

God Has Come to Dwell in Us

***“Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you – So glorify God in your body” – 1 Cor. 6:19, 20***



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*Living Bulwark* is committed to fostering renewal of the whole Christian people: Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox. We especially want to give witness to the charismatic, ecumenical, evangelistic, and community dimensions of that renewal. *Living Bulwark* seeks to equip Christians to grow in holiness, to apply Christian teaching to their lives, and to respond with faith and generosity to the working of the Holy Spirit in our day.



“Make your home in me, as I make mine in you”

– John 15:4

[Intro to this issue](#)

[Let Christ and His Word Make their Home in You](#)

This issue overlaps with the fifty days between the celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, his Ascension forty days later to the right hand of the Father in heaven, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples of Jesus ten days later on the Feast of Pentecost in Jerusalem.

What is the significance of Jesus' death, resurrection, his ascension into heaven, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost? We are witnesses today of a new Pentecost and mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit through the charismatic renewal and a new evangelization to bring the Gospel to all nations and peoples. God is shaking the heavens and the earth to purify his people and rouse them from spiritual lethargy and moral complacency.

God wants the good news of Jesus' victory over sin, death, and Satan, and the new abundant life, power, and gifts of the Spirit to reach every corner of the earth and every area of our personal lives, homes, relationships, and communities. Will we surrender all to Jesus - every area of our personal lives, relationships, and resources he places at our disposal? As we make more space in our lives for him, he, in turn fills us with ever increasing peace, joy, and abundant life.

The Risen Lord Jesus spent forty days with his beloved disciples to reassure them that he is truly alive and will never die again. We, too, are witnesses of the Lord's resurrection and power at work in our lives and in his church, the body of Christ. We, too, experience *God's love poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us* (Romans 5:5).

We can know and experience the Lord Jesus personally because he is alive and has chosen to dwell with us. The Lord Jesus unites us with himself and he calls us to live in his presence with expectant faith, confident hope, and fervent love. If we yield to the Holy Spirit and allow him to mold us like clay and purify us as refined gold, then he will transform us, day by day, into the glorified image of the Crucified and Risen Lord who reigns forever.

May this issue inspire you to make room for the Lord and his word to dwell more richly in your personal life, home, and service for his kingdom.

Sincerely in Christ,  
Don Schwager  
editor



## The Children of God and the Pursuit of Purity and Righteousness

A Commentary on 1 John 3:1–6

by Daniel A. Keating

The following brief commentary from the First Letter of John, Chapter 3 is lightly edited with the consent of the author, Dr. Daniel Keating, from the book, *Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture: James, First, Second, and Third John*, published by Baker Academic, 2017. While it was written from a Roman Catholic perspective, the material can be beneficial for Christians from other traditions as well. – ed.

### The Children of God (3:1-2)

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<sup>3:1</sup>See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. <sup>2</sup>Beloved, we are God's children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. [1 John 3:1-2]

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OT: Exodus 34:29–30 NT: John 1:12–13; 3:5; 1 Corinthians 13:12; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 4:6; 1 Peter 1:23

[3:1-2] In one of the most exhilarating passages in the New Testament, John speaks about what we are now, God's children, in order to point to something even greater that awaits us: becoming fully like Jesus. He begins by bringing the theme of being God's

children to center stage: See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. God the Father has loved us to such an extent that we have the immense privilege of being called his children. But John immediately adds, Yet so we are. We are children of God not in name only or merely as a title of honor. Christians truly have become God's children in a new way through the saving work of Christ: "To all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12–13 NRSV).

John continues: The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. The fact that we are the children of God explains why the "world" does not recognize us for what we are. Just as those who belong to the world failed to recognize Christ himself and his Father, so they clearly will not know or recognize those who are begotten of God. As children, we are like the Father and the true Son, Jesus Christ, and so we should expect to experience the same rejection that Christ received.

In a remarkable and unexpected development, John speaks in verse 2 of what we will become when Jesus appears in his second coming. He begins by restating what we already are: Beloved, we are God's children now. This is the starting point and a strong affirmation that we are already "like" him as children are like their father. Then he adds: What we shall be has not yet been revealed. Is John saying that Christians have received no revelation whatsoever about what we can expect in eternal life, in the kingdom to come? No, but he is pointing to the fact that we do not fully know the form of what our life will look like after Jesus returns, when we will live as children of God in our resurrected bodies. This is because "what we shall be" is far more wonderful than we can now imagine: "Now to him who is able to accomplish far more than all we ask or imagine, by the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen" (Ephesians 3:20–21).

## BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

### *Children of God*

The title "children of God" is not found as such in the Old Testament, though there are occurrences of the title "sons of God" (Hosea 2:1; NABRE: "children of the living God"), and certainly the revelation of the people of Israel as God's children is deeply rooted in the Old Testament (Exodus 4:22–23). In the New Testament, Paul freely uses the title "children of God" of Christians: "The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs" (Romans 8:16–17 [see also Rom 8:21; Ephesians 5:1; Philippians 2:15]). He also employs the parallel title "sons of God" to designate all believers (Romans 8:14). John, however, never uses the word "sons" to designate Christians, reserving "son" for the only-begotten Son, Jesus. "Children of God," therefore, is John's special title to denote our adoption by God and close resemblance to him (John 1:12; 11:52; 1 John 3:1–2, 10; 5:2).

Though we may not fully know what our life will be like then, John assures us, We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Most translations have "when *he* is revealed," referring to Christ.<sup>4</sup> When Jesus comes again and brings in the fullness of the kingdom of God, we will be like him, for we will see him in his full glory. We are already God's children right now; this is a present reality. Though we do not know precisely the form that this will take in the next life, we do know that we will be "like him": we will be sons and daughters who are like the Son of God (see sidebar, "The Deification of the Christian"). "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood" (1 Corinthians 13:12 RSV).

John seems to make a connection between "seeing" Jesus and "being like" him. Paul speaks in strikingly similar terms: "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another" (2 Corinthians 3:18 RSV). "Seeing" or "beholding" the Lord in his glory is transformative. Just as Moses' face shone because it reflected the glory of God as he stood in God's presence (Exodus 34:29–30), so when we behold *fully* the glory of God in the face

of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6), his life will be fully manifested in us, both spiritually and physically through our resurrected bodies.

## LIVING TRADITION

### ***The Deification of the Christian***

When John says that “we are God’s children now,” and that when Christ returns “we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (3:2), he is speaking about what the later Christian tradition would call our deification or divinization. Deification does not mean that we “turn into God” or that we simply “become God,” but that we share so fully in God’s divine life and power that we become “like God.” Paul describes this as becoming conformed to the image of Jesus (Romans 8:29). Our deification begins in this life — we are God’s children now — but it reaches completion only in eternal life, when we will be fully transformed into the likeness of God. All this is possible only because God has come to dwell in us and has granted us fellowship with himself. Maximus the Confessor (c. 580–662), an outstanding teacher who suffered torture and exile in defense of the faith, describes the goal of our deification in these words:

The fullness of God permeates [the faithful] wholly as the soul permeates the body... He directs them as he thinks best, filling them with his own glory and blessedness, and bestows on them unending life beyond imagining and wholly free from the signs of corruption that mark the present age. He gives them life, not the life that comes from breathing air, nor that of veins coursing with blood, but the life that comes from being wholly infused with the fullness of God.<sup>a</sup>

a. *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ: Selected Writings from St. Maximus the Confessor*, trans. Paul M. Blowers and Robert L. Wilken (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003), 63.

## Purity and Sin Contrasted (3:3–6)

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<sup>3</sup>Everyone who has this hope based on him makes himself pure, as he is pure. <sup>4</sup>Everyone who commits sin commits lawlessness, for sin is lawlessness. <sup>5</sup>You know that he was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. <sup>6</sup>No one who remains in him sins; no one who sins has seen him or known him.

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NT: John 8:46; Romans 6:2; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22

[3:3] In this section John insists on the incompatibility between purity and sin. The opening verse states the positive goal: Everyone who has this hope based on him makes himself pure, as he is pure. What is the logic at work here? John is saying that all who possess the hope of becoming like the Lord in the age to come purify themselves now in order to grow in our likeness to him. Just as he is pure, so we seek to become pure. Even now we have God’s Holy Spirit dwelling within us, and the Spirit inspires us to seek the purity that Christ himself has. Our hope that we will be fully like him when he comes again gives us motivation in the present to press on toward the goal of purity.

What does it mean to make oneself pure, literally, “to purify oneself”?<sup>5</sup> In the New Testament, the verb “purify” (*hagnizō*) always refers to what one does for oneself, often through a rite of cleansing (John 11:55; Acts 21:24, 26; 24:18). The purpose of purifying something is to cleanse it so that it will be in the right condition to enter God’s presence. John does not specify what he means by purifying ourselves, but the wider teaching of the letter provides a basic answer: to be pure and righteous is to avoid sin (2:1), to

obey the commandments of the Lord (2:3–4), and to live in the way that Jesus lived (2:6).

[3:4–6] The opposite of a life of purity is a life marked by sin: Everyone who commits sin commits lawlessness, for sin is lawlessness. Sin by its very nature is a form of lawlessness.<sup>6</sup> “Lawlessness” is one of the most negative terms that the Bible uses to describe human conduct. It is the opposite of righteousness. To be lawless is to manifest active rebellion against God and his ways. For John, Christians who persist in unrepentant sin manifest a serious disregard for God and his standards. The accent here is on *the ongoing practice of sinning*. The fact that John uses the present tense when speaking about sinning in verses 4–6 indicates ongoing or habitual sinful actions.<sup>7</sup> The ESV translation, “Everyone who makes a practice of sinning,” is preferable to the NABRE, “Everyone who commits sin,” because it brings out the ongoing practice of sin. John, then, is contrasting two ways of life, one marked by the practice of sinning, the other by the practice of righteousness: “Everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him” (2:29 ESV).

John then turns our attention back to Christ Jesus himself: You know that he was revealed to take away sins. The eternal Son did not become incarnate to leave us burdened by sin, but so that we would be free from sin and live a life of purity. To make clear that Christ had nothing to do with sin, John adds: and in him there is no sin. The New Testament speaks with one voice about the sinlessness of Christ. Paul says that Jesus “did not know sin” (2 Corinthians 5:21), Hebrews tells us that he was “without sin” (Heb 4:15), and Peter says that he “committed no sin” (1 Peter 2:22). Just as Christ is “pure” and “in him there is no sin,” so we are to pursue a life of righteousness because we desire to be like him.

John concludes with a sharp contrast: No one who remains in him sins; no one who sins has seen him or known him. The idea of an ongoing practice of sin is captured by the ESV: “No one who abides in him keeps on sinning.” In other words, those who truly abide in Christ will not live in sin or lawlessness. If we are living a life that continues to be characterized by serious sin, this is evidence that we have not truly come into fellowship with the Father and the Son. The more deeply we are in communion (*koinōnia*) with God, the more we love his will and aim to live a life of purity and righteousness.

Is John contradicting what he said earlier in the letter? There he stated, “If we say, ‘We are without sin,’ we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1:8). He also explained the remedy for sin available to Christians: “If anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one” (2:1). Now he seems to be saying that if we sin, then we neither truly see nor know Christ. How can these statements be reconciled?

When John says here that “no one who remains in him sins,” he is not primarily concerned with an occasional lapse or even with habitual sins of personal weakness that we are making every effort to overcome through regular repentance. He is speaking, rather, about a pattern of sinful living for which we are not repenting. He is speaking about the person who claims to be a Christian yet continues to live a life characterized by sin.<sup>8</sup> For John, the new life that we have received in Christ through the Spirit leads us *out* of sin: “I am writing this to you so that you may not commit sin” (2:1). John expects that Christians will cooperate with the grace of God to lead a life of substantial purity and righteousness.

## Reflection and Application (3:1–6)

John’s teaching on being children of God is, at one and the same time, a profound revelation and a tremendous challenge. The revelation comes first. The Father’s love is so great that he has called us his children and genuinely made us his children. We do not have to wait for this; we are already the children of God. Do we know this personally? This is one of the deepest works of the Holy Spirit in us: “The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Romans 8:16 ESV). What will we become in eternal life? We do not fully know, but we have the assurance that “we will be like him” and “we will see him as he is.” These are momentous promises of transformation and life in God’s presence, both now and in the age to come.

God our Father, through his love, has bestowed on us a great privilege: to be his children. With this privilege comes a responsibility: to live as the children of God by living in union with and imitating Jesus Christ.

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## Notes

3. For the phrase “begotten by” referring to God the Father, see 1 John 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18; see also John 1:13.
4. For example, the RSV, NRSV, NJB, ESV, NIV. The Greek text permits either translation, as the NABRE footnote acknowledges.
5. For the call to purify one’s heart, see especially James 4:8; 1 Pet 1:22.
6. This is the only occurrence of “lawlessness” (*anomia*) in the Johannine writings, but the term appears in other NT writings (e.g., Matt 7:23; Rom 6:19). Notably, Paul identifies the †antichrist as “the man of lawlessness” (2 Thess 2:3 RSV).
7. Those who support this interpretation include John Painter (*1, 2, and 3 John*, SP 18 [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002], 227) and Peter Rhea Jones (*1, 2 & 3 John*, SHBC [Macon, GA: Smith & Helwys, 2009], 122).
8. Many scholars believe that John is directing this word against his opponents, those who left the church, because they were claiming to be true disciples of Christ yet were still living in sin and lawlessness.

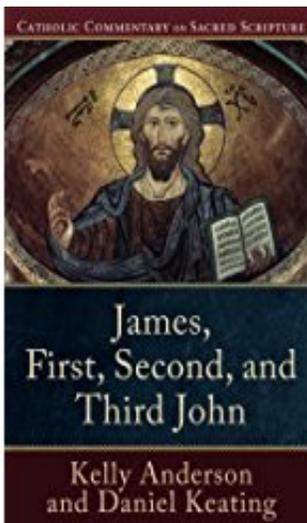
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Matthew Levering, James N. and Mary D. Perry Jr. Chair of Theology,  
Mundelein Seminary

*Commentary on James*, by Kelly Anderson, and *Commentary on First, Second, and Third John* by Daniel Keating, [Baker House Publishing Group](#), 2017

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## Being Spiritual People

by Steve Clark

In the third chapter of First Corinthians, there is a passage that provides a fundamental insight into the work of the Spirit in us (verses 1-4). Paul was speaking to the Corinthians, a church he had founded, and said,

But I, brethren, could not address you as spiritual men, but as men of the flesh, as babes in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food; for you were not ready for it; and even yet you are not ready, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving like ordinary men? For when one says, "I belong to Paul," and another, "I belong to Apollos," are you not merely men?

There were a number of problems in the newly established Christian community at Corinth when Paul wrote this letter. The chief seemed to have been serious disunity resulting in factionalization that was threatening to lead to division. As we can see in the above passage, Paul attributed this to the fact that they were not spiritual people. They were, as he put it, of the flesh and behaving like ordinary human beings, rather than like Christians.

To understand what he meant by that, it is helpful to look at what he said to them in the first chapter of First Corinthians in verses 4-12:

I give thanks to God always for you because of the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in him with all speech and all knowledge – even as the testimony to Christ was confirmed among you — so that you are not lacking in any spiritual

gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ; who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

I appeal to you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brethren. What I mean is...

At the outset of the letter the lack of unity in the Corinthian church was clearly on his mind. There were dissensions and quarreling. Nonetheless he began by thanking God for them because they had received the grace of God. Even more, he said that they had received all the spiritual gifts. Now here is something extraordinary. The Corinthians had been baptized in the Spirit and had all the spiritual gifts, but, as he said in Chapter 3, they were not spiritual!

To understand what Paul is saying, we first need to understand that when "spiritual" is used in the New Testament, it almost never means "immaterial". Rather, it means "of" or "related to" the Holy Spirit. Something is spiritual when it comes from the Holy Spirit or is somehow connected to the Holy Spirit. Second, we can usefully retranslate the word "spiritual" as "spiritualized". This will allow us to speak and think more clearly about what Paul is saying.

As we can see from comparing the above two passages, the fact that the Corinthians were not spiritual does not mean that they were without the gift of the Holy Spirit. Nor does it mean that they had not experienced the Holy Spirit at work in and through them (cf. 1:4; Romans 8:9). Rather, it means that the presence of the Spirit in them had not transformed them, at least not in one very important respect. In short, there is a difference between having the Spirit present in us and working through us and being spiritual people, or, more clearly put, being spiritualized people.

Being of the flesh, as used in 1 Corinthians 3:1, means that the Corinthians were behaving in such a way that their way or manner of life was not spiritual. *Flesh* in this context refers to unredeemed human nature, so those who are of the flesh relate in a way that is characteristic of unredeemed people. They are like ordinary people, that is, people who have never been spiritualized.

Jealousy and strife were the sign that something was seriously wrong. The phrase among you indicates that the problem was corporate (and therefore that the problem was not necessarily with all the members). In other words the Corinthian community was acting in a way that indicated it had not been fully spiritualized, and this was manifested in the way many of the members related to one another.

Not all conflict is seriously wrong, but if it turns into hostility or disunity (factionalizing) within a body of Christians, something is wrong. Of course, the cause of the problem might only be some people who are not spiritualized – it only takes one side to start a war – but the existence of the war at least indicates something seriously wrong. Paul, then, was probably talking about a community problem and indicating that it was due to the fact that the members of the community, some at least, were not yet spiritualized in how they related to the life of the community and to one another. In short, the sign of deficient spiritualization in this instance was a personal relationship problem, a problem in love of neighbor.

In order to see the positive side, to see what spiritualization should look like when it is present, we will look at a different passage: Galatians 5:13-26. This is sometimes referred to as the Fruit of the Spirit Passage.

For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for

the flesh, but through love be servants of one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” [Leviticus 19:18] But if you bite and devour one another take heed that you are not consumed by one another. But I say, walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh...

Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us have no self-conceit, no provoking of one another, no envy of one another.

To understand this passage, we should recall some background. Galatians was written in response to people sometimes referred to as Judaizers, who wanted all Christians to “live like Jews” (2:14), especially to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses. This implied that Christians who had been pagans (Gentiles) needed initiation into the old covenant in order to receive the full benefit of Christianity. Paul rejected such a view.

In the course of the letter, Paul taught that being in Christ and having received the Holy Spirit included all that the old covenant provided, and more. It was therefore unnecessary for Christians to add old covenant practices, like circumcision, to new covenant life. They did not bring a better or fuller relationship with God, and to say that they did was to deny an essential truth about what Christ did for us. On the other hand, he had to rule out the misconception that we could be in Christ and live any way we want just because we have been freed from the old covenant law, and so we have the exhortation in Chapter 5 on the fruit of the Spirit.

Paul began by saying that the Galatian Christians were called to freedom, probably meaning freedom from those aspects of the old covenant approach that came from its purpose in dealing with human sinfulness and imperfection. But he insisted that this freedom was not just lack of restraint. God did not free us so there would be an opportunity for the flesh, that is, so that the flesh, our unredeemed nature, could have its way unrestrained. Rather he intended us to serve one another in love. Christian freedom is the freedom to be what we were meant to be – sons and daughters of God and therefore people who live in his image and likeness.

In the course of the passage Paul listed off works of the flesh. These are the things the flesh will work [do] if left to itself. They include fornication, sexual impurity... idolatry...enmity, strife, etc. We would normally call these “sins”. They are patterns of behavior that are forbidden by God.

Instead of gratifying the desires of the flesh, that is, allowing the flesh to do what it wants, we need to walk by the Spirit. “Walking” is a Hebrew idiom for “behaving”, that is, for living a certain way. The way we walk is the way we live. To call what results when we walk in the Spirit the fruit of the Spirit means that this new way we should live will naturally tend to grow when the Holy Spirit is in us. The list of the fruit of the Spirit includes love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and the like. The fruit that the Spirit produces, then, is good patterns of behavior or character traits, good ways of treating others, good ways of handling the circumstances of life.

There is an intrinsic connection between the Holy Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, and God has certain characteristics. He is loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind and so on. So the presence of God’s Spirit in us tends to make us act the way he himself would. The scriptures also talk about the result as our being in the image and likeness of God (for instance, Colossians 3:10 or 1 Corinthyans 3:18).

If the Holy Spirit is in us, he will be about restoring the image and likeness of God in us, making us more like God in the way we live.

This truth is sometimes expressed in a different terminology. Christian teachers, especially those who lived in Western (Latin) Europe during the Middle Ages or later teachers who have been influenced by them, sometimes speak about infused virtues. By virtues they mean good character traits or good patterns of behavior. When they say these virtues are infused, they mean that the Holy Spirit, who has filled us, produces these virtues in us (pours them into us, so to speak). They are not just acquired by our own efforts, but are given to us by the work of the Holy Spirit. The term “infused virtue”, then, is another way of speaking about the fruit of the Spirit.

Paul concluded with an important distinction when he said that if we live by the Spirit, we should also walk by the Spirit, or, translated with different words, if we have life from the Spirit, we should also live in a spiritualized way. In Romans 8, a similar passage, Paul makes the same distinction by speaking of the Spirit dwelling in you (8:9, 11) and giving [you] life (8:10-11) and our walking (8:4) or living according to the Spirit (8:5). Because Christ gives us the gift of the Spirit, that is, gives us new life through the Spirit, that does not mean that we will turn out the way he intended when he gave us the gift. We will not necessarily become spiritualized and so live in a spiritual way. In other words, it is one thing to live by the Spirit or have new life through the Spirit. It is another thing to walk in the Spirit, that is, live in a spiritualized way.

The description Paul gave of what the gift of the Spirit should produce makes the results sound automatic. Once we have received the Spirit, all we need to do is put up our feet, lay back and let good character and excellent behavior just grow – no fuss, no muss... and no effort. Now Paul certainly meant to convey the fact there is a new spiritual life put inside of us that gives us a new capacity and desire to live the way God wants us to. He did not, however, intend to convey that we will end up living that life automatically, with no effort.

The way Paul exhorted the Galatians to show the fruit of the Spirit makes clear that there is a matter of choice and effort on our part. We have to crucify the flesh, put the flesh to death, that is, deliberately choose to depart from the old way of life. We also have to continue to avoid the old way of life. We have to, in an ongoing way, refuse to follow the flesh, the unredeemed or untransformed tendencies, which are still within in us. As Paul said in a similar passage (Romans 8:12), if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. We can successfully choose to live differently, but we need to be resolute, even at times violent, about doing so. We can do that by the power the Spirit gives us.

If we need to choose to live in the new way, we need a criterion to judge when we are being spiritual(ized) or not. This is why the word of God, scripture, and Christian teaching, is so important. We cannot always determine what is spiritual by direct intuition or discernment. We need to know what God intends the gift of his Spirit to produce in us so that we are not led astray (1 Corinthians 12:2) or deceived (1 John 2:26). We need to be able to test the Spirits (1 John 4:4) and so need to know the signs of the work of the Holy Spirit.

The criterion Paul gave us in the passage we have been reading is keeping the commandments, turning away from the works of the flesh and exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit in the way we relate to others. We do not need to do extraordinary things to be spiritual. We do not have to perform miracles or have great spiritual experiences, as Paul himself did (cf. 2 Corinthians 12:1-4). But we do need to treat others, our brothers and sisters in Christ, well. The sign of being spiritual, then, is loving God and neighbor (v. 14).

The well-known passage in First Corinthians 13:1-7, the “love passage”, is in fact about the importance of the right criterion to evaluate our spiritual condition:

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a

clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Paul was not saying here that speaking in tongues, prophesying, understanding mysteries, moving mountains, giving away all our possession, letting ourselves be killed in martyrdom are bad without love. He was, however, saying that those things are not a criterion of whether we are doing well. That criterion is love, the fruit of the Spirit. The presence or absence of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives will tell us if we are spiritualized people or not.

The communitarian aspect of being spiritualized also needs to be emphasized, because we live in such an individualistic culture that we tend to interpret the above passages as simply concerning being about individual Christians. We easily overlook the fact that the Paul was trying to instruct a group of Christians about how to live together, about how to be a body of people filled with the one Spirit of God. Even as individuals, we can only successfully become a dwelling place of God in the Spirit by being built into the new temple (the Christian people, the church), as we can see in Ephesians 2:17-19:

And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

There is, then, a direct connection between being built into a body of Christians and living the life of the Spirit. We are not normally first brought to life spiritually and then unite ourselves to others who are also alive spiritually. Rather, it is as we are joined to a body of Christians that the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in us in an ongoing way. We receive help to live the life of the Spirit by being part of a community that is living the life of the Spirit.

Two truths are linked here and elsewhere in the scripture. On the one hand, we become spiritual or spiritualized by living in a body of people who are living the life of the Spirit, and, on the other hand, relating to one another in a good way makes us a fitting place for the Holy Spirit to dwell in. Relating to other Christians in a good way should increase spiritual life in us, just as letting the Holy Spirit dwell in us should bear fruit in relating well to others. True spiritual life and Christian community go together.

The chief criterion, then, of being spiritual is how we love one another in a daily life way. Good relationships among Christians is what makes a body of Christians a truly spiritual temple. We are filled with the Spirit so that we can be a temple to the glory of God, a body of people who love God and love one another.

## **An Experiential Relationship With God**

The gift of the Spirit gives us power to live the Christian life, to walk in the Spirit, in part by making our relationship with God experiential. The experiential aspect is only one component of good Christian living. We

also need to believe in an orthodox way. We need practical wisdom for how to deal with the various things we come across in life. We need to repent of our sin. And so on. In speaking about the experiential aspect of our Christian life, we are only focusing on one feature of Christian life. Nonetheless, it is an important one.

For many, Christianity is a matter of ideas, either about what happened in the past (the events narrated in scripture) or about doctrine and morality. They think they mainly need to “live up to” what they have been taught. Relationship with God in Christ, however, should not be just a matter of ideas, however true we believe them to be or however well we try to live up to them. It should be something experienced in our world, experienced as real (objective) and personal, a relationship with a person with whom we interact. We can, in other words, make contact with God and know that we have done so. To use the word we will use for such objective, interactive contact with God: we can and should experience him and his presence with us. To use the scriptural phrase: we can know the Lord (Jeremiah 31:34).

We can see that experience is an integral part of the Christian life in a number of passages in scripture. The most striking one is Galatians 3:1-5 where Paul says:

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh? Did you experience so many things in vain? – if it really is in vain. Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith?

In this passage Paul shows that he expected all the Christians in the Galatian church to have had an experiential relationship with God. He asked two linked questions: did you experience so many things in vain? and does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith? The striking thing is that he actually expected them to be able to answer the questions; otherwise he would not have made his point. He expected them to know, from experience, how they received the Spirit and how they, or at least some of them, worked miracles.

The answer to Paul’s rhetorical questions, of course, is that the Galatian Christians experienced the gift of the Spirit by hearing with faith, not by being circumcised and following the ceremony of the old covenant law. We will consider the importance of hearing with faith in the next two chapters. Here it is enough for us to see that Paul actually expected the Christians he had raised up to have experienced the Spirit and spiritual gifts.

Such a view is not restricted to Paul. The First Letter of John says the same thing in an equally explicit way, in verse 4:13:

By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit.

In verse 3:24, it says something similar:

All who keep his commandments abide in him, and he in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us.

The First Letter of John was written to help a group of early Christians judge whether they were true Christians, truly spiritual people, or not. This had become important because they needed to be able to distinguish between Christian spirituality and that of certain people, sometimes called Proto-Gnostics, who claimed to be the truly spiritual ones. According to 1 John, the criteria of true (Christian) spirituality are

whether people believe in the incarnation of Christ, whether they keep the commandments, and whether they love other Christians – as well as whether they have experienced the Spirit. In the above two passages, then, John was saying that Christians should know that they have a true relationship with Christ, that is, whether they abide in him and he in them, by their experience of the Spirit.

The above set of passages tells us that Christians should experience the Spirit. Others could be added. If we cannot point our finger to anything definite in our experience that indicates the presence of the Spirit, the questions or comments in these passages make no sense. If that is the case, then our Christian life is missing something. We should have an experience of Christ as a real person, an existent being who is something other than us (and not just an aspect of us, our spiritual selves, as New Age people sometimes say). And we should have an experience of the Spirit he has given us as present in us and working through us.

Although the truth about the experiential nature of Christianity is important, it has to be approached with some caution. Our goal should not be to have spiritual experiences, but to have a good relationship with God that is experiential. We do not want to become “experience-focused”.

We live in a time when a large number of people are focused on experience. They are especially looking to have experiences with high subjective interest, excitement, personal satisfaction. We can see this in many ways. A while back, about fifteen years or so ago, I came across a striking example in an article. The writer had noticed a new phenomenon – the first Feminists were starting to have babies. Since the early Feminist movement was noted for being somewhat hostile to women having babies and spending much of their life taking care of them rather than going out to work, their new interest in babies was newsworthy.

Most of the article contained interviews of women who had recently had babies and were answering the question why they had them. One of those interviewed expressed a common opinion. She said, “I knew I was getting older and soon would not be able to have a baby. I did not want to miss the experience of having a baby, so I had one.”

That is an extraordinary approach to having a baby. She did not have a baby because the baby was important to her, because a new living human being would come into the world. She wanted to have a baby so she could have an experience! It would be hard to find a better example of how experience-focused our age can be, and yet many of us do not even notice such things, because they are so common.

Such an orientation is all around us. New Age religion is very experience-focused. To many of the proponents of New Age teaching, it does not seem important what God or spirit or spiritual force they might be experiencing. The important thing is that they are experiencing something spiritual. And they do not seem to be at all concerned that there might be any bad effects from experiencing a relationship with an evil spirit.

Christians too can be experience-focused. Charismatics can be especially prone to this, seeking leadings, times of “slaying” or “resting” in the Spirit, “divine appointments”, etc. Such things become a center of attention, even the goal of the Christian life, rather than a spiritual help in the course of seeking a good relationship with the Lord. This too is probably a result of the times we are living in.

## Knowing someone experientially

To understand what it means to say our relationship with the Lord should be experiential and why spiritual experience is important, we need to clear away some misconceptions about experience. First, human experience is not always exciting, stimulating, emotionally moving. We might touch a live electric wire. That would be an exciting, stimulating and moving experience. But we also might watch a boring movie. We would still be having an experience, even if we were uninterested and unmoved, at least until the point when we fell

asleep.

Knowing that we can have human experience without excitement or much subjective stimulation has special relevance to our understanding of our spiritual life. We often have to live through periods when we cannot experience much in a lively way, and yet those are often times when we most need to relate to the Lord. The way we experience life changes when we get sick, for instance. We are usually dulled in our ability to respond to and appreciate things. If at such a time we evaluate something connected to our relationship with God like prayer by how much we are moved by it or how immediately interested we are in praying, we may not be able to pray at a time when we most need to.

Something similar is true of old age. As we get older, we do not respond as immediately to people and events as when we were younger. If we have to be excited, stimulated and moved in order to believe that we are having significant experiences, we will be tempted to evaluate our experience of personal relationships and relationship with God as getting poorer as we get older, when instead it is just changing with age and may even be getting deeper in many respects.

Not only is experience not always exciting, stimulating and moving, it is often not conscious or adverted to, surprising as that seems to many. In fact, we very commonly do not notice what we are experiencing. I can tell you about an experience that you are having right now, but almost certainly are not noticing – you are breathing. Now that I have mentioned it, you are conscious of it. Moreover, you know that two minutes ago or ten minutes ago you were having the same experience, but you had not adverted to it.

We most often notice or are conscious of our experiences when there is a change, when something new happens. If we stop breathing, we will very quickly have a conscious experience of our breathing, or, to be more precise, of the fact that our breathing has ceased. Or if we smell something pleasant and make a point of inhaling to get more of the fragrance, we likely will notice our breathing. We also become conscious of our experiences when there is some difficulty related to them. People with asthma or some other breathing difficulty are often more regularly conscious of their breathing.

The same thing is true of our personal relationships. I recently went to a funeral of an old acquaintance. At the funeral, I noticed that one of my friends was crying during the service. This surprised me because I had not thought he had had that much of a relationship with the dead man, so I asked him about it. He responded that he was surprised too and said, “I had not realized how important he was to me until he was gone and I missed him.” Very often that is the case. We only realize the depth or strength of relationships with people we live with or see regularly when those relationships are lost or are threatened.

Experience, then, is not always exciting, stimulating and personally satisfying; nor is it always conscious or adverted to. But nonetheless the presence or absence of an experience of something, especially of an experiential relationship with people, is important. It changes our lives in objective ways, some big, some small.

One of the members of our community comes from Fiji. He studied in England, became part of the university outreach, and then stayed to be part of the community. I knew him for many years, and I knew that he had a father who was still alive, because he talked about him, but his father was always in Fiji or at least some place other than where I was. I had a certain relationship with him in that we knew of one another and both knew that we had a relationship with a third person, his son.

One day I happened to be in London when the father, who worked in the Fijian diplomatic service, came on a mission. We had lunch with him right after he got off the plane from Fiji and that was my chance to meet him. Now, I have a great deal of sympathy with people just getting off a plane from a long flight trying to cope with

a new time zone and country, because I do that frequently and can feel a bit like a zombie. My friend's father is always gracious and the lunch was pleasant enough, but he was clearly tired and much less lively than usual. Having lunch with him was not an exciting, stimulating, moving experience.

Nonetheless it was an important event. For the first time, I met him, made his acquaintance personally. Before I had known about him. Now I knew him – experientially. That changed our relationship, established it in a personal way. Since then I have gone to Fiji. Because I knew him, I stayed at his house. In the course of being there he told me many things about Fiji and Fijian society and Fijian history that most Americans would never know. Once when he was a Fijian senator, I got to go to a meeting of the national Senate. Many things happened differently thereafter because I had had an objective experience, the simple objective experience of meeting him.

The same thing is true of our relationship with God. There is a big difference between knowing about God and knowing him from experience. Experiential knowledge of God allows us to enter into a relationship with him that is personal and more dynamic than it would be otherwise. That is the case whether we experience it as exciting or routine, whether we consciously advert to it or take it for granted.

We can lead a good Christian life without having made experiential contact with the Lord. Many have, but it is more difficult, because the experiential aspect of the relationship with God imparts vitality and strength. That is why many people after they have been baptized in the Spirit experience a “spiritual high”. They have experienced a major change for the better in their Christian life and they notice it at once. For others, an experiential relationship with the Lord comes about more gradually, like slowly developing a friendship with someone we have lived with for many years. Nonetheless, it still makes their Christian life more vital, even though they cannot date the beginning of a change.

It is also true that our experience of Christian life, our experience of God, is often ordinary, even routine, like most of our experience of life. If we evaluate our Christian experience by how we consciously feel about it, or even more, by how exciting, stimulating or moving it is, we might often be tempted to think that “God has gone away” or we “lost it” or “it faded away”. That could be the case. Some people have lost their relationship with God or it has become weak. But it is rarely the case that people are concerned about their relationship with God when they do not have much of one. They are usually concerned because they do have a significant relationship with God, but something has changed in the way they experience it.

The question, then, is how can we evaluate our spiritual experience. We can find the answer in many parts of the New Testament. A short statement of it can be found in Colossians 1:9-13:

And so, from the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son...

Paul in this passage gives a sketch of how spiritual experience should function. First of all, it is not an end in itself. The true end or goal of the Christian life is to lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God. The goal, in other words, is love of God and love of neighbor. To make this possible, the Holy Spirit works inside of us, equipping us to live the way God wants us to. Our experience of the work of the Holy Spirit, then, should be manifested in how we do

God's will, and therefore doing God's will is the main criterion for evaluating our spiritual experience.

In saying this, the above passage contains much the same point as the passages we looked at in the first part of this chapter, but it adds a couple of important truths that help us to recognize when the Holy Spirit has been active. First, it makes clear that one of the ways the Holy Spirit works in us is to give us spiritual wisdom and understanding. He provides light for our minds so that we can know God and know his will. Second, it makes clear that he also strengthens us interiorly so that we can go through trials and sufferings in a good way. The fact that he gives us light and strength is noteworthy partly because many Christians tend to assume that the only way to discern the working of the Holy Spirit in us is by feeling him move inside or perhaps by feeling a desire to do something.

To say that the Holy Spirit gives us light, does not mean that every time he does so we have a conscious experience of being enlightened, although that often happens. Nor does it mean that whenever the Holy Spirit strengthens us, we have a conscious experience of being strengthened, though that too happens. More commonly, our experience is of having new spiritual wisdom and understanding or having greater strength and reflecting on the fact that we did not produce these things ourselves but seem to have received them in our relationship with God. The criterion for evaluating what is happening with us spiritually is by considering how well we are able to live our Christian life as a whole, not how often we have a strong conscious awareness of the Spirit working in us, much less how often we "feel" him at work in us.

Our conscious experiences of the Holy Spirit are only intended to equip us to live a life pleasing to God, and if they do not do that, they are not benefiting us and may be merely emotional and not genuinely spiritual. We might, for instance, go to a charismatic conference or prayer meeting and have a very good experience. We might have been 'in the heavenlies' and return at night enthused and uplifted. Then we might get up the next morning and come down to the breakfast table. We find our wife there a little more grumpy than usual. We find ourselves more irritable than normal because of the late return we had the night before. Our young son spills the milk all over us. Even worse, he spilled it on the last clean shirt we had. We finally get to the car and drive away late. On the way it seems like every light we come to is red. Still later we get to work and remember that we were supposed to meet with our boss the first thing in the morning and he is waiting for us. At the point, the question is, what good was going to the prayer meeting and being in the heavenlies.

The answer should be that it is good if it helps us to make a good response to our boss, to our family, to our daily life responsibilities. If we handle our relationship better with our wife or children, with our job – and with the Lord himself – at least over time, then it has been good. If not, it has not been good, or at best neutral. We need to be spiritual at home and at work, not just at the prayer meeting or in conferences. If we have a job, are married, have a family to raise, that is where our vocation is. If our spiritual experiences at the prayer meeting or conference do not help us to love God and love our neighbor in our daily life, to live our vocation well, they have not helped us to be spiritual people. Christian spiritual experience should equip us to live daily life better, the daily life we were called to.

It should also help us to live Christian life for the long haul. Much of life is routine and should be. We cannot constantly live in a state of excitement or constantly have everything new and interesting, whether humanly or spiritually. The spiritual experience we need is the kind that persists through ups and downs. Sickness or discouragement may make our experience of life "flat" or "sour", but it does not have to eliminate our having a personal relationship with God or our confidence that he is with us or our making a good spiritualized response to difficult circumstances.

Dry periods are also part of spiritual living. Even though our emotions in relationship to God and spiritual things may seem arid or desiccated, we can still live in a spiritualized way. In fact, it seems to be true that God uses such times for bringing us to a new level of spiritual life. A "dry" relationship with God over a period of

time, a dry prayer life, forces us to choose whether God himself is more important to us than “what we get out of” prayer or “what we get out of” our spiritual life.

Moreover, as we get older we experience life differently and so experience spiritual life differently. We need an approach to spiritual experience that allows us to be in a good relationship with God when we experience all of life in a quieter less energetic way. If our model for Christian fervor is the response of a newly converted young person, we will only be able to see our spiritual life as one of steady decline.

We need a broad enough understanding of experience, one that takes in the many ways we experience people and things in the course of human life. Otherwise, we will be often tempted to think that we have lost our relationship with God, or at least lost a vital one, despite the fact that it is still there. Nonetheless, we do need to come to know the Lord and then live in the confidence that he is with us and accessible to us. It is part of God’s plan that we have an experiential relationship with him.

This gives us our second conclusion. Our charismatic spirituality aims at our becoming spiritual(ized) people, people who love God and neighbor with all of our life for the rest of our life and are enabled to do that better partly because of having an experiential relationship with God.

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## Created to Be the Dwelling Place of God

by A.W. Tozer

*Christ in you, the hope of glory*  
- *Colossians 1:27*

Deep inside every man [and woman] there is a private sanctum where dwells the mysterious essence of his being. This far-in reality is that in the man which is what it is of itself, without reference to any other part of the man's complex nature. It is the man's "I am," a gift from the I AM who created him.

The deep-in human entity of which we speak is called in the Scriptures *the spirit of man* (1 Corinthians 2:11). As God's self-knowledge lies in the eternal Spirit, so man's self-knowledge is by his own spirit, and his knowledge of God is by the direct impression of the Spirit of God upon the spirit of man. The importance of all this cannot be overestimated as we think and study and pray.

From man's standpoint the most tragic loss suffered in the Fall was the vacating of this inner sanctum by the Spirit of God. There God planned to rest and glow with moral and spiritual fire. Man by his sin forfeited this indescribably wonderful privilege and must now dwell there alone.

### Our new birth in the Spirit

By the mysterious operation of the Spirit in the new birth, that which is called by Peter "the

divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4) enters the deep-in core of the believer’s heart and establishes residence there. Such a one is a true Christian, and only such.

An infinite God can give all of Himself to each of His children. He does not distribute Himself that each may have a part, but to each one He gives all of Himself as fully as if there were no others.

One cause of the decline in the quality of religious experience among Christians these days is the neglect of the doctrine of the inward witness.

One distinguishing mark of those first Christians was a supernatural radiance that shined out from within them. The sun had come up in their hearts and its warmth and light made unnecessary any secondary sources of assurance. They had the inner witness. It is obvious that the average evangelical Christian today is without this radiance. Instead of the inner witness we now substitute logical conclusions drawn from texts.

The world’s own prophets, the unbelieving psychologists (those eyeless seekers who seek for a light which is not God’s light) have been forced to recognize at the bottom of religious experience this sense of *something there*. But better far is the sense of *Someone there*. It was this that filled with abiding wonder the first members of the Church of Christ. The solemn delight which those early disciples knew sprang straight from the conviction that there was One in the midst of them.

How wonderful is this sense of Someone there. It makes religion invulnerable to critical attack. It secures the mind against collapse under the battering of the enemy. They who worship the God who is present may ignore the objections of unbelieving men. What they see and hear overwhelms their doubts and confirms their assurance beyond the power of argument to destroy. Nothing can take the place of the touch of God in the soul and the sense of Someone there. Where true faith is, the knowledge of God will be given as a fact of consciousness altogether apart from the conclusions of logic. The spiritual giants of old *experienced God*.

We are only now emerging from a long ice age during which an undue emphasis was laid upon objective truth at the expense of subjective experience.

Wise leaders should have known that the human heart cannot exist in a vacuum. If Christians are forbidden to enjoy the wine of the Spirit they will turn to the wine of the flesh for enjoyment. Our teachers took away our right to be happy in God and the human heart wreaked its terrible vengeance by going on a fleshly binge from which the evangelical Church will not soon recover, if indeed it ever does. Christ died for our hearts and the Holy Spirit wants to come and satisfy them.

One quality belonging to the Holy Spirit, of great interest and importance to every seeking heart, is penetrability. He can penetrate matter, such as the human body; He can penetrate mind; He can penetrate another spirit such as the human spirit. He can achieve complete penetration of and actual inter-mingling with the human spirit. He can invade the human heart and make room for Himself without expelling anything essentially human. The integrity of the human personality remains unimpaired. Only moral evil is forced to withdraw.

### [Man's greatest tragedy and God's greatest grief](#)

A man by his sin may waste himself, which is to waste that which on earth is most like God. This is man’s greatest tragedy, God’s heaviest grief.

Sin has many sides and many ramifications. It is like a disease with numberless complications, any one of which can kill the patient. It is lawlessness, it is a missing of the mark, it is

rebellion, it is perversion, it is transgression; but it is also waste – a frightful, tragic waste of the most precious of all treasures. The man who dies out of Christ is said to be lost, and hardly a word in the English tongue expresses his condition with greater accuracy. He has squandered a rare fortune and at the last he stands for a fleeting moment and looks around, a moral fool, a wastrel who has lost in one overwhelming and irrecoverable loss, his soul, his life, his peace, his total, mysterious personality, his dear and everlasting all.

When God infuses eternal life into the spirit of a man, the man becomes a member of a new and higher order of being.

### We are made for eternity

We who live in this nervous age would be wise to meditate on our lives and our days long and often before the face of God and on the edge of eternity. For we are made for eternity as certainly as we are made for time. To be made for eternity and forced to dwell in time is for mankind a tragedy of huge proportions. All within us cries for life and permanence, and everything around us reminds us of mortality and change. Yet that God has made us of the stuff of eternity is both a glory and a prophecy.

Just here the sweet relevancy of the Christian message appears. "Jesus Christ...hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." For every man it must be Christ or eternal tragedy. Out of eternity our Lord came into time to rescue his human brethren whose moral folly had made them not only fools of the passing world but slaves of sin and death as well.

What is the supreme benefaction, the gift and treasure above all others which even God can give? He gives Christ to be in our nature forever. This is God's supreme and final gift. Not the pearly gates, not the golden streets, not heaven, not even the forgiveness of sins, although these are God's gifts too. Not a dozen, or two dozen, or a thousand, but countless hundreds of thousands of gifts God lays before His happy people, and then bestows this supreme gift. He makes us the repository of the nature and person of the Lord Jesus. "Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Colossians 1:19–29)

[Excerpt from *Gems from Tozer: Selections from the Writings of A. W. Tozer*, (c) 1969, Send the Light Trust, Bromley, Kent, England]

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Top illustration of *Adam and the Holy Spirit*, painting by (c) Joshua LaRock

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Aiden Wilson Tozer (April 21, 1897 - May 12, 1963) was an American Christian pastor, preacher, author, magazine editor, Bible conference speaker, and spiritual mentor. For his work, he received two honorary doctorate degrees.

Among the more than 40 books that he authored, at least two are regarded as Christian classics: *The Pursuit of God* and *The Knowledge of the Holy*. His books impress on the reader the possibility and necessity for a deeper relationship with God.

Living a simple and non-materialistic lifestyle, he and his wife, Ada Cecelia Pfautz, never owned a car, preferring bus and train travel. Even after becoming a well-known Christian author, Tozer signed away much of his royalties to those who were in need.

Tozer had seven children, six boys and one girl. He was buried in Ellet Cemetery, Akron, Ohio, with a simple epitaph marking his grave: "A. W. Tozer - A Man of God."

Prayer was of vital personal importance for Tozer. "His preaching as well as his writings were but extensions of his prayer life," comments his biographer, James L. Snyder, in the book, *In Pursuit of God: The Life Of A.W. Tozer*. "He had the ability to make his listeners face themselves in the light of what God was saying to them," writes Snyder.



## Let Christ and his Word Make their Home in You

***“Make your home in me, as I make mine in you” – John 15:4***

by Jeanne Kun

### Home our abiding place

The simple word “home” has a strong impact on us. For most of us thoughts of home are agreeable and pleasant, evoking images of warmth, shelter, rootedness, safety, security. Home is where the heart is. It’s that place of our origin, a haven, a resting place, the spot where we know we belong, the place we call our own, a source of refreshment to us.

To feel “at home” is to be at ease, on familiar ground. Home: our abiding place. And so the idea of going home is usually a welcome one; with fondness and anticipation we make that trip. The statement, “you can’t go home again” has a sharp poignancy about it.

With a realization of these many aspects of home, it becomes significant that Jesus extends this particular invitation to us: “Abide in me!” (John 15:4), or, actually using our image, the Jerusalem Bible reads, “Make your home in me.”

## The Lord Jesus is our dwelling place

More than any earthly home, it is Jesus himself who is our shelter (Psalm 91:1), our rock and refuge (Psalm 62:7), our dwelling place (Psalm 90:1). He offers himself as our resting place (Matthew 11:29), our refreshment. We have a sure confidence of belonging to him, and he even allows us to claim some “ownership” of him, too: “My beloved is mine, and I am his” (Song of Songs 2:16).

As we grow into a deep, intimate relationship with Jesus, we find ourselves more and more at ease and on familiar ground in his presence. As with our home, “where our treasure is, there too will be our hearts” (Luke 12:34). And we look forward to finally arriving at our “homeland” in heaven (Philippians 3:20).

What a rich comparison there is in seeing Jesus as our home. Even our most appealing notions or most pleasant experiences of our earthly homes pale in the light of Jesus as our true and lasting abiding place. A wealth of insight lies before us in this concept for our prayer and reflection.

## “Make your home in me”

But we can find even more in this comparison as we search the Scriptures further – more to thrill us, more to excite us, more to move us to an active response to Jesus’ invitation. While inviting us to make our home in him, Jesus went on to say he wants to make his home in us: “Make your home in me, as I make mine in you” (John 15:4). In other words, Jesus requests that we make a place to receive him, to welcome him, where he can take up permanent residence with us. Earlier in his gospel, John expressed the same idea this way: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14), or, more literally, “pitched his tent among us” – made his dwelling place in our midst.

How can we respond to such a request? And such an offer! What can we do to make more of a place for Jesus to enter into our lives? Perhaps the most concrete action we can take is to embrace the Word who dwells among us – to get to know the Word made flesh by getting to know the spoken and written word of God in Scripture.

## Let the message of Christ find a home with you

St. Paul gives us advice that is finely tuned to our analogy: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Colossians 3:16). Again, the translation that the Jerusalem Bible offers strongly underlines the image: “Let the message of Christ, in all its richness, find a home with you.”

This image helps make real one of my favorite (and to me, most helpful) ways of approaching Scripture. I often think of Scripture and relate to it in terms of “making it my own.” To me, that means not only reading Scripture, but taking it in, loving it, embracing it, pondering it, allowing myself to be molded and taught by it, obeying it, having it as my fingertips and in the front of my mind; in short, becoming so familiar with God’s word that I can really say that I’ve made it “my own” – my way of thinking, my way of life, my guide, my nourishment.

One doesn’t build a house or home overnight. Nor has Scripture instantly become my own. It has only been with daily patience, daily discipline, daily prayer for insight into the word of God, over years and years, that this familiarity has been growing, that the word of God is truly finding a home in me. And there have been many days of being hard put to find the time to read Scripture; or while having the time, no desire has risen in me for this reading. But little by little, gradually but steadily, Scripture has pervaded my life, has taken a hold of me, and is finding that place in me that God desires and yearns for. It is being written on my heart.

## Make a worthy home for the Word of God

In Old Testament times, the God of Israel gave his people a way of holding onto his word to them. The direction he gave to them so long ago has been relevant, meaningful, and effective for me as I have striven to let the word of Christ find a home in me.

Urging the Israelites to prize his word, Yahweh said,

“These words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” (Deuteronomy 6:6-9).

May you, too, write the word of God on the doorpost of your house. As you make your home in Christ, may you also make a worthy home for his word in your heart.

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Jeanne Kun is a noted author, a founding member of [Bethany Association](#), and a senior woman leader in the [Word of Life Community](#), Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA. This article originally appeared in *God's Word Today*, May 1991. Used by permission of the author.

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## The Indwelling Spirit

by John Henry Newman (1801-1890)

"You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwells in you" (Romans 8:9)

[Note: Minor changes, including capitalization style, were made to allow the text to be more accessible to modern readers. Sub-headings were also added. Editor]

God the Son has graciously condescended to reveal the Father to his creatures from without; God the Holy Spirit, by inward communications. Who can compare these separate works of condescension, either of them being beyond our understanding? We can but silently adore the Infinite Love which encompasses us on every side.

The Son of God is called the Word, as declaring his glory throughout created nature, and impressing the evidence of it on every part of it. He has given us to read it in his works of goodness, holiness, and wisdom. He is the living and eternal law of truth and perfection, that image of God's unapproachable attributes, which men have ever seen, by glimpses, on the face of the world, felt that it was sovereign, but knew not whether to say it was a fundamental rule and self-existing destiny, or the offspring and mirror of the divine will.

Such has he been from the beginning, graciously sent forth from the Father to reflect his glory upon all things, distinct from him, while mysteriously one with him; and in due time visiting us with an infinitely deeper mercy,

when for our redemption he humbled himself to take upon himself that fallen nature which he had originally created after his own image.

The condescension of the Blessed Spirit is as incomprehensible as that of the Son. He has ever been the secret Presence of God within the creation: a source of life amid the chaos, bringing out into form and order what was at first shapeless and void, and the voice of truth in the hearts of all rational beings, turning them into harmony with the intimations of God's Law, which were externally made to them. Hence he is especially called the "life-giving" Spirit; being (as it were) the soul of universal nature, the strength of man and beast, the guide of faith, the witness against sin, the inward light of patriarchs and prophets, the grace abiding in the Christian soul, and the Lord and Ruler of the church. Therefore let us ever praise the Father Almighty, who is the first source of all perfection, in and together with his co-equal Son and Spirit, through whose gracious ministrations we have been given to see "what manner of love" it is wherewith the Father has loved us.

### The work of the Holy Spirit

On this Festival [of Pentecost] I propose, as is suitable, to describe as scripturally as I can, the merciful office of God the Holy Spirit, towards us Christians; and I trust I may do so, with the sobriety and reverence which the subject demands.

The Holy Spirit has from the beginning pleaded with man. We read in the Book of Genesis, that, when evil began to prevail all over the earth before the flood, the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man" (Genesis 6:3); implying that he had hitherto striven with his corruption. Again, when God took to himself a peculiar people, the Holy Spirit was pleased to be especially present with them. Nehemiah says, "You also gave your Good Spirit to instruct them" (Nehemiah 9:20), and Isaiah, "They rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit" (Isaiah 63:10). Further, he manifested himself as the source of various gifts, intellectual and extraordinary, in the Prophets, and others. Thus at the time the Tabernacle was constructed, the Lord filled Bezaleel "with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works" (Exodus 31:3,4) in metal, stone, and timber. At another time, when Moses was oppressed with his labors, Almighty God graciously agreed to "take of the Spirit" which was upon him, and to put it on seventy of the elders of Israel, that they might share the burden with him. "And it came to pass, that, when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease" (Numbers 11:17,25). These texts will be sufficient to remind you of many others, in which the gifts of the Holy Spirit are spoken of under the Jewish covenant. These were great mercies; yet, great as they were, they are as nothing compared with that surpassing grace with which we Christians are honored; that great privilege of receiving into our hearts, not the mere gifts of the Spirit, but his very presence, himself, by a real not a figurative indwelling.

When our Lord entered upon his ministry, he acted as though he were a mere man, needing grace, and received the consecration of the Holy Spirit for our sakes. He became the Christ, or Anointed, that the Spirit might be seen to come from God, and to pass from him to us. And, therefore, the heavenly gift is not simply called the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of God, but the Spirit of Christ, that we might clearly understand, that he comes to us from and instead of Christ. Thus St. Paul says, "God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts;" and our Lord breathed on his Apostles, saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit"; and he says elsewhere to them, "If I depart, I will send him to you" (Galatians 4: 6; John 20:22; 16:7). Accordingly this "Holy Spirit of promise" is called "the earnest of our inheritance," "the seal and earnest of an unseen Savior" (Ephesians 1:14; 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5); being the present pledge of him who is absent,— or rather more than a pledge, for an earnest is not a mere token which will be taken from us when it is fulfilled, as a pledge might be, but something in advance of what is one day to be given in full.

This must be clearly understood; for it would seem to follow, that if so, the Comforter who has come instead of Christ, must have condescended to come in the same sense in which Christ came; I mean, that he has come, not merely in the way of gifts, or of influences, or of operations, as he came to the Prophets, for then Christ's going away

would be a loss, and not a gain, and the Spirit's presence would be a mere pledge, not an earnest; but he comes to us as Christ came, by a real and personal visitation. I do not say we could have inferred this thus clearly by the mere force of the above cited texts; but it being actually so revealed to us in other texts of Scripture, we are able to see that it may be legitimately deduced from these. We are able to see that the Savior, when once he entered into this world, never so departed as to suffer things to be as before he came; for he still is with us, not in mere gifts, but by the substitution of his Spirit for himself, and that, both in the Church and in the souls of individual Christians.

For instance, St. Paul says in the text, "You are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwells in you." Again, "He shall quicken even your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwells in you." "Do you not know that your body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you?" "You are the Temple of the Living God," as God has said, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them." The same Apostle clearly distinguishes between the indwelling of the Spirit, and his actual operations within us, when he says, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given to us"; and again, "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God" (Romans 8: 9,11; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Romans 5:5; 8:16).

### Evidence for the Spirit's divinity

Here let us observe, before proceeding, what indirect evidence is afforded us in these texts of the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Who can be personally present at once with every Christian, but God himself? Who but he, not merely ruling in the midst of the Church invisibly, as Michael might keep watch over Israel, or another angel might be "the Prince of Persia,"— but really taking up his abode as one and the same in many separate hearts, so as to fulfill our Lord's words, that it was expedient that he should depart; Christ's bodily presence, which was limited to place, being exchanged for the manifold spiritual indwelling of the Comforter within us? This consideration suggests both the dignity of our Sanctifier, and the infinite preciousness of his office towards us.

To proceed: the Holy Spirit, I have said, dwells in body and soul, as in a temple. Evil spirits indeed have power to possess sinners, but his indwelling is far more perfect; for he is all-knowing and omnipresent, he is able to search into all our thoughts, and penetrate into every motive of the heart. Therefore, he pervades us (if it may be so said) as light pervades a building, or as a sweet perfume [pervades] the folds of some honorable robe; so that, in Scripture language, we are said to be in him, and he in us. It is plain that such an inhabitation [by the Spirit] brings the Christian into a state altogether new and marvelous, far above the possession of mere gifts, exalts him inconceivably in the scale of beings, and gives him a place and an office which he had not before. In St. Peter's forcible language, he becomes "partaker of the divine nature," and has "power" or authority, as St. John says, "to become the son of God." Or, to use the words of St. Paul, "He is a new creation; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." His rank is new; his parentage and service new. He is "of God," and is not his own; "a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (2 Peter 1:4; John 1:12; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 John 4:4; 1 Corinthians 6:19,20; 2 Timothy 2:21).

### New birth in the Spirit

This wonderful change from darkness to light, through the entrance of the Spirit into the soul, is called regeneration, or the new birth; a blessing which, before Christ's coming, not even prophets and righteous men possessed, but which is now conveyed to all men freely through the sacrament of baptism.

By nature we are children of wrath; the heart is sold under sin, possessed by evil spirits; and inherits death as its eternal portion. But by the coming of the Holy Spirit, all guilt and pollution are burned away as by fire, the devil is driven forth, sin, original and actual, is forgiven, and the whole man is consecrated to God. And this is the reason why he is called "the earnest" of that Savior who died for us, and will one day give us the fullness of his own presence in heaven.

Hence, too, he is our “seal unto the day of redemption”; for as the potter moulds the clay, so he impresses the divine image on us members of the household of God. And his work may truly be called regeneration; for though the original nature of the soul is not destroyed, yet its past transgressions are pardoned once and for ever, and its source of evil stanchd and gradually dried up by the pervading health and purity which has set up its abode in it. Instead of its own bitter waters, a spring of health and salvation is brought within it; not the mere streams of that fountain, “clear as crystal,” which is before the throne of God, but, as our Lord says, “a well of water in him,” in a man's heart, “springing up into everlasting life.” Hence he elsewhere describes the heart as giving forth, not receiving, the streams of grace: “Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” St. John adds, “This he spoke of the Spirit” (John 4:14; 7:38,39).

Such is the inhabitation of the Holy Spirit within us, applying to us individually the precious cleansing of Christ's blood in all its manifold benefits. Such is the great doctrine, which we hold as a matter of faith, and without actual experience to verify it to us. Next, I must speak briefly concerning the manner in which the gift of grace manifests itself in the regenerate soul; a subject which I do not willingly take up, and which no Christian perhaps is ever able to consider without some effort, feeling that he thereby endangers either his reverence towards God, or his humility, but which the errors of this day, and the confident tone of their advocates, oblige us to dwell upon, lest truth should suffer by our silence.

### The Holy Spirit reveals the Father to us

**1. The heavenly gift of the Spirit fixes the eyes of our mind upon the divine Author of our salvation.** By nature we are blind and carnal; but the Holy Spirit by whom we are new-born, reveals to us the God of mercies, and bids us recognize and adore him as our Father with a true heart. He impresses on us our heavenly Father's image, which we lost when Adam fell, and disposes us to seek his presence by the very instinct of our new nature. He gives us back a portion of that freedom in willing and doing, of that uprightness and innocence, in which Adam was created. He unites us to all holy beings, as before we had relationship with evil.

He restores for us that broken bond, which, proceeding from above, connects together into one blessed family all that is anywhere holy and eternal, and separates it off from the rebel world which comes to nought. Being then the sons of God, and one with him, our souls mount up and cry to him continually. This special characteristic of the regenerate soul is spoken of by St. Paul soon after the text. “You have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” Nor are we left to utter these cries to him, in any vague uncertain way of our own; but he who sent the Spirit to dwell in us habitually, gave us also a form of words to sanctify the separate acts of our minds. Christ left his sacred prayer to be the peculiar possession of his people, and the voice of the Spirit. If we examine it, we shall find in it the substance of that doctrine, to which St. Paul has given a name in the passage just quoted. We begin it by using our privilege of calling on Almighty God in express words as “Our Father.”

We proceed, according to this beginning, in that waiting, trusting, adoring, resigned temper, which children ought to feel; looking towards him, rather than thinking of ourselves; zealous for his honor rather than fearful about our safety; resting in his present help, not with eyes timorously glancing towards the future. his name, his kingdom, his will, are the great objects for the Christian to contemplate and make his portion, being stable and serene, and “complete in him,” as beseems one who has the gracious presence of his Spirit within him. And, when he goes on to think of himself, he prays, that he may be enabled to have towards others what God has shown towards himself, a spirit of forgiveness and loving-kindness.

Thus he pours himself out on all sides, first looking up to catch the heavenly gift, but, when he gains it, not keeping it to himself, but diffusing "rivers of living water" to the whole race of man, thinking of self as little as may be, and desiring ill and destruction to nothing but that principle of temptation and evil, which is rebellion against God; – lastly, ending, as he began, with the contemplation of his kingdom, power, and glory ever-lasting. This is the true

“Abba, Father,” which the Spirit of adoption utters within the Christian's heart, the infallible voice of him who “makes intercession for the Saints in God's way.” And if he has at times, for instance, amid trial or affliction, special visitations and comfortings from the Spirit, “plaints unutterable” within him, yearnings after the life to come, or bright and passing gleams of God's eternal election, and deep stirrings of wonder and thankfulness thence following, he thinks too reverently of “the secret of the Lord,” to betray (as it were) his confidence, and, by vaunting it to the world, to exaggerate it perchance into more than it was meant to convey: but he is silent, and ponders it as choice encouragement to his soul, meaning something, but he knows not how much.

## The Spirit glorifies the Son

**2. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit raises the soul, not only to the thought of God, but of Christ also.** St. John says, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." And our Lord himself, "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him" (1 John 1:3; John 14:23). Now, not to speak of other and higher ways in which these texts are fulfilled, one surely consists in that exercise of faith and love in the thought of the Father and Son, which the Gospel, and the Spirit revealing it, furnish to the Christian. The Spirit came especially to “glorify” Christ; and vouchsafes to be a shining light within the Church and the individual Christian, reflecting the Savior of the world in all his perfections, all his offices, all his works.

He came for the purpose of unfolding what was yet hidden, while Christ was on earth; and speaks on the house-tops what was delivered in closets, disclosing him in the glories of his transfiguration, who once had no comeliness in his outward form, and was but a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. First, he inspired the holy evangelists to record the life of Christ, and directed them which of his words and works to select, which to omit; next, he commented (as it were) upon these, and unfolded their meaning in the Apostolic Epistles. The birth, the life, the death and resurrection of Christ, has been the text which he has illuminated.

He has made history to be doctrine; telling us plainly, whether by St. John or St. Paul, that Christ's conception and birth was the real Incarnation of the Eternal Word, – his life, “God manifest in the Flesh,” – his death and resurrection, the atonement for sin, and the justification of all believers. Nor was this all: he continued his sacred comment in the formation of the church, superintending and overruling its human instruments, and bringing out our Savior's words and works, and the apostles' illustrations of them, into acts of obedience and permanent ordinances, by the ministry of saints and martyrs. Lastly, he completes his gracious work by conveying this system of truth, thus varied and expanded, to the heart of each individual Christian in whom he dwells. Thus he condescends to edify the whole man in faith and holiness: “casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5).

By his wonder-working grace all things tend to perfection. Every faculty of the mind, every design, pursuit, subject of thought, is hallowed in its degree by the abiding vision of Christ, as Lord, Savior, and Judge. All solemn, reverent, thankful, and devoted feelings, all that is noble, all that is choice in the regenerate soul, all that is self-denying in conduct, and zealous in action, is drawn forth and offered up by the Spirit as a living sacrifice to the Son of God. And, though the Christian is taught not to think of himself above his measure, and dare not boast, yet he is also taught that the consciousness of the sin which remains in him, and infects his best services, should not separate him from God, but lead him to him who can save. He reasons with St. Peter, “To whom should he go?” and, without daring to decide, or being impatient to be told how far he is able to consider as his own every Gospel privilege in its fullness, he gazes on them all with deep thought as the church's possession, joins her triumphant hymns in honor of Christ, and listens wistfully to her voice in inspired Scripture, the voice of the Bride calling upon and blest in the Beloved.

## The Spirit keeps us in perfect peace

**3. St. John adds, after speaking of “our fellowship with the Father and his Son:” “These things we write to you, that your joy may be full.”** What is fullness of joy but peace? Joy is tumultuous only when it is not full; but peace is the privilege of those who are “filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” “You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you” (Isa. 26:3). It is peace, springing from trust and innocence, and then overflowing in love towards all around him. What is the effect of mere animal ease and enjoyment, but to make a man pleased with everything which happens? “A merry heart is a perpetual feast”; and such is peculiarly the blessing of a soul rejoicing in the faith and fear of God. He who is anxious, thinks of himself, is suspicious of danger, speaks hurriedly, and has no time for the interests of others; he who lives in peace is at leisure, wherever his lot is cast.

Such is the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart, whether in Jew or Greek, bond or free. He himself perchance in his mysterious nature, is the Eternal Love whereby the Father and the Son have dwelt in each other, as ancient writers have believed; and what he is in heaven, that he is abundantly on earth. He lives in the Christian's heart, as the never-failing fount of charity, which is the very sweetness of the living waters. For where he is, "there is liberty" from the tyranny of sin, from the dread, which the natural man feels, of an offended, unreconciled Creator. Doubt, gloom, impatience have been expelled; joy in the Gospel has taken their place, the hope of heaven and the harmony of a pure heart, the triumph of self-mastery, sober thoughts, and a contented mind. How can charity towards all men fail to follow, being the mere affectionateness of innocence and peace? Thus the Spirit of God creates in us the simplicity and warmth of heart which children have, nay, rather the perfections of his heavenly hosts, high and low being joined together in his mysterious work; for what are implicit trust, ardent love, abiding purity, but the mind both of little children and of the adoring seraphim!

### Temples of truth and holiness

Thoughts, such as these, will affect us rightly, if they make us fear and be watchful, while we rejoice. They cannot surely do otherwise; for the mind of a Christian, as I have been attempting to describe it, is not so much what we have, as what we ought to have. To look, indeed, after dwelling on it, upon the multitude of men who have been baptized in Christ's name, is too serious a matter, and we need not force ourselves to do so. We need not do so, further than to pray for them, and to protest and strive against what is evil among them; for as to the higher and more solemn thought, how persons, set apart individually and collectively, as temples of truth and holiness, should become what they seem to be, and what their state is in consequence in God's sight, is a question which it is a great blessing to be allowed to put from us as not our concern.

It is our concern only to look to ourselves, and to see that, as we have received the gift, we “grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption”; remembering that “if any man destroy the temple of God, him shall God destroy.” This reflection and the recollection of our many backslidings, will ever keep us, please God, from judging others, or from priding ourselves on our privileges.

Let us but consider how we have fallen from the light and grace of our baptism. Were we now what that holy sacrament made us, we might ever “go on our way rejoicing”; but having sullied our heavenly garments, in one way or other, in a greater or less degree (God knows! and our own consciences too in a measure), alas! the Spirit of adoption has in part receded from us, and the sense of guilt, remorse, sorrow, and penitence must take his place. We must renew our confession, and seek afresh our absolution day by day, before we dare call upon God as “our Father,” or offer up psalms and intercessions to him. And, whatever pain and affliction meets us through life, we must take it as a merciful penance imposed by a Father upon erring children, to be borne meekly and thankfully, and as intended to remind us of the weight of that infinitely greater punishment, which was our desert by nature, and which Christ bore for us on the cross.



## Anointed with the Holy Spirit

from the writings and sermons of Spirit-filled preachers - ancient and new

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### The Anointing of the Holy Spirit

by Cyril of Jerusalem (315?-386 AD)

When we were baptized into Christ and clothed ourselves in him, we were transformed into the likeness of the Son of God. Having destined us to be his adopted sons, God gave us a likeness to Christ in his glory, and living as we do in communion with Christ, God's anointed, we ourselves are rightly called "the anointed ones". When he said: Do not touch my anointed ones, God was speaking of us.

We became "the anointed ones" when we received the sign of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, everything took place in us by means of images, because we ourselves are images of Christ. Christ bathed in the river Jordan, imparting to its waters the fragrance of his divinity, and when he came up from them the Holy Spirit descended upon him, like resting upon like. So we also, after coming up from the sacred waters of baptism, were anointed with chrism, which signifies the Holy Spirit, by whom Christ was anointed and of whom blessed Isaiah prophesied in the name of the Lord: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me. He has sent me to preach good news to the poor.

Christ's anointing was not by human hands, nor was it with ordinary oil. On the contrary, having destined him to be the Savior of the whole world, the Father himself anointed him with the Holy Spirit. The words of Peter bear witness to this: Jesus of Nazareth, whom God anointed with the Holy Spirit. And David the prophet

proclaimed: Your throne, O God, shall endure for ever; your royal sceptre is a sceptre of justice. You have loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above all your fellows.

The oil of gladness with which Christ was anointed was a spiritual oil; it was in fact the Holy Spirit himself, who is called the oil of gladness because he is the source of spiritual joy. But we too have been anointed with oil, and by this anointing we have entered into fellowship with Christ and have received a share in his life. Beware of thinking that this holy oil is simply ordinary oil and nothing else. After the invocation of the Spirit it is no longer ordinary oil but the gift of Christ, and by the presence of his divinity it becomes the instrument through which we receive the Holy Spirit. While symbolically, on our foreheads and senses, our bodies are anointed with this oil that we see, our souls are sanctified by the holy and life-giving Spirit.

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## The Work of the Holy Spirit

by Basil the Great (392-379 AD)

The titles given to the Holy Spirit must surely stir the soul of anyone who hears them, and make him realize that they speak of nothing less than the supreme Being. Is he not called the Spirit of God, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, the steadfast Spirit, the guiding Spirit? But his principal and most personal title is the Holy Spirit.

To the Spirit all creatures turn in their need for sanctification; all living things seek him according to their ability. His breath empowers each to achieve its own natural end.

The Spirit is the source of holiness, a spiritual light, and he offers his own light to every mind to help it in its search for truth. By nature the Spirit is beyond the reach of our mind, but we can know him by his goodness. The power of the Spirit fills the whole universe, but he gives himself only to those who are worthy, acting in each according to the measure of his faith.

Simple in himself, the Spirit is manifold in his mighty works. The whole of his being is present to each individual; the whole of his being is present everywhere. Though shared in by many, he remains unchanged; his self-giving is no loss to himself. Like the sunshine, which permeates all the atmosphere, spreading over land and sea, and yet is enjoyed by each person as though it were for him alone, so the Spirit pours forth his grace in full measure, sufficient for all, and yet is present as though exclusively to everyone who can receive him. To all creatures that share in him he gives a delight limited only by their own nature, not by his ability to give.

The Spirit raises our hearts to heaven, guides the steps of the weak, and brings to perfection those who are making progress. He enlightens those who have been cleansed from every stain of sin and makes them spiritual by communion with himself.

As clear, transparent substances become very bright when sunlight falls on them and shine with a new radiance, so also souls in whom the Spirit dwells, and who are enlightened by the Spirit, become spiritual themselves and a source of grace for others.

From the Spirit comes foreknowledge of the future, understanding of the mysteries of faith, insight into the

hidden meaning of Scripture, and other special gifts. Through the Spirit we become citizens of heaven, we are admitted to the company of the angels, we enter into eternal happiness and abide in God. Through the Spirit we acquire a likeness to God; indeed, we attain what is beyond our most sublime aspirations—we become God.

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### ***A Completely New Kind of Life*** ***by Cyril of Alexandria (378 – 444 AD)***

It can easily be shown from examples both in the Old Testament and the New that the Spirit changes those in whom he comes to dwell. He so transforms them that they begin to live a completely new kind of life... Does this not show that the Spirit changes those in whom he comes to dwell and alters the whole pattern of their lives?

With the Spirit within them it is quite natural for people who had been absorbed by the things of this world to become entirely other-worldly in outlook, and for cowards to become men and women of great courage. There can be no doubt that this is what happened to the disciples... The strength they received from the Spirit enabled them to hold firmly to the love of Christ, facing the violence of their persecutors unafraid. Very true, then, was our Savior's saying that it was to their advantage for him to return to heaven: his return was the time appointed for the descent of the Holy Spirit.

[see longer version of the homily, [The All-powerful Spirit Changes Us](#)]

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### ***The Spirit Restores Paradise to Us*** ***by Basil the Great (330 – 379 AD)***

The Spirit restores paradise to us and the way to heaven and adoption as children of God; he instills confidence that we may call God truly Father and grants us the grace of Christ to be children of the light and to enjoy eternal glory. In a word, he bestows the fullness of blessings in this world and the next; for we may contemplate now in the mirror of faith the promised things we shall someday enjoy. If this is the foretaste, what must the reality be? If these are the first fruits, what must be the harvest?

[from the treatise *On the Holy Spirit*]

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### ***Made New by Spiritual Fire and Water*** ***by Didymus of Alexandria (313 – 398 AD)***

Speaking quite literally, and also in harmony with the words of water and the Spirit, John the Baptist says of Christ: *He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire*. Since we are only vessels of clay, we must first be cleansed in water and then hardened by spiritual fire – for God is a consuming fire. We need the Holy Spirit to perfect and renew us, for spiritual fire can cleanse us, and spiritual water can recast us as in a furnace and make us into new men and women.

[see longer version of the homily, [The Holy Spirit Perfects and Renews Us](#)]

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## ***The Fire of the Holy Spirit***

by Theodore of Heraclia (d. 355 AD)

The souls of the saints, in order to receive the mystery of revelation, are said to be baptized purely “in fire.” This is because the Spirit first came down upon the disciples in tongues of fire, by which they were baptized and their souls made perfect (Acts 2:3). Or because, in the age to come, all will be baptized with fire, for “everyone will be salted with fire” (Mark 9:49), so that “the fire may test everyone’s work, of what sort it is” (1 Corinthians 3:13). Fire is appointed for the material element, which in itself is neither wicked nor evil but powerful and able to purify from evil. For the power of fire is deemed to be beneficial and strong, destructive of evil things and preservative of what is better. This is why fire is associated with wisdom by the prophets. For this reason also, when God is called “a consuming fire” (Deuteronomy 4:24, Hebrews 12:29), this is to be understood as a term and symbol not for evil but for power. As fire is the strongest of the elements and conquers everything else, in the same way God is all-powerful and almighty, able to conquer, to create, to make, to nourish, to multiply, to save, possessing authority over both body and soul. Just as fire outperforms all the elements, so too all gods, powers and rulers are no match for the Almighty.

Fire has a twofold potency. On the one hand, it is suitable for the formation and ripening of fruits and for the birth and sustenance of animals. The sun is the primary image of this power. On the other hand, fire is fit for destroying and consuming, as is the case with earthly fire. When God therefore is called a “consuming fire,” able to destroy, he is being called a mighty and irresistible power. To God nothing is impossible. Concerning such a power the Savior also says, “I came to cast fire upon the earth” (Luke 12:49). This is a power that purifies the saints, causes material things to disappear and, we might say, educates. Fire induces fear. Its light spreads outward.

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## ***Turned Upside Down by the Holy Spirit***

by Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa, preacher to the papal household

At Pentecost... the apostles did not want to make a name for themselves but for God. They were no longer discussing among themselves who the greatest was. They were turned upside down by the Holy Spirit, dazzled by the glory of God. Everyone understood them because they did not speak about themselves but about “God’s great deeds.” The apostles experienced the Copernican revolution: They became “decentralized” from themselves and were “recentralized” on God. We need to ask the Holy Spirit to perform this Copernican revolution in us too. Let’s make him our center and proclaim his great deeds. Only then can we say that the revolution has happened!

...Our evangelization should be Pentecostal: It should cause heartstrings to vibrate. In the place where the towers of Babel were first erected and people wanted to make a name for themselves, those towers are demolished and every one’s name is forgotten. Let us, therefore, lift up the name that is above all names and proclaim Paul’s words, “If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (see Romans 10:9).

[see longer version of the homily, [\*Pentecost: The Way to Conversion and Unity\*](#)]

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## ***The Witness of the Holy Spirit***

by John Wesley (1703 – 1791 AD)

The Spirit directly witnesses to our spirit, that we are children of God. That Jesus Christ has loved us and given his life for us. That our sins are forgiven and forgotten. Faith becomes personal - I, even I, am reconciled to God.

The testimony of the Spirit of God must come before the testimony of our own spirit. This is evident by the fact that: We must be holy of heart, and holy in life before we can be conscious that we are so; before we can have the testimony of our spirit, that we are inwardly and outwardly holy. But we must love God, before we can be holy at all. Love of God is the root of all holiness. Now we cannot love God until we know he loves us. "We love him, because he first loved us." And we cannot know his pardoning love to us, until his Spirit witnesses it to our spirit. Consequently, the witness of the Holy Spirit precedes our inward consciousness of it and the testimony of our spirit concerning it.

[see longer version of the sermon, [The Witness of the Holy Spirit](#)]

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## The Indwelling Spirit

by John Henry Newman (1801 – 1890 AD)

The Spirit comes to us as Christ came, by a real and personal visitation... Such is the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart, whether in Jew or Greek, bond or free. He himself perchance in his mysterious nature, is the Eternal Love whereby the Father and the Son have dwelt in each other, as ancient writers have believed; and what he is in heaven, that he is abundantly on earth.

He lives in the Christian's heart, as the never-failing fount of charity, which is the very sweetness of the living waters. For where he is, "there is liberty" from the tyranny of sin, from the dread, which the natural man feels, of an offended, unreconciled Creator. Doubt, gloom, impatience have been expelled; joy in the Gospel has taken their place, the hope of heaven and the harmony of a pure heart, the triumph of self-mastery, sober thoughts, and a contented mind.

[see longer version of the homily, [The Indwelling Spirit](#)]

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## The Glory of the Holy Spirit

by Gregory of Nyssa (335 – 395 AD)

When love has entirely cast out fear, and fear has been transformed into love, then the unity brought us by our savior will be fully realized, for all men will be united with one another through their union with the one supreme Good. They will possess the perfection ascribed to the dove, according to our interpretation of the text: One alone is my dove, my perfect one. She is the only child of her mother, her chosen one. (Song of Songs)

Then, when [Christ's] human nature had been glorified by the Spirit, the glory of the Spirit was passed on to all his kin, beginning with his disciples. This is why he said: *The glory you gave to me, I have given to them, so that they may be one as we are one. With me in them and you in me, I want them to be perfectly one.*

[see longer version of the homily, [The Glory of the Holy Spirit](#)]

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## The Renewing Work of the Holy Spirit

by Steve Clark, author of *Charismatic Spirituality*

The renewing work of the Holy Spirit is an ongoing part of the life of the pilgrim people of God. In every age, the Holy Spirit begins movements of renewal. Sometimes he does so through the ordinary forms of church life, sometimes through special interventions that may lead to new forms of Christian living.

We live in a special time of renewal...a time in which we cannot simply rely on the accomplishments or forms of life of the past. Rather we must live the unchanging life of Christ and his church in new ways. These have to be both more effective for our age and more faithful to what was entrusted to the church in the beginning.

As throughout the ages the Holy Spirit has been active among the Christian people to bring about renewal, groups of Christians have come together to respond. Many Christians have come together to perform some special services or foster spiritual growth with no further bond among themselves than that necessary for achieving particular goals... When the Holy Spirit renews his people, he often leads groups of Christians to join themselves to one another to live more fully the life together of the Christian people. Such a coming together is not intended as an alternative to the life of the church. Rather, it is a renewed living out of what the life of the church should be and so signifies the communion and unity of the church of Christ.

[see longer version, [A Work of the Spirit - New Forms of Christian Life in Community](#)]

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## A Theological Reflection and Short History on the Healing Ministry

by Damian Stayne

And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity.

-Mathew 9:35

A young nurse was working in the hospital when a man who was intoxicated came in and attacked her. He broke her spine and severely damaged her spinal column. As a result, she underwent a total of forty medical interventions, during which several metal plates and bolts were inserted into her spine, but none of the treatments helped. The damage to her spine was so severe that for six years, she could not even get out of bed. Standing was completely impossible. Although she was on very high doses of morphine, the doctors were unable to properly manage the pain. She could not even sit herself up in her bed. Her speech had been affected, and she did not have complete use of her arms. Because of the damage to the spinal column, she could not cope with light, so she had to always be in the dark or wear sunglasses. For six long years, she lay bedridden in pain in a dark room.

In desperation her mother brought her in her wheelchair to a healing service. I preached, and then we heard a joint testimony of healing from a woman and her physician husband. At one of our previous services in France a year before, this woman had been healed of an incurable degenerative condition that had kept her bound to a wheelchair.

As I led the time for healing, I asked the Christians in the auditorium to place their hands on the sick near them and pray. As God prompted me, I commanded conditions to be healed in Jesus' name. I concluded, "Be freed from your crutches, be freed from your sticks, be freed from your paralysis, be freed from your wheelchairs, in Jesus' holy name." Then I told the people, "Now in Jesus' name, do what you couldn't do before." All over the room, hundreds demonstrated their healings.

Suddenly we heard a big cheer from the center of the crowd. I jumped off the stage and approached the area where the excitement was. There was the young woman standing next to the wheelchair, hugging her mother. I asked what had happened, and they explained that she had just stood up with no pain. All the strength had returned to her legs. I could see that she was completely stunned.

I walked her to the stage. With her empty wheelchair next to her, she gave a brief explanation of her incredible healing. She walked up and down the platform freely and then jogged back and forth, shaking her head in wonder and wiping tears from her eyes. The people were cheering and shouting the praises of God. A year later, she was still completely healed.

It was reported to me afterward that some male members of the security staff for the facility in which we were meeting were moved to tears. Through witnessing such a beautiful act of God, they were convicted of the lordship of Jesus and then and there asked for his mercy and invited him into their hearts as their Lord and Savior. Glory to God!

The Vatican document *Instruction on Prayers for Healing* states, "'People are called to joy. Nevertheless each day they experience many forms of suffering and pain.' Therefore, the Lord, in his promises of redemption, announces the joy of the heart that comes from liberation from sufferings (d. Isaiah 30:29; 35:10; Baruch 4:29). Indeed, he is the one 'who delivers from every evil' (Wisdom 16:8)."<sup>1</sup>

The prophet Isaiah announced a future time in which sickness and infirmity will be overthrown and there will be a great outpouring of healing grace:

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,  
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;  
then shall the lame man leap like a hart,  
and the tongue of the dumb sing for joy.  
(Isaiah 35:5-6; see also 65:19-20)

This is a prophecy of the messianic era. Jesus' ministry was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, and the Church is the continuance of the ministry of Jesus in the world through the power of the Holy Spirit. One aspect of that ministry is the ministry of healing, which is inseparably linked to the proclamation of the Christian gospel.

### Jesus' Ministry of Healing

The amount of time that Jesus gave to healing the sick was considerable. He clearly understood this ministry as having a central role in his mission. It was a demonstration of the in-breaking of the kingdom, not only the confirmation of his message. At times this ministry is described as an expression of his compassion; at other times, as an attack against the influence of the evil one; and at still others, as a sign of the glory of God. Looking at the Gospels, it is inconceivable to imagine Jesus without healing miracles, because they were so prevalent. This is from the Vatican's *Instruction on Prayers for Healing*:

In the public activity of Jesus, his encounters with the sick are not isolated, but continual. He healed many through miracles, so that miraculous healings characterized his activity: "Jesus went around to all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the Gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness" (Matthew 9:35; d. 4:23). These healings are signs of his messianic mission (d. Luke 7:20-23). They manifest the victory of the kingdom of God over every kind of evil, and become the symbol of the restoration to health of the whole human person, body and soul.<sup>2</sup>

Jesus' ministry is summed up by Peter: "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; ... he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him" (Acts 10:38).

When Jesus commissioned the Twelve, he "gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every infirmity" (Matthew 10:1). He said to them, "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons" (10:8; see Luke 9:1). This makes it clear that the Church potentially has within its power the grace to heal every disease and sickness, even to the raising of the dead (d. Matthew 10:8). This commission was not restricted to the apostles. The seventy-two were also commissioned, when they were sent out to "heal the sick" (Luke 10:9).

In the conclusion to the Gospel of Mark, as well as in the Letter to the Galatians, the expectation that healings are to be normal in the ministry of ordinary believers and the local church is clear. It is highly significant that there is no commissioning of Jesus' disciples to proclaim the gospel that is not accompanied by the command to heal the sick. In the four Gospels, more than one-third, or 38.5 percent, of the narrative text refers to the healing of the sick in one form or another.

### The New Testament Church: A Model of Proclamation with Healing Power

The conclusion of Mark's Gospel, speaking of the disciples, declares, "And they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it" (16:20).

The first preaching of the gospel described in the Acts of the Apostles was accompanied by numerous miraculous healings, which demonstrated and confirmed the power of the gospel proclamation. *The Vatican's Instruction on Prayers for Healing* notes, "This had been the promise of the Risen Jesus, and the first Christian communities witnessed its realization in their midst: 'These signs will accompany those who believe: ... they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover' (Mark 16:17-18)."<sup>3</sup>

Such an emphasis on healing and miracles as natural accompaniments of the proclamation of the word of God is clearly expressed in the prayer of the early Church. In a moment of persecution, when caution might have seemed the prudent response, the community of disciples prayed, "And now, Lord, look upon their threats, and grant to your servants to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus" (Acts 4:29-30).

Following Pentecost, multitudes were healed through Peter and the apostles. But only after this second outpouring of the Holy Spirit, when power for healing was specifically requested, is Peter recorded as being used to heal them all (Acts 5:16).

The healing gifts are widely distributed among believers in the Acts of the Apostles and the letters of the New Testament. The Vatican document on prayers for healing states, "The wondrous healings are not limited to the activity of the Apostles and certain of the central figures in the first preaching of the Gospel." <sup>4</sup> The preaching of Philip in Samaria was also accompanied by miraculous healings: "multitudes with one accord gave heed to what was said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs which he did. For unclean spirits came out of many who were possessed, crying with a loud voice; and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed" (Acts 8:5-7).

St. Paul describes his own proclamation of the gospel as being characterized by signs and wonders worked by the power of the Holy Spirit. He writes, "For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has wrought through me to win obedience from the Gentiles, by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:18-19; see also 1 Thessalonians 1:5 and 1 Corinthians 2:4-5). It is clear from the accounts of Paul's ministry that miraculous healings were among these signs and wonders to which he referred. Such wonders were also occurring among the faithful in the local church: "Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith?" (Galatians 3:5).

### Healing in the History of the Church

Of course, the Church has been committed to healing through the medical profession and the establishment of hospitals through the ages. This developed alongside the activity of charisms of healing, as we see in the lives of St. Cosmas and St. Damian (c. AD 287), both medical doctors who also exercised gifts of healing.

As with prophecy, the expectation of healing miracles continued in a dramatic way in the early centuries of the Church. In the second century, St. Irenaeus (AD 130-202) wrote, "By praying to the Lord who made all things, only by calling upon the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, [does the Church] even now cure thoroughly and effectively all who everywhere believe in Christ." <sup>5</sup> Likewise, Origen (c. 185-c. 254) testifies about healings in his age: "We too have seen many set free from severe complaints, and loss of mind, and madness and numberless other such evils, which neither men nor devils had cured." <sup>6</sup> And Hilary of Poitiers, a Church Father and Doctor of the Church (c. 315-c. 367), writes, "We become steadfast in hope and receive abundant gifts in healing." <sup>7</sup>

Later, in the fifth century, St. Augustine of Hippo says "with regard to the goods of life, health, and physical integrity, ... 'We need to pray that these are retained, when we have them, and that they are increased, when we do not have them.'" <sup>8</sup>

Many of the testimonies of these Fathers are vigorously upheld by Blessed John Henry Newman in his great *Essays on Miracles*. <sup>9</sup>

Dr. Ramsay MacMullen, professor of history and classics at Yale University, in his book *Christianizing the Roman Empire AD 100—400*, asserts that healing and deliverance from demons—and not only social advancement, as some secular critics have claimed—were major factors in turning the pagans of the empire to Christianity. The reason was that these miracles clearly demonstrated that the Christian God was greater than all the gods of Rome. <sup>10</sup>

The number of reports of healing miracles in the ministries of saints down through the ages would be impossible to count. One example of a saint with healing gifts was St. Patrick (385-461): "For the blind and the lame, the deaf and the dumb, the palsied, the lunatic, the leprous, the epileptic, all who labored under any disease, did he in the Name of the Holy Trinity restore unto the power of their limbs and unto entire health;

and in these good deeds was he daily practiced."<sup>11</sup>

After the fourth century, there seems to have been a decline in expectant faith for healing as a ministry exercised by ordinary Christians. However, there continued to be amazing stories of miracles in the revivals led by many saints, including St. Augustine of Canterbury, St. Cuthbert of Lindisfarne, St. Bernard, St. Francis, St. Dominic, St. Collette, St. Vincent Ferrer, St. Francis of Paola, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Paul of the Cross, and others. From apostolic times, healings have been present in the Church in what French theologian René Laurentin calls "a constant tradition,"<sup>12</sup> and it would be hard to find a period when they were entirely absent from the Church.

Yet the records we have tend to be, for the most part, demonstrations of healing in the ministries of the saints, holy men and women, and at shrines, or through relics. The point I want to make here is not that healing miracles were not a part of Catholic culture and belief; they certainly were. However, the expectation of them as regular components in the life of Christian communities, through the prayers and actions of ordinary good Christians, in the first four centuries had faded.

"During the first eight centuries of the Church's history, the anointing of the sick was regarded as a rite of healing for all kinds of illness," writes Fr. Laurentin. After the ninth century, spiritual healing became more emphasized, although physical healing was accepted as a real possibility. "Only by a distortion that began in the nineteenth century did it become the 'sacrament of the dying.'" <sup>13</sup>

#### Healing in the Orthodox and Coptic traditions

Healings continued in the Orthodox Church in a similar way. Some Orthodox saints were remarkable in their healing gifts. Especially well known are St. Seraphim of Sarov, who was a contemporary of the Curé of Ars, and St. John of Kronstadt, who died in the early twentieth century. St. John's life is sometimes referred to as "a sea of miracles."

Here is just one story from St. Seraphim:

The sick nephew of Princess Shahaeva was carried into St. Seraphim's cell. The saint told him to lie facing away from him, but the man in time turned to look at the saint and saw him levitating in the air in prayer. The young man was healed but admonished to never tell what he had seen until after the saint's death.<sup>14</sup>

In 1903 St. John of Kronstadt appeared in his gold vestments to a man who was dying of typhoid, and as he blessed him, he held the man's hand. This was no ordinary vision. St. John was mysteriously physically present in that room, although he was known to be present simultaneously in another place many miles away. He assured the man that he would recover and then stepped away and disappeared into a white haze. The man quickly recovered. When he told his father about the priest who visited him, his father explained that he had sent a telegram to Fr. John in Kronstadt asking him for his prayers.<sup>15</sup>

The Coptic saint Pope Kyrillos VI (1902-1971) was the instrument of thousands of healings, recorded in eighteen volumes. In one healing, he gave a cup of water that he blessed to a woman who had been diagnosed with an undeveloped uterus, which made having children quite impossible. Eight months later, she was experiencing pain and enlargement of her abdomen, and she consulted a new doctor who did not know of her medical history. To her astonishment, he told her she was eight months pregnant. The woman's husband showed the doctor her previous medical reports, and the doctor was amazed that the woman had been able to get pregnant and carry the baby to nearly full term. "Can it be that we are still in an era where clergy pray on water and miracles are performed? God created a new womb for her," he said. This same physician attended the delivery.<sup>16</sup>

## Healing in the Pentecostal and charismatic tradition

Maria Woodworth-Etter's healing services and revivals attracted people from all over the United States in the early twentieth century. Dying people would be brought in cots and find themselves instantly raised up. The blind, deaf, and lame were regularly healed, and often in large numbers. Even the dead were raised. One of the miracles that took place in her ministry that was witnessed by a medical surgeon, John H. Bowen, was the total healing of a child with several chronic conditions.

There was a boy seven years old, who had never walked; he was born insane, blind, deaf and dumb; he was always pounding his head and beating himself like the maniac among the tombs. They tried everything, including the best medical help, but the doctors could not locate the cause, and they said he would never have any sense....

[But after the prayer he] can hear and see perfectly. God has given him a bright, intelligent mind; he laughs and plays and walks around in front of the pulpit every day in view of all the congregation; before he was healed, he had spasms, as many as twenty a day, but now he is well and happy.<sup>17</sup>

Hundreds of thousands, perhaps even millions, of healings were experienced through ministries such as these in the first part of the twentieth century. These were followed by the healing revival of the 1940s and 50s, which swept across North America. Meetings took place in tents that could hold up to eighteen thousand people. In the sixties and seventies, Kathryn Kuhlman became renowned for her extraordinary healing ministry. Such large numbers of healing miracles took place in her ministry that she was sometimes referred to by Catholics as a "Walking Lourdes." Kuhlman was very happy to have met with Blessed Pope Paul VI, who gave her his blessing and assured her of his prayers.

As we have stated, the "canonizing" of the enduring place of charismatic gifts among the people of God in the texts of the Second Vatican Council opened the way for a renewal of charisms of healing being exercised among "ordinary" Catholics. The Sacrament of the Sick was restored to its original intention as a sacrament of healing, and the language of healing can now be found in many of the liturgical texts of the Church. In 2000 the Vatican also published a document encouraging the charism of healing in the Catholic Church.

### Healing Ministry Today

In today's culture, it is common to hear the term *healers* used of both Christian and non-Christian practitioners of healing. However, such a title is inappropriate when referring to Christians exercising healing gifts. Like other spiritual gifts, healing is not something we receive one day and possess for the rest of our lives, as though we carry it in our pockets and bring it out whenever a need presents itself. Every time we seek God's intervention for healing, we depend on his free gift.

While this total dependence on the Lord's action never changes, there are those who, if faithful, can be used in this way very regularly and often with increasing power as their faith grows. In such cases, we refer to "a ministry of healing." Professor Francis Sullivan explains:

Paul never speaks of a "gift of healing," nor does he speak of any individuals as "healers." Paul mentions healing three times in 1 Corinthians 12 (vv. 9, 28, 30), and each time he uses the phrase *charismata iamatōn*, which means "charisms of healings." The consistent use of this

phrase suggests that Paul saw each healing as a charism, or gift of grace. But his statement, “To another [are given] charisms of healings,”... suggest[s] that when Paul talks about those who “have charisms of healings,” he has in mind not the people who are healed, but people who are in some way involved in the healing of others. Paul's way of speaking of this implies that he does not see this as a habitual “gift of healing”; on the other hand, it does suggest that certain individuals are used with some frequency as channels or instruments of the healings that take place. If this is the case, then it would seem legitimate to speak of such people as having a ministry of gifts of healing for other people.<sup>18</sup>

### An exercise of the kingly anointing

When we were baptized, we were made sharers in Christ's priestly, prophetic, and kingly anointing. Often the emphasis on the kingly anointing has been one of conforming the world to the values and purposes of Christ through social action—by influencing work, politics, education, commerce, and the environment, so that God's values reign there. This is quite true, and its importance can hardly be overestimated. It is something in which all of us are called to play a part in one way or another. But this is not the whole story.

In Genesis, Adam had dominion over creation. Before the fall, all creation could be mastered by man: “Fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion” (1:28). The New Jerome Biblical Commentary tells us of the word subdue, “The nuance of the verb is ‘to master,’ ‘to bring forcefully under control.’”<sup>19</sup> *Dominion* in Greek is *kratos*, and according to one definition, it means “force,” “strength,” or “might,” and “more especially manifested power.” It is derived from the root word *kra*, which means “to perfect, to complete.”<sup>20</sup>

Thus, to exercise dominion is to have mastery over and bring to full order and completion God's creation. This exercise of dominion is a kingly authority that Adam and Eve exercised over creation before the fall. According to *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, “In the ancient Near East, the king was often called the image of the deity and was vested with God's authority; royal language is here [Genesis 1:28] used for the human.”<sup>21</sup> Adam named creatures as Jesus named people. In other words, he creatively defined them. This is not naming as one might name a pet; rather, Adam's words carry the very power of God as God's son in a sinless state. “The giving of names [by Adam] is in itself a creative act.”<sup>22</sup>

In the Liturgy of the Hours, we read in one of the intercessions in Lent: “May we gain through the second Adam what was lost by the first.”<sup>23</sup> Supernatural ministry such as physical healing demonstrates the kingship of Christ in a particular way. Jesus says to his disciples, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore ...” (Matthew 28:18-19) There is nothing that is not under his authority. The kingly authority of the risen Jesus is not only over the spiritual realm but also over the physical realm, and it is possible to exercise this kingly authority even now, imperfect as we are.

When I am standing before a crowd, many of whom are physically sick, I stand with the authority of Christ exercising my kingly anointing in him. As I speak to the various conditions—“Ears, hear; eyes, see; legs, be strong; cancers, be gone,” and so forth do not simply speak with hope. I speak with faith and authority, knowing that if I am acting in the Holy Spirit, people's bodies will resonate to the creative word of Christ on my lips—not to my voice but to the words of Jesus from me.

Now of course, unbelief can present an obstacle, as we see even in Jesus' own ministry in his hometown: “And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief” (Matthew 13:58). But I believe that God has woven into his created material world a programming that recognizes the voice of its Creator. The Sea of Galilee had no ears, but it “heard” the voice of its Lord in Jesus' command to be still (see Mark 4:39). The fig tree had no ears but “heard” the voice of its creator in Christ and withered (Matthew 21:19).

When we speak in authority, in faith, in a faith environment, our words have tremendous creative power through the power of the Holy Spirit. Now, unless I have specific revelation about a particular sickness to be healed, I cannot be absolutely certain I will see healing in all the areas I've mentioned, but I have a general faith expectation that is not wishful thinking. At every service we run, we normally see deafness, levels of blindness, and lameness healed, and sometimes in large numbers. It's common to see incurable and terminal conditions, as well as many smaller conditions, instantly healed.

When we command healing, we do so as people exercising the King's authority over what he has made. This is why cancerous tumors, even large ones, often shrink and even vanish. When the Scripture says, "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God" (Romans 8:19), this is because the children of God hold the material world's healing in their hands. As coheirs with Christ, we are the kings and queens over God's creation; we are called to exercise his dominion in love, turning back the effects of the fall and establishing the kingdom.

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Damian Stayne is the founder of [Cor et Lumen Christi](#) (The Heart and Light of Christ), a Catholic community located in Wigton, United Kingdom, which seeks to integrate a deep life of prayer and worship and a ministry of the word with healing, signs and wonders. The community is formally recognized by the Vatican. Damian has ministered in 25 countries, equipping believers of every background for supernatural ministry and seeing thousands healed at his services. God has graciously used Damian to bring many into the ongoing experience of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, prophetic revelation and deliverance. He believes that the Lord desires the new season in the miraculous that the church is now entering to be characterized by humility, purity, intimacy, unity and the manifestation of God's glory. Damian is married to Cathy and they have two

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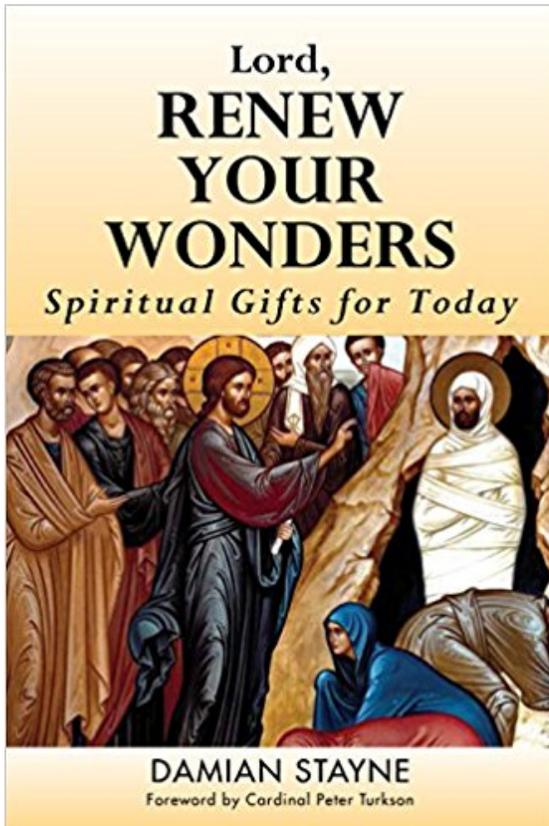
For contact Info and book orders see below.

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#### Notes:

1. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on Prayers for Healing*, 1, September 14, 2000, quoting Pope St. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* 53.
2. *Instruction on Prayers for Healing*, 1.
3. Ibid.
4. *Instruction on Prayers for Healing*, 3.
5. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, bk. 2, chap. 32, 5.
6. Origen, *Contra Celsus*, bk. 3, chap. 24.
7. Hilary of Poitiers, *Tract on the Psalms*, 64:15.
8. St. Augustine, Epistle 130, VI, 13, as quoted in *Instruction on Prayers for Healing*, 4.
9. John Henry Newman, *Essays on Miracles*, [newmanreader.org/works/miracles/](http://newmanreader.org/works/miracles/).
10. See Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire AD 100–400* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1984), chap. 4.
11. Edmund L. Swift, *The Life and Acts of St. Patrick*, quoted in Hebert, 193.
12. René Laurentin, *Catholic Pentecostalism* (New York: Doubleday, 1977), 112.
13. Ibid.
14. "The St. Seraphim of Sarov," [orthodoxinsight.com/icons/deticon4.html](http://orthodoxinsight.com/icons/deticon4.html).
15. "A Sea of Miracles" (Orthodox Photos.com, 2003), [orthodoxphotos.com/readings/portrait/miracles.shtml](http://orthodoxphotos.com/readings/portrait/miracles.shtml)

16. Fr. Rafael Avva Mena, quoted in Ata and Mena, 27-28.
  17. Maria Woodworth-Etter, *Signs and Wonders* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1997), 130-131.
  18. Sullivan, 151.
  19. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Roland E. Murphy, eds., *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 11.
  20. *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson), 334. The word *kratos* "also signifies dominion, and is so rendered frequently in doxologies, 1 Peter 4:11; 5:11; Jude 25; Revelation 1:6; 5:13 (RV); in 1 Timothy 6:16, and Hebrews 2:14 it is translated 'power.'"
  21. *New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 11.
  22. Bishop Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press), 54,
  23. Divine Office, Lent weeks 1 and 3, Thursday morning intercession.
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*Lord, Renew Your Wonders: Spiritual Gifts for Today* by Damian Stayne

is available at:

Amazon

<https://www.amazon.com/Lord-Renew-Your-Wonders-Spiritual/dp/1593253230>

The Word Among Us website: <https://bookstore.wau.org/Lord-Renew-Your-Wonders-Spiritual-Gifts-For-Today-P303.aspx>

Goodnews books website: <https://goodnewsbooks.co.uk/our-catalogue/product/1738-lord,-renew-your-wonders.html>

#### INVITATIONS

If you would like to invite Damian or his team to lead one of their training schools in spiritual gifts and a public Miracle Healing Service or their Healing, Signs and Wonders conference please contact Damian at [coretlumenchristi@gmail.com](mailto:coretlumenchristi@gmail.com)

#### FILMS

Short films of Healings at our events to build faith can be found at <http://www.coretlumenchristi.org/videos.php> or at Damian's Facebook page.

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*top illustration: Jesus heals the lame man, illustration by James Tissot*



## The Holy Spirit and a New Society

By Jerry Munk

Before He returned to heaven, Jesus Christ made a promise to His followers. “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). This promise was fulfilled shortly after his ascension:

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled the house where they were sitting...and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4).

The lives of Christ’s disciples were transformed when they received the Holy Spirit. God gave them a new life and formed them into a new society. God’s people became a visible and united family of believers. They lived a common life: a life devoted to Jesus Christ. Because of their love for one another, the first Christians were able to convince others of the reality of the new life they had found in Jesus Christ.

All who believed were together and had all things in common. They sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need. Day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number those who were being saved (Acts 2:44-47).

## Contemporary society

We have seen many societal changes in recent decades. Unfortunately, much of this change is in opposition to the way of life the Bible teaches Christians to live. Crime, dishonesty, abortion, broken marriages, drug abuse, the breakdown of neighborhoods, sexual promiscuity, and materialism have increased at an alarming rate. There is no way to measure the emotional, psychological, and spiritual damage that is being done. Many people lack purpose and have few lasting, supportive relationships – they especially lack relationships that will help them love Jesus Christ and live fully for him.

Our modern society has placed tremendous pressure on the churches. Fewer and fewer Christians are able to stand firmly in the face of these challenges. Many simply adopt the values of the secular society in which they live. Vision for and experience of a full Christian life lived in the context of a tangible, loving community of God's people have, for the most part, been lost by today's Christians.

## Building Christian community

The Lord is actively working among Christians to restore among them the life He came to give. He is looking for men and women to be His disciples, to proclaim His Gospel, and to build His kingdom. Through the Holy Spirit, men and women can have a personal experience of God. They can receive power to dedicate themselves to Him and to live a life that glorifies Him. Only through the Holy Spirit can Christians respond fully to the commandment of Jesus Christ: "that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34). One result of this renewing work of the Holy Spirit is the building of Christian community.

You are God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were no people but now you are God's people (1 Peter 2:9-10).

## What is Christian community?

Christian community is created when people who have committed their lives to Jesus Christ agree to live for him and serve him together. In Christian community, God's people share their whole lives with one another in an environment of love and mutual support: a new society – a new family – in which men, women, and children live for Jesus Christ and experience the abundant life that he came to give. People in community share their talents, their resources, and their day-to-day lives. They make a stable, long-term commitment (a commitment that is often life-long) to love and serve one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. They agree to work together in the mission God has given them to do. Single people, couples, and families find in Christian community an environment that helps them to grow in Jesus Christ and to live faithfully for him.

## What Christian relationships ought to be

The Bible contains many instructions about how Christians ought to relate to one another. By looking at passages that contain the phrase "one another" we can begin to see what "normal" Christianity was intended to be.

- Serve one another (Galatians 5:13).
- Bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2).
- Speak the truth in love to one another (Ephesians 4:15).
- Teach one another (Colossians 3:16).
- Forgive one another (Ephesians 4:32).
- Admonish one another (Romans 15:14).
- Comfort and edify (build up) one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

- Exhort one another (Hebrews 3:13).
- Stir up one another to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24).
- Confess your trespasses to and pray for one another (James 5:16).
- Be hospitable with one another (1 Peter 4:9).
- Minister to one another the spiritual gifts you have received (1 Peter 4:10).

While these instructions are given to all Christians, very few Christians today have a tangible experience of this kind of personal, committed, and Christ-centered relationships. By living in community, members of The Sword of the Spirit are not trying to do something extraordinary, they are simply trying to live “normal Christianity:” a Biblical way of life.

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top illustration of by (c) [Digital Storm](#) at [Bigstock.com](#)



Jerry Munk is a member of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church and a coordinator in the [Work of Christ Community](#), Lansing, Michigan, USA. He and his wife Jan have three grown children, all actively participating in the community.

## Pray by Day: Meeting the Challenge of Personal Prayer

### *A New Prayer App based on the iPray App*

Prayer can revolutionize your life. It gives strength to the weak, wisdom to the fool, joy to the sorrowful, and comfort to the oppressed. Most importantly, it gives us a living relationship with God.

Unfortunately, most youth and many adults struggle to have consistent and effective personal prayer. We know we should pray but we regularly fail to do it. Not knowing how, we never start. Sometimes we struggle because we are distracted by other things.

Although we set apart 15 minutes to pray, we spend it mostly flitting from one thought to another. We set apart the time – but we just don't pray much. Sometimes we are just bored by doing the same thing over and over, so we quit before we begin!

#### **What is Pray by Day?**

Pray by Day helps you Start, Strengthen and Sustain a daily prayer habit.

Watch a video about Pray by Day on [Facebook](#) or below:

#### **Where can you download it?**

Get the app here:

- [iOS \(iPhone/iPad\)](#)
- [Android \(virtually all other smart phones\)](#)

#### **Why a prayer app?**

We in the Sword of the Spirit have rich music culture, and a focus on daily personal prayer and scripture reading. What if there was a way to easily offer that to the wider Christian people? What if we could get our music and teaching “out there”?

That's what Pray by Day can do. It takes you through a 15 min prayer time complete with a reflection on scripture, music, and time to give thanks and intercede. It's also customizable so people can add their own intercessions or switch out the songs and best of all, it's free!

#### **Who might like this?**

- People who are trying to start a habit of personal prayer
- People who have one, but are looking to strengthen and sustain it
- And it's just worth saying, this app could work really well for commuters
- People who like our music - we keep adding more songs (for example, John Hughes' songs) and there will be more coming
- Eventually, we want people to "graduate" from using the app. We hope it will give them a pattern of prayer that they can continue using even after they're done with the app!

## How can you help?

Here's three ways you can help:

- 1) Tell your friends about this awesome app!
- 2) Help us gain an online presence
  - a) Like us on [Facebook](#),
  - b) Re-share the videos we post, especially [this video](#).
  - c) Leave a review for the app ([iOS](#), [Android](#))
- 3) Pray for the success of the project. It's only fitting to pray for the success of a prayer app!

## A Scriptural Orientation to Worship, Part I



## Welcome to Heaven!

### Our Worship of God Transforms Time and Space, Making Them Sacred

by Michael Shaughnessy

One thing have I asked of the Lord,  
that will I seek after;  
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord  
all the days of my life,  
to behold the beauty of the Lord,  
and to inquire in his temple.

- Psalm 27:41

### We have access to heaven now

The hustle and bustle of traffic and pedestrians all busy with their affairs is non-stop in the modern world. In the middle of it all, a group of university students gather to participate in a prayer meeting, a time of joy-filled singing and praying. When they begin their time of worship, they are in a building near campus, but they don't remain there very long.

The very act of worship transforms time and space, making them sacred. Through worship we are lifted out of the ordinary, the common, the daily flow of events and places and enter the presence of God. We cross over the threshold of the temple of God and stand in the presence of the angels and saints surrounding the throne

crying by day and by night to the Lord: "Holy, you are holy." We, who know God the Father, are redeemed by his Son and are filled with the Holy Spirit, have access to heaven now. It won't just happen when we die, but happens every time we enter the throne room of God by setting apart time and space to pray.

Scripture teaches us that the various ways we pray, both individually and corporately, are meant to help us live in the heavenly reality now. They remind us, that the most fundamental event now taking place is not what we see and hear on the street, on the television, or on our favorite website; no, it is taking place in a dimension parallel to this. Christian worship is built on that reality, a reality expressed in the Letter to the Hebrews, chapter 12:

You have come to Mount Zion,  
to the city of the living God,  
the heavenly Jerusalem,  
with myriads of angels round the throne!  
- Hebrews 12:22

### Worship and worthship

What is worship? The word "worship" comes from the Old English word "weorthscipe". Thus, to worship means to acknowledge the value or worth of something. When we worship God we are saying something about his worth.

What can or should we say about God's worth? Some songs we sing help us here: "Lord you are more precious than silver..." which compares the worth of God with things normally held in high esteem. The song with the words "You alone are holy, you alone O Lord; you alone are worthy, Lamb of God," speaks of God's worth without comparison. It simply says God alone is worthy of divine worship. The song with the words "My King and my all, My Lord and my all, My God and my all, My life, my all, my God," expresses that we know God deserves all of our life.

In the Book of Revelation, John describes his vision of the throne room of God where, day and night, they never cease to sing, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" (Revelations 4:8). God, the Most High, is ceaselessly being worshipped, ceaselessly being honored as worthy. The angels and the saints are before his throne saying: "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you have created all things, and by your will they existed and were created" (Revelations 4:11).

In those verses from Revelations we see God is worthy of worship because of what he has done. He created all things. He is the ultimate source of all that is. It is amazing that he who did not need us, created us. He created beings like himself who can love, reason, and appreciate truth and beauty. And then, when we rejected what is good and true and beautiful, he made a way for us to be more than we ever were, a way for us to be united to him and to share in his divinity.

But God is worthy of worship not just because of what he has done, but because of who he is. Even if he had not created nor redeemed us, he would be worthy of worship. He is all good, all loving, all just, all beautiful. He is almighty, all knowing, infinite, and eternal. Another way of saying this is: God is holy.

Saying God is holy doesn't just mean that he is righteous and good. That God is holy means he is set apart from all other things. He is wholly other. There is none who compares with him. He is above time and space. They do not confine or limit him. He is above all power and all wisdom. Yes, the Lord is worthy.

That the Lord is worthy of worship because of what he has done and who he is can be seen in many of the psalms – the original scriptural songs of worship to the Lord.

In Psalm 145 David praises God because of who he is and for what he has done:

I will extol you, my God and King,  
and bless your name for ever and ever.  
Every day I will bless you,  
and praise your name for ever and ever.  
Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised,  
and his greatness is unsearchable.  
One generation shall laud your works to another,  
and shall declare your mighty acts.  
On the glorious splendor of your majesty,  
and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.  
Men shall proclaim the might of your terrible acts,  
and I will declare your greatness.  
They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness,  
and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.

David goes on for 40 lines, noting that God is worthy because of who he is: because he is great, because he is majestic and powerful, because he has dominion over all, because he is good and just, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, because he is compassionate, faithful and kind.

He says God is worthy because of what he has done: his wondrous works, his awesome acts, his mighty deeds, for upholding the falling, giving us food, being near to us, fulfilling our desires, hearing our cry and saving us. Like David we should say: "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised," and when we participate in a time of worship we, like David can express why he is worthy as we enter into the courts of the Lord:

Holy, O holy, Lord God Almighty  
Worthy O worthy glorious Prince of Peace  
We bring our lives to you, a sacrifice to you  
We stand in awe before your holy name.  
All glory and honor and praise  
Be to the Ancient of Days.  
We praise you we worship you  
Our Lord and our King on high.

Michael Shaughnessy is the Director of [Kairos in North America](#). Kairos is an international federation of outreaches to high school, university and post university aged people, and a member of [The Servants of the Word](#).

## A Scriptural Orientation to Worship, Part 2



## Worship Is Our Service to God

### ***Worship of the Lord is at the heart of the Christian life***

by Michael Shaughnessy

Come, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord,  
Who stand by night in the house of the Lord!  
Lift up your hands to the holy place, and bless the Lord!  
- Psalm 134:1-2

### ***At your service***

The word "worship" comes from the Old English word "weorthscipe", which means to acknowledge the value or worth of something. When we worship God we are saying something about his worth. The words in Hebrew and in Greek, which we usually translate as "worship", are rooted in our relationship with God and our behavior before him.

In English we normally translate one Hebrew word either by the word *servant* or the word *worshippers*. Thus

in 2 Kings 10:23 Jehu calls together the worshippers/servants of Baal. "Then Jehu went into the house of Baal; and he said to the worshippers of Baal, 'Search, and see that there is no servant of the Lord here among you.'" It could also be translated: "Then Jehu went into the house of Baal; and he said to the servants of Baal, 'Search, and see that there is no worshipper of the Lord here among you.'" The word for servant and worshipper is the same word. In some translations this same word gets translated *minister*. The simple point is that in Hebrew, one of the words for worship portrays worship as service we give to a master. Here worship is rooted in the relationship of humility we have with God.

The same relationship exists in Greek and can be seen in the New Testament.\* Revelations 7:15 says of the saints in heaven who are worshipping the Lord, "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night within his temple." Their worship is described as service.

It is from this position as a servant that we can rightly honor God. It gives us the right point of view. We can have the mind of a servant. We can have the attitude of a servant and the behavior of a servant in worship. Our attitude can be. "I am here to honor the Lord God as a servant before my master." When we are honoring the Lord it is helpful to be aware of who he is and who we are. He is God almighty. We are his servants.

### At the heart of the Christian life

The connection between the concept of being a servant and being a worshipper is important to us. Worship of the Lord should be right at the heart of the Christian life. Our life as disciples of Christ can encompass a wide range of service and activities, such as mission, evangelising and bringing people into radical discipleship, working for social justice, and promoting the unity of the Body of Christ. It is more than just a desire to live community life as the early Christians did in the Acts of the Apostles. Central to who we are and what we do is being the Lord's servants, whose duty it is to give him the worship he is due.

Servanthood is not a popular concept in the post-modern era. It involves humility. Like Christ, we must empty ourselves to become a servant, humble ourselves, and become obedient. (Philippians 2:5-8) The servant has duties to perform. He or she is expected to be faithful and responsible, doing what is required of him or her according to the mind of the master. One of the duties of the servant of the Lord is to worship. We do not worship because of what we have to gain from it, but because it is our duty. We live in a consumerist society that puts "me first", even in prayer!

The consumer asks, "What's in it for me?" whereas the worshipper is always "At your service." Doing the master's will is the work of the servant, thus it is right to think of worship as the work of a servant.

We are servants of the Lord.  
He is our master Jesus Christ.  
All our joy in you our God.  
Lo we have come to do your will.

### Worship is our work

I will offer to you burnt offerings of fatlings,  
with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams;  
I will make an offering of bulls and goats.  
- Psalm 66:15

Old Testament ritual worship involved some pretty serious manual labour, that is, labour demanding real physical effort.

Some of it was also gruesome, involving the slaughtering of rams, bulls and goats. It meant raising them, getting them to Jerusalem, butchering them, building the fire, placing the meat on it and saying the prayers.

The work of worship today is not so demanding in terms of manual labour. The work of worship mainly demands mental, emotional and spiritual effort. In order to worship well, one must pray with more than one's lips.

Do you ever sing a hymn at church and afterward find yourself unable to remember what the hymn said? Distraction is one of the chief problems we need to work at. One of the devilish things about distraction is that we are not aware of the problem when we are in the middle of it. It is only when we remember what we are supposed to be doing that we even realise we have just been distracted. You can't fight distraction when you are distracted. The main thing you can do is discipline your mind to avoid being distracted. This is mental work. It is only one of the ways we need to apply our minds in order to pray well. We also need to know what constitutes good worship so we can do it better ourselves. This too (including reading an article like this), is the work of worship.

### Pray for the grace to pray well

We need to work at prayer spiritually as well. We must pray for the grace to pray well and then respond well to the grace the Lord provides. Praying is itself probably the best way to learn to pray. Praying with others, who know how to pray well, in addition, helps us to learn to pray well and motivates us besides. To this end it is good to prepare for our times of worship, as Paul exhorts:

*Brethren when you come together, each one should bring a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. (1 Corinthians 14:26)*

We also need to work on prayer "emotionally". We can cultivate the right sentiments and attitudes toward prayer. Recognizing where we have a bad attitude or wrong sentiments, then renouncing them, often will help us in our experience of prayer. Love of prayer doesn't just fall out of the sky upon us. Love of prayer, like love of another, is work. Joy in prayer takes work. Fervor in prayer takes work.

Now, if that sounds like a lot of work, it's because it is. Having said that, there is great joy found in worshipping God well. We were made for this. There is no higher use for our voices than singing the praise of God. There is no higher use for our eyes than seeing his face. There is no higher use for our hands than raising them to honour the Lord. There is no higher use for our minds than knowing God truly. Although worship is a duty, it is a joyful one.

Finally, it is important that all who are present participate. Worship is not something one watches others do. Each person contributes his or her voice, his or her hands, his or her mind. No one can do it for them and if they are not doing it, the corporate offering of praise and thanks is diminished. As servants of the Lord we all have an important role to play in worship, not just the musicians and the singers, but each one of us. Let us each bring in the full offering. (Malachi 3:10)

It is a great privilege to be called into this service of worship but it is also our duty. It is a great joy to serve the Lord with gladness (Psalm 100:2), but it is also work.

Although we may well have a good spiritual experience when we worship, our desire is to please God, not have a spiritual experience.

Bless the Lord oh my soul.  
Let all that is within me  
Bless his holy name.  
- Psalm 103:1

## A Scriptural Orientation to Worship

Part 1: [Our Worship of God Transforms Time and Space, Making Them Sacred](#)

Part 2: [Worship Is Our Service to God](#)

Part 3: [Inspired Psalms and Songs](#)

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Michael Shaughnessy is the Director of [Kairos in North America](#). Kairos is an international federation of outreaches to high school, university and post university aged people, and a member of [The Servants of the Word](#).

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top photo of Holy Sepulchre Jerusalem entitled "Eternal Believer" by (c) [Nadavdov](#)

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### A Scriptural Orientation to Worship, Part 3



## Inspired Psalms and Songs:

*The Psalms are not only inspired by God, they form and shape our praise and worship of God as well*

by Michael Shaughnessy

*Sing praises to God, sing praises!  
Sing praises to our King, sing praises!  
For God is the King of all the earth;  
Sing praises with a psalm!  
- Psalm 47:6*

### The Spirit forming and shaping our worship and singing

“That is really an **inspired song!**” I have often thought that about a new song when I experience something in my own spirit that is lifted up and drawn into the presence of the Lord. Music has the power to inspire, that is, to inspire, that is, to fill us with the Spirit. It is the way God designed us; and the way he designed music.

You may have heard a Christian song writer say, “The Lord gave me the lyrics,” or “The melody just seemed to be given to me while I was praying.” The Lord does inspire, or breathe into us, the ability to worship him in spirit and in truth. When we are open to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Lord will inspire our worship and singing. It is a work of the Spirit giving expression to what he is doing or wants to do among God's people.

It is the Spirit forming and shaping the worship life of the Christian people.

### The psalms form those who sing them

Yet when it comes to lyrics for songs, none are as inspired as the psalms. Here we have not only inspirational lyrics, we have lyrics with the authority of the Scripture, because that is what they are. The Christian church has judged them objectively inspired by God. Because of this it is appropriate that many of the songs which Christians sing are based on the psalms.

The people of God have used the psalms as the basis of songs not just because the psalms are inspired and give honor to God in the way he intended to be honored, but also because they form and shape those who sing them. (Most of us know how “pop” songs have the ability to stick in our minds long after we last heard them. Inevitably, they affect the way we think and feel.) With songs based on the psalms it is the Word of God that is forming us. His Word is truth and life. We are centered on God and his truth, not on our self. St. Athanasius, a 4th century bishop, commented that the psalms not only stir up the emotions, but moderate them. This is at least in part because they were written by people who were trying to understand God and his ways rather than trying to understand themselves. Many songs that Christians sing are simply the Scripture put to music. However, not all are Scripture. Many songs express the fundamental truths of the faith like the hymns of old. We sing of the amazing grace of God to save us. We are inspired at the name of Jesus. We remind ourselves that we are born into a spiritual battle and need to fight the good fight of faith until we join the angels and saints in Jerusalem.

### Giving the Lord the honor due to him

Many Christian songs simply praise, exalt, hallow, and adore the Lord. This is because most of the time that Christians spend in worship together is not mainly asking God to meet our needs. We are centered first and foremost on giving God his due, knowing that our God will supply our every need, and we shall not want. Most good Christian songs also are not expressing how we feel about the Lord (although that is important). Rather they express the objective reality of the worthiness of God to receive praise and honor. Whether these songs are the Scripture put to music, hymns of old, or the latest in the Christian worship scene, the goal is the same: to give the Lord the honor due to his name.

There are other songs which Christians sing as well. Songs which are appropriate when the Lord leads his people into a time of repentance and we ask him, *change my heart, oh Lord*. There are times when we do ask the Lord to meet our needs or to touch us in our emotions. However, our primary objective in worship is usually meant to be honoring the Lord as the source of truth and life and not being concerned about ourselves.

*Worthy O worthy is the Lord  
Worthy to be thanked and praised  
And worshipped and adored.*

Michael Shaughnessy is the Director of [Kairos in North America](#). Kairos is an international federation of outreaches to high school, university and post university aged people, and a member of [The Servants of the Word](#).

Top illustration of David playing the lute by (c) Michael O'Brien

## The Lois Project for Moms and Mentors



### I Will Stay

by Janice Firm

This past Lenten season, I have been reflecting on two areas of my life where I have experienced both the blessing and the challenge of saying “yes” to God. The first is in the area of work, the second area is in parenting. Everyday, in each area, I am faced with uncertainty. Despite this uncertainty, I feel tremendous grace to remain in and fully inhabit the spaces where God has placed me.

For a number of years I worked in a hospital with patients and their families at the end of life. For me, it is privilege and an honor to spend time with the dying. My ongoing experience of death - the “good”, peaceful deaths, and the not so peaceful deaths - is not what I expected when I started working in the palliative care field. To be present at the moment of death is, for me, to be very near heaven. The veil is especially thin; it feels as if I can almost touch heaven. When I think of death I cannot help but worship God for his victory over death, even as I mourn for those who have died. Christ’s victory on the cross has removed the sting of death. Death no longer has the final word. I can echo Paul’s words, “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O

death, is your sting (1 Corinthians 15:55)?" I am in awe of God's work of redemption, his saving power over death, and the fact that he has conquered what we fear most – death itself.

I am also a foster mom. My husband and I love our foster daughter and want to adopt her if given the opportunity. However, it is not clear what will happen with her case, and every few days we receive more information about her situation that only further drives home how precarious it is; how uncertain the outcome. It is easy for me to become anxious about the future. I am powerless to influence or direct the course of events but I desperately want to have control over what happens. I have an idea of what seems best for her but I can't know for sure what is in her best interest long term: staying with us, returning to her family of origin, or going to live with a blood relative.

People often ask "how do you do it?" How do you find strength to work with the dying? How do you open yourself up to loving a child who may not remain in your home?

If one looks at death from a solely human perspective, it is horrible, hopeless, and final. When viewed with spiritual eyes, it helps us to place our hope in a merciful God who loves us and desires life, not death, for us. Christ came to a broken and sinful world to heal, restore, and make all things new. He changes death into life. This life lives in me, and I bring it with me into every room, every situation, every encounter - including foster care.

None of us can know our children's futures or say with certainty that they will remain with us. We are called to love them today. For love, in God's economy, is never wasted. Because I cannot hide from the reality of an uncertain future, I am continually reminded that my foster daughter is a gift to love and cherish fully, with all of my heart. That reality is something I can be present to, act on, and influence now, even in the midst of uncertainty. "When one loves, one does not calculate," wrote Therese of Lisieux. Such action (to love her without calculating) is absolutely and always in her best interest, whatever the future may hold.

**None of us can know our children's futures or say with certainty that they will remain with us. We are called to love them today. For love, in God's economy, is never wasted.**

But remembering all of the things the Lord has done for me in the past, and the things he has done for my foster daughter, keeping her healthy and safe through pregnancy and delivery, keeping her safe now, gives me hope. To paraphrase Psalm 43:5 "Why, my soul, are you in despair? Why so anxious within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him my savior and my God." God has acted and protected. He acts and protects now. He will act and protect in the future. Rather than be consumed by worry, I now say every day: "Thank you for letting me be her mom today." I hope I can say the same thing tomorrow.

**Rather than be consumed with worry, I now say every day: "Thank you for letting me be her mom today." I hope I can say the same thing tomorrow.**

Both at work and in my personal life, being near death, pain, uncertainty, and suffering presses me to find my hope and strength in God's love. He has poured his love into my heart through the gift of his Spirit (Romans 5:5) and that gives me strength to love fully and without counting the cost in return. There is so much pain and ugliness in the world, so many needs that are larger than what I have to give. I do not have enough within me to meet all of the demands and concerns of my family or those I serve at work. I do not have what it takes to comfort them, change their circumstances, or control outcomes. I am often in situations where the need is overwhelming and I am so lacking that I feel helpless and unsure of what I can do; I want to turn and walk the other way. From a human perspective I recognize that I have little or nothing to give.

I am a beggar and only God can make up for what I lack. In my want I can say like Peter who met the lame man in the temple, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you” (Acts 3:6). I can sit, listen, and be present to each patient, to witness their experience, and uphold their dignity. I can love my foster daughter today, even with the uncertainty of what tomorrow may bring. I can choose not to run away, but to stay, be present, and love. Christ did not shy away from pain, from ugliness, and from suffering when he embraced the cross for my sake. I know that his cross can give me strength to embrace suffering and be a light in painful places.

**I can choose not to run away, but to stay, be present, and love. Christ did not shy away from pain, from ugliness, and from suffering when we embraced the cross for my sake. I know that his cross can give me strength to embrace suffering and be a light in painful places.**

There are times when I am tempted to think that my competence, efforts, skills, and training are enough to get the job done. But, daily, as I am pushed past my natural abilities and skills, and recognize my limitations, I get a glimpse of what Paul the Apostle means when he says, “When I am weak, then I am strong.” It is God’s mercy to place me at the edge of my capabilities so that, in humility, I will know my reliance on him. I know that his love is stronger than death, stronger than my own anxiety, more powerful than the foster care system, and more powerful than my own expectations about what is best for my foster daughter. With God’s ongoing grace may I stay faithful to his call.

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This article was first published in [The Lois Project](#). Used with permission.

Lois Project is a Missional Motherhood Collective that aims to empower moms and mentors in their Christian faith. We seek to share real stories and insights from women around the world as a means of connection and encouragement and to cultivate a sincere faith that influences future generations.

The Lois Project is a group of Christian women from various cities, countries, and church backgrounds who feel a common call to be disciples on mission in all seasons of life. Most of us find ourselves in a season of care-giving as mothers, grandmothers, mentors, or teachers.

Many of our writers are part of an international, ecumenical Christian community called *The Sword of the Spirit*. Although we come from Catholic, Orthodox, or Protestant traditions we seek to foster unity among these groups and work together.

www.loisproject.com  
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## Coming to the Lord As We Are in Daily Prayer

A reflection for women by Lynne May

Coming to the Lord daily, alone, with just our heart and conversing with him is one foundational aspect of what it means to be a “radical” disciple, a disciple who is “rooted” in Jesus Christ alone. Coming to the Lord, as we truly are, being authentic before him in daily personal prayer cannot be undervalued. It is critical that we come to him daily in prayer, in a solitary manner, fully as we are—to worship, adore, thank, confess, and ask his help for our needs and those of others. **Coming to him daily helps to free us from distraction, worry, and lingering preoccupation with ourselves.**

It makes us more and more into his image, the image he calls us to bear to others around us. He saves us from our fears. He leads us back should we get distracted. He transforms and renews our minds. He gives us strength to do the things he asks of us daily. He encourages and surrounds us with comfort, truth, and love. He delights when we come to him as we are, worshipping him! As I come to him as I am, he promises that he will totally transform me—because of who he is!

He desires for each of us to find it easy and delightful to live out of our identity as his beloved daughters and for our speech, thoughts, and actions to flow out of a deep sense of this identity. Daily coming to the Source of Life,

worshipping him, thanking him, and talking to him allows him to transform and remove anything dissonant that remains either consciously or subconsciously in our minds and hearts. Coming to the Lord in personal prayer keeps us safe, in the light and shadow of God's safe and loving wings. **Here, in the protection of his wings, we have the chance to be authentic and receive the deep affirmation, comfort, strength we need, the real and lasting love and affirmation we seek and thirst for as women.** Here, alone with him, we can drink deeply from the Source of Everlasting Life and Love.

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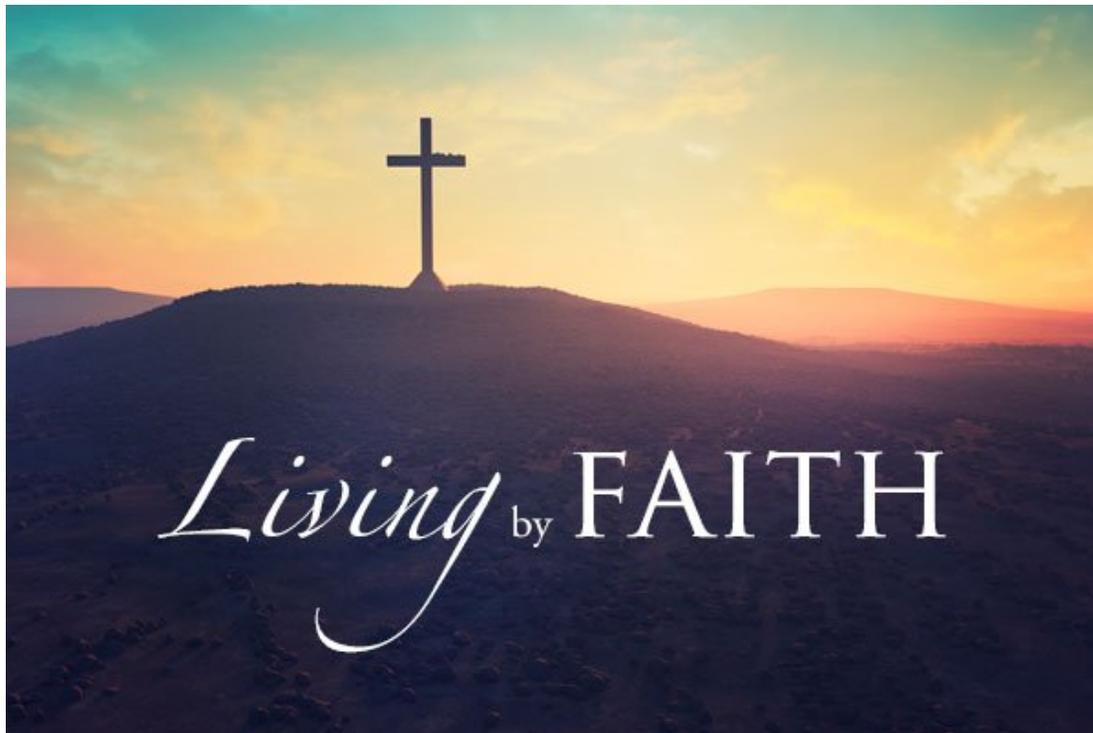
This article by Lynne May first appeared in [The Lovely Commission](#), a publishing venture and brand of [Kairos North America](#). It is run by Molly Kilpatrick and Mary Rose Jordan and a team of contributors from various Christian communities in North America and beyond. Together they are working to build a culture of radical love, femininity, modesty of heart, mind, and body amongst young women.

Their aim is to inspire and equip young women to embrace and promote a culture of Godly femininity in which we live out our rich identity as daughters of God and disciples of Jesus Christ.

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Photo credit of young woman praying by Lightstock.com

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## Courage to Take Steps

by Michael Kriechbaum

The Lord has really blessed me with the opportunity to do a year of service away from home with the Kairos GAP Mission Team in Dublin. My GAP year has been an absolutely amazing experience and I want to tell you about one important thing that the Lord is showing me this year. The Lord blesses us greatly if we take a step of courage in faith. I want to share how the Lord has blessed me when I've taken a step for Him.

At the beginning of the year we received three weeks of training and preparation for mission. After training were to begin outreach during freshers week at UCD (University College Dublin). Freshers week is when all the new students arrive in college and spend the week looking for friends and student groups to join. We planned to set up a coffee stall right in front of the main bus stop, give out tea & coffee and talk with students. The primary goal was to connect with students and invite them to be part of our UCO (University Christian Outreach) community.

I was absolutely terrified when I heard what we were going to do. I was not a person who was very comfortable with approaching people and chatting to them. I also have a tendency to sleep poorly in stressful situations and as a result I didn't sleep very well the nights before we started the stall. I prayed a lot about this both by myself and with others and I asked for courage and boldness because I couldn't see myself succeeding in this. I tried to trust the Lord with everything that was going to happen and I offered Him this opportunity to work in me and through me.

The Lord absolutely blessed me in laying down my life and trusting in him. I had amazing conversations and

encounters throughout freshers week and during our regular Tuesday coffee stall. I have had many chances to share my faith and some of the experiences I have had with the Lord. The Lord has been walking with me and changing me for a little while now and I can already see how He has used some of my struggles and doubts to give witness to His goodness. Looking back I am amazed how the Lord turned my fear and anxiety into boldness and strength to stand up for the gospel. On my own I would not have been able to do that.

Taking these steps of faith is a very important part of the Christian life. We are challenged all the time as Christians. Should I tell this person that I am a Christian? Should I trust the Lord in my choice of career? Can I even believe that the Lord has absolutely great things in store for me? These situations always require a response. Choosing to take the easy way is normally the one that leads you away from God rather than closer to him. Often the easy way just means not doing something; not speaking about the gospel or to not saying sorry for something that hurt another person.

God always calls us into action. He calls us out of apathy and resistance. He challenges us to be courageous and to stand up for him. The most important part of choosing to follow God's call in these challenging situations is faith. Faith that the Lord is on our side and will not let us down. And he never does. When we step out for God he will be on our side to support us and strengthen us. In the end it comes down to us to get up and take the step. God does not move our feet but He blesses every single step we take for Him. I have not used every time I was challenged in my life to make a step closer to God. I let many opportunities pass and that is not a great feeling. But it makes me even more determined to choose for the Lord the next time. During the YES retreat (a Kairos retreat for youth) somebody gave me this verse as an encouragement for steps of courage and it has been in my mind ever since:

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope!” Jeremiah 29, 11

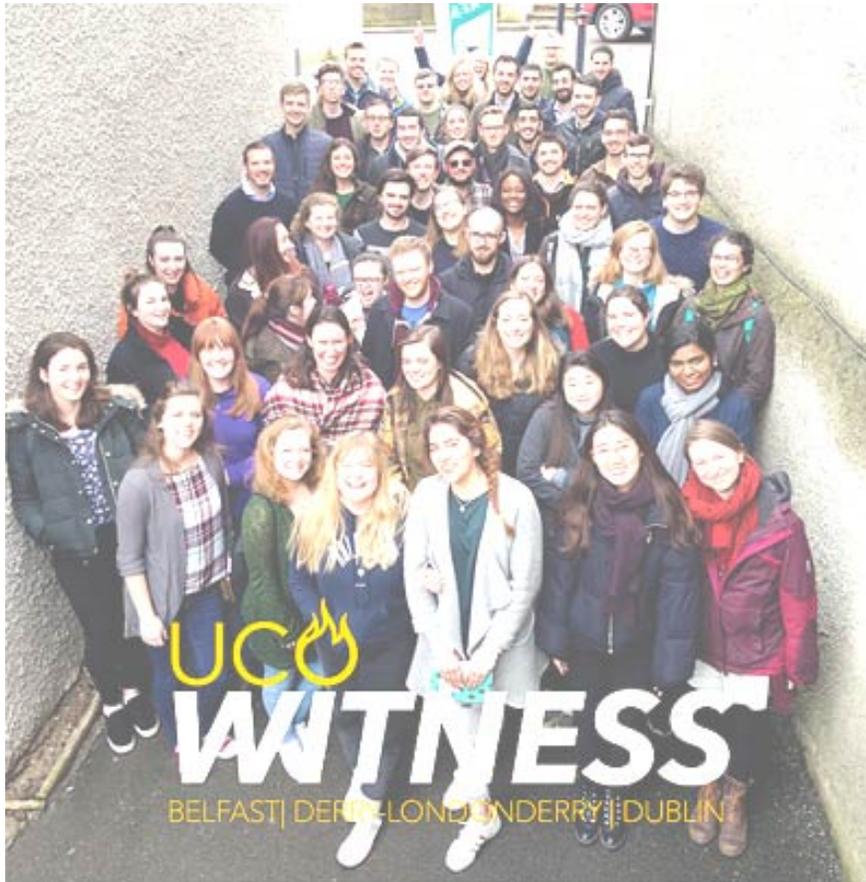
The Lord will never let me down. He will always be on my side and he will lead me into greater things than I can even imagine. That is what taking a GAP year is all about. A GAP year is the perfect opportunity to step into that life. It is the moment when the Lord calls you to go away from home, to step into a whole new environment, to explore what he has in store for you and to grow in ways that you could not even imagine. It is challenging, sometimes frustrating and exhausting, but these times are nothing against the joys of experiencing a different country and culture, to live and work with people who seek the Lord like you and to find the Lord in every day of your life.

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Michael Kriechbaum is from Munich, Germany. He has been serving for a year (2017-2018) on the Kairos GAP Mission Team in Dublin, Ireland.

The GAP Programme is organised and hosted by the [Community of Nazareth](#) on behalf of [Kairos EME](#). To find out more about Kairos GAP Europe go to: <https://www.kairos-eme.org/gapmissionteam> •

## Update on Kairos Events in Europe



### UCO Witness Weekend Retreat: Belfast, Derry & Dublin

by Celine Murray

A few weeks ago our University Christian Outreach (UCO) chapters in Dublin, Ireland and in Derry and Belfast, Northern Ireland came together for a weekend retreat in Armagh, Northern Ireland. It was absolutely amazing to see how God has been at work on the different college campuses and within each one of those groups.

Before this weekend I was definitely feeling God calling me on, and asking me to step further into life in him, but I was doing my best to ignore it because of my own desires for myself. I wasn't allowing God to push me in my faith very much because I was comfortable where I was and didn't want to let go of that. I knew however, going into this weekend, that the Holy Spirit was going to have a huge presence and that God had great things in store.

The theme of the weekend was "Witness" and the attendees were blessed and encouraged in a series of sessions about being a witness for God.

I personally felt the Holy Spirit's presence very strongly on this retreat and I am sure that anyone who attended would agree that God was at work and still is as we head back home. I am coming back feeling so inspired and encouraged by the holy and committed young Christians who are following God's call for them with such joy and such a drive for evangelism.

Something that really struck me this weekend was in a talk given by Tony Sarkis, who is a man from Lebanon currently serving with UCO Belfast. A common used line that went along with the theme of the weekend was "a cloud of witnesses" and Tony posed the question: "How are we a cloud of witness?"

This to me was such a powerful question. It made me ponder on what I had seen and heard in these past months of serving and being challenged in my faith, and it made me see the ways God has changed me and blessed me through it all already. I am so blessed to be completely immersed in God's plan and to be able to see Him at work so clearly in my day to day life. The realization for me was that I have such a responsibility to be a witness of this to others, maybe even more so than some people because of where God has me right now. I feel a strong call to witness God's love and joy to others and to allow others to see the peace and contentedness that comes from a life in Christ.

This is something that I can so easily allow fear or laziness to get in the way of, but who am I to get in the way of or ignore the Lord's plan. God sees the whole battle, while I only see the small little fights that exist in it. I would be foolish if I did not trust that God is calling me on for a reason worth following.

Going back to my daily schedule and services, I am feeling so revived and open to what the Lord wants to do through me. I am so on fire for Him and his plan. I am ready to get out of my comfort zone and to bring myself further and further into a life in Christ.

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Celine Murray is a member of University Christian Outreach in Dublin, Ireland.

To learn more about Kairos in Europe and the Middle East visit their [website](#) and Facebook page.

## Update on Kairos 2018 Events in Europe



### Kairos EME Weekend February 2018: Kingdom Come

by Celine Murray



I had the opportunity to go to my first Kairos weekend and it was an amazing experience. The prayer times particularly come to my mind when I reflect on the weekend, as I feel that the Holy Spirit was present in a very special way as we worshipped. It didn't feel forced, it felt very powerful and exciting to be with a large group of other young people trying to know and praise God. The talks were inspiring and I think God really imparted his vision of unity and mission for our region. I'm very grateful for the chance to have gone.

John-Joe Jackson  
UCO Glