn you as long as you keep His rules as you do understand them. Freedom of conscience is very important to God.

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But remember that God considers an unborn child, a rich or poor person, an elderly or disabled person, and a person of color as a person no less than you and equal under His law. This gives you freedom to try to convince others of your faith, however faulty it may be, but never the freedom to threaten, berate, or coerce people to your point of view. That would infringe on their freedom.

There are others, but you get the idea. Yes, this worldview was also held by our forefathers, who maintained “these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness – That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these Ends, it is the Right [duty?] of the People to alter or abolish it, and to institute new Government...” (For those educated in government schools, that is a quote from the Declaration of Independence, unanimously endorsed by the original thirteen colonies in Congress on July 4, 1776, resulting in the birth of our nation.)

This old-fashioned worldview has a Golden Rule too. It is found in the book of Matthew in the Bible, where no less than Jesus Himself said to “do unto others as you would like them to do to you.” It is the most profound statement ever made. It is woven into the fabric of the universe. Any regime throughout history that violates this Golden Rule and abuses its people, eventually destroys itself by its own decadence and corruption. And any people-group, nation, or culture that really lives by it is bound to be happy, prosperous, and secure.

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America, at least the America I know and love, was built and made great by men and women who, for the most part, held to this old-fashioned worldview. It is woven into our Constitution, our laws, our traditions, our songs, our folklore, and our history from the beginning. You and I still receive the blessings of life, liberty, and property as a direct result of this. So, why am I sad as my life turns the page on fifty? Because you youngsters look only at what you have and are glad, but I look at all you've lost, all you could have had, all that was your heritage, paid for by the blood of your forefathers, and all that you unwittingly squandered by your naïve trust in the lies of your teachers, politicians, news reporters, and others with the evolutionary survival-of-the-fittest worldview. I weep for the pitifully few freedoms that still remain, rapidly dwindling to nothing but suffering and slavery.

Have you ever read *The Communist Manifesto*? It is actually espoused by many of our American politicians and educators today, though they probably won't admit it. It teaches that citizens must give up their God-given rights for the sake of the common good, and the only rights you have left are those granted by the government – if you are 'good'. It promises a utopian peace and evenly distributed wealth. But it always ends up in a corrupt police state ruled by a few filthy rich tyrants while the vast majority are impoverished, deliberately weakened so they need to struggle for survival and have no strength to rebel.

The ten core planks of *The Communist Manifesto* are:

1. **Abolition of private property.** You think you own your land? You don't own any logging, mining, oil, or water rights, and just try missing your property taxes for a few years to learn who really owns it.

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2. **A progressive income tax.** That means instead of the fair system in which everyone pays a flat percentage, we have a tax based on envy of the rich in which successful people pay higher percentages, giving a perverse incentive that encourages laziness and discourages success. The Revolutionary War was sparked by a three cent tax on tea. Remember, “No taxation without representation!” But even a middle class family now pays over 50% of their income on taxes. Much of that goes for causes that you do not support, or would not if you knew about them, but over which you have no control.

3. **Abolition of rights of inheritance.** Inheritance taxes and probate fees in America can be as high as 90% for those who have worked hard and been frugal.

4. **Confiscation of the property of emigrants and rebels.** Federal confiscation is now at an all time high, both from those accused of drug or racketeering connections and those accused of attempting to leave the country with too much money. The accused is assumed to be guilty unless he can prove himself innocent. He may have his records and means of livelihood confiscated to use as evidence against him. He is not permitted a jury trial, and may be impoverished to the extent that he is unable to even hire a lawyer. In some cases, agents just got the wrong house or planted the evidence themselves. This is often the case when they want to make an example out of someone who is politically incorrect, such as our friend Dr. Jonathan Wright. He was raided by the FBI because he dared to help his patients with nutritional advice rather than the medically approved drug / radiation / surgery approach. Remember, they have so many conflicting laws now they can always find one that you’ve inadvertently broken.

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5. **A central bank.** Ever hear of the Federal Reserve? It is privately owned, not federal. But it has been given total power over our US Currency and (so far) total immunity from independent audit, so that its manipulations of our economy for its own benefit might not be exposed.

6. **Government control over means of communication and transportation.** Yes, I know our leaders say they're deregulating in these areas, but you have no idea of how much they still control. The news media, especially, is about 80% controlled by the liberal socialist elite and is the primary means they use to manipulate our elections.

7. **Government ownership of factories and agriculture.** American business is supposedly free because it is based on capitalism. But government regulations are so onerous, especially on small businesses, that it is almost impossible to start a business anymore, at least not one that can make a profit. Further, our government now picks the winners and losers in business by how they craft the laws to benefit their favorite lobbyists and special interests.

8. **Government control of labor.** This is done through the unions, who take money from all workers by force of law and use it to bribe the legislators to pass laws in their favor. This long-running scam has now been exposed, and conservative states are passing 'right to work' legislation to break the power of these crooked unions.

9. **Corporate farms with regional planning.** A billion regulations strangle small family farms. Only big farms can afford to hire the legal help they need to keep up. The government uses subsidies and fines to maintain control over the big farms. Any farm that won't go along with the program – well, it's pretty easy to find an endangered rat, toad, salamander, or owl on their farm and shut 'em down.

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10. **Government control of education.** The brainwashing of our children into liberal progressives and God-hating socialists and the resulting abject failure of the public ‘educational’ system would be laughable if it weren’t so tragic. Even the liberals admit to some problems, but their solutions involve doubling down on the very things that caused the problems: zero tolerance for God and His laws, shutting down any debate about conservative issues, and opposing competition by the charter school movement. Just throw more money at ‘em and they’ll get better. *Ha.*

Having seen communism at its best, enslaving and destroying entire continents, I cannot believe that our leaders are so stupid as to want it here – unless they are traitors deliberately wanting to enslave or destroy us. But are we not the worse fools if we so easily let them?

Yes, I love my God and my country. But I fervently hate the trend in our government to turn away from being our servant to becoming our wicked and fearful master. Frankly, I don’t even see that hatred as unchristian. I believe that to love God is to hate evil, and to love one’s fellow man is to hate those things that are destroying him. I side with Thomas Jefferson, who had a seal inscribed, “Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God,” and with Abraham Lincoln, who insisted, “The people are the masters of both Congress and courts, not to overthrow the Constitution, but to overthrow the men who pervert it!”

There, I said it. And I’m glad. I’m old enough to still believe in our First Amendment right of free speech. And I will sign my name, but sadly, knowing that by doing so I may soon be taking my place with those who have given their lives trying to blow the whistle on our government run amuck.

Paul Lindberg – July 1997

A Father's Counsel to His Children on Father's Day

Thank you for your expressions of love to me on Father's Day. Though you are all adults now, you will always be my children. I can no longer tell you what to do like I did when you were little, but I can still council you. I appreciate the way you honor me by at least listening to my council. I said a lot of things today, but you may have forgotten some of them, and I now remember other things that I meant to say but forgot, so I'm writing them down for us all. Here is a written version of my little speech to you on Father's Day:

Always remember our ultimate purpose in life. It is found in Genesis 1:26–28. We were created first to express God's image, His nature and character, and second to be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, subdue it, and rule over it. The New Testament repeats the theme in many places, in which we are called to be holy as He is holy, to be imitators of God, to have the mind of Christ, to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, so that we may receive our inheritance in Him, and to rule with Him as kings and priests over all creation.

God is Trinity; so – in His image – are we, and we will do well to ensure that each of the three aspects of our being is properly nourished, exercised, and trained.

Feed your physical body with only the best foods and drinks. Don't neglect or abuse it. It is God's temple, and one day you will be called to account for how you have treated it.

Our bodies were created with the ability to balance accounts on a divine 'buy now, pay later' plan. Good eating habits are best, keeping party foods rare, but if you eat only party foods your body will eventually break down and demand nothing but health foods. It is best to have

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regular sleep habits as well as a regular day of rest and regular times of relaxation, but if you do not, your body will eventually break down and enforce an extended time of rest. It is best to stretch out and exercise regularly, but if you do not, the day will eventually come when even vast amounts of stretching and exercise will not recover the strength and flexibility you once had.

Take a little time each day to develop those special talents that God has given you; as with muscles, what you do not use, you eventually lose. Your young bodies can take a huge amount of stress, but though cyclic stress may strengthen you, continuous stress of any kind is harmful. I believe that cancer is a stress disease, and that any continuous stress load – junk foods, anger, bitterness, anxiousness, or whatever – will eventually cause your body to break down and give in to the constant battle against the cancer cells that we all carry.

Your body's sexual passions are a gift from God that will bring joy and lifelong blessings when used in strict accordance with the divine plan of marriage and family; abuse them outside of this plan and they will bring a lifetime of pain and sorrow upon you and your loved ones.

Don't forget your physical surroundings; periodically walk through all areas of your jurisdiction and note things needing upkeep. Then try to spend at least five minutes a day picking up, cleaning up, repairing, putting away, or planning for the bigger jobs such as rebuilding the engine or repainting or re-roofing the house. Everyone wants to live in a clean, sturdy house with a beautiful yard, but cleanliness and beauty don't just happen, they result from daily diligence. Now that you are adults, you can no longer expect your parents to clean up after you!

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The financial realm is another that needs regular upkeep: don't spend what you don't have, don't buy on impulse, keep your bank accounts balanced, try to put a little away in savings each paycheck for emergencies or big purchases, don't waste your time and resources on cheap junk, and do your best to plan for your future needs, particularly in light of starting your own family. Remember to use things and love people, not the other way around. Things, even nice things, quickly become a burden if you have too many or have too great a focus on them. In a real sense, you don't really own things – God does. But don't let them own you, either! Everything requires some upkeep; if you want to minimize the time spent on upkeep, then keep your life simple with just a few, good quality things according to your own carefully thought-out needs and desires. Just because it is available (or on sale) doesn't mean you have to have one. (Believe me, I preach that to myself as well!)

As a father, it gives me great joy to see all my children avoiding the stupid things in life, the things that are so obviously self-destructive, such as smoking, drugs, liquor, pornography, gambling, and the like. Thank you! I am proud of you all for that. A good motto is to just abstain from evil and use moderation in the good. Evil is always harmful. But anything in excess, even very good things, can also become harmful.

Your body is your most important earthly possession. Care faithfully for it, and it will care for you. You love your spouse and children best by taking care of your own health first, for if you become sick or injured, you may no longer be able to take care of those you love – they may have to start taking care of you!

A Father's Council to His Children on Father's Day

Feeding the soul is just as important as feeding the body. Your soul is your connection between your body and your spirit. It is intended to rule over your body so that the physical passions never get out of control. Take a little time each day to find and appreciate some beauty in life, to express some joy and gratefulness, to show someone that you love them, and to build relationship bridges with those around you.

Be on your guard against those things that could come in to poison your soul: bitterness, contention, grumpiness, anger, a critical attitude, discouragement, arrogance, and the like; they would hurt you far more than any whom you may be tempted to lash out against.

Be frank with yourself about weaknesses and failures; be humble enough to ask forgiveness and gracious enough to forgive others whose weakness may have hurt you. But always strive to improve yourself; learn from your (and others') mistakes; let divine forgiveness not only give you peace from the past, but also strength and grace to do better in the future.

Don't forget who you are: in training to be kings and priests, ruling over all creation. Don't spend all your free time on TV or videos. Try to spend five minutes a day reading something fun, five minutes reading something worthwhile (even educational), five minutes catching up on the day's news, and five minutes composing something original (a thank you note, a love note, a diary, a letter to a friend or to the editor or your congressman, or even a book for your family and descendants to appreciate who you are). Twenty minutes is not a lot to invest in your continuing education, and it can be done in spare minutes that otherwise may be wasted.

A Father's Council to His Children on Father's Day

Get in a habit of carefulness. Double check to make sure that each job is finished well, including the clean up, with all your heart as unto the Lord, so that at the end of each day you have no regrets. If it's worth doing at all, it's worth doing well.

Remember, a vulgar, ignorant, self-consumed fool might be tolerated but is rarely appreciated, while a kind, intelligent, well-read, knowledgeable, articulate, and self-disciplined person is admired for his wisdom and is fun to have around. Love wisdom! Many who have paid dearly for it are willing to give it to you for free. Take it! Use it! Your good name depends on it!

Finally, don't forget to **feed your spirit**. It is the least understood but most significant part of your 'trinity'. Your spirit was always intended to be one with the divine Spirit, so that your entire being is led by the Holy.

A starving spirit can make everything else in life seem wasted and unfulfilling. If you lose your connection back to the Holy, the Divine, then all of life quickly becomes meaningless, futile, "vanity and striving after the wind." (Eccl. 1:14) Life is too short, and if your goal ever becomes "get all you can out of life while the gettin's good," you'll find that it's all over way too fast, and the consequences of a self-consumed life are more than anyone can bear.

But eternity is a lot longer. You were made to become like God Himself and to rule with Him over His creation for at least a thousand years. He loves you and has invited you to be part of the divine family. However, being a gentleman, God will not force you nor take over any area of your life that you do not willingly surrender. You must seek after Him. You must ask for His wisdom, His guidance, and His highest and best plan for your life.

A Father's Council to His Children on Father's Day

Try to spend at least five minutes a day reading His Holy Word, with the prayer that He will interpret it and speak through it to your heart. As you read, meditate on it, listening for His still, small voice and even writing down what He tells you. One Word from God to your heart can change your whole life! Read in an attitude of worship, basking in the greatness of His infinite love and reflecting back to Him your gratefulness. After tuning in to your heavenly Father's heart, you are better able to specifically verbalize to Him your needs, hopes, dreams, and prayers for your family and loved ones.

Remember that the Kingdom of God is relationships. First, your love relationship with your heavenly Father, and second, your love relationships with all He has placed around you: family, friends, neighbors, and church family.

Try to spend at least an hour or two each week in regular fellowship with the saints, those others who, like you, have been adopted into the divine family. Someday, I assure you, you will find that these times of relationship with your divine lover and His family will turn out to be the best spent times of your entire earthly existence.

Thank you for listening. Each of you is different, so I don't expect you to take all of these things the same way. But I believe that they are general enough that you all can take them, apply them to your own lives however they best fit, and benefit from them. My greatest desire is your happiness, fulfillment, prosperity, and blessing, and I have just told you how to achieve all those in your life.

Good luck doesn't just happen; it is carefully crafted by those who diligently seek after wisdom and guard their good name with integrity.

The End of the Christmas Story

Once upon a time, almighty God came to earth
As the baby Jesus, born to a virgin named Mary,
In Bethlehem of Judea, in the highlands of Israel.
He left the splendor and majesty of his heavenly throne
To become a helpless infant, born in a sheepfold,
Where He slept in the feeding crib.
The angels announced His coming to some shepherds
Out in the fields watching their sheep that night.
They came to the stable, saw Him,
Believed that He was God's Son, and worshiped.
Wise men were led from the east by His natal star;
They believed that He was the prophesied Messiah.
They worshiped Him too, and gave Him rich gifts.

But not everyone in Judea believed that He was God's Son.
Herod the king panicked and tried to kill Him.
An angel warned His stepfather, Joseph,
So Joseph and Mary fled with Him to Egypt.
After Herod's death, they brought Him back to Israel
Where they settled in a little town called Nazareth
In Galilee. Thus He was called a Galilean.
That is the Christmas Story – the part that's usually told.
But that is not the end of the Christmas story!

Jesus, the helpless, tiny baby, became Jesus the Man,
Learning wisdom in His stepfather's carpenter shop
In perfect obedience to His parents for thirty years.
Then He spent three years as an itinerant preacher,
Spreading the good news of the Kingdom of God
All across the cities and towns of Israel.

The End of the Christmas Story

Jesus never sinned, though He was often sorely tempted.
Instead, He always looked to His heavenly Father
And did everything His Father told Him was right.
Still, this perfect Man, God's own Son sent from heaven,
Was accused of blasphemy after admitting who He is.
He was condemned, tortured, and slain
As a sacrifice for sins He did not commit,
So that in Jesus' name, God can grant just pardon
To all those of us who have sinned
If we believe in Him and accept His sacrifice in our place.
But still, that is not the end of the Christmas story!

You see, Jesus won the victory over death and rose again.
After greeting and blessing His friends and loved ones,
He returned to His rightful place in heaven
At the throne of almighty God.
There, He ever lives to intercede for us,
Sympathizing with us in our weakness
And helping us through; for He understands.
He has been here before.
But still, that is not the end of the Christmas story!

One day very soon, Jesus will come to earth again,
Not as a baby, nor as a mere man,
But as the almighty King of the universe,
King of Kings and Lord of Lords.
He is coming in great power and glory
With awesome signs in the heavens,
Terrible destructions in the earth,
And unbelievable terror among men.

The End of the Christmas Story

For Jesus shall gather together all His enemies,
Including Satan their chief, known as the adversary,
Together with all who hate God, reject His love,
And despise His wisdom, His ways, His laws.
Jesus shall throw them into the lake that burns with fire
Where they shall receive God's righteous judgment
In strict justice for all their evil deeds.
He shall also gather together all those who love Him,
Who delight in His ways, His wisdom, and His laws,
And shall join them to Himself as His Bride,
In the greatest, grandest, and most glorious
Wedding celebration of the ages.
But still, that is not the end of the Christmas story!

After the righteous have received their rewards,
After the wicked have received their punishment,
And after the earth is cleansed and purified by fire,
Jesus will restore all things as He always intended.
He will establish a perfect Kingdom of righteousness,
A Kingdom of infinite love, joy, and peace,
Of wisdom, justice, kindness, and understanding,
In which we, His Bride, will be His kings and priests
Reigning with Him over all his creation,
As Adam and Eve were created to do.

Then all our sins, failures, and weaknesses,
All our ignorance and self-centeredness,
Will be forgiven, washed away, and forgotten,
Removed from us as far as east is from west.
In their place, we will love His Kingdom of righteousness.

The End of the Christmas Story

The animals will love us and serve us as our friends.
Jesus will wipe away every tear from every eye.
Everyone shall know Him, from the least to the greatest.
And the lion will lie down with the lamb,
And the wolf and the fox, and a little child will lead them.
A nursing baby will rest his hand over the snake's den,
For they shall not hurt or destroy in all His Kingdom.
But still, that is not the end of the Christmas story!

For this is a story that has no ending.
He who conquered death has become our life
Now, and on and on to the ages of the ages
And beyond, even into His eternity.
All glory be to Jesus, at whose name every knee shall bow
And every tongue confess that He is the rightful King
And the Master of the universe.
The increase of His government shall never cease,
As all those from the highest heaven to the lowest hell,
Even those who paid the price for their evil deeds
In that lake that burns with fire and brimstone,
Finally bow and swear allegiance to the Master,
To the glory of the Eternal Father
That God may be all, and in all,
All throughout the universe,
Yes, this infinite almighty God,
The very same One who once was but a helpless baby
In that humble stable in Bethlehem.

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

As I was driving to work, minding my own business, a question I had considered as a child popped into my mind. Remember the story of creation? When God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, He told them they could eat of any tree in the garden except one: the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Of course I knew why He didn't want them to have the knowledge of evil, but why didn't He want them to have the knowledge of good, either? As soon as the question came to my mind, the Holy Spirit gave me the answer. It made a powerful impression on me. I pray that as I share it, the Holy Spirit will speak to you through it as well.

When God created Adam and Eve, He did give them a free will, but it was not the freedom to choose either good or evil. It was instead a free will to either obey Him as their Lord and their God, or to rebel and become their own lords. They honestly had no concept of either good or evil! Everything God made was, in His own words, 'very good', without the slightest suggestion of 'evil' to mar His creation – except for one thing: don't eat of that tree. Wouldn't it be nice if our lives were so simple!

So they really had no concept of either good or evil. All they knew was that the Lord God of heaven was their creator and their friend, and it was their delight to love and obey Him. Then along came Satan. He showed them the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, that it was good for food and pleasant to look at. But that wouldn't have caused them to disobey the God they knew and loved, the friend they walked and talked with in the cool of the day. The clincher came when Satan assured them that the fruit could make them wise, and that if they ate it, they would become as God, knowing good and evil.

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

God actually concurred with Satan. That is exactly what happened. You all know the rest of the story. They ate, and they did become as gods, knowing good and evil. “And the Lord God said, ‘Behold, the man is become as one of Us, to know good and evil...’” (Gen. 3:22)

So here is the key that the Holy Spirit revealed to me today: *that one sin – eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil – has been the primary root sin of humanity ever since.* It is basically the sin of idolatry: setting up self as god in place of the one true God. As long as a man retains the right to decide with his own mind what is good and what is evil, so that he can make his God-given free-will choice based on what he knows and understands, he is sinning even if he chooses the good.

In other words, the sin is not so much the choice. It is making my free will choices based upon what I know in my mind. Therefore, righteousness is giving up the right to make my own choices, letting God by His Holy Spirit lead my choices, and trusting Him to keep me in His perfect way, regardless of my human understanding.

It all boils down to this: just who really is Lord anyway? Who really makes the final decisions around here: me in my own human wisdom (and habits, traditions, biases, conditionings, shortsightedness, ignorance, and lack of experience), or the one true Lord, Jesus Christ? Do I just call Him Lord, or have I accepted His Lordship?

If I am a godly person in the eyes of the established church system, I will make my decisions after carefully considering what the Scriptures say about it, what the pastor and other godly people say about it, what the doctrines of the church say about it, and, after prayer, whether or not it feels right in my own mind and heart.

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

That, according to the revelation I received from the Holy Spirit today, is sin. It is the sin of eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for my action was based on my own knowledge of what is good and what is evil. If like a good boy I choose the good over the evil, my sin is not a transgression in God's eyes, but it is still the sin of iniquity, because self is lord.

In case that strikes you as a distinction without a difference, let me explain the terms. 'Transgressions' are breaking any of God's laws. That is an outward thing. 'Iniquity' is an inward thing, a heart of rebellion against the King, which is idolatry (with self as your surrogate god). Iniquity may result in transgressions, but you can hold iniquity in your heart without ever transgressing the law of God, and it's still wrong. That's because iniquity keeps you from fulfilling the law of love. You can't really love God or His people when your heart is filled with idolatry and self-centeredness. Sadly, that is the normal human condition – the 'flesh nature' – which according to Scripture "cannot please God". (Rom. 8:8)

An innocent infant may be unable to transgress the law of God, but he was still "born in iniquity" (Ps. 51:5). This is the tragic inheritance we each receive from Adam due to that first sin. Every child since Adam (except one – the One born of a virgin) is born a self-centered little brat, as any doting young mother will soon learn.

What is the solution? *Invite Jesus Christ to be your Lord.* When Jesus Christ is really Lord, He tells me, by His Holy Spirit within, what is best in His sight, and I do it. Pure and simple. I don't need to know whether it is good or bad, right or wrong; all I really have to know is that it is indeed Jesus speaking to me by His Holy Spirit.

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

I've been taught that to know the voice of the Lord I must start with what I know and understand about the Scriptures and confirm it through prayer, other godly people, or Christian books. I always supposed that this was good advice, particularly for babes in Christ who needed to learn how to recognize the voice of the Lord. I assumed that if I was careful to do all this, I would soon learn to know Jesus Christ's voice for myself. But I never learned it that way, though I sought it earnestly for many years. Sadly, of those who taught me this, very few ever learned to know the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ, either. They may have right doctrines about the Scripture as the inspired, infallible Word of God, but are still depending on their knowledge of good and evil to hear from Him.

How did I learn to know the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ? I opened up my heart and listened for His voice in every circumstance, in everything I heard or saw or did or smelled or felt, with a determination to do His will whenever I heard it. I soon found that Jesus delights in speaking to me through His Holy Spirit in me, and He wants to speak through anything and everything (Scriptures and godly people included) if I will only commit to hearing His voice in it all.

But for a long time, I listened in fear: fear that I would hear incorrectly, and that I would sin by accepting or doing something wrong because of what I heard. Well, guess what? The 'doing something wrong' wasn't the sin. The sin was listening in fear and feeling that I would have to carefully confirm what I heard with the Scripture and my pastor and good solid church doctrines and so on, according to human wisdom. (Or, if you please, according to my knowledge of good and evil.)

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

Essentially, I was setting myself up as judge over the word of the Lord Jesus Christ to me. My god was my own human knowledge and understanding of Scripture.

Not any more. As of today, I repent of all that and turn my back on it. I do know the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I know I belong to Him now and forever, and that His name is forever sealed upon my forehead. From this moment on, I permanently give up the right to choose based on my own knowledge of good and evil. I give that right to my Lord and my God, my sovereign King, and I choose only to follow wherever He may lead.

Even if He were to lead me into evil and I was destroyed, so be it; I would die in faith knowing that I followed my Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit within. But I don't believe He will. Instead, I really believe that He is waiting and longing for ones who will walk with Him totally by faith (not by sight or human knowledge), and I know He guards me very carefully from evil. In fact, I can see many evidences of that throughout my life. When I start getting into something He doesn't like, His "NO!" comes through loud and clear, and when I hear that tone of voice, believe me, I've learned to listen!

I know that my stand in the Lord Jesus Christ alone condemns much of the modern-day church system of doctrines, creeds, Bible studies, preachers, and so on. They're pushing the knowledge of good and evil for all they're worth, usually without even knowing it. There are a million inspirational self-help books that prove it. In a way, I'm kind of sad, for I grew up under the established church system of man and have strong bonds with it. I'm tempted to view them with sympathy or even fondness, for many of them seem to be doing the best they can.

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But I break those bonds now, by the Spirit of God, and determine to have no bond except with the Lord Jesus Christ. I had always felt that it was the established church system that made me what I am now, but in reality, it was and is only the Lord Jesus Christ who made me what I am now. Even though He did at times use parts of the church system, why should I give them any glory? Unto Christ alone belongs all the glory! Those from the established church system who actually did minister truth to me by the Spirit of God, will not be offended by what I say, for they will agree: to God belongs all the glory, for they did not minister in themselves, but only the Spirit of Jesus Christ ministered through them.

What about you? I don't know. Why are you reading this? If the Lord Jesus Christ is speaking to you now, wherever you are and with whomever you fellowship, that's great. Stay there and follow the Lord. He is the one who sets each of us into the body as He desires (1 Cor. 12:18), and He delights in the fellowship of the believers within the local church body even more than we do. If you are really listening to the Lord Himself and not just idolizing a pastor, then if or when He wants you to move on you'll have no trouble leaving.

But if you're just following some pastor or attending your church because you feel comfortable there and it meets your social needs, then you're still in bondage and no better off than a member of one of the cults that religious leaders are so quick to condemn. It took me four churches before I really started looking beyond the words of the pastors and listening for the Lord. It really was no fault of the pastors, either, but it was the patience and love and discipline of the Lord that brought me through.

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Am I condemning the true church? No. The true church is the body of Christ, called to follow only the Lord Jesus Christ, the head of His body. I'm condemning the demon spirits behind those church leaders who would try to build their own empire and preserve their own kingdom by ministering fear in the hearts of 'their' sheep: "Ya gotta be careful. Be sure to get it confirmed. Ya can't just trust every inner voice that seems to be speaking to you. Ya gotta try the spirits. Make sure it lines up with the Scriptures and with our doctrine. After all, no Scripture is of private interpretation – you can't be expected to hear the Word of God for yourself. Why, you might be (horror of horrors) deceived!"

Thus they destroy what little real faith and trust you do have in the Lord Jesus Christ speaking to you by His Holy Spirit, giving you in its place a whole truckload of fear: fear of deception, fear of being misled, fear of missing God, fear of doing something wrong, fear of temptation, fear of falling into some great sin that would destroy you.

What they never tell you is that the fear itself is the greatest sin of all. It is out and out unbelief! It is saying to the Lord Jesus, "I can't really believe what You are saying to me because You're not big enough or wise enough or strong enough to speak clearly to me and keep me from deception, so... I gotta check it out with my own wisdom and with my pastor and with what I understand of the Scripture and with church history and religious tradition and... If it all checks out, then, Lord, I'll exercise my free will, and I'll choose to believe You." I hope you see in that line of thought who is really lord. It is I. I have become as god, knowing good and evil.

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The ultimate conclusion of the above line of reasoning is that the church becomes your lord, telling you what to believe, what to do, what to fear, what is right, and what is wrong. And you have become as god, judging the word and making the final decision according to your own knowledge of good and evil. It thus carefully and slyly guides you away from actually hearing and knowing the voice of the Lord Jesus for yourself.

In the end, it takes away the Scriptures too, for of course you can't be expected to understand the Bible without rigorous religious training, so you'd better spend your time sitting quietly in your padded pew and listening to someone who has been through seminary and understands all that deep theological stuff. Thus in place of the Living Word of God, now behold! You have an 'infallible' pope!

Yes, the Roman Catholic religious organization is the height of this damnable folly. Most Roman Catholic clergy (not all – God has His true saints in every church) are there because they have wholeheartedly bowed their knee to the serpent in this regard. Just read a little history, and you'll quickly see how they persecuted and even murdered any who dared to think he could hear from the Lord for himself without bowing to the pope.

No, the religious hierarchy is really no different today than it was when Jesus walked the earth. Tell me honestly – if Jesus Christ Himself walked into your church on the next Sabbath day, would you recognize Him as Lord of Lords and King of Kings? Think again! With all your knowledge of good and evil, just how good would this look to you?

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First, He'd probably wouldn't be able to get in – most churches are locked up on the Lord's Sabbath ever since the Catholic church banned Sabbath-keeping and changed all the scriptural promises for Israel to refer to themselves.

Second, He'd be wearing the plainest of clothes and would look unappealing to you (there is no beauty in Him that we should desire Him), not like those beautiful pictures you've seen representing Him. You'd probably think Him a common criminal and call the police.

Third, the first thing He'd probably do if He got in would be to drive out the merchandisers on the church payroll “who have turned My Father's house into a den of thieves.” (See John 2:16) I may be wrong there. He may find some on the payroll actually serving God from the heart rather than for the security of getting a regular paycheck, but churches like that are rare.

Fourth, when Jesus looked around at your expensive building and lavish furnishings, would you be rather proud in how much you had done 'for the Lord' in helping to build it? Then what would you think of Him when He says it is all, “Pure vanity. In a short time, there will not be one brick left standing on top of another. My Father dwells not in buildings of brick and stone, but within the temple of a humble and contrite heart.”

Fifth, when Jesus starts condemning the hypocrites among the leaders of the church, and spending all His time helping the backslidden and despised ones among you, the “wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked” (See Rev. 3:14–22), don't you think you would get a little suspicious as to what kind of a man He really is, anyway? Hanging out with gluttons, drunkards, and harlots?

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Sixth, just how long would your pastor put up with it when this weirdo from nowhere starts preaching with authority, “the Kingdom of God is at hand! Sell all that you have, give it to the poor, and come follow Me.”? Especially when his faithful little flock started leaving him to follow this crazy looking guy! That is the crucial test, you know. A good man can take a lot without wavering, but when you start to touch his own little kingdom, watch how he responds and you’ll see to whom he belongs. That is probably the point at which your pastor and elders would start plotting how to crucify Him. Oh they’d do it all very legally and according to Scripture, I’m sure, but He would end up crucified just the same.

Yes, much of our religious hierarchy is nothing more than Babylon, described in the book of Revelation as the great whore who persecuted the man-child. A whore is one who takes the sacred, the precious and beautiful, and sells it for money, thus mixing the precious with the profane. The established church is called the whore because she has taken the precious truth of God and put a price tag on it. Again, there are exceptions – pastors who don’t preach for money or pressure people to give, pastors who are truly in it only out of love for God and for His people – but they are fewer than you think.

Come on, now, don’t tell me you were never made to feel bad because you didn’t put anything in the offering basket they stuck under your nose. After all, “ya’ gotta support your pastor, and ya’ gotta pay for the upkeep on the facilities, and ya’ gotta support your missionaries, and if only you’ll dig a little deeper, God can really bless you.” In some churches that subtle manipulation to give more ‘to the Lord’ comes through in nearly every sermon.

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

Did you know that is a sin? And worse yet, did you know that every pastor who has ever taken those Bible verses that talk about giving and used them to politely twist your arm to give more money to ‘God’s work’ is leading you into sin?

There is really only one right reason to give: you love the Lord. He shows you what is right in the sight of the Father, and out of your love for Him, you do it. All other reasons taught by the church system of man are reasons given to your mind designed to enthrall you with all the benefits of giving (knowledge of good) and to bring fear into your heart of all the consequences of *not* giving (knowledge of evil), thus training you to operate by your knowledge of good and evil rather than operating by faith.

And whatsoever is not of faith is sin. (Rom. 14:23) Pure and simple. In this case, it is a subtle, insidious sin, because it seems to come from Scripture, but it ends up putting you in bondage to the system of man and keeping you from hearing from the Lord Jesus Christ yourself and being free to give (or live) only as He leads.

But the call to those who live in Babylon is to “Come out of her, My people. Come out from their midst and be separate, and I will receive you. Touch not the unclean thing, that you not participate in her sins and that you not receive of her plagues, for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.” (ref. Rev. 18:4–5 and 2 Cor. 6:17)

As long as I was committed to the established church system of man, I could not even hear the call to come out of her, for the church system taught me that the call did not apply to me, only to those in the cults. And of course I wasn’t in a cult – my pastor preached from the Bible!

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Yes, my carefulness to accept all the established church doctrines so that I would not be deceived, actually made me blind and deaf to the true call of God. Oh, how could I be set free from this bondage to the whore? Praise the Lord Jesus Christ, He is the Truth that sets me free!

So here is the bottom line, the gospel of the Kingdom: Jesus Christ is the Lord, the King. We don't have to make Him Lord – He already is the Lord of Heaven and Earth! We only need to accept His Lordship, worship and serve only Him and no other, and trust only in Him for our wisdom and knowledge, for our protection, for each breath and each bite of food, for every waking moment and for a restful night's sleep, for our guidance each step of life's way, for the words to speak and the attitudes to take... He is King and there is no other!

Why should I give even one second of my time to the enemy of my soul? I shall not! I do not need to try to do good. Neither do I have to wrestle with the powers of darkness. Jesus Christ my Lord has already won that battle. He has given me His deliverance power over all the false power of the enemy. He does His good works through me as I submit totally unto Him, and He is able to keep me from sinning. (Jude 24; Phil. 1:6,10–11; Phil. 2:12–15; 2 Cor. 3:5–6; 1 John 1:9 ff; and many others.)

That, my friend, is the good news. That truly is the gospel of the Kingdom. Jesus Christ my Lord has not only forgiven my past sins and blotted them out as far as the east is from the west, but He has also won, once for all, the total victory over sin, Satan, and death for all of His creation (even me). In doing so, He has delivered me from the power of sin and given me the power to be His righteousness on the earth.

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No, I don't have to try to do good, because Jesus Christ is my Lord and He does only that which is right in the Father's sight (true good) through me.

So am I still a sinner? Well, the potential is sure still there. I would be a liar and would certainly fall to pride if I failed to acknowledge the totally depraved flesh nature that I inherited from Adam, which remains utterly hostile toward God. That famous passage in 1 John 1:5–10 is still absolutely true, and will be until I receive the “redemption of the body.” (Rom. 6:23)

But I refuse to give the sin in me any power by the confession of my mouth. Thus I now confess only that my old nature, the flesh, is dead and buried in the garden tomb where Jesus once was laid. Now I no longer live to satisfy the lusts of the flesh, but rather only to allow the glory and beauty of the living God to live through me, that He may accomplish through me all His purposes for which I was created, and that He may receive great praise and honor which is due to the wonderful name of the Lord Jesus Christ, yes, even in and through me.

“The mystery which has been hidden from the ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is *Christ in you, the hope of glory*. And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man [or woman] complete [perfect] in Christ. And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which works mightily within me.” (Col. 1:26–29 emphasis mine)

Why We Must Get the Ten Commandments Out of Public Schools

We've been pussy-footing around this issue far too long. There are good, honest reasons why we need to get rid of the Ten Commandments, prayer, and other archaic religious expressions from our public schools and other areas of public life. We need to admit them to each other. How can Democrats be united on this issue if they don't understand why? So it's time somebody told the truth.

I'm not ashamed of the truth. I have nothing to hide. I'm proud of what we liberal Democrats have accomplished, and I'm proud of our goals for Mother Earth. So I'll just tell it like it is and let the chips fall where they may.

That Supreme Court nonsense about one person's public religious expression being inherently coercive (and thus abridging somebody else's constitutional religious freedom) is just a smoke screen, and a darn poor one at that. Our entire legal system from day one was built on the value of public debate. You state your views as vigorously as you can, and I'll state mine, and if I am unable to stand and defend my own views, then maybe they weren't worth defending anyway. Public debate is only coercive if you are a spineless jellyfish.

Again, I'm not ashamed of the truth. I'll happily stand to defend my faith in materialism, humanism, evolution, Mother Earth, and the ultimate godhood of mankind against any of those whiny fundamentalists anytime.

The very idea of any public religious expressions being unconstitutional is laughable. It is patently obvious that when our founding fathers wrote the First Amendment, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...",

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they did *not* mean that Congress shall make laws that prohibit public religious expression. Any Joe Blow can see that, Supreme Court mumbo-jumbo notwithstanding. You have to be brain dead to get it that backwards. If our founding fathers had meant that, they would have said it, as they certainly were not short on words. And if they had meant that, they would not have covered their walls with religious expressions, opened their sessions with prayer, and based all their schools on the Bible. As long as we're in bondage to their Constitution, damn it, we're stuck with their morality, too.

I'm not ashamed of the truth, like I said. The truth is that our founding fathers were very religious people, and they wrote our Constitution with the goal of giving religion the freedom to flourish in all areas of life, public and private, without any possibility of the government controlling or squelching it. More than that, they actually expected the people to only elect religious leaders! If you don't believe that, read what they themselves said about it:

George Washington: "To the distinguished character of a Patriot, it should be our highest glory to add the more distinguished character of a Christian." "It is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the Providence of almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for all His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor." "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and Morality are indispensable supports."

William Penn (founder of Pennsylvania): "Those people who are not governed by God will be ruled by tyrants."

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James Madison: “We have staked the whole future of American Civilization, not upon the power of government, far from it. We have staked the future of all our political institutions... upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves, to control ourselves, to sustain ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God.”

John Jay (first Supreme Court chief justice): “Providence [an archaic reference to the divine] has given to our people the choice of their rulers. It is the duty, as well as the privilege and interest of our Christian nation to select and prefer Christians for our rulers.”

Ben Franklin: “And have we now forgotten this powerful Friend? [another reference to the divine] Or do we imagine we no longer need His assistance? The longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth: that God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid?”

Thousands of similar quotes are still on record, despite all our efforts to remove them from modern history books. Only the ignorant or deceitful try to deny it. Until we liberals finally admit it, we'll get nowhere.

We need to start acknowledging what every thinking person knows anyway: that the goals of our founding fathers were very different from our goals. They wanted to establish a safe haven where Christians could escape their persecutors and be free to practice their religion. They really believed all that drivel about obeying God rather than man. It's obvious from their writings, and until we admit it, people will see through our other lies.

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Our goals are far bigger, but they do involve deceiving the masses with some pretty bold lies. We can't tell the public that we really want to eliminate about 90% of the world's people – especially all the less-evolved races – to have plenty of room and resources for our New World Order. We can't tell them that we're going to eliminate national borders, governments, and constitutions, as well as all their zealots and patriots, so we can gain total control of the world. We've got to lie about these things. People love their own little nations, their own elected leaders, their own culture and heritage. You know, God and country and all that rubbish. It's got to go, but we can't tell them yet. However, if we are caught lying about the obvious stuff like our nation's history, they'll suspect our bigger lies. And if they get exposed, we're in big trouble!

So let's start with this Ten Commandments nonsense. We've got to get rid of them, and we liberals must understand why. I am really angry with the half-liberals who try to love the Ten Commandments while working for our cause. You can't love the Ten Commandments and still be a good liberal! Don't even try! Any thinking man will see right through you and laugh at you for your hypocrisy. We who have world-class goals cannot afford to be stuck with antiquated religious hang-ups.

Of these Commandments, the first few refer to stuff like God, idols, not cussing, and keeping the Sabbath holy, whatever that means. It's pretty obvious why we ignore those, and everyone else pretty much ignores them too. Nobody really believes in an actual, live God anymore, anyway, so I'll talk more about them later. Let's start with Commandments that fellow liberals seem to waffle over.

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One of the Ten Commandments is **don't kill**. That's absurd! What about overpopulation? We've got three or four billion to kill just get our population down to more reasonable levels. Then there are the unwanted babies – how can we really be free to enjoy our sexuality if we have to worry about unwanted babies? If you can abort them before birth, fine, but if not, what difference does a few inches and a few minutes make? They're just as easy to kill after they're born, and that may be easier on the mother. Until they grow up and begin to benefit society, they're no better than any other animal protein. Just don't waste the protein. At least it makes good fertilizer, but better uses include organ harvesting, cosmetics, pet food, or people food for those of us who have evolved beyond those kinds of hang-ups. Don't forget the aged, infirm, unproductive, and handicapped, not to mention all the convicts, terrorists, protesters, and damn narrow-minded dogmatic fundamentalist nut-burgers who drag their feet at anything that doesn't fit their own personal theology – they're not productive! They're no benefit to society! Don't mess around. Just kill 'em. It will be that much easier to get our world population under control.

Of course it must be understood that it is we leaders who do the killing, through our police and terrorist control forces, medical establishment (using vaccinations and drugs as well as abortions), by secret control of food and water supplies (bet you didn't know we've been killing people for years through pesticides, hormones, genetic modifications, preservatives, and refining the nutrition out of foods), and even by our contrived wars and our beloved United Nations 'peace-keeping' activities.

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The peons themselves must be absolutely disarmed – not only guns and knives but even firecrackers must be prohibited. It's easy to do; we just create crime crises and pretend we're solving the problem by taking away their weapons. We certainly can't afford to have them fighting back while we're killing them! The only problem here is that criminals don't comply with weapons control laws and will, in fact, increase their criminal activity knowing their victims have no means of defense. We don't really have a good solution for that. But we will control all the major news sources so we can trivialize the increase in crime and use it for more hype on weapons control.

We ourselves, of course, need to stay heavily armed for our own protection, because we will be making lots of enemies as we establish total control. Just don't let the conservatives know, or they might think we're hypocrites when we disarm them. This is easier than you think. They have moral compulsions against breaking laws, which results in their actually keeping the laws we make. But they look on us as evil and expect us to break the law, so they're not too surprised when we do. How sweet it is!

Now you begin to see why we've got to get rid of the Ten Commandments. Any of you fellow liberals who retain qualms against killing won't make it in our New World Order. Killing must be as easy as swatting a mosquito – a good analogy, because mosquitos are overpopulated too. We've got to protect our young people from even seeing the Ten Commandments! All our years of indoctrination in evolution (insisting they came from pond slime and are no better than any other animal) would be wasted if they develop scruples or hang-ups against killing.

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Another of the Ten Commandments is **don't steal**, and its relative, **don't covet** your neighbor's things. This is even more absurd than don't kill, as my fellow liberals ought to know. How insane to think that anyone can own anything for himself! We've got to indoctrinate the masses with a healthy dose of pure ideological socialism. There is no stealing if everyone already owns everything.

The only way to achieve our utopia is for the government to take everything and distribute it equally to the masses (compliant ones, that is). We liberal socialists have been preaching that for more than a hundred years, through great leaders such as Mao Tse Tung, Karl Marx, Stalin, Lenin, and my favorite, Adolf Hitler. It hasn't worked so far, only because the government has never before gained total control over everything and everyone. This control has been sadly hampered by influence from neighboring nations who have not yet become socialistic.

But in our New World Order, there will be no such nations. We will own everything in the entire world, know everything about everyone (using our networked computers), and control everything and everyone. There will be no army but our army, no police force but our police force, no currency but our currency, no news but our news, no way of thinking but our way of thinking, and no way for anyone to even buy or sell without our knowledge and control – and tax. Talk about stealing! Our New World Government will have the incredible power to steal it all and control it with an iron fist! Finally, utopia! Everyone will have plenty, with no fear of anyone taking it away. (Except of course those who resist our control, who will be quickly eliminated.)

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We liberal Democrats must really understand this basic concept of socialism. If a peon owns anything at all, then at least in that area he is not dependent on government. Our job is to wipe out all private ownership, so that all the peons are totally dependent on us for every aspect of their lives. Only by their total dependency do we retain control. This is why welfare and socialized medicine are so important. Those who are dependent on welfare for their daily food and shelter and have nowhere else to go for their medical needs, are absolutely under our control.

Another of the Ten Commandments is against lying: “**Don’t bear false witness.**” As I said, this too has got to go. We have to lie – and cheat, steal, kill, and everything else required to gain control over any who resist our New World Order. In fact, the masterful use of deceit is a prime requisite for the leaders in our world government.

I hate that, myself. I’d never make a good world emperor. I’d rather be right up front about things. I’m certainly not ashamed of my ideology! But here’s a vital principle that we liberal democratic socialists must never forget: the end justifies the means. Those religious fundamentalist bigots would rather die than submit. We’ve got to deceive them into going along with the program until we gain the power to eliminate them. However, that shouldn’t be too hard as long as we keep our ultimate goal in mind: our all-powerful, all-knowing, all-wise government will replace their mythical Jehovah! What a concept! We’ll all get a good belly laugh when their God is dead for good! Of course, the originators of this Jehovah concept, the Jews, must all die as well, whether they’re religious or not. We can’t have them starting any more god myths.

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And that, of course, explains why we cannot allow the First Commandment, in which Jehovah says, “**You shall have no other gods before Me.**” Hmm. Perhaps we should rewrite that to say, “no other gods before the almighty state” or somesuch. We need someone better with words than I to write a catchy jingle along that line. If our New World Order is to become our god, we need the very best minds and the finest talent to help us with the PR snow job. Advertising is a wonderful tool as long as we keep it firmly under our control.

Another Commandment is “**Don’t commit adultery.**” How quaint – obviously written by some straight prude who didn’t know how to have fun and who didn’t have access to birth control pills or abortion. I actually don’t mind this Commandment – for others. I’d just as soon nobody else mess with my women and possibly give me a venereal disease. When I have a favorite woman, you must understand, I own her. Touch her and I’ll kill you.

But there’s a hidden problem here. If young people are permitted to see this Commandment, it might bias them against us liberal democratic socialists who do know how to have fun. If they are biased against us, they might resist the New World Order and have to be eliminated. We don’t want to eliminate too many of our youth at the peak of their productivity, so this too must be hidden from their eyes. Our goal, therefore, is to teach kids from the earliest possible ages (even from kindergarten) how to enjoy their sexuality, but safely, using one of the many alternate ways we can teach them which don’t procreate. Ahem. As we’ve been doing in our public schools ever since we started sex education classes.

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Speaking of ways that don't procreate, finally convincing the world that homosexuality is normal and good was our crowning achievement. It was tough. It took a lot of time and effort because of all the many deep-seated revulsions against it from the dawn of evolution. I still view it as a rather disgusting perversion (as I'm sure you do as well). But it was necessary, first to hide our real agenda (the total destruction of religious morality) and second to encourage all the sex perverts to 'come out of the closet' and identify themselves. That also causes the religious morality zealots to take a stand against them and identify themselves, so we know who they all are. Then we can eliminate both groups when we purge the population to set up our New World government. Surprised? Or have you forgotten Hitler's Brownshirts, whom he encouraged and used until he gained power, then massacred along with the Jews. Heil, Hitler! If only you and your SS had had computers! You would have won, and I would right now be living in your racially pure utopia!

The Commandment that prohibits swearing says, "**You shall not take the name of Jehovah your God in vain.**" This seems harmless on the surface, though I personally don't know of anyone who doesn't enjoy a good cuss now and then. But it has the same problem as the last one. What if our young, impressionable leaders of the future see us old leaders cussing and develop a bias against us for our colorful language? However, not to worry. All we need to do is provide lots of high quality, exciting videos showing all their movie heroes cussing (and fornicating, lying, stealing, killing, and all the rest). How can they be biased against it if all their movie heroes do it?

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Another insidious Commandment is “**Honor your father and mother.**” Your parents were of the old social order that actually believed in the Ten Commandments and, like our founding fathers, wanted to keep us a Christian nation. That’s unacceptable! You must dishonor and disobey any parents like that if we’re going to move into the New World Order of peace, power, and prosperity through absolute government control. In essence, your New World Order government will become your new parent, and believe me, you had better honor and obey it! If your old parents get in the way, just kill ’em or turn ’em into the authorities and we’ll eliminate ’em for you. True freedom is freedom from restraint so you can do whatever you please, and what worse restraint is there than parental restraint? Remember who tried to spank you when you were little. Show no mercy! Mercy is not an acceptable characteristic of the New World Order. (Just don’t waste the protein.)

All the Commandments are bad, but perhaps this one is the worst: “**Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.**” We mentioned it before, but I want to emphasize it. The very thought of it is terrifying! If anyone tried to keep the Sabbath and attended their church or synagogue, they might learn about all the other Commandments too. That would undo our careful brainwashing! We’ve got to hide this from our youth at all costs, as you well know.

Fortunately, we have a pretty good start in destroying this one. All their favorite sporting events are held on Saturday and Sunday, the two prime contenders for the Sabbath. The Sabbath is fast becoming their primary play day. Nothing like football to keep your mind off religion.

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One last one I need to really emphasize. It's a sleeper. "Don't make for yourselves an idol in any likeness of... [basically anything in the universe]." This will cinch my argument for the absolute necessity of keeping the Ten Commandments hidden from society. What is an idol? Anyone or any thing you place in higher honor than God. But the God being preferred here is Jehovah! Do you realize the horrific implications? This implies that Jehovah must be honored more than our New World Order government, and that whenever the two come in conflict, Jehovah must be obeyed rather than our own laws! That's actually what our founding fathers believed. It's sheer lunacy! This means that any two-bit peon who thinks he can hear from God can (and probably will) resist our entire ideology and buck our entire liberal democratic socialistic power structure just because he feels he ought to obey God rather than men. After all our careful training in evolution, humanism, and the innate godhood of man, this one Commandment can undo it all! Arrrrrrghh! (Pardon my quiet scream.)

That is why we must get rid of the Ten Commandments, not only from our public schools, but also from every aspect of our society. With them, we've got to eliminate the Bible (it contains the Ten Commandments), prayer (if Jehovah ever answers, we're all in big trouble), and all Christians, Jews, Moslems, and others who believe in Jehovah (because they all know the Ten Commandments and might teach them to someone). This means we must get rid of private schools and home education as well. But that won't be too difficult when we finally get our teacher certification ducks in line.

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We start with simply offering the private school teachers and home-educating parents a little ‘free’ help – in the sports realm, for example – and end with, “Every teacher a state-certified (ie. state-controlled) expert.”

Then we will tackle the churches and synagogues. We’ve planned a double-prong attack. On the one hand, we strangle them with thousands of little regulations and controls as they try to keep their precious tax exempt status. This prevents them from speaking out on our political agenda. On the other hand, we license and then start to control all their extra-church activities (like the day-cares, nurseries, church schools, parking lots, and home gatherings) all in the name of public safety or of enforcing our anti-discrimination tolerance laws.

I know it will be a big job. We have a lot of people to kill and a lot of books to burn and plaques to destroy. But if we proud liberal democratic socialists really believe in the power of big government to become our god and provide for all our peace, happiness, and security, then we’ve got to do it. It’s high time we realize that there is absolutely no common ground between us and those religious fundamentalist nut-burgers. This is a battle to the death, and if we do not win it, they will.

But win it we will – as long as we fully understand what we’re about and are wholehearted in pursuit of the entire agenda as I’ve described it. And as long as we don’t do anything stupid like spilling the beans and letting those damn conservative fundamentalists get their grubby hands on a copy of this super-secret planning paper!

Praise government from whom all blessings flow!

The Twenty-First Century Democrat

The Democrat Party is large and multifaceted, but let's pin it down to a few of its major characteristics. The 20th century Democrat was, for the most part, a kind, caring person and a law abiding citizen. He loved nearly everybody, and was especially concerned for the poor and the working class. Though often a person of faith holding a traditional moral code, he was loving and tolerant toward those of other faiths and moral codes. He was accepting of immigrants or minorities. Consequently, the Democrat Party became the party of Blacks and other downtrodden people groups. The term 'liberal' was a favorable term, meaning liberally caring, helping, and giving to the less fortunate. 20th century Democrats were often Christians, trying to follow the biblical standard of the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Lest you think that I am (or was) a Democrat myself, I hasten to point out a flaw in their thinking. Though they may have understood that charity begins at home, they concluded that charity ended with big government, and that the best way to implement their liberal dreams was through government programs financed by taxes taken by force from those who refuse to donate voluntarily. (The federal tax structure is set up so that if you voluntarily donate enough of your income, you don't pay any tax.)

Some fallacies of their thinking are:

1. Confiscation from the rich to give to the poor makes a good Robin Hood story but it is still stealing.
2. Trusting in government power to accomplish this transfer of wealth is at best very inefficient and wasteful, and is dangerously close to tyranny.

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3. The recipients of the confiscated wealth are rarely helped by it; instead they are often locked into a cycle of dependency, which destroys incentives to improve and tears apart families for generations, resulting in growing problems with crime and poverty.

4. Whatever you subsidize, you get more of. Human nature is such that many will take advantage of the easy money and get lazy, living off the backs of others.

5. What you tax, you get less of. Human nature is such that many will spend their time and effort finding ways to get around this unjust tax, even if it means reducing their income or moving their business to another country.

Thus, taxing success and rewarding failure is a recipe for disaster. Such perverse incentives are a major reason why America's economy has been struggling.

Something happened to the Democrat Party as we entered the 21st century. It had been growing for a long time, but it kinda reached a head when the Clintons came to power. To Americans like me, the Clintons seemed like moral perverts, very good liars, cruel cutthroats against any who opposed them, easy to bribe, and quick to pardon donors no matter what crimes they may have committed. With their reign, the good Democrat Party changed. America now has what I call the 21st century Democrat. Again, I will attempt some broad generalizations:

1. He has a huge double standard. Anything goes – for a fellow liberal: lying, stealing, immorality, it's all good, and he'll defend him to the death. But if a conservative tries anything questionable, he'll nail him to the wall.

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2. The rhetoric is more important than the deed. He'll gain the media spotlight by a vigorous speech, and as long as it sounds good, it doesn't matter whether it actually helps anyone or not, or even whether it is true or not. Truth is relative, and the end justifies the means.

3. He is open-minded and non-judgmental. There is no such thing as sin or evil, so whatever happens is not your fault. As long as it feels good and doesn't seem to hurt anybody, it must be okay. The only ones he is not open-minded and non-judgmental about are Christians who still hold to the absolute, God-given standards of right and wrong and therefore must be judgmental and bigoted and should be shut out of the political process.

4. For him, life is a class struggle. He considers his fellow Democrats and himself as the elite ruling class. He will do anything, legal or illegal, to keep his party in power, so they can 'help the various oppressed classes'.

5. He has an agenda. In a nutshell, it is the freedom to do whatever one pleases without facing the consequences. For example, the freedom to indulge one's sexual fantasies without worrying about STDs, AIDS, or unwanted kids. Or the freedom to be lazy, presuming the government will pay you to stay home, watch TV, and make babies. Or the freedom to make stupid decisions that cause you to fail in business, hoping the government will bail you out. Or the freedom to build your home in a hurricane zone, hoping the government will help to rebuild it after the inevitable hurricane destroys it. Or the freedom to eat like a pig, trusting the government to pay all your medical bills. Remember, whatever happens is not your fault.

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6. Whatever it takes to further his agenda is good, but whatever blocks it is bad. Abortion / infanticide and every kind of contraception is good; it gets rid of unwanted babies, allowing unrestrained sex. Teaching faith in evolution while prohibiting any mention of God in public schools is good; it allows a young person to behave like an animal without any kind of conscience, guilt, or fear of future consequences from a just and holy God. Spending public money for AIDS research and drugs is good; if we conquer AIDS, it may allow homosexuals the freedom to pursue their degenerate lifestyle without consequence. But creationists (Christians), those who still believe in traditional morality, marriage, and family and who are still horrified when a mother kills her own baby, are bad and must be silenced and shut out of the debate.

There are more, but I'm sure you are getting the idea. My conclusion (which should be pretty obvious by now) is that good Democrats had better wake up soon, or their party, and possibly even their country, will be toast. Yes, America is indeed 'the land of the free and the home of the brave,' but if our freedoms become licentiousness, America will fall just as surely as did decadent Rome.

To state the obvious, one primary purpose of government is to restrain and punish evil men so that good men will have the freedom to prosper. The 21st century Democrat has turned this on its head. Our government is now used to restrain and punish good Christians, silencing them and branding them intolerant, hateful, bigoted, or worse, so that degenerate men will have the freedom to prosper. This puts our form of government, which is (or was) a constitutional republic, in mortal peril.

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Just as a democracy cannot long stand when the people realize that they can vote themselves largess out of the public treasury, so a constitutional republic cannot long stand when its people no longer elect representatives who are upright, discerning, know the difference between right and wrong, recognize that our rights actually come from God, understand our founders' original intent when writing the Constitution and Bill of Rights, and have the courage to punish evildoers.

The fatal flaw in modern liberalism is simply this. They are wrong. There is such a thing as evil, and it does indeed have consequences. We've got to hate it and fight against it, or it will overwhelm us and destroy us. If you really love a person, you will hate the things that are harming him. You cannot afford to be so open-minded that your brains fall out and you get wishy-washy with sentimentality toward those who are truly evil.

Being judgmental is not necessarily a bad thing. If a man approaches me and I cannot judge his character well enough to know whether he wants to help me or hurt me, I may soon be a crime victim. Hopefully, I will then learn wisdom to become a little more judgmental!

There is an absolute standard of right and wrong (the Ten Commandments are a good summary, which is why the 21st century Democrat hates to have them displayed), and there are such things as absolute truth and morality. The modern liberal ignores these at their peril.

So, have you remained a 20th century Democrat in the 21st century? May I suggest you bail the Party before becoming a 21st century Democrat?

The Twenty-First Century Democrat

Where to go? Well, I'm not suggesting you become a 21st century Republican. That is a whole 'nother story, but I'm afraid many of the good, conservative Republicans of 1994 (remember the Republican revolution?) have become big spending, big government liberals, with the same flaws I mentioned of the Democrats at the beginning of this essay. President Bush truly was a 'compassionate conservative Christian', but he was a big-spending liberal just the same. I got so frustrated with the Republicans spending my money like drunken sailors, giving money to our country's enemies, harassing law-abiding citizens at the airports while letting illegal aliens flood our borders, and supporting the big-government programs we elected them to eliminate, that I quit the Republican Party.

I have since rejoined it. Unfortunately, it is the best party we've got that has any chance of actually winning. It seems we're pretty much forced into a two party system. So now I focus on helping elect Republican candidates who are more conservative and have godly morals.

I urge you to be a little judgmental, even hateful, of those things that are destroying our country. If you are truly liberal in the proper sense, if you love America and her people, I urge you to not fall for modern liberalism that puts power politics above truth and morality.

The Clintons taught the 21st century Democrat that as long as the economy is good, things like truth, justice, and morality don't count. They are wrong. We are now beginning to face the awful consequences. Wickedness, moral decadence, always has consequences. I pray that true American liberals wake up before it is too late.

The Outrageous Platform

Twas the summer of Y2K. The primaries were over and the Republican national convention was in full swing. Of a crowded field, three candidates had risen to the top. Their supporters were clamoring to be heard.

Mr. Glamor had the *charisma*. His poise and polished speeches were truly impressive as he swayed the crowds with his vibrant rhetoric. The people loved him!

Mr. Important had the *credentials*. His long list of accomplishments and his political acumen and business connections in high places had won the admiration and respect of the Party leaders. They were determined that he should and could lead the Grand Old Party on to victory.

Mr. Compromise had the *platform*. On the tip of his tongue was the answer to each of the nation's problems. He knew how to reduce government bureaucracy without sacrificing jobs. He knew how to balance the budget without increasing taxes. He knew how to pacify big business and the workers at the same time. He knew how to satisfy the special interest groups and still have the resources to increase the military and welfare budgets, protect the environment, and eliminate drugs and crime. And all of this while bringing down inflation and starting to pay off the national debt! His compromises were slick, smooth, and so stunning that when he finished his speech, silence thundered throughout the huge hall.

Here was a man who could sweep the convention, the nation, and who knows? The world! Politicians stopped their politicking to listen in awe. Never a man spoke like this man! Surely the Republicans had their candidate. Mr. Compromise would be elected on the first ballot, easily beat the Democrats, and lead the Grand Old Party to never-before-achieved heights of glory.

The Outrageous Platform

But as the convention delegates prepared their ballots, shades of scandal darkened the assembly. It seemed that Mr. Compromise had some compromises in his past that he had hoped would stay hidden – such as compromises with the IRS in bending the rules to avoid paying taxes, compromises with lobbyists in accepting their bribes and returning favors, and compromises with various financial institutions in manipulating their money in ways that were decidedly to his own benefit.

A stormy session ensued, during which the supporters of Mr. Important saw their chance and took center stage. The delegates recognized the great accomplishments, the impressive influence, and the solid, widespread backing of this man of power and authority. Here indeed was the man who deserved to carry the standard of the Republican Party to the presidency!

Once again the delegates were busy preparing their ballots, secure in the belief that their job was done and they would soon be on their way home. But once again, accusations of impropriety flooded over the auditorium. It seemed that Mr. Important was a little too important with a supra-national group whose published goal was to eliminate national governments and set up a world dictatorship. This group intended to rule by force and oppression, eliminating individual freedoms, all ‘for the good of planet earth’ of course. With dismay, the delegates realized that no matter how solid his backing in high places, Mr. Important would never be acceptable to the voters. No, not with America’s long history of willingness to fight and die for freedom. The mere mention of his affiliation with this group would cause him to be soundly thrashed at the polls.

The Outrageous Platform

Another stormy session resulted, and amid the yells and name-calling, the supporters of Mr. Glamor saw their chance and ascended to center stage. Here is a man that everyone likes. No matter that he doesn't have a platform; he can borrow all the pat answers of Mr. Compromise. No matter that he has no connections or backing in high places; with his handsome looks and charisma he can talk anybody into supporting him. No matter that he has no political skill or wisdom; he would just do the talking, and his advisors would run the country. The perfect candidate! Everyone will gladly vote for a man with such a golden tongue, handsome profile, and appealing smile.

Sad to say, just as the ballots were being prepared to nominate Mr. Glamor, allegations of immorality swept the hall. It seems he'd had a little too much charisma with a certain movie star, resulting in an unwanted child, a messy forced abortion, and millions in hush-money under the table. He'd never seen the need to inform his previous wife at the time, or his current one, either.

After an angry and tearful scene between Mr. and Mrs. Glamor right on the stage, the shocked delegates looked at one another in dismay. "Who is left? Who will run for us? – Nobody's perfect, but at least he's got to appear perfect to the American public. – But it's stupid to place personal morals above credentials, connections, or charisma. What do personal morals have to do with running the country? Let a man do what he likes in his private life. – But will the American public go for that? – Well, they can't expect a morally upright leader when they themselves have filled the country with immorality. – You can't tell them that! – But that sounds like a double standard. – But... But..."

The Outrageous Platform

Amid the confusion, a small group found its way to the front. Speaking softly but clearly into the microphone, its spokesman smiled and said, “Ladies and gentlemen, I think we have the answer.” He then introduced Mr. Clean, an older man with a weather-worn face, silver hair, and calloused hands. “Mr. Clean is a family man,” he said. “He has always been faithful and true to his wife. He has six grown children and fifteen grandchildren who all adore him and will vouch for him. He has been diligent and generous in supporting his community, his church, and his local town government. He has gained a widespread reputation for integrity, honesty, and virtuous character. He has worked hard all his life, and has learned a lot of wisdom in the process. His friends and neighbors come to him with their problems and heed his wise counsel. He is not really wealthy, but neither is he poor, for he manages his money well. Those who know him best say that surely he has given away a thousand times what he has now, but who can prove it? He doesn’t keep a record of his gifts or claim his contributions on his income tax.”

“Bah! Away with him!” someone shouted. That’s stupid! In this world, you take whatever you can get. Besides, he has no political experience, no connections, no credentials! You’ve got to have political savvy and power backers to win in this dog-eat-dog world!”

“Points well taken,” responded the soft-spoken gentleman. “Are you willing to listen to my answer?”

The angry rustling throughout the hall softened to a questioning hush, so the spokesman continued. “Mr. Clean’s political experience is the successful managing of his family, his business, and his local town government, as well as his success in helping his friends and neighbors.

The Outrageous Platform

He has done all this using sound principles of faithfulness, integrity, and virtue. Those principles work on any scale, from family, business, community, and local government, all the way up to the presidency. His power backers are fifty million other families like his own all across the land. Every one of them is struggling with the same kinds of problems Mr. Clean has been through: how to raise their children right and keep them out of trouble; how to relate to their local community, church, and government; how to prosper in business; and how to keep their pursuit of pleasure from getting them into trouble. When they see one of their own who has actually succeeded, they will vote for him. He will succeed in the government the same way he succeeded at home, by putting the same principles of virtue and sound wisdom to work for him.”

“Ha! That’s like putting a nice two-year-old kid at the wheel of a Mack truck! It’s a cruel world out there. They’ll eat him alive! He won’t survive a week in Washington. Why doesn’t he talk for himself? Hey, Mr. Clean, are you afraid of talking in front of a crowd?”

“I was waiting to be invited,” responded Mr. Clean. “What I have to say, you won’t necessarily want to hear, because it’s going to hurt. America is in trouble. It has gotten corrupt, selfish, and lazy. The faithfulness and integrity that once engendered trust all over the world has gotten unfashionable here lately. Government at all levels has gotten so involved in serving special interests that it has forgotten what its original purpose was: a servant of its law-abiding citizens, to restrain and punish the wicked and encourage the righteous by providing an environment where they can flourish. Stop and think about that. Most new laws nowadays do exactly the opposite.

The Outrageous Platform

“The foundation stone of American law, that a citizen is innocent until proven guilty, has been perverted by a legal system that seems more determined to protect the criminal than the victim. Even the definitions of good and evil have been turned upside down. Nowadays, it’s ‘good’ for a mother to kill her baby before birth, and ‘evil’ to try to save the mother and her baby. It’s ‘good’ to welcome illegal aliens who have no desire to become Americans and would rather kill us and take over our country, but ‘evil’ to build a wall to protect our nation’s borders. It’s ‘good’ to encourage sexual immorality and promiscuity – even queer sex – but ‘evil’ for Christians to try to protect traditional morality and marriage the way God created it. It’s ‘good’ to lie to our school children about the theory of evolution as if it were proven fact, but ‘evil’ to even post or mention in school the laws of God upon which the universe was founded. It’s ‘evil’ to pray in school, ‘evil’ to study the Bible, ‘evil’ to talk about God in the classroom, except it’s still fine to use God’s name as a curse word!

“The American public is writhing under a heavy burden of laws which, instead of giving a citizen freedom to flourish by honest labor, tend to smother him under the bondage of multitudes of taxes and petty restrictions. Almost everything good he tries to do is restricted or taxed in some way, yet he sees criminals all around him, seemingly quite free to ply their evil trades. It’s like gun control, my friends. When you outlaw guns, then only the outlaws will still have guns. Our local, state, and federal governments are churning out ten thousand new laws a year, but law-abiding, moral American citizens don’t need more laws. And you simply cannot legislate morality for those who don’t keep the law anyway.

The Outrageous Platform

“I don’t particularly want to be president. I have no desire for fame or fortune. I’m only standing here because I believe my country needs me. I’m not ashamed to say that I love my country enough to be willing to serve her faithfully and with all the wisdom God has given me thus far. But only on one condition. America needs strong medicine in order to be restored to peace, strength, and prosperity. I can deliver that medicine to you. But are you willing to take it?”

“All right, wise guy,” someone shouted from the crowd. “What’s your platform?”

“First, we have to start getting our priorities straight,” responded Mr. Clean. “I will get the federal government out of functions we have no business being involved in – the things that the roughly thirty ‘enumerated powers’ listed in our Constitution do not cover, and are therefore ‘reserved to the states... or to the people.’ For example, federal involvement in welfare, education, roads and other public works, foreign aid, and supporting or subsidizing special interest groups, all will have to be eliminated. And even the military must be drastically cut. If these functions are needed at all, they can be handled better and cheaper by state or local government, a militia, private companies, churches and other faith-based groups, or private citizens.”

At this, a clamor arose from dozens of competing voices. “Excuse me, Mr. Clean, but did I hear you say you would do away with welfare? – That would be insane to get rid of the military! Militias are trying to destroy our government, you ninny! – What did you say about not supporting education? You’re crazy! You’ll never get away with it! – Government can’t work with churches. Isn’t that unconstitutional? – Government doesn’t run that way!”

The Outrageous Platform

“I told you this would hurt. But I’m not through yet. The second thing I would address is our burgeoning bureaucratic system. Much of the country’s legal system would have to be cut back and streamlined. I would take it upon myself to use a line-item veto on every bill that came across my desk. The fat from special interest groups has all too often negated the good of important and necessary laws, and Congress would soon find that to get a bill past my signature, it would have to be right, *all* right, or I would send it back marked in red. I don’t compromise with wrong or improper laws; I eliminate them. At the same time, I would commission some of my friends and advisors to review the entire legal structure of our federal government. Using the Constitution and Bill of Rights as their foundation, they would rewrite, condense, or eliminate every other law on the books.

“Our government is supposed to be ‘of the people, by the people, and for the people.’ When my team finishes, I will have one small volume that the people, yes *all* the people, can read and actually understand.”

“But that’s impossible! You can’t do away with two hundred years worth of laws in one season! The country would fall apart! You’d have anarchy! You’d...”

“I didn’t say it would be easy. I said I would do what has to be done. And while that was being written I would also require that the penal code be rewritten to be far tougher on convicted criminals. Convicts would have to make restitution for their crimes, at hard labor until their debt to society is paid. Prisons would be required to make money for the state as the prisoners worked off their debts, and any violent repeat criminals would be quickly eliminated. Those who are lawless at heart would...”

The Outrageous Platform

“Eliminated? That sounds pretty final. What’re you gonna do, kill ’em all? I was beginning to think you were a Christian! The Bible says to love your enemies!”

“You, as an individual, are commanded to love your enemies. Government is commissioned and empowered by God to purge the land of evil, destroy the enemies of righteousness, and defend us against any who want to harm us. Someone who is sympathetic toward evil has no business being in government.

“But I’m not done yet. Every nation or organization who’s published goals include destruction of the United States government and the American way of life will be labeled as America’s enemy. I would require that radical Muslims, communists, and all other avowed haters of our country be rounded up and shipped out. I will prohibit trade and any form of aid on a national level with our enemies. After giving them a month or so of grace, I would have all people from such organizations or nations declared persona non grata. Any who refuse to leave will be forceably removed and their goods confiscated to pay extradition expenses. This includes all Marxist / socialists who have infiltrated our public school system with the intent of destroying our capitalist / free enterprise system from within by ‘re-educating’ (read that ‘brainwashing’) our youth into thinking that socialism actually works, in spite of the overwhelming evidence around the world to the contrary.

“If these traitors don’t have a nation to go to, they will be sent to whatever nation most closely matches their personal ideologies, so they can experience firsthand the chaos, corruption, poverty, and lack of freedom that results from their bankrupt beliefs.

The Outrageous Platform

“After I’m done, the blessings, personal freedoms, and high standard-of-living that law-abiding Americans have earned by integrity, diligence, and good old-fashioned helping one another, will then be reserved for those who appreciate it and want to preserve it, rather than wasted on those wanting to destroy us as a nation.”

“Hey, wait a minute! You can’t just ship out everyone who disagrees with you! You’ll end up with a worse tyranny than the Commies have! – Did you hear that? He also said he’d ship out the Muslims! What about religious freedom? – And what about all the democratic socialists? You can’t just ship out everyone in the Democrat Party! Even a lot of us Republicans support social programs...”

“Sir, I never said I would ship out everyone who disagrees with me. I appreciate those who disagree with me, and I listen to them carefully for two reasons:

“Firstly, I know that my knowledge is limited. I could be wrong, and in my great hunger for righteousness and truth, I will be eager to change my ways wherever someone can show me where I am wrong.

“Secondly, even if I am right, carefully hearing those who disagree with me can only strengthen my knowledge on the subject, help me see it from a different perspective, and be better able to debate them to defend why I’m right.

“No, sir, I’m well aware that this country was founded on the preposition that every individual has the freedom to disagree, to state what he feels without fear of reprisal. Vigorous debate, robust competition, and checks and balances are inherent to our free market system. They helped make America great. Each person has the freedom and the opportunity to do it better than it has ever been done before, the challenge to rise to greater heights.

The Outrageous Platform

“What I really said, sir, and please listen carefully, was that I would ship out all those who’s published goals were the *destruction* of our national government. That’s treason, my friend, *treason*. That’s actively working within our nation to take it away from American citizens and give it to our enemies. Any yes, I’m sorry to say even some of our own citizens, mostly bleeding-heart socialist Democrats but even a few so-called Republicans, also fall into this category. Shame on them!

“Right now our government is truly ‘of the people, by the people, and for the people.’ These socialists who are crippling our youth with ideologies that don’t work and causing our educational system to spiral down toward ignorance and illiteracy are not trying to do things better! No, they are actively supporting an old lie which tries to abolish individual rights, freedoms, and ownership by insisting that everything exists for the good of the state. “Just sell your soul to big brother, my friend, and he will take care of you from cradle to grave, and tell you what to do and eat and say and wear, when and how much and with whom and where,” and if you so much as wince you’ll find yourself freezing in Siberia with a billion other political prisoners who couldn’t stand living under the cloud of lies and oppression and fear.

“No, sir! Not here! The communists have vowed to hang us (with our rope, no less – they’re too poor to afford their own), and the Marxist / socialists have vowed to do away with capitalism, the free market economy, and all personal freedoms in their so-called ‘classless society’ in which everyone is reduced to equal poverty – except their own ruling class, of course. I interpret that to mean they want to destroy our government and our way of life.

The Outrageous Platform

“You don’t improve a building by dynamiting its foundations, nor can this United States government be improved by throwing away our Constitution and substituting *The Communist Manifesto*! If I am elected president of these Unites States, I will swear to uphold the Constitution, in order to ‘provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.’ Any president who allows treason within this land to go unpunished has violated his oath of office. If I take that oath, I intend to keep it!”

“Boy oh boy! A real live pinko-commie-freak hater! I thought that kind of hatred became unfashionable back when we first became civilized!”

“Sir, I don’t believe I am the only one left who loves his country enough to hate our national enemies. If they attacked us with guns would you fight in our defense? Then why will you not fight when they attack us with deceitful words and false ideologies, especially against our weakest point, our nation’s children?”

“And speaking of our national enemies, one of the first things I would do is get us out of the United Nations and get the United Nations out of America, along with all their grand but Satan-inspired plans for their New World Order. Their words sound smooth, but I foresee the godless tyranny that would result if we gave up our national sovereignty. If you don’t believe me, just read Revelations 13 and 14.

“The next thing I would do is audit and nationalize the Federal Reserve and restore the constitutional requirement that Congress, not a bunch of foreign bankers, retain control of the US money supply.

The Outrageous Platform

“I would then set up a task force to calculate our true national debt, according to the actual value these foreign bankers have provided instead of the badly inflated and usurious debt they are telling us we owe for the use of their worthless paper money. My goal here is to get us back on some kind of a gold standard so that our money maintains its value over the long term.

“I would also start restructuring the IRS, which right now is too much like the Russian KGB. Our IRS has been running roughshod over the people it is supposed to serve for many years. It has gained a reputation for motivating by fear, making it almost impossible for a normal citizen to exercise his First Amendment right ‘to petition the government for a redress of grievances.’ Somewhere along the line, the IRS seems to have gotten confused, to where they now assume each individual taxpayer is guilty unless he can prove himself innocent. Now, this will take a lot of work, but in the end, about 90% of the bureaucracy would be eliminated, and the tax laws would be rewritten so any grade-school dropout will be able to figure out his fair share without help and will be able to file his tax return on a postcard. Speaking of ‘fair share’, it would be a flat rate, no more than 10%, rather than this progressive nonsense that takes from hard-working, productive citizens to give to those who refuse to work. That way, though the rich would still pay a lot more than the poor, even the very poor would pay a few dollars for the benefits they receive. No one should be able to play the system for his own laziness and greed. Paying the correct tax would be based upon the honesty of each taxpayer, rather than on fear of being audited. Unpatriotically refusing to pay their fair share of taxes would be a matter of public record...”

The Outrageous Platform

“*Trusting* the taxpayer, Mr. Clean? Why, the government would go broke in one year!”

Mr. Clean smiled at him. “You forget what I said about people who hate the American way of life and want to destroy our form of government. They will no longer live here. The vast majority of our citizens are indeed quite patriotic and trustworthy. They will pay their taxes as long as they are modest, fair, and properly used.

“Now a few other financial laws that we desperately need: I would require a balanced budget, even if it came out of the salaries of the legislators to pay for all that they voted for. I would insist that the national debt, once correctly calculated, be put on a regular payback plan, and would prohibit further debt except in time of war...”

“Yeah, what about war, Mr. Clean? What if we are attacked after you disband the military? How are you going to defend the country, by all your flowery words?”

“I never said I would disband the military, I said I would drastically cut it. Heavy military equipment like tanks, ships, and aircraft would be maintained by a core of professional military volunteers, who would also train the entire populace to defend the country. Every able-bodied, law-abiding male citizen would be required to own and learn to use a weapon of some kind, and would donate a week or two per year for military training. The cost to the government would thus be minimized, but in the event of an attack, every citizen would know exactly what to do in our defense, and already have the weapons to do it. Our forefathers called this a militia, and it is in the Second Amendment to the Constitution as a right as well as a responsibility. It worked in 1776 against a far superior enemy force, and it will work now.”

The Outrageous Platform

“Mr. Clean, you’ve got a lot of theoretically great answers that will never work in actual practice. The world has changed since 1776, and you are over-simplifying to the point of the ridiculous! You can’t govern people on good principles; they have to be kept under control with carefully codified laws for each different occasion. People are basically evil, and creatively so! If you reduce the laws to just a few, you only make it easier for evil people to hurt one another!”

“Good point, sir, and I do agree with your premise. But I disagree with your conclusion. Fewer, simpler laws are actually more effective if, and only if, they are built on the right foundation. God only needed ten basic laws, and these He later boiled down to just two: love God and love your neighbor. If we base our laws on that foundation, fewer will turn out to be better, more enforceable, and less expensive. But I agree with you that we need to have laws for every occasion. I’m not saying to eliminate all the laws and just love one another. I am insisting that we base our laws on God’s eternal law, and keep them simple and straightforward enough so that every citizen can fully understand exactly what is expected of him or her and what the penalties are for breaking the law. People are a lot more likely to keep laws that are clear and concise.

“I am also saying that federal law must concern itself only with federal tasks and responsibilities – not usurp the power that the Constitution has guaranteed to the states. States’ rights are very important, and the sooner the federal government gets out of the way, the sooner the states will be able to clean up their own laws. Any state that does it wrong, that tries to oppress its people, will discover its people voting with their feet to better states.”

The Outrageous Platform

As the arguments turned into fruitful discussions and the antagonism changed to honest inquiry, the convention delegates began to realize they had a serious contender here. This Mr. Clean was no ball of fluff. He was certainly far, far out, but he knew his history, had good reasons and sound principles backing up his statements, and real-life examples to defend his conclusions.

Oh, everyone knew he could never pull it off. Even if he were elected, Mr. Clean could never actually enact such an outrageous platform. Congress wouldn't let him. The judiciary wouldn't let him. Hey, the people wouldn't even let him! Too many were too used to government handouts for nearly every phase of their lives. But, you know, it just might shake people up enough to do some good, to have a man like that run for president.

And so the vote was taken, the ballots were counted, and to a subdued and shocked audience, the Republican candidate for the presidency was announced: Mr. Clean!

"How did that happen? And on the very first ballot! – What shall we do now? How can we possibly get him elected? – At least the Democrats won't be able to dig up any dirt on him like they usually do. – But Democrats have a strong contender, very popular with the people, with a lot of political connections and savvy. The first debate and he'll wipe Mr. Clean all over the stage!"

"Maybe we can tutor Mr. Clean in how to respond, to compromise – teach him what to say and how to phrase it so it won't offend people. – And what to keep quiet about! A lot of this stuff we can postpone until after the election. – Maybe bring it up after another four years, if he survives that long. – Yeah, we can rewrite his platform to hide the real thrust of what he is saying, soften it so that..."

The Outrageous Platform

“No!” came a thundering voice from the podium. “I said it before, and I’ll say it again. I do not, I will never, compromise truth. My entire platform is founded upon truth and integrity. I will tolerate no hypocrisy in my campaign. If I cannot be elected for who I really am and what I really believe, then I will not be elected at all, regardless of the consequence. However, note this well: I told the truth here. I pulled no punches. I stated the facts as I see them bluntly and boldly, without regard for whom it might offend, and you elected me. Why should not the same tactics work for the general public? I think you will be surprised at how many Americans still appreciate the unvarnished truth, even when it hurts!”

Stunned silence, then a soft buzz rippled through the crowd. “He’s right. Maybe we have more here than we bargained for. We’ll see how he does in the initial debates. – The people are ready for a change; who knows, maybe they’ll love him. – Well, at least we can help him find a quick-thinking running mate who can distract the public and help Mr. Clean get his foot out of his mouth when...”

“I already picked my running mate: Mr. Trustworthy here beside me, who announced my candidacy to you earlier. Go ahead, grill him. You will find that he believes like me and has the courage of his convictions to stand firm for what is true and right in any situation. You will also find that he, like me, is a man of unimpeachable integrity and trustworthiness. His platform, like mine, will be based upon virtuous character, both public and private, which in his entire family is impeccable. I say this for him because I know him; he is also very humble and will not readily admit to such a high level of integrity or godliness. Mr. Trustworthy, what do you have to say to that?”

The Outrageous Platform

“You are indeed very blunt, Mr. Clean, but kindly so. I accept your introduction as a challenge to continue to grow in all those areas.” And turning to the crowd, “From my earliest childhood, I have always tried to live according to the principles of wisdom and righteousness that I learned from my godly father. If you accept me as your vice presidential candidate, I can assure you that though you may debate my actions, you will never have cause to question my integrity. Now, what are your questions?”

Their questions were returned with careful, wise, thoughtful, and respectful answers. And when the vote was finally cast and counted, far fewer were surprised that Mr. Trustworthy was accepted next to Mr. Clean on the party ticket on the first ballot.

November, 2000. The campaign has gone relatively well, in spite of numerous violent and vicious enemies that Mr. Clean and Mr. Trustworthy seem to have acquired.

Surprisingly, these enemies usually managed to discredit themselves with no effort on the Republicans’ part. It seems that they got so angry at the Republican platform’s outrageous solutions to the country’s problems that they would lose control of themselves and do something stupid like lose their tempers in public, which everyone knows is political suicide.

Mr. Clean and Mr. Trustworthy were quick to point out (firmly but respectfully, of course) that the source of their anger, bitterness, hatred, and violence was actually Satan himself, who has always violently hated all that is true and good and wise and proper. And many of the people actually bought it, much to the surprise of the Republican campaign managers.

The Outrageous Platform

But now comes the moment of truth. Can he be elected? Or must we suffer through another four years of liberal Democrat ‘big-government-will-take-care-of-you’ and their resultant runaway taxes, out-of-control budget, and over-burgeoning bureaucracies? Good Republicans everywhere are biting their nails as they perch in front of their televisions. “What, he’s got New York? I didn’t think that was possible! They’re too liberal there. – And Florida! Massachusetts? Oh, no! – How did he get Wisconsin or Ohio? And Pennsylvania? – Even liberal Michigan?”

With awe and wonder, mouths dropped open and stayed open all across this wide land as state after state, some narrowly, but many with wide margins, gave their mandate for truth and righteousness. Though it seemed impossible, when it was over, Clean and Trustworthy had won a landslide victory of almost two thirds of the popular vote, carrying every state except California!

That makes an interesting side-story, though many didn’t understand it because the controversy was mostly in Spanish. But everyone saw the result. It was so sad. After the election, California opened the border to Mexico to allow irate Mexican-Americans to mourn the results with their fellow Mexicans, who willingly flooded in and took over. After the bloody riots quieted a bit, the mobs held an election, in which they seceded from the Union and declared California a new Mexican state.

They renamed it ‘Aztlán’ and claimed Los Angeles as their new capital city. They had originally tried to take Sacramento, the traditional capital city, but they couldn’t capture it. Most of the liberals there had gone south to help with the uprising, while a lot of the conservatives who had fled north helped hold the capital.

The Outrageous Platform

The outgoing president didn't even try to stop it, as he secretly sided with the Mexicans. By the time Mr. Clean had been sworn in as president, it was too late. Mexicans were in firm control of everything south of San Rafael and Sacramento, and anybody with any sense at all had fled north. Besides, by that time, much of southern California – now Aztlan – was on fire, due to the rioters, looters, anarchists, the loss of almost all the police and firefighters (who had fled north), and the strong gusty winds that fanned the flames. Berkeley and Oakland burned to the ground along with much of historic old downtown San Francisco. Parts of northern Los Angeles burned too, including all of Hollywood. The southern border cities also burned, including most of San Diego. It was so sad.

Conservatives in the north quickly held an election to repudiate the results of the last election and declare themselves back in the United States. They retained the name 'California' and their capital city, Sacramento, and set their new borders at the Golden Gate Bridge and the now burned out land where Berkeley had been. They belatedly assigned their half of California's electoral votes for Mr. Clean and celebrated his inauguration. They also claimed the south-eastern quarter of the state, including Yosemite, King's Canyon, Sequoia, and Death Valley.

Aztlan hotly contested that, but didn't have the power to prevent it. Rioters and looters don't have the discipline to establish a good border defense. The military forces and border patrol stationed in southern California were loyal to the president, so though they had obeyed the outgoing president's order to stand down during the crisis, after inauguration day, Mr. Clean had them pack up and move north and east to hold the new borders of California.

The Outrageous Platform

The major news media of course also sided with the Democrats and the Mexicans, so they supported Aztlan. But strangely, most Americans were so accustomed to hearing the press lie that it didn't affect the elections as much as it used to. However, a sharp journalist did discover that California elections had been fraudulent for many years, due to millions of illegal aliens who had been routinely voting Democrat (with the full knowledge and blessing of the Democrat Party, I might add).

Mr. Clean and his cabinet agonized over what to do about the catastrophe. The secession had not only hurt a lot of people, it was clearly illegal because the election was mostly driven by illegal votes. In the end, he decided to accept the division of the state without trying to send in the military to restore the union as Lincoln had done.

He wrote Aztlan a letter that stated (in part), "You have behaved like foolish children in aligning yourselves with Mexico. I hope that someday you will grow up, repent of your foolishness, and beg to rejoin the Union. Whether you do or not, I will not fight against you, for I do not wish to send troops against their own brothers. However, I will discipline you: first by sending you all our illegal aliens and second by sealing our borders with you. You will soon learn that running a government starting with lawbreakers can only result in a lawless society and its inevitable poverty and corruption."

Mr. Clean's prediction came to pass all too soon, as the law-abiding, productive Californians had mostly fled, their businesses had mostly been destroyed, and Aztlan's dependence on America's water, power, and federal aid quickly became critical. Aztlan soon became worse than Mexico, and the immigration flood turned back south.

The Outrageous Platform

I would like to say that the battle was now over, and that following the election, the good old United States of America was able to settle down and enjoy years of peace, prosperity, and growth – the natural consequence of godly governance. But alas, the battle has just begun.

The overwhelming majority of Americans who really believe in truth and righteousness as the basis for freedom and the foundation for national success, somehow seem inclined to go back to sleep after the election, leaving the entire task to their elected representatives.

But the far fewer so-called Americans who want to destroy the foundations upon which our peace and prosperity are built have not gone to sleep! No, sir! My dear friends Mr. Clean and Mr. Trustworthy are having to battle them every step of the way, and their loud laments and distorted word pictures published by a lying liberal and socialist-sympathetic press have somehow made us true patriots out to be the nation's enemies and have gotten us to feeling that we are in the minority.

But that isn't true, thank God. In a way, we can thank Aztlan, too, for their vivid object lesson demonstrating the end results of America's flirt with liberal progressives and Marxist socialism. Even Democrats are stunned at how quickly the most prosperous and beautiful state in the Union became a corrupt third-world hell-hole.

Patriotism still lives in America, and now the majority is starting to awaken. Those who care about truth and righteousness are learning this bit of wisdom: *"to be a friend of all that is good, be an enemy of all that is evil."* As they do, the United States of America is again receiving God's blessings (instead of His judgment), and Americans are again loved and respected by free nations everywhere.

The Muslim Problem

Many today are trying to cloud the issue, but I'll make it very simple. Devout Muslims hate Jews and want to annihilate them from the earth. Sadly, that's only the first step. Devout Muslims also hate Christians and want to annihilate them too. "First the Saturday people, then the Sunday people," they like to say. The third step then becomes obvious. Devout Muslims hate everyone who will not convert to Islam. They want to forcibly convert, enslave, or annihilate them, too, until the entire world is finally at peace – the peace of total submission to Allah (which is what the word 'Islam' actually means to them).

I am not talking about 'Muslims by convenience' who are Muslim only because of the culture around them and have no real faith of their own. I'm talking about the true believers in Islam, who may be twenty percent or less of the total number of Muslims worldwide. Forget the rest. They are irrelevant to our discussion.

Today's liberal progressives insist that the Muslims living in Palestine will be happy if we give them their own state next to Israel. My advice to them is, study a little history. Have Muslims ever happily lived in peace next to Jews? Or anyone else, for that matter? Aren't you being a little unrealistic thinking that will change now?

However, grant that they do need a place to live. Where should that be? Today's progressives want to carve up the ancient land of Israel to give the Palestinian Arabs another state, seemingly oblivious to what would happen there. Devout Muslims within that new Arab state would immediately take over and begin their traditional ethnic cleansing – ridding their new state of all Christians and Jews, destroying all Christian and Jewish holy sites, and forcing everyone there to swear allegiance to Allah.

The Muslim Problem

Then they would start again, loudly proclaiming that the Jews remaining in Israel were oppressing them, and sending rockets and children with suicide bombs across their new borders to placate the offense. After all, Israel must be an aggressor nation for daring to defend itself against Muslim aggression, and its expansionist policy must be condemned for daring to block the expansion of Islam. Anybody who doesn't know this is either incredibly naïve or willfully ignorant. Just study a little history.

To solve this problem, we need to analyze the attitude of today's progressives. They claim to be liberal and compassionate. However, they turn a blind eye to the oppression of their Arab friends everywhere else in the world. The Muslims already control roughly twenty-two countries surrounding Israel (including territory about 640 times the size of Israel and 60 times her population). In every single one of them, the Muslims have practiced ethnic cleansing and barbarism, not only trying to rid their lands of Christians and Jews, but also of Arabs who reject their style of Islam. They torture and kill any who oppose them. This ethnic cleansing seems to be okay with today's progressives, so let's carry that a little further.

What about Muslims in England? France? Spain? Germany? They have taken over parts of each country, making them no-go zones (even for local police) because they refuse to assimilate into the local cultures. To be consistent, give them their own states there, too, and allow them to get on with their ethnic cleansing of those newly conquered lands. For now, they'll take a third of England and a quarter of Spain, France, and Germany, thank you. Lesser amounts of other European nations will be okay until they build up their strength there, too.

The Muslim Problem

Now giving Muslims another state to radicalize and return to the Dark Ages doesn't seem nearly so much fun, does it? Perhaps we should consider an alternate solution. Let's end our failed experiment in multiculturalism and tolerance as if there were no evil in the world. Let's simply tell the truth. Islam is not just a faith – it is also an evil political ideology bent on conquering the world by force and destroying Western Civilization in the process. Study your history. If the Palestinian Arabs were not Muslims, they would already have assimilated into Israel, which welcomes peaceful Arabs living next to them. But Islam has taught them, almost from birth, to be filled with hate against anyone not submitted to Allah, especially Jews and Christians whose God is YHWH. That is the problem.

Now that we've defined the problem, the solution becomes obvious. We need to declare war. Islamists (and their sympathizers and apologists) are the enemy. They declared war on us hundreds of years ago, but because we did not recognize the enemy, we let them take over large parts of the world. Millions have already died in this war, and many more will die if we do not take action. Most of the dead are Christians and Jews, although many other faiths have also been slain. Even many moderate Muslims (Muslims by convenience) are dead because they didn't like the intolerant nature of authentic Islam.

I'm not going to say how to prosecute this war. I'm not a military leader. All I am saying is that before we screw up any more, we need to acknowledge the facts, recognize the enemy, expose the lies, and know the history. Oh, and one more thing. Liberal progressives who know all this and still side with the Islamists have blood on their hands. Aiding and abetting the enemy in time of war is treason.

The Muslim Problem

But rather than execute these traitors, I suggest a more merciful punishment. Give them a one-way ticket to the Muslim-controlled nation of their choice. They will quickly wish they had sided with Western Civilization.

Can we win this war? Bluntly, no, we can't. Not the direction we're headed. Having abandoned the God of the Bible, Europe has already lost and will succumb to Islam within a generation. England is still hanging on, but may not be far behind. America is at a crossroads. If we persist in electing liberal progressive Democrats to rule us, we certainly will lose, because they, like Europe, have turned against Israel and YHWH, the God of Israel.

The only nation I see actually winning is Israel, who is beginning to turn toward YHWH their God. For this is a spiritual battle, and He certainly will win it, along with those who side with Him and His people.

Ultimately, the Jews will possess the ancient land of Israel – all of it – for God is the owner of the land, and He gave it to them. His infallible Word promises that He will give them a new heart, a new Spirit, and they will live in peace upon the mountains of Israel (Judea and Samaria) with no one to make them afraid, and he will judge all the nations that came against them, and YHWH will dwell with them and be their God, and they will be His people. (See Ezekiel 35 and 36.) “Then you will know that I am YHWH your God, dwelling in Zion my holy mountain. So Jerusalem will be holy, and foreigners will never again invade her.” (Joel 3:17) Those who cannot agree with that are fighting against God Himself and are headed for destruction. I hope and pray that before it's too late, America will wake up and elect leaders who side with God, His people, and His eternal promises.

Do Christians Get Cancer?

I prefer to believe that the answer is no, Christians do not get cancer. In their carefulness to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, He leads them in caring for their bodies, His temple, so that such degenerative diseases do not trouble them. Of course, there are always the ‘make-believers’, the hypocrites for whom the Lordship of Jesus Christ is just an unrealistic fable. Their god is actually their belly, so it should surprise no one when they fall prey to all sorts of disease. But true Christians can claim God’s promise that, “...If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the Lord your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the Lord, am your Healer.” (Ex. 15:26)

Unfortunately, what I see around me does not seem to fit the above theory. I have asked God, “Why?” and, “What can I do about it?” In answer, He has given me many insights over the years, both from Scripture and as I observed others in their struggle with cancer.

I just finished reading another story in *Guidedposts* of a Christian family who struggled through the tragedy of the death of a loved one through cancer. My heart weeps with them. I see once again the truth of Hosea 4:6: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.” I am therefore led to share my own personal experiences with this dread disease that seems to strike such fear into the hearts of so many believers.

I have learned that there is indeed an answer, though it is not easy to hear unless the Holy Spirit has prepared your spiritual ears. Please, before you read on, ask Jesus to fill you with His Holy Spirit, to give you ears that hear and eyes that see what He may show you through my tale.

Do Christians Get Cancer?

My first real encounter with cancer was brief. A fifty-three year old man sitting next to me at work had smoked much of his life. One day I looked him straight in the eye and saw death written all over his face. I bluntly told him that unless he quit smoking he wouldn't last a year. He laughed in my face, saying that he had always had a strong constitution and smoke never bothered him at all.

Within a few days he had contracted 'laryngitis', which he swore was totally unrelated to his three-pack-a-day habit. He smoked his last cigarette about five months later, the day he died of a very fast moving throat cancer penetrating his lungs and lymph systems. (He couldn't quit smoking, even knowing it was literally killing him!) The point here was easy to see: cancer cures smoking, permanently. Maybe that's a good thing, considering the discomfort of all his friends, relatives, and coworkers.

My second encounter with cancer was down in Texas where I visited a beautiful, gentle Christian, Curtis, every six months on my business trips to Dallas. One visit, I found to my horror that his wife had terminal cancer. She had been to all the doctors in the Dallas area and had been given no hope. At the most, she was told, she had six months to live. She had even traveled to specialists in other parts of the country. The only one who had offered her any encouragement was some 'quack' nutritionist in the Seattle area, who had told her to cut out refined foods, meats, and dairy, and eat only vegetables – and those only raw until the cancer was gone.

I recall thinking that that was rather absurd; after all, cancer is just a disease you catch if you're unlucky. It has nothing to do with diet, right? That was not just my own opinion. Every doctor I had talked to felt the same way.

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When I got back home, I decided to make this a special prayer project. I prayed earnestly for Curtis' wife for about two months (until God told me that it was done, so I could stop praying and start praising Him for the answer). Sure enough, on my next visit to Dallas I found that the 'terminal' cancer was in a state of remission, and she was well on the road to recovery. They both had become veritable health nuts and were almost totally on natural and raw foods, but I knew that it was actually my prayers that had healed them. *Ha.*

I saw Curtis again, years later; he was then in his sixties, and he literally glowed with good health, vitality, and joy in the Lord. I had two questions: "How is your wife?" and "Are you still on that vegetarian diet?"

He answered with a smile that his wife was feeling better than ever in her life, and that they would never go back to "eating in the world's ways" again.

I should have caught the message then, for God was already dealing with me on my own diet. But it took one more adventure before I began to catch on. A committed Christian lady at work, Debby, called me over to her desk one day and asked if I would be willing to pray for a dear sister in the Lord from her church group in Oregon. Her name was Judy, and she not only had cancer, but also was pregnant with her fifth child. She had postponed medical treatment for the unborn child's sake and then had come to Seattle for chemotherapy right after the baby was born.

I did promise to pray for her. I prayed more fervently than I ever had before. I cried out to God for two months. I was beginning to believe the battle was won, when I got an invitation to her funeral. "What went wrong, Lord?" I cried. He said to go to the funeral and I would find out.

Do Christians Get Cancer?

I went. I saw two things there that really impressed me: the beautiful work of grace God had worked in the hearts of Judy's husband Steve and their children, and tables laden with all sorts of 'the king's delicacies': refined foods, sweets, dressings, creams, coffee, and an abundance of, you guessed it, pork. I learned that day that God does indeed work out His purposes even through our failures, weakness, and ignorance, but also that there is an easier way: keeping His commandments in the first place so the discipline is not required. I also began to learn the depth of truth to Proverbs 23:1-3. "When you sit down to dine with a ruler, consider carefully what is before you; ... Do not desire his delicacies, for it is deceptive food."

That church group was exceedingly careful to live out their faith in their daily lives, but on this one point, their appetites, they had chosen Satan's deceptive foods. Their eyes were therefore blinded so they could not see the damage it was doing to them physically. (By the way, God did answer my prayers for that family, though in a way I did not expect. He provided the perfect wife for Steve and mother for those five young children, in the person of Debby, the one who had first led me to pray for them.)

But the Lord was not done with me yet. Shortly after that, my best friend at work, Bill, a dear and sincere man of God, came to me on Friday with a prayer request. His mother was going in for exploratory surgery, suspecting cancer. So I prayed and wept with Bill, but I also had a few suggestions this time, as I was beginning to catch on. I asked Bill if his mother ate much meat, especially pork. Yes, they had always eaten a lot. She loved her bacon and eggs in the morning. So I hesitantly suggested to Bill that she consider changing to a more healthy diet.

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Bill didn't understand, but he heard me. He told me later that he had tried to convince her to change. But she chose to believe the doctors instead. They assured her that her diet had nothing whatsoever to do with the type of cancer she had, and they went right to work on her with surgery, radiation treatments, and chemotherapy.

The same Friday I had prayed with Bill, I came home to learn that my own mother required surgery to remove a rapidly growing cancerous tumor in her lower digestive tract – scheduled for early the next Monday morning!

Now, this is where the rubber meets the road. It's fine to counsel others on these new theories God was teaching me, but when it came to my own dear mother living right beside us, would I have the guts to suggest she ignore her doctor's advice and follow what the Lord was showing me? We prayed long and hard that weekend.

Our family had always kinda been garbage eaters, and we had had our share of 'the king's delicacies', including pork (since we were poor and it was the cheapest meat). But look at it from my mother's point of view. She had tried to feed us kids right, according to the best wisdom of the day: meat, dairy, bread, fruits, and vegetables, plus a sweet desert to reward us for eating a good meal. Sounded good to me, though looking back, it was mostly cooked and included a lot of refined sugar, white flour, and pork.

Being a Christian family, we could even justify pork from Scripture. After all, aren't all those Old Testament laws fulfilled in Christ? (Gal. 3:24 ff) And didn't God tell Peter to "... kill and eat..." the unclean animals forbidden by the old ceremonial laws? (Acts 10:13) And didn't Paul say that "...nothing is unclean in itself..." (Rom. 14:14) and "All things are lawful..." ? (1 Cor. 6:12 and 10:23)

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So what could I tell my mom? I really wrestled with that one! In the end, I asked her if she had faith and peace from the Lord about the operation. She responded, “No! I’m terrified!” I then suggested she wait until the Lord gave her assurance that it was right, for if she went ahead with it out of fear, she would not be walking by faith, and “...whatever is not from faith is sin.” (Rom. 14:23)

In the meantime, she went to a good nutritionist, who put her on a very strict diet (starting out with nothing but carrot / celery / cabbage juice, as I recall), and showed her how to get her digestive system cleaned out.

To make a long story short, my mother is now (this is about twenty-five years later) healthier than ever, and she is thoroughly enjoying eating God’s good foods in God’s ways. Bill’s mother was dead within the year.

But God was not yet finished with my cancer lessons. He sent Al into our lives, insisting that I “go fellowship with Al. I have some things to teach you through him.”

I obeyed, and now, thousands of delightful hours of fellowship later, I am full of thanksgiving to God for the abundance of His wisdom He has shown me through Al.

Al nearly died three times: from an accident, from lung cancer, and from an acute asthma attack. The third time, in the hospital under an oxygen tent, God said, “Well, Al, are you ready to go My way yet?”

Al finally gave up and said, “Yes, Lord.” From that time to this, Al has been actively submitting himself to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in everything as God leads him, even to submitting his eyes to see only what God leads him to see, his lips to speak only what God gives him to speak, and his appetite to eat only what God leads him to eat. (This is called being led by the Holy Spirit.)

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When I first saw Al about fourteen years ago, he looked thin, weak, and sickly, though recovering. Now he looks quite robust and healthy. He even jogs and skis. What was it that God led him to eat? Fruits, vegetables, grains, and nuts. Mostly raw. Genesis 1:29. That's all.

When I once saw him eating a big raw vegetable salad without even adding any salt or salad dressing or anything to pep up the taste, I asked him about it. He said it was delicious once you developed the taste for it, but that even before he developed the taste for it, he ate it because that is what God told him to eat. As he explained it, "It's easy once you let the Lord Jesus Christ be the ruler over your appetite. I no longer live to eat. Now I eat to live. Those who live to eat, eat dead foods merely for the taste. I eat living foods that I may live. Eating pure, raw, living foods keeps my body clean and strong and my mind sharp, so that I may know and do God's will. Why don't you try the Daniel test (Dan. 1:8–16) to see if God would also lead you this way?" (I condensed his discussion of several hours into those few statements.)

One more cancer victory before I wrap up. Eight years ago, Bill Farber was within a few weeks of becoming a cancer statistic. His body looked and smelled like death, he had pus oozing out of various bodily orifices, he was in unbearable pain, and he barely had the energy to get to the bathroom. He knew the cancer had spread throughout his whole body through his lymph system, and that he had no chance at all, except to try God's way.

I didn't know him back then, and from looking at him today, you'd never know he was sick in his life. He glows all over with health, and though he is in his sixties, his grey hair is starting to turn brown again.

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Bill has quit his (rather lucrative) research scientist / engineering job. Now he spends all his time traveling around the countryside spreading the good news that God's way works and helping people to get started on a program of hearing from God how He would have them treat their bodies. He gives talks explaining the inevitable consequences of following the world's ways of eating, medicine, and so on, and he gently guides people into an understanding of how God created our bodies to function. He has written several books, including one titled *Thank God for Cancer*. Even the title blesses people.

So now, back to the question I posed as the title of this article. Do Christians really get cancer? The answer I hope is now clear: Christians who have withheld lordship over their bodies, especially their appetites, do get cancer. And Christians who finally give up and let Jesus Christ be Lord over their physical passions and lusts, get healed.

If you call yourself a Christian, I challenge you to try this. The next time you dig into a bloody steak, some fat bacon, a sugar doughnut, a chocolate cheesecake, or even a cup of coffee or a can of soda, ask yourself, "Am I doing this because I know my Lord Jesus Christ wants me to? Or am I doing it to indulge an unbridled fleshly appetite in willful rebellion against the knowing in my heart that it is destroying this temple of God that is my body?"

"Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are." (1 Cor. 3:16–17)

So, what about me? I've told stories of others, but I'm sure you're wondering how I personally have responded to the Lord's training program regarding my diet.

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Well, I'm glad you asked, for I have good news to share. God is good. He does not condemn our failures, weaknesses, and inability to save ourselves from our sin and guilt. On the contrary, that is why Jesus Christ died, to bear in His own body at Golgotha our burden of guilt, to set us free from the bondage of sin in our lives and give us the power to walk with God in His righteousness. Praise God! That is why He is now both Lord and Savior for all who will believe on His name.

If you are still walking under the bondage of sin in your life, (and remember, anything that is not of faith is sin!) and are unable to get rid of evil habits, evil thoughts, and fleshly lusts, I assure you, *the Lord Jesus Christ is the answer!* Cast yourself upon Him without reservation, and you will know the Truth with a capital T, (for Jesus is Truth) and the Truth will set you free.

I have found so far three basic ways in which Jesus sets people free. The first is the miraculous deliverance, which He primarily uses among baby Christians to give them faith. The second is the way He used with me at first: He allowed me to suffer the consequences of what I had done to my body and gave me the grace to endure, so I could learn this truth: "Be not deceived, God is not mocked. For whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap." (Gal. 6:7) For over ten years, I was in pain, slowly learning what I needed to be able to receive the third way.

The third way is the easiest, yet it seems to the be hardest for people to receive. I call it 'the high road' or 'the road of obedience'. After I had grudgingly submitted to His discipline for all those years, I finally gave up to Jesus' Lordship over my body, and asked Him to "crucify my body, together with its passions and lusts." (Gal. 5:24)

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That sounds difficult, but it wasn't. He taught me to simply reckon it done and look to Him minute by minute for His strength, wisdom, and grace to walk in His ways.

What a deliverance! No longer do I "continue in sin, that grace may abound." (Rom. 6:1) Instead, I determine to trust completely in the Lord Jesus Christ. I commit my every thought and action to Him, knowing that He will make my paths straight. (Ps. 37:5) Surely He knows if I'm headed into sin. He wants to deliver me even more than I want to be delivered! So here is what I do. First, I keep myself in tune with God by listening for His still, small voice to my heart (which is the prompting of His Holy Spirit) and setting my heart to do His will whenever I find it. Second, I check to be sure it lines up with the Holy Scriptures and wait for confirmation until I know in my heart that it is right. Then I just do it. This gives me the power to avoid the sin and walk on with God.

Remember those verses that I thought justified eating pork and other unclean foods? (See Lev. 11.) Well, I've also learned that merely because poison is not inherently evil is no reason for me to take it into my body. "All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify." (1 Cor. 10:23) "...all things are lawful, but I will not let anything control me." (1 Cor. 6:12) By God's grace, Christians are free from the Old Testament law, but "... shall we then continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid!" (Rom. 6:1-2)

We're no longer bound to the old covenant God gave to Israel, but that doesn't change the fact that, for example, eating swine's flesh is still called a detestable thing worthy of death in Isaiah's prophecy of the future glorious return of Christ to establish His Kingdom! (Isa. 66:17)

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Indeed, the **wisdom of God** behind all those old laws (regarding ceremonial washing, pork and other unclean foods, draining the blood, not eating the fat, and so on) is very clear to me now. In our human wisdom, we think we know what won't hurt us, but God knows what's *best* for us! Believe me, He did not give all those laws to the Jews just to be a burden on them; He gave those laws to be a blessing, because He loves His people and wants them to be healthy and strong. If we deliberately keep ourselves ignorant of God's laws (or His principles behind them), then we have chosen the hard road, the road of discipline, sickness, and suffering, and have missed a great blessing.

Mind you, I'm not saying that choosing the hard road (in good conscience) is wrong. We who live under God's grace are indeed free from the law. It won't keep you out of heaven if you believe that eating pork (for example) is a good way to treat your body that is His temple. In fact, it might even get you to heaven sooner! I'm merely saying that we Christians must learn to live by faith rather than by our fleshly appetites. If we fall and give in to the fleshly appetite, we repent and seek God's grace to not fail next time, rather than giving up and resigning ourselves to a lifetime of failure. God's grace, after all, is not merely the undeserved favor He shows to us sinners; it is also His own power placed within us to enable us to overcome sin. "... for it is God who is at work within you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure." (Phil. 2:13)

I well know that you and I, in our own strength, cannot live the perfect life of total 100% submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, even in such a simple thing as what we put into our mouths. God knows we are weak, made of dust, and unable to keep His commandments.

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But He in us is able! “Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless, with great joy...” (Jude 24)

In summary, this is what He has been teaching me regarding keeping free from cancer:

- I try not to eat any of the unclean animals listed in Leviticus 11, especially pork and shellfish.

- I don’t eat blood, and I try to avoid or at least minimize the bloody red meats. (Gen. 9:4)

- I try not to eat animal fat, or animals that have been intentionally fattened by high food intake, little exercise, and hormone injections. (Lev. 3:17 and 7:25) I have also stopped eating (or greatly reduced) most dairy products and have gone on an extensive colon cleansing program to unclog my digestive system from the effects of years of excess animal milk and other congesting foods.

- I don’t eat any refined sugar, and I rarely allow any refined (white, bleached or unbleached) flour.

- My wife tries to buy organic foods when possible.

- I avoid preservatives, chemicals, drugs, and air pollution of all kinds, especially tobacco smoke. I try not to breathe them or let them touch my skin.

- I eat plenty of fruits, vegetables, seeds, nuts, and grains, preferably raw (or sprouted) to maximize natural nutrients and enzymes. I aim for 50% raw, especially in the summer when our garden is producing. I also try to separate fruit meals from vegetable meals, to aid digestion.

- Plenty of clear, fresh air, pure water, and regular, vigorous exercises are essential and are aids to healing. I drink about a quart of warm water when I first wake up, as my ‘internal shower’, and I try to total several more quarts during the day, preferably in between my meals.

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I keep a window open while sleeping (even in the winter) for fresh, oxygen-rich air. I exercise regularly on a bouncer, walking, or riding my bicycle, or on a treadmill when the weather is poor.

– I do celebrate now and then with party foods (though always in moderation) and do not condemn myself or others when during our celebrations we eat things we normally should avoid. (See Nehemiah 8:10.)

– I give excess stresses to God, trust Him for them, and rejoice always, with thanksgiving.

This is how He has led me. I know that in this leading, He has delivered me from cancer (and other degenerative diseases) that I unknowingly may have been heading for, so that I can now claim the promise of Exodus 15:26 as I mentioned at the beginning.

Praise God! Now I can truly say “Jesus Christ is Lord,” my Lord, over every area of my being. For if He knows of some hidden area of my life that has yet to be turned over to His Lordship, He also knows that He has my full permission and cooperation for Him to deal with it.

Therefore, “I know that when He appears I shall be just like Him, for I shall see Him as He is. Because I have this fervent hope within me I diligently purify myself, just as He is pure.” (1 John 3:2b – 3, personalized)

Praise the Lord Jesus Christ!

UPDATE: I wrote this essay in 1995. My mom lived a remarkably healthy life until late 2007 when, her health finally failing at the age of ninety-five, she came to live with us. She suffered congestive heart failure and went to heaven in 2008, still in faith that Jesus is her healer.

Why Johnny Can't Read and What To Do About It

A lot of people are concerned about the dramatic drop in scholastic aptitude test scores in the public education system in the United States of America. There are many theories attempting to explain it and proposing how to correct it.

But the explanation is very simple when viewed from the perspective of our sovereign, almighty, all-wise, and all-loving God – yes, the God we acknowledge in our national motto: “In God We Trust.”

America's public education system was founded with the stated purpose of teaching children to read the Bible, and through the Bible, instilling in them godly morals, virtue, and character. Early American colleges were all founded to prepare young men for Christian ministry. If you don't believe it, read the *real* American history books – not the modern history books that are edited (with malice aforethought) to remove all references to God, the Bible, the godly character of our early American heroes, and the godly heritage on which this nation was founded.

The result of our founding fathers' godly dedication was God's blessing on our public education system (and our entire nation). Without computers, with few books or supplies, often in one-room schools, children learned the essentials. They also learned to think, reason, and debate from a correct worldview. They developed integrity, self-discipline, a willingness to work hard, and the love of learning. And yes, many of them also learned to love God and His law. Within a generation, the brilliance, virtue, and creativity of Americans was admired worldwide. Nearly overnight, we became a first-rate world power, loved, trusted, and respected wherever we went. Our word was our bond. ‘Yankee ingenuity’ was proverbial.

Why Johnny Can't Read and What To Do About It

However, something changed in 1932 when John Dewey was elected honorary president of the National Education Association (NEA). John didn't believe either the Bible or the God of the Bible. Perhaps you are not aware that John Dewey was also a chief designer of the 1933 *Humanist Manifesto!* That's right, John's religion was secular humanism. The US Supreme Court even admitted that secular humanism was a religion in the 1961 *Torcaso vs Watking* (367US488) landmark decision.

Being a secular humanist, John of course felt obliged to use his rather extensive influence to ensure that his religion gained control over the public education system. In this he was remarkably successful (where were the Christians? Asleep in their soft padded pews?), and the result is boldly stated by another honorary president of the NEA, Charles Francis Potter: "Education is a most powerful ally of humanism, and every American public school is a school of humanism. What can the Sunday school, meeting for an hour once a week, and teaching only a fraction of the children, do to stem the tide of a five-day program of humanism?"

In essence, the humanists preach Satan's lie as truth. Satan says, "You shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. You will be free! Free of restraint! Free to follow your heart, do your own thing, be whoever you want to be!"

What do you think our sovereign, all-powerful, and all-wise creator God thought of that?

I believe He thought, "Okay, if you won't read the Bible, there is no reason for you to read at all." *I believe He has been systematically removing Himself, His wisdom, and His blessing from the public education system ever since the religion of secular humanism replaced Christianity.*

Why Johnny Can't Read and What To Do About It

So, where did the brilliance and creativity go? Did all Americans become stupid? Not at all. But even a genius who hates God's wisdom can become profoundly evil. Case in point: Satan is extremely shrewd and cunning. Smarter than any of us. Yet we know where he ends up!

Let's not blame God for our wrong choices. If schools teach children all about drugs or sex (for example) and their parents permit it, they shouldn't be surprised to find their children experimenting with their new knowledge. The knowledge of evil leads to involvement in evil. It becomes a downhill spiral called 'dissipation'. Giving in to the lusts of that lower nature dissipates their life-energy. It results in mental and emotional perversion as well as degrading and self-abusive acts, and a consequential twisting of their God-given brilliance and creativity. That lower nature is never satisfied. It becomes all-consuming.

This is the religion of secular humanism: self is god. Whatever feels good is good. With no transcendent God or absolute truth or Judgment Day to hold us to account, the humanist is free to indulge himself to the fullest.

But teaching lies regarding God's involvement in American history does not negate the truth! Truth is still truth for any who seek it. Many still in the public school system, even many non-Christians, are still truth seekers.

I believe that even within the public school system, God has reserved for Himself many godly teachers (and brilliant pupils) who have not yet bowed their knee to secular humanism. I believe that God is slowly but surely calling them out into private schools, charter schools, or home education. Even secular observers are noticing that scholastic aptitudes among private and home-educated students exceeds that of public schools.

Why Johnny Can't Read and What To Do About It

What should concerned Christians do about it?

This is the bottom line. Knowing how evil public education has become, how saturated with lies in every subject, and how entrenched are the humanists who now control the system, do you really think that we should continue to support it? Sure, some children (with brave and diligently involved parents) have managed to survive and become good citizens and even godly adults. But how many more have been corrupted, intentionally dragged down into immorality and godlessness, and ultimately destroyed? And how long will we let this continue? Until they capture the rest? That is their goal! They hate God, and they fully intend to keep up their insidious work until no one can graduate still believing in biblical morality or the God of the Bible. That is already true in a number of subjects in college – psychiatry, for example, which requires you to support the homosexual agenda.

We do need to expose the lies. More than that, let's:

1. Recognize that God gave *you* the freedom and the responsibility to ensure *your* children's education is based on truth. Don't abdicate your duty by allowing the government (or the God-hating NEA) to feed them lies.

2. Instead of trying to put the Bible back into public schools, I suggest we vote to reduce public education funding. Do we want our taxes to support the religion of secular humanism? One way of doing this is to set up a voucher system in which the funding goes with the student whether the parent chooses public, private, or home education. Some parents who don't care will choose public education regardless, and they should have that choice. But for parents who don't want their children brainwashed by the state, this would be a godsend.

Why Johnny Can't Read and What To Do About It

3. Let's support private and home education for these precious children God has entrusted to us. Help make these alternative schools the best they can be.

4. Help educate parents! Many parents don't even know what is being taught to their children. Tell parents, "Your child is being told that there is no creator God, that life spontaneously generated from pond scum, that they evolved from monkeys, that there is no absolute right or wrong, no absolute truth, and no Judgment Day where we will have to give an account for our deeds, that life has no design and no eternal purpose, and that all religions are equal except Christianity, which is hateful, intolerant, and dangerous. In college they learn that it is okay to form mobs, scream obscenities, vandalize, and loot whenever their tender feelings get offended. And they learn that our cherished freedoms of speech, of religion, or of the press only apply to liberals like themselves. Conservatives, or anyone who might say something to challenge their own (perverted) worldview, should have no such freedoms. The hypocrisy would blow their minds if they ever dared to think about it. It's no wonder so many zone out on liquor, drugs, movies, video games, and sex. Are you sure you want to entrust your children to public schools?"

5. Let's all step up to our God-given responsibilities to ensure that at least our own children's education is based upon the truth of God's Word and godly wisdom, morals, discipline, virtue, and character.

6. Let's be careful to live godly lives as an example and inspiration to God's precious little ones.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

(Prov. 9:10)

Why Not Socialism as Our Next Form of Government?

The republican form of government in the United States has come under fire by many Americans as outdated, inadequate to meet our needs, and unresponsive to our desires. Some say that our US Constitution and Bill of Rights, the many US Supreme Court decisions, and the mountain of supporting legislation upon which our laws are based, have passed critical mass and bogged down.

In their eyes, major changes in our form of government are overdue. Some zealous leaders in this nation even believe that the whole mess should be scrapped. They are subtly (and sometimes deceptively) working to replace it with socialism. They've gotten many to agree with them, especially young, impressionable students and the poor.

What is socialism? Socialism is a theory of economics in which government has control over businesses, capital, and the means of production and distribution. According to this theory, all people contribute to the common good (the state) via taxation, and the state takes care of them by redistributing their wealth via welfare programs. There are various forms and levels of socialism. The worst form is communism, in which the state not only controls but actually owns the means of production, allowing the people few freedoms and not much private ownership. The best form is democratic socialism in which the people get a vote in all this: who their leaders are, how much tax they have to pay, how much they get out, who benefits, and who doesn't. This allows more freedom and more private ownership, but still cedes a good deal of control over their lives to the leaders they have elected. In all forms of socialism, the government promises free stuff, paid for by taxes confiscated from the rich.

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Why is socialism so attractive to the poor? This appeals to the downtrodden working classes who feel oppressed by the ultra-wealthy business magnates. The worker who sweats away his life-blood trying to stay out of debt only to see his wealthy employer get even richer, may become desperate for an alternative. The promise of socialism is liberally sprinkled with the word, 'fair'. The rich must pay their 'fair share', but it would be 'unfair' to tax the poor, those struggling to make ends meet, those with big debts, health problems, or disabilities, single mothers, etc. Thus all forms of socialism have a progressive taxation system that penalizes success and rewards failure.

Is socialism really a viable alternative? I have searched for actual cases in world history where socialism has worked. Some seemed to work for a while, but I have not found any long-term success stories. Many countries in western Europe are leaning socialist, but even Denmark, arguably the most socialist welfare state in Europe so far, still has a high level of capitalism. (Denmark's means of production is controlled not by the state, but by market driven forces.) Some welfare states, like Greece, have already failed. Others are on the brink of failure, though for some the jury is still out. But though headed in that direction, none of these are socialist states. Every truly socialist state has either failed or reformed.

The early Christian church (described in Acts 2 of the New Testament) has been given as an example of socialism by those who didn't understand it. There is no doubt that it was successful, as have been some other communities that were patterned after the New Testament church. However, that was not socialism.

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The main difference is that socialism enforces submission to the state, while Christianity encourages (never forces) a willing submission to the Holy Spirit. When a Christian community loses its focus on each individual being led by the Holy Spirit, then it soon tries to force submission to the organization or to a set of rules (a form of socialism). When that happens, the community cannot long survive.

The early Pilgrims who came to Plymouth in 1620 tried socialism for several years at the dictates of their charter. Those years were called 'the starving time'. They never had enough to eat until they allowed each family to reap the results of their own labors. Their counterparts in Jamestown never resolved that issue, and suffered for it.

No, socialism did not work for them, which is why our founding fathers carefully established our government based on each individual's rights and responsibilities "...for the mutual Preservation of their Lives, Liberties, and Estates, which I call by the general Name, Property. The great and chief End therefore, of men's... putting themselves under Government, is the Preservation of their Property." (John Locke, *Of Civil Government*, 1690.)

Sweden flirted with socialism in the 1970s, but within twenty years they got disillusioned and restored free markets, school vouchers, and no minimum wage laws. Canada is still moving toward socialism. Many Canadians feel oppressed under the tax burden and their nanny state telling them what they can/can't do and say and think. Those I've talked to would rather give up their privileges of the welfare state to recover the freedom to live and use their property according to their own conscience.

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What about the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (now Russia)? What about the People's Republic of China? What they have is called communism, which is not just state control, but actual state ownership of the means of production for the common good. But that is a lie. They have progressed beyond communism to what socialism always (knowing human nature) tends to become: an oligarchy. That is the absolute rule by a wealthy, godless few at the expense of the many. Looking beneath its lies, propaganda, and coverups, it has been a dismal failure. The sum total of human suffering (including the torture and murder of those who believe in God) within those socialist states in the last two decades alone has exceeded the much publicized torture and murder of the six million Jews in Nazi Germany. The only reason they haven't failed entirely is that they have backed off and allowed some level of free-enterprise and capitalism.

No, the socialist dream of a peaceful, happy, productive society with the promise of equality for all based on state control, has never (to my knowledge) been successful. I believe that it never will be. Here is why. It is based on external control, man-made laws – force, if you will. But due to our fallen nature, no external force is capable of controlling the human heart apart from the grace of God.

Socialism presupposes:

- equality of all members. In practice, only Christians see all people as created equal. Socialist leaders, who don't believe that 'creation myth', always demand to be 'more equal than others', and control the rest through manipulation, greed, and lust for power.

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- everyone contributes according to his abilities. In practice, human nature (untouched by divine love) is selfish and lazy and will not work for the good of the state unless forced, and even then only half-heartedly.
- everyone receives fairly according to his needs. In practice, a person's basic needs are inevitably confused by his wants. The lusts of the flesh nature are never satisfied, creating a constant battle for distribution of the wealth. The fallen human nature has many takers and few givers.
- everyone is motivated to do his best for the common good. In practice, very few (outside of the grace of God) are ever motivated to do anything for the good of anyone other than themselves and their own circle of loved ones.
- the lust, greed, selfishness, ambition, cruelty, anger, violence, laziness, and other evils of the human nature are only temporary, due to our environment, and they will fade away when the ideal socialist state is achieved. That is the worst lie of all, for it attributes to environment what only God can do – change the human heart. Show me a person who was evil, selfish, or lazy and now is industrious, loving, content, peaceable, patient, generous, and eager to help others, and I'll show you an individual whose character changed by a spiritual transformation of his heart by the living God.

No, socialism is not the answer for America (or any other nation). It is a lie being promoted by communists and globalists for the purpose of bringing people into bondage to their New World Order. Like Karl Marx, they push socialism merely as a stepping stone to Marxist communism, which always ends in a tyrannical oligarchy.

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I urge you to not accept that lie, in whatever form it may come. Are you aware that it is already woven into much of the political maneuverings of our nation? In spite of the safeguards (checks and balances) in our Constitution and Bill of Rights, our government is becoming bigger and bigger and gradually consuming more and more of our resources and freedoms. Make no mistake; every vote for bigger government is a push toward socialism. Every new part of our lives over which the government gains control is one more freedom lost and one more step toward governmental control (and eventually ownership) of all our property (“lives, liberties, and estates”).

Do you really want the welfare state at the expense of all your individual freedoms? I don't, but I see more and more people with that 'cradle-to-grave security' and 'Big Brother will take care of you' mentality. Big Brother will promise to take care of you, as long as you sell your body and soul to the state! That kind of 'social security' is really not security at all, but a form of slavery.

No, I don't believe socialism is for America. By its very nature it cannot ever be anything but a grand political theory. Wherever it is attempted, it demands a monstrous governmental bureaucracy to try to manage all the state owned property and means of production and to try to control the unwilling, selfish, greedy, irresponsible, and lazy citizens. Governmental bureaucracy has proven to be the least efficient way to run anything! Just look at the mess big government has made of our public education, welfare, social security, health care, foreign aid, and even the US Postal Service (before it began to be privatized).

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Please, fellow Americans, don't let our elected public servants scrap the US Constitution and our republican form of government in their quest for that unachievable socialist lie! God gave us the government we now have. He blessed us and made this nation great under it. It has gotten out of hand, due to the pressures of so many special interest groups wanting free handouts for their social needs (wants) or justification for their vices. But it is still government "of the people, by the people, and for the people." That concept is rare and precious!

Instead, let's get our government back to the basics.

What was it originally designed for, and why did our nation become great under it? I believe our government was set up for only three purposes: (See Rom. 13:1-7.)

1. to establish a uniform set of laws based on God's law, so we can live in peace and freedom to do right in God's sight. (This also requires a stable currency, equal justice under the law, and impartial judges.)
2. to encourage those who do good.
3. to punish those who do evil, and protect us from them. (This also includes guarding our national borders.)

I believe that everything else could be handled better locally or privately, if it needs to be done at all.

Welfare, for example, should be handled by volunteers and church organizations, as it was before government took over and made such a mess. Even disaster aid is best handled by private organizations. For example, Southern Baptist Disaster Relief and Samaritan's Purse both do an excellent job of appealing for funds and distributing them where the real needs are, with little overhead or waste.

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Education can never be handled by the state without pushing one religion to the exclusion of others (in our case today, excluding Christianity in favor of the religion of secular humanism with its lies of the innate goodness of man and the creation of all things by time and chance). Private and home schools have proven to result in more excellent education at less overall cost, and they often manage to expose the lies as well.

The need for foreign aid is questionable. Is it necessary for our security? Or just to protect our business interests? In general, I think our government should stop all foreign aid. If a country (such as Haiti) has humanitarian needs, tell the American people; they have proven exceedingly generous. A possible exception is aid to Israel, which was essential for her survival and for which, biblically, our nation will be blessed.

Defending other nations against attack is a different story. We need allies who share our love of freedom under law. We must value them and help defend them. Our mutual defense pact ought to vow that an attack on any is an attack on all, it will be met with overwhelming force, the aggressors will be quickly annihilated, and all their land and possessions will be permanently given to their intended victim. Period. If this is understood up front and enforced, it will rarely happen (likely only once). Nations will learn to settle their differences peacefully.

A small army will always be required, but a full standing army may not be needed if a “well-regulated militia” of armed citizens is ready to come to the national defense, as prescribed in Amendment II of the Bill of Rights.

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If an allied nation is attacked, the full militia may need to be mobilized, but that will be rare if we keep ourselves trained and ready, and if our allies' enemies know for sure we are strong and determined to keep our vows.

Gun control is another socialist lie, intended to quietly disarm the populace in order to more easily enslave them. The fact is (from Amendment II of our Bill of Rights) that US citizens have both the right and the responsibility to "keep and bear arms," because that is "necessary to the security of a free state." When guns are outlawed, only outlaws will have guns! And that goes double for our socialist leaders who want to disarm us but insist on keeping their own weapons. This creates a ruling elite class, and turns the entire constitutional principle of "equal under the law" on its head. These leaders might be believable if they would abide by the laws they lay on us.

Our entire Constitution and Bill of Rights are based on biblical principles. Our early framers were men of godly character and virtue. They had a good working knowledge of the Holy Bible. They may not all have been Christians, but they did all accept the validity of biblical principles and incorporated them into our government's framework. Our nation became great because God blessed it, as long as we used His principles of wisdom and based our laws on His law. *God's Word defines what is good and what is evil!* When we redefine evil to be good (i.e. encouraging sodomy, illegal immigration, and the murder of unborn children) and good to be evil (i.e. our public schools cannot teach our children to read the Bible or pray, to be virtuous and patriotic, or to know our godly national heritage) then God's blessings begin to wane.

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Are you aware that “Separation of church and state” is **not to be found** anywhere in the US Constitution or Bill of Rights? But it is in the constitution of the USSR! For example, Articles 142 and 227 of the “Articles of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR” – the Russian Republic – state that it is illegal to organize religious meetings for worship or study, to teach religion to children, or to print religious literature. These laws are enforced, too. Many thousands of prisoners, whose only crime was staying true to their own consciences, are serving long terms.

Our Bill of Rights (First Amendment) says the opposite: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free expression thereof.” Sadly, that has been reinterpreted by the Supreme Court to allow hundreds of laws prohibiting the free expression of religion and establishing secular humanism as our official state religion. Note that this First Amendment expressly limits Congress, like much of our Constitution. It has no hint of limiting people from freely expressing their religious ideas in public. Yet Congress also turned that on its head by passing laws to fine or jail people for living according to their deeply held religious beliefs.

No wonder the United States of America is in big trouble! We had a good thing going, but it has been torn out of context and reinterpreted by people who don’t know what they’re doing. They couldn’t know, since they don’t have the God-centered worldview, the deeply religious background, or the godly character, integrity, and virtue of our founding fathers. If they did, they would recognize that godly principles have given our government a good solid foundation, and they wouldn’t try to destroy it.

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So instead of changing our form of government, let's fix the one we've got by restoring the godly foundation upon which it was built. There can only be one basic standard of right and wrong in a nation, and in ours it is the Word of God. Many who didn't like that were free to come to the United States and to worship as they pleased, but that does not change the standard! Those who don't want the Word of God as our standard are free to worship however their own conscience dictates (or not worship at all) as long as they don't try to destroy the very standard that gave them their freedom in the first place! Yes, I have a real problem with those who claim that their freedom to worship is actually a freedom to silence everyone else's worship, or, worse yet, is a right to impose their worship of self, Satan, lies, evil practices, and all forms of moral perversion upon all those around them. And I have a real problem with those guilt-ridden souls who claim to be offended by any mention of God (unless it's used as a swear word) and feel that their freedom in America should be the freedom from ever having to hear prayers or see crosses or other religious expressions in public.

This nation can again be great and receive the blessing and protection of almighty God in whom we trust. But only if we:

- are not ashamed of our Christian heritage.
(Instead, we learn from it!)
- are willing to repent of departing from
God's standard of right and wrong.
- start learning (and teaching our children)
the principles and wisdom of God's Word.

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- are willing to work to restore this nation's laws to the right standard of good and evil: God's law as revealed in Scripture.
- are willing to stand firm in what is right, even in the face of those who push lying ideologies such as socialism and humanism.
- stop depending on government to do everything for us and cast our vote for less government, more personal responsibility.
- trust God to restore America's greatness as we return to building our lives, individually and nationally, on His principles.
- stop voting for politicians based on their words; look at their records and don't believe their lies.
- vote to elect a virtuous president who will appoint to the Supreme Court judges with godly character, convictions, and morals.
- vote to elect virtuous legislators who will approve the appointment of godly men to our courts.

I love this United States of America! I hope you do, too. As I have studied our history, I know that our freedom was not cheap! Let's not sell it cheaply to the socialists, globalists, or secular humanists who are trying to destroy its foundations. They preach peace, but their 'peace' demands conformity to their plans for world domination and tyrannical control. As our forefathers knew, peace at any price is a lie! Ben Franklin reminded us that, "Those who would sacrifice liberty for security deserve neither."

Why Not Socialism as Our Next Form of Government?

Do you remember when being called a communist was the worst possible accusation, and when the pledge of allegiance brought tears to your eyes? God's principle of 'love your enemies' applies to individuals, but not to nations or political ideologies! Communism (socialism) and secular humanism are our enemies, and yes, we love those people, but we hate their lies and the evil principles that hold them in bondage!

Oooh... did I say hate? Yes, I did! I'm not ashamed to be an American, to love what I know is good for America, and to hate what I know will destroy it. Yes "give to me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free," but why are they coming here? To become Americans and participate in the American dream? Or to 'fundamentally transform' America by bringing here the cultures, laws, and philosophies that destroyed their own nations? I will do my part so that they can still breathe free, by encouraging them to leave behind those lying ideologies and evil principles that held them in poverty and slavery in the nations which gave them birth. If America fails, where then will the oppressed go?

Do you love America? America is a great nation only because it was founded upon the godly principles of the Bible. These principles gave us the freedoms we have, especially the freedom from tyranny and the freedom to practice our faith according to our conscience. Only as we restore, guard, and preserve that foundation will the United States of America remain a great nation, one that immigrants desire. True Americans are those individuals who appreciate their freedom and diligently seek "the mutual preservation of their Lives, Liberties, and Estates."

What Is the Gospel?

The gospel is:

The good news that Jesus is come

- to pay the law's penalty for our sin
by sacrificing Himself in our place (Heb. 9:26)
- to take away sin (1 Jn. 3:5), resulting in
justification of life for all mankind (Rom. 6:8–11)
- to destroy the works of the devil (1 Jn. 3:7)
- to set free those held captive by sin (Rom. 6:17–18)
and by poverty, sickness, and oppression (Lk. 4:18)
- to deliver those who through fear of death
were all their lives subject to slavery (Heb. 2:15)
- to perfect the church as a many-membered Bride
for Himself (Rev. 19:7–8), worthy of His name
- to bring her many members into unity with Himself
so they are as one body (1 Cor. 12:12–14)
with Christ as the head (Eph. 1:22–23; Col. 2:19)
- to also bring many sons to glory (Heb. 2:10)
and sanctify them, so that He is not ashamed
to call them His own brothers (Heb. 2:11)
and invite them to His wedding feast (Rev. 19:9)

so that we saints could

- know the Father through Christ (Jn. 14:6 ff; 17:3)
- overcome tribulation in Christ (Jn. 16:33)
- walk with God as He created us to walk (Rev. 3:4–5)
- overcome the evil one (1 Jn. 2:13; Rom. 16:20)

What Is the Gospel?

receive eternal life (Jn. 3:15–17; 10:28; Rom. 6:23),
the same life-form as Jesus Himself (1 Jn. 5:11, 20)
be changed (1 Cor. 15:51–52) into the image of Christ
(Rom. 8:29); partake of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4)
be filled up to the fullness of God (Eph. 3:19; 4:13 ff)
participate in His ministry as His ambassadors,
reconciling all things to Himself (2 Cor. 5:19–21)
set all creation free from futility into the freedom
of the glory of the children of God. (Rom. 8:18–23)
The King of glory (Ps. 24:7–10) is doing all this for us
He has already won the victory (1 Cor. 15:50–58)
He is able (Jude 24), for He has all power (Eph. 1:18–23)
and all authority (Matt. 28:18)
He will complete it (Phil. 1:6), for He is love (1 Jn. 4:8, 18),
and true love never fails (1 Cor. 13:8)
The growth (increase) of His Kingdom government
will never cease (Isa. 9:7)
Ultimately, every knee will bow and every tongue will
confess to acknowledge His Lordship – no exceptions!
(Rom. 14:11; Phil. 2:10–11; Isa. 45:21–23)
so that God in Christ Jesus will ultimately be all in all
(1 Cor. 8:6; 15:22–28; Eph. 1:10, 22–23; 4:6, 10;
Col. 1:16–20; 3:11; Rom. 11:36; Heb. 2:10)
And this is all still too small a vision, for God is always
bigger and the gospel is always better than we could
ever even ask or imagine. (Eph. 3:20–21)

People's Primer on Politics

The United States of America used to have statesmen of integrity, who were elected to public office as public servants. These were intelligent and virtuous men whose primary focus was not ruling, it was serving the people for the good of the country according to our Constitution.

No more. Now we have politicians whose primary focus is getting reelected, making themselves rich, and ensuring themselves a cushy retirement and gold-plated health insurance. They may still be intelligent – in a devious, shrewd sort of way – but it's hard to tell, because they don't seem to understand basics that even a grade-school kid knows – like, you can't spend more than you have, illegal aliens are illegal, all religions are not equivalent, human babies are just as human before birth as after, boys and girls are different, and marriage, family, and morality the way God defines them are beneficial to civil society.

So in this essay I present a brief primer on our current crop of politicians now ruining the country, and what they should be doing instead.

First, a summary of the nature of government.

1. **Government is force.** Unless restrained, politicians will use that force to benefit themselves and will try to extend it into every area of our lives. That is slavery, and it is not what our founding fathers had in mind.
2. **Government is inefficient.** It can be made more efficient by astute politicians, but it can never be made as efficient as the private sector. There is always some waste in the bureaucracy and red tape, and more waste in the fraud and abuse of the typically dishonest politicians.

People's Primer on Politics

3. **Government is limited.** There are some things government simply cannot do, no matter how sincerely politicians promise. For example, government cannot grow the economy. Only the private sector actually grows the economy. That is because the bigger and stronger government gets, the more it takes from us in taxes, which drains the economy more than government jobs or programs can grow it. The best that government can do is make consistent laws and a stable currency, and then stay out of the way so private businesses can prosper.

4. **Government is a monopoly.** The competitive marketplace sharpens skills, streamlines business practices, and weeds out poor service and bad ideas, or the company goes broke. But government, with no competition, continues in business with poor service, bad ideas, terrible management, and even a perennial deficit, like we have now. When they go broke they simply print more money (which devalues the currency) and raise our taxes and their salaries (since money is now worth less). Public education also tries to be a monopoly, as that is essential to hide from our young people the truth that their future is being stolen from them.

With that understood, let's look at our politicians. To my knowledge, every one of them begins office by swearing on the Bible to uphold the Constitution (except possibly Muslims, who swear on the Koran). But it's a lie. The majority of them don't care a whit about upholding the Constitution. Even the best of them put that second to their primary goal, which is (as I said) to stay in power, increase their personal wealth, and provide for their own personal retirement and health care.

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If you don't believe me, just ask them to cut their salaries to what the average American makes, limit the length of their time in office, give up their gold-plated retirement and health care plans, and abide by the same laws as they make for the rest of us. Not a chance.

But these are elected officials. How can they stay in power when they lie to the people who elect them? Why aren't they voted out of office by now? Three reasons. First, there are no consequences when their campaign promises evaporate and their lies are exposed. "Everyone does it." We expect our politicians to lie to get elected, and come the next election we swallow the bait all over again.

Second, their re-election campaigns are well-financed by lobbyists, unions, and ultra-rich ideologues who know that such bribes will get their own special-interest agenda into law. Politicians love bribes, so they make it legal.

But the third reason is even more insidious. They stay in office by bribing the voters and playing class warfare. We are promised free health care, free education, free loan guarantees, and free fraud protection. We are given nearly unlimited unemployment benefits, welfare, food stamps, and earned income tax credits, all to be paid for by taxing the 'filthy rich'. We have now reached the tipping point, in which the majority of Americans get more back from the government than they put in. Of course they vote for any liberal politician who gives them free stuff.

What is the result? Well, first, wealthy people are taxed to the limit. They've got to be, to pay all the freeloaders. So they either get poor themselves, or they take their wealth to some other country that lets them keep some of it.

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Second, poor people are enslaved to a system designed to keep them poor. Politicians can't afford to have them work hard and reap the rewards of their labor, or they would lose their votes. You don't think our politicians are trying to prevent you from becoming rich? Just take a look at the progressive income tax, the capital gains tax, the alternative minimum tax, and the death tax. And if you think you are finally almost rich, try retiring and living on social security, which you paid in to all your life while your beloved politicians were stealing your money and using it for bribes to other voters. By the time you retire, their ingenious system of gradual inflation will have made your savings worthless and your social security income barely enough to live on. The entire system is intended to keep you poor.

But wait, some very rich people are also supporting this system. Why? It's called 'tax loopholes'. Even the ultra rich are duped into voting for the dishonest politicians who give them special tax breaks for staying on board. Their lobbyists bribe the politicians as much as the politicians bribe the people. Our entire government now runs through bribes and special interests.

In short, the American experiment in self-government is now broken. Government "of the people, by the people, and for the people" is gone. Government has become our enemy, not our friend. Dishonest politicians have made so many promises to so many people (entitlements) that the resulting debt burden is totally unsustainable. We simply cannot continue the promised payoffs to the majority of Americans while the wealthiest among us take their capital and their productivity elsewhere.

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Face it. We are bankrupt. So, where do we go from here? Is recovery possible? Of course it is. We live in the greatest nation on the face of the earth, and our country is filled with decent, hard-working folks who will always enable us to succeed if given half a chance.

But we must understand that our government is the problem, not the solution. To fix the problem, our government must be limited to only the things it can (and must) do well: provide for a stable currency; establish just laws founded on God's moral law; set uniform standards for commerce between states; punish liars, lawbreakers, and contract breakers; guard our nation's borders; keep a tight control on immigration; and provide for the common defense. Everything else must be shifted back to the states or the private sector.

So, here is my list of seven essentials if we are to have a country to pass on to our children and grandchildren. Some of these things may seem painful, even heartless, but I maintain it is more heartless to destroy the nation for the sake of our own cushy entitlements.

1. Pass an amendment to the Constitution requiring a balanced budget (except for declared war) and requiring modest but regular pay-down of our national debt. This must go into effect immediately, not gradually over the a number of years, no matter how much it hurts. Withhold all politicians salaries until they get it done.
2. Immediately begin a phased transfer of entitlements to the private sector. This includes social security, welfare, education, all forms of government involvement in loans, subsidies, medical care, insurance, and so on.

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2a. Social security. Of course you must meet current obligations to everyone who has put money into the system. But allow anybody to opt out with a private individual retirement account, controlled by each citizen in any bank of his or her choice. Within twenty years, there will be no one left in the current government Ponzi scheme system, since any private, investment-based system will pay so much larger returns.

2b. Education. Again, at least for a while, you must maintain the government run schools, providing free education per law. But allow tax credit vouchers to anyone who wishes to transfer to a private school, charter school, or home school, requiring only that students pass periodic grade-level competency exams in basic subjects. And again, it will only be twenty years before there will be no more government schools, since every other alternative is so much more efficient and effective. A side benefit here is that public schools will no longer be able to preach their religion of secular humanism or brainwash students into the current politically correct nonsense of the day.

2c. Medical care. Government has no business in this very private matter, but once in, it is tough to get out. Immediately repeal Obamacare. It was sold to the American people based on flat-out lies and bribes, and every congress-person who voted for it ought to be fired, if not tried for criminal conspiracy. Continue meeting current obligations on Medicare and Medicaid, but allow no new entries into either without a substantial co-pay agreement. When people start actually paying the costs of their own medical care, they will be more careful what they buy and how well they take care of their own health.

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Pass laws protecting doctors from lawsuits for honest mistakes, and making the loser pay all costs of the lawsuit (to eliminate frivolous lawsuits). Eliminate all laws restricting medical insurance and prohibiting alternative providers, to let the free market work. More important, require that medical care providers give patients a list of estimated costs before treatment, and allow them the option of saying, "No, that's too expensive. I'm taking my business elsewhere." An on-line feedback system such as eBay uses would also help, so people could shop for doctors and hospitals whose patients provide positive comments and who have a record of reasonable prices.

2d. Loans. Subsidies. Insurance. Arts. Sciences. Research. Corporate welfare. These are not government functions and should immediately be privatized or eliminated. The free market will step into these functions after the government lets go. Government intervention into these areas has skewed the market, artificially picking winners and losers that are not sustainable. For example, the Obama administration's investments in solar and wind power and in high-speed rail have proven to be a wrong and rather stupid waste of taxpayer dollars. In a government "of the people," the people get to pick the winners or losers in the market via competition.

2e. Welfare. Some people, through no fault of their own, fall upon hard times. In a civilized society, there must be a safety net to help them get back up. Americans are the most compassionate people on the planet. But when government takes upon itself this function, we wind up with a permanently dependent class of freeloaders. This ruins families, rewards failure, and punishes success.

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By its very nature, government is NOT compassionate; only people are. Tell your government representatives, “If you want to help someone, give him your own money. But stop stealing from the working class to buy the votes of the non-working class. Let churches and other private organizations handle the needs of the truly poor. And tell the freeloaders to go get a job.”

3. Improve the economy, so that everyone who wants to work will be able to prosper. Jobs should not be scarce in this land of abundance! This is easy, but it does require several additional things beyond what I mentioned above.

3a. Eliminate the federal tax code in its entirety. Replace it with a one page bill that takes a flat 10% on all personal income over the first \$20K or so. Income must include interest and investment income, but exclude any tax on retirement accounts (to reduce the burden on seniors) and any tax on an inheritance (that money has already been taxed). Take no other deductions, including charitable contributions, mortgage payments, or state taxes. Do not tax corporations at all, as corporate taxes are just passed on to the consumer anyway. If this doesn't raise enough money (though I think it will), then slap a flat 2% tariff on all imports and exports.

3b. Require all government business in English only. This includes voting. Anyone who does not know English will have difficulty voting, because they cannot possibly understand the issues. But this will not be a problem if all immigrants are given immersion English classes and not allowed full citizenship until they can speak English. Of course require citizenship ID verification for voting.

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3c. Eliminate the EPA. Publish basic environmental protection guidelines (not laws) and perhaps maintain a list on-line of those patriotic organizations meeting those guidelines, but the free market will regulate itself if given half an opportunity. Nobody wants dirty air or water!

3d. Encourage American energy independence. Allow energy exploration and drilling on federal lands and issue permits within days, not years. Encourage development of all forms of energy by not harassing developers. (Duh!) Encourage drilling offshore, in the arctic, in national parks and forests, and in wild areas. With our current technology, this can be done with minimal impact or risk to the environment. If accidents do occur, recovery techniques are improving as well.

3e. Begin a thorough review of government agencies and their regulations, for the purpose of simplifying them and deleting those that are redundant or unconstitutional. Mandate that every government regulation must refer to the specific place in the Constitution that authorizes it. Business will prosper when they have a sane, clean, easily understood set of regulations to meet. A sunset clause on most laws will also help, because it will force legislators to look at the laws every few years to see if they are really worth renewing. The entire body of federal law must fit comfortably in one easy-to-read, people-friendly volume.

These changes will make our government less intrusive and more efficient, and allow our economy to flourish.

4. Rein in government spending. The balanced budget amendment is only the start. Other changes are required to get this monster under control.

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4a. Reduce all government salaries to a flat \$50K per year. Public servants should not make more than their masters, the people. This must be a fixed income, never adjusted for inflation, so they won't be tempted to inflate the money supply. If their salary needs an increase, only the people should have the power to do it. And make them live by the same laws that they force on the rest of us. You know something's fishy when they set their own salaries and exempt themselves from their own laws!

4b. Audit the Federal Reserve and revise its charter to a single item: a stable money supply backed with precious metal reserves. Prosecute those in the Federal Reserve who've been manipulating the economy and stealing from us by making our savings worth less.

4c. Of course we must have a congress, a judiciary, an FBI and penal system, a military, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, a border patrol, and ambassadors overseas, but pretty much everything else should be on the table. Eliminate the IRS, the Education department, the Energy department, Health and Human Services, the EPA, Housing and Urban Development, and a thousand other departments / bureaucracies that are redundant or unconstitutional or both. The Commerce department can't be eliminated, but reduce its charter to what the Constitution says: regulate commerce to congressionally approved standards and make sure it is equitable and not fraudulent between states. Why are we subsidizing sugar or tobacco or paying farmers to not grow corn? Every federal department that is retained should be cut back by 90% and should be required to justify their continued existence by the Constitution every election cycle.

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4d. Prohibit baseline budgeting. It is deceitful and virtually guarantees inflationary spending.

4e. Stop supporting the UN. It is antagonistic to America's interests. It is also corrupt, and there is no hope of reforming it because most of its member nations are also corrupt, anti-American, and anti-Christian.

4f. Eliminate foreign aid, no exceptions. Even aid to Israel, which once was essential to their survival, is no longer needed. Encourage private organizations to fill in the gaps in places like Haiti where aid is really needed. Americans love to give to real needs, but having our government steal from us to do our giving for us rankles us. And our current politicians are behaving irrationally giving money to Muslim nations who hate us and want to destroy our country. Frankly, that borders on treason. Their aid to terrorist-sponsoring nations is over the line.

4g. Absolutely prohibit unionization or strikes by public employees. This especially applies to the corrupt NEA and its many affiliates. Collective bargaining works in the private sector, as long as the rights of non-union workers are protected too. But government is a monopoly, and true collective bargaining is impossible since one side – the side paying for it all, the taxpayer – doesn't even have a seat at the negotiating table! Don't tell me that our elected representatives negotiate for us. They don't care. The money doesn't come out of their pockets! I suggest that salaries and benefits packages be submitted for approval by a vote of the people. Public servants who don't like it and walk off the job should be instantly fired and replaced by someone who wants to serve his country.

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4h. Abolish legalized bribery. Every person should be equal under the law. Any politician who writes laws to favor a special interest who contributed to his re-election campaign, should be prosecuted and sent straight to jail.

4i. Eliminate affirmative action laws favoring one or another group because of race or gender. The law should be absolutely color-blind and gender neutral. The only time the feds really need to know race and gender is when the FBI is chasing a criminal.

4j. Ensure all laws list where they are legal under the Constitution. Most should have a sunset clause. (See 3e.)

4k. Impose eight year term limits for elected federal officials. After that, they become part of the problem, not part of the solution, because their focus shifts to trying to upgrade their public service into a lucrative career.

4l. Prohibit political contributions from unions or corporations. In a free society, anyone should be able to contribute as much as he wants to any candidate or cause (large contributions should be reported for transparency). But a corporate or union contribution violates the rights of the individuals working there. If a corporation feels the need to support a cause or candidate, it should make its case to its workers, who could then choose (or not) to make personal contributions. Example: the Democrat Party is 'owned' by the labor unions through billions of dollars in campaign contributions (read: bribes). This is just flat out wrong, as well as being unfair to the union workers and damaging to the country. We will not be a free nation as long as our politicians are beholden to the labor unions or large corporations who got them elected.

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5. Streamline the immigration system. We do need those (law-abiding, self-supporting) immigrants, and lots of them, but we need to keep track of them to ensure they learn English, assimilate, and become good citizens.

Establish a universal eVerify system; enforce its use and penalize companies who hire illegals. There is no need to go out of our way to deport illegals, but if one is picked up for some other infraction, he should be immediately deported. And fix the border so they don't keep coming back! One other thing here, stop the insanity of maternity tourism and anchor babies by denying automatic citizenship to babies born of illegal aliens. Rights granted to US citizens under the Constitution do not apply to aliens, especially those who broke the law to get here. No immigrant should be given citizenship without a criminal and health background check, an English fluency test, and a brief exam on US history and form of government.

6. Allow the marketplace to work. Government must not be in the business of bailing out people or companies who made bad decisions. People make choices every day. Good choices ought to result in some measure of success; poor choices ought to result in adverse consequences. For our government to take money away from those who make good choices and give it to others who've made bad choices, is wrong. America is a great country because Americans work hard, make good choices (usually), learn wisdom from the bad ones, and pick themselves up and go on. We've always done that. Now if our government will get off our backs and stop stealing the fruits of our labors for their pet social engineering projects, maybe we can make America great once again.

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7. Acknowledge that this is “one nation, under God” and that all our rights are “endowed by our creator” and not by our government. While we must be tolerant of other faiths (as long as they are not pledged to destroy us!), we must still recognize that America is unique. Our country and its laws are built on the Judaeo-Christian faith, and our prosperity is at least in part a result of the blessings of the one true creator God of the Bible. All religions are not equal. Take a good look at those nations founded on the Hindu god, or the Muslim god, or the humanist or atheist god (man), or the Buddhist god, or any other culture. Compare them to America and consider. We allow them to destroy our religious foundations at our peril, for we could end up just like them.

Already we've allowed atheists to nearly destroy our public education system and rewrite our textbooks to present a false history of our nation. Do we really want our children growing up in an amoral godless society? Or are we finally willing to acknowledge that morals count, and that the God who defines good and evil (and who will reward or punish it on Judgment Day!) ought to be revered even in our public life?

We should never establish a state religion. That includes our current state-sponsored religion of secular humanism. But neither should we become antagonistic toward true religion as our current crop of politicians have been. Tolerance is actually a pretty good word, as long as it does not degenerate into tolerance of evil! This nation was built on tolerance of any and all faith systems, as long as they are willing to assimilate, become Americans, and accept the benefits of a country founded on Christianity.

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On the other hand, we certainly should be antagonistic toward false, harmful religions, such as those that foment terrorist activity, violate basic human rights, and feel free to commit all sorts of heinous crimes in the name of their god. Radical Islam, for example, is not just a religion, it is a political terrorist ideology bent on world domination, and it needs to be annihilated. Its apologists in America (including many Democrats) need to be tried for treason for attempting to subvert our government and betray us to our sworn enemies.

This is, after all, a battle to the death. Islam has wiped out many nations before us and has committed genocide and ethnic cleansing across whole continents. I do not deny that it is a spiritual battle and that our God YHWH will win, but He uses people, too. Islam has declared war on us. They will win if shut our eyes and pretend it isn't so.

I maintain that if we implement these seven essentials, our great nation will recover quickly from the tragedies induced by the progressive liberals and their foolish socialistic, humanistic, anti-capitalism, anti-God, immoral, big-government policies. And from now on, Americans will elect only those who know our nation's history, respect America's greatness, and understand how the free market works.

Paul A. Lindberg 3/8/2012

Copyright note: I, Paul A. Lindberg the author, hereby place this essay *People's Primer on Politics* into the public domain and urge you to freely copy it and pass it around to the maximum extent possible. Maybe if enough people read it we can turn this monster around. PAL 3/8/2012

The King Is Coming!

You can worry about inflation;
You can cringe when you read the news.
You can fret about corrupt politics;
You can hide behind double-locked doors at night.

But NOT ME!

My King is on His way!
And He has the power to take away all fears.

You can boast about all your successes,
Your expensive house, fine car, and high-paid job.
You can take pride in all you've accomplished:
Oh, the glories of modern technology.

But NOT ME!

My King is on His way!
And He's given me the vision of glories to come.

The KING is coming!
I would shout it in your ear!
I would shake you... Can't you see Him?

Look what's in His hands for you and me:
The love, joy, peace, and eternal life we've wanted,
All tied up in a package, marked
"Free Gifts for My Children!"

The KING is coming!
Now it all becomes clear.
The trials and sorrows. The loss of loved ones.
The purifying pain. The pruning of dead branches.
The chipping away of all the rough edges.
All to change us from sons of Adam into sons of God!

The King Is Coming!

OUR King is coming!

Yours and mine who are His sons.

He's coming to rule over us, to judge His enemies,

To establish a perfect Kingdom,

His Kingdom of Peace and Righteousness,

Where everyone gladly bows to His Lordship,

And everything, small or great, is in His loving hand.

Then we shall reign with Him over all creation,

Working with Him to reconcile all things to Himself,

As He works in and through us for His good pleasure.

Yes, even to rescue His enemies from the lake of fire.

His Kingdom will continue increasing forever and ever,

Until all the universe is in perfect harmony,

Until everything in heaven or earth or under the earth

Has bowed the knee to the glory of the eternal Father,

And has confessed that Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

Thus will the eternal Father be glorified in the Son,

And with the Holy Spirit bringing all things together,

Abolishing all rule, authority, power, even death itself,

That in His eternity, God may be all and in all

In this glorious Kingdom of God!

Open your eyes, my brother.

Here, stand beside me.

We'll meet Him together, we who are His sons.

Together

We are adopted together into God's family,
Not just for now, but forever.
We have been brought together by God's grace
To encourage, bless, and minister to one another.
We have been drawn together by God's love,
That fantastic power which shall never fail!
We have been baptized together by God's Spirit,
Many individuals made into one body.
We have hungered and thirsted together for God's Word,
And we have been filled, and shall yet be filled.
We've hoped and longed together for God's righteousness,
And we know that we shall be satisfied.
We are now being immersed together into God's fire,
For we've demanded to be purified and refined.
Thus we now dwell together in God's presence.
We rejoice with fervent praise and thanksgiving!
For we shall rule together over all God's creation
And bring pure worship before His face forever!
Come! My brothers and my sisters,
Let us pledge our love for one another.
For we have our eyes and hearts set on things above
And have determined that we shall not look back.
Come! Walk with me, as I walk with Brother Jesus,
For we shall walk into this Kingdom of God,
Together.

Ten Steps to Spiritual Perception

Do you know the voice of the Good Shepherd?

Jesus insists, "...the sheep hear His voice, and He calls His own sheep by name, and leads them out... He goes before them and the sheep follow him because they know His voice... I am the Good Shepherd, and I know My own, and My own know Me... My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me..." (John 10, excerpts)

Nice theory, but the reality is that many Christians do not recognize the voice of the Savior, if they hear Him at all. Let's review some steps on learning to hear and confirm His voice, so we won't be led astray.

There are a few essential preliminaries before we can even start. These are basics that every Christian should already be doing – without them, you should question whether or not you are actually a Christian and if you need to start with the sinner's prayer of repentance and ask Jesus into your heart.

Ask Jesus to lead you. He is Lord, but He will not force you. He will only lead those who desire to follow.

Tell Him you are willing to do whatever He tells you. It is unlikely that He will show you what He wants of you if you are still boss of your own life, because knowing and not doing is worse than not knowing at all. "If any man is willing to do His [the Father's] will, he shall know of My teaching, whether it is from God..." (John 7:17)

Listen for His answer, especially as you read the Bible. Prayer is a two-way communication. If you are always talking and never listening as you pray, how can you expect to hear from God? Often, His answers come straight out of His Word, which His Holy Spirit illumines and reveals to your heart. Listen and expect to hear His voice as you meditate on His Word, preferably daily.

Ten Steps to Spiritual Perception

Most true Christians are already doing this, yet many still agonize over hearing the Good Shepherd's voice, especially when it comes to something not specifically addressed in the Bible. Some even believe He doesn't speak anymore, except what He already said in the Bible. Did God change? Did He stop talking with His people after the Bible was compiled? Not according to John 10!

But He is Spirit, high and holy. His voice is gibberish and His ways are foolishness to the natural man. We must not only listen with an earnest desire to hear and obey, but we must also learn to recognize His voice. Many voices compete for our attention. Most of them are not God! They may be Satan or his demons, or perhaps just our own thoughts and the lusts of our own fleshly desires. Especially for a new Christian, it is easy to be misled and difficult to be sure you have clear direction from the Lord.

Yet God has always loved to talk with His own. If you are one of His sheep, you hear His voice. That's a promise you can take to the bank. It is a plain statement of fact spoken by Jesus Himself: "My sheep hear My voice." You can rest your faith on it. You, child of God, do hear His voice! The problem is learning to distinguish what He is saying from the other voices and miscellaneous garbage that is deluding our brain and demanding our attention.

Here are ten questions that may help your spiritual perception. In time (with practice) these ten steps can become almost instinctive. Even routine decisions will benefit, but especially for those important, life-changing decisions, ask them of yourself honestly and earnestly. They will give you confidence that you really have heard God's voice and obtained His guidance. So, when you think you may have heard from the Lord, ask yourself:

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1. Is it consistent with the nature of God? God's nature is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control. (Gal. 5:22–23) Remember, you are acting in the place of God Himself, since if He leads you to do it, He is responsible for it. He will never violate His own nature! So if God seems to be leading you to do something unloving, impatient, unkind, unfaithful, or the opposite of any of the above fruits of the Spirit, then you are mistaking His voice for the voice of His adversary. Satan often tries to imitate God's voice, but there's always a lie in there somewhere. He may convince you that cheating on your wife, for example, will be full of love and joy and peace and all the rest, for you and your new flame! But Satan will neglect to mention how your unfaithfulness and unkindness to your wife will stab her to the heart. Satan will fill you with impatience and drive you to lose your self control. But if it is really God's voice, every single one of those fruits of His Spirit will line up. Count on it. Most false leadings will end right here.

2. Is it consistent with the law of God? It never ceases to amaze me when God's people fail this basic test. If 'god' is urging you to do anything that directly violates God's law, it's the wrong god. Period. Don't try to give me the excuse that "God told Abraham to sacrifice his son." I'm sure God made His command so abundantly clear to Abraham that he was absolutely sure it was God, or he wouldn't have done it. If God makes Himself that clear to you, then you don't need my steps to spiritual perception; you'll be teaching me. In our example, if 'god' seems to be urging you to go sleep with the gal next door while your wife is away, the true Spirit of God will lead you right to the seventh commandment prohibiting adultery.

Ten Steps to Spiritual Perception

3. **Is it consistent with the ways of God?** God's ways are higher than our natural inclinations. We feel pretty good just coasting along, no problems, blessings and prosperity all around. But that is not God's way. "Whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and scourges every son He receives." (Heb. 12:6) If you take the easy way out rather than face the troubles God allows in your life, if you want His blessings but not His discipline, or if you think you deserve only God's love and mercy while others around you are hurting, you may not be hearing correctly. Learning the ways of God's Kingdom is tough, because it often seems contrary to our ways. In the Kingdom you must die to self to really live, you must give to receive, you must serve to rule, you must mourn to be happy, and you must be full of wrath and hate toward a person's sin to be truly compassionate and loving. When you not only love what God loves but also hate what God hates, when your heart is broken with the things that break God's heart, then you have been touched with divine love, the kind of love that hears and does the Father's will. Jesus didn't come to earth to zap you into instant glory. He suffered every cruelty, every hateful thing that wicked men could do, even to the death. That is how He won the victory. Perhaps He wants you to walk His path.

An exception may be praying about getting a divorce. God hates divorce. It's not His way. He is faithful and true. He keeps His vows. So should we, if we would reflect His image in us. So first, pray about how to love your spouse so self-sacrificially that he/she no longer wants a divorce. But God understands the hardness of men's hearts. In an abusive situation, God may lead you to divorce for your own protection – and so He can discipline your abuser!

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4. **Is it consistent with the priorities of God?** This one is a bit tricky. Many good things move us, but God wants the best for us. If we are so burdened down with good deeds that we miss the best, we are not hearing the Savior correctly. “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke on you and learn from Me... for My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.” (Matt. 11:28–30) You cannot solve all the world’s problems or feed all the world’s poor. Just care for the few God brings under your ministry, and allow Him to look after the others. This applies double if your own family has to suffer because of your generosity to others. “If any one does not provide for his own, especially for those of his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel.” (1 Tim. 5:8) Keep your priorities right. Make sure your family knows your love and care before you give it to others. Those who are so burdened for others that they neglect their family and even their own health, may themselves wind up becoming a burden, with a broken family and lost health.

5. **Is it consistent with the Word of God?** This ought to be obvious, but strangely it is not. God often speaks directly through His Holy Word, the Bible. That much you know. Did you also know that He will often confirm through His Word what He’s trying to tell you personally? If you think you’ve heard from God, it is often wise to seek confirmation through His Word. Be specific, even though you know that nothing like that is anywhere in the Bible. You will be surprised at how often God will bring something to mind that you will instantly know is confirmation. In the process, you will gain a deeper understanding of the nature of His inexhaustible Word.

Ten Steps to Spiritual Perception

The Bible is like a mine full of treasures – the deeper you dig the more treasures you find. However, for this to work, the Holy Spirit needs something to work with. If you are totally ignorant of the Bible, you can't very well expect Him to bring a passage to mind, can you. Read the Word daily, meditate on it, and memorize as much as you can. "Let the Word of Christ dwell richly within you..." so you can, "...do all in the name of the Lord Jesus..." (Col. 3:16–17) As an example, once I was praying about buying a very nice motorcycle. I asked for confirmation from my wife. God reminded her of a verse she'd learned: "No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly before Him." (Ps. 84:11) I got the motorcycle, and it's been blessing my family ever since. (See pg 11.)

If you've gotten this far and 'all the lights are green' then you probably have a true word from God. For things that seem to have little consequence or impact on others, that may be enough. Don't laugh. God leads in the little things too. For someone tuned to the Holy Spirit, even brushing your teeth or choosing a route to go to work can be led by the Spirit and may have an eternal significance. Just go ahead and do it, trusting God for the results.

Thankfully, the above five questions can be asked, and answered, in mere seconds by someone who knows God's Word and is trained to discern the Spirit of God. This can become nearly instinctive – check with Spirit, the lights are all green, go for it. You know God! You do recognize His voice. You love His wisdom, understand His ways, and accept His priorities. His law, reflecting His own nature, is written on your heart. **This is the normal Christian life.** "All who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God." (Rom. 8:14)

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The closer you get to God, abiding in Him and He in you (John 15:4), the more you will find yourself checking with the Holy Spirit on all things, even the routine things you took for granted before. This is “praying without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17) when you are constantly in tune with the Holy Spirit, even as He directs (or redirects) you in those little things. And most of the time, the lights will simply stay green until something comes up. Then *wham! A red light. That’s not consistent with God’s ways!* Instantly you are praying, “God, what would You have me do here? Something doesn’t seem right.” He answers, redirects, and with barely the slightest pause you walk on with God.

Then there are the big decisions, the life-changing ones that can impact you, your family, and others for a lifetime. Choosing a life partner, a move, sale of a house, buying a car, a ministry or career change, a trip overseas – all these and more are not the sort of thing you risk on a momentary pause while you check with Spirit.

“**Only fear the Lord**, and serve Him in truth with all your heart, for consider what great things He has done for you.” (1 Sam. 12:24) Walking with God is fun – a constant joy and delight – but it is not a thoughtless, casual lark in the park like walking your dog. There is fear involved. Not fright – He is your friend and the lover of your soul – but a deep respect at His awesomeness and at the eternal implications of the things you do under His direction. You approach the big decisions earnestly seeking for His will and bowing your heart to His sovereign majesty. So now we move beyond the quick check with the Holy Spirit to make sure all the lights are green... way, way beyond. This is an important word He has given you. You want to make very sure you heard Him correctly.

Ten Steps to Spiritual Perception

6. Did you commit it all to the Lord? Specifically?

“Commit your way to the Lord. Trust also in Him, and He will do it.” (Ps. 37:5) You are a Christian. You always commit your way to the Lord and trust He will guide you. But this is an important word, and you cannot take it for granted. Take the time to specifically commit this to the Lord, and ask Him to direct you in it. “In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.” (Prov. 3:6) By specifically (with a sincere heart in the integrity of your soul) committing it to the Lord and placing your trust in Him for the result, you are placing on Him the burden of either making it turn out right or closing the door and protecting you from a grave mistake. Remember that there are three possible answers: yes, no, or wait. Any of the three are equally acceptable, as He is God, our Master and Lord, and we never try to push Him around as if we were some kind of overlord.

7. Do the one(s) closest to you confirm it? This may be your spouse, parents, or even your children. It may also be others who would be directly impacted if you do what God seems to be telling you. If your decision is about committing yourself to a life-partner, this would also be him or her as well as his or her parents, because they certainly would be directly affected by your decision. We are one body in Christ, and if He is leading in something that affects others in the body, He will lead them in the same direction. If, for example, your spouse says no, then consider that you’ve heard from God on the matter and pursue it no further, other than asking him or her to continue praying about it with you. Trust that when the Lord actually wants you to do it, He will bring you and your spouse into harmony on the matter.

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8. **Will your spiritual leaders confirm it?** Even a spiritual leader needs spiritual leaders – counselors who know God’s ways and are willing to come alongside at times like this. Especially if your decision impacts the local church body, get confirmation from church leaders. That’s what they are there for, to help you confirm major things the Lord is saying to you. However, don’t assume. Insist that they pray about it first, and verify that they also are following these steps of knowing the voice of the Good Shepherd. Too many church leaders are hirelings who don’t know the Lord’s voice themselves – they could neither confirm nor deny how He is leading you. “You will know them by their fruits.” (Matt. 7:16) Go to leaders whose lives show they are walking by the Holy Spirit, rather than those with merely all the right words.

9. **Who does it benefit?** Who gets the honor and glory? Is it all about you, your wealth or well-being, or your own desires or ambitions? “You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives that you may spend it on your pleasures.” (James 4:3) Obeying a true word from God will indeed benefit you, but that will not be the primary focus. His own honor, the growth of His Kingdom, His people that you serve, the passion of His heart will be central, and your own benefit will be incidental. Jesus came to earth not seeking His own glory, but to give Himself as a servant to do His Father’s will. “Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant... just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give His life a ransom for many.” (Matt. 20:26–28) Every true word from God will have some element of humbling myself, bending myself to the Father’s will, rather than seeking my own glory or wealth.

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10. When? What should I do about it right now?

This is a crucial question. The prophetic word is just that, prophetic. We cannot assume that just because we have a confirmed word from God, we don't need any further guidance. Just the opposite; once we have a confirmed word from God, we are on a mission for His Kingdom, and we need His guidance for every step of the way! Yes, the word should burn within us until it is accomplished, but don't ever let yourself get ahead of God. Timing is everything. Even in the little things, the right time can make all the difference. "Take your neighbor a plate of cookies." "Okay, Lord, when?" "After supper." "What do you want me to do right now?" "Bake up a fresh batch." Do you see how asking the 'when' question can flesh out the mission? It is hard to hear from Spirit, particularly on a complex mission. But I assure you, lives have been saved – suicides have been prevented – just because someone called or visited with an encouraging word, a gesture of kindness, or a plate of cookies at just the right moment.

I'm going to end this essay the same way I started it. As a child of God, one of His sheep, you do know His voice, you do hear from the Good Shepherd, and you do follow Him, for that is the normal Christian life. Even baby Christians who haven't yet learned to know His voice, want to! Do not presume that you are a Christian if you do not, for every true Christian desires to draw near to the Savior and be led by His Spirit.

Never express the negative, "I can't..." Change it to the positive, "I'm learning to know His voice." Your words have power. Command your soul, "Hey, soul, listen up. You belong to God. He loves and guides you, and you do hear and obey His voice, for His Holy Spirit lives in you."

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Then get with it. Learn these ten steps and internalize them, so they become instinctive. Don't be surprised when the Spirit speaks to you, for He will – I maintain that He speaks to everyone who is listening in eagerness to hear and do the Father's will. Rather, expect it. Look forward to it. Delight in it. Begin each day with a joyous, "Lord, let Your Kingdom come and Your will be done on earth, *even today through me*, as it is in heaven. Cleanse my sin nature by Your blood. Fill me with Your Spirit. Tune my heart to hear Your voice, and pour out Your grace that I may obey, for Your Kingdom's sake." Then go through your day expecting Him to answer that prayer. I assure you, that is a prayer He loves to answer!

Some of the things He says may seem silly, especially when you're first learning. He once told me to slow down to 40 mph on the freeway, which seemed to me both silly and dangerous at the time. (I later learned how crucial that timing was. It put me in the right spot to witness a precious saint as her car was rammed by a drunk driver. The drunk insisted that it was her fault! I was a blessing to her as well as a testimony to the police and the judge.) But even if it is truly silly and totally inconsequential, even if we end up doing something stupid and making a fool of ourselves, at least it was an exercise in learning to know and heed the voice of the Good Shepherd, and the consequences of that are eternally significant.

Sure, He will let us make mistakes. If we complain, "Why, Lord? I committed it to You! I thought it was your Spirit, and it turned out so stupid!" He will respond with a smile, "You did commit it to Me. Now trust Me. It will turn out fine in the end. Wouldn't you rather feel stupid once in a while, than never learn to know My voice?"

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Thus you humble yourself, determine to trust Him more, and walk on with God. In the process, you may never know the ones you encouraged – those who saw you make a fool of yourself for the sake of Christ and thought, “Wow. That takes real faith. And trust. And commitment! God forgive my arrogant pride and make me also willing to become a fool for Your name’s sake and the sake of Your Kingdom.”

Any major endeavor requires work. Learning to walk by the Spirit is no different. Let us make a few mistakes – every baby has a few falls while learning to walk. It takes planning, study, and practice. It’s like a rigorous exercise program – to get the long-term benefit, you are consistent, working out every day whether you feel like it or not. In a sense, we’re all beginners at this, so cut us beginners a little slack. We’re just learning! We’ve let our spiritual muscles get flabby and out of shape, and our spiritual senses are dull from lack of use. But by the grace of God, we are determined to change, to become all that God wants us to be, all that He created us to be.

No, we’re not where we ought to be, but by God’s grace, we’re not where we once were, either. Our focus is set on the fullness of the Kingdom, in which “I shall put my laws into their minds and write them upon their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people, and they shall no longer teach everyone his fellow citizen and everyone his brother saying, ‘Know the Lord!’ For all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.” (Heb. 8:10–12) Yes, He is doing it. He uses even our mistakes and failures to do it. We are weak, but He in us is able, and He in us will do it.

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“For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 1:6) He will do it! That’s a promise!

Remember, you can’t steer a parked car. “...work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.” (Phil. 2:12–13) If we’re not out there at least trying, working at it, and sometimes falling on our faces, then we’re just like that parked car. Start it up and let’s go somewhere! Just commit it to God and trust that He will help steer once we get moving. And every wrong turn, every mistake, every stupid thing we run into is another lesson learned, “...until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the full measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. So we are to no longer be children... but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects unto Him who is the head, even Christ.” (Eph. 4:13–15)

That’s it. That’s the goal. A mature man, a son of God in the likeness of His Son. Regardless of our physical gender, that’s how we will appear to the world – a son of God – when we submit to Christ in humility like a bride to her husband, when we are learning from Him, hearing and obeying His voice to do His will. Then He will be able to boldly express any of the gifts of the Spirit through us however He desires for the benefit of the whole body of Christ. (See 1 Cor. 12:4–11.) Then He will get the glory, His precious saints of the Kingdom will get the benefit, and we will humbly, gratefully, joyfully, and prayerfully walk on with God.

THE END

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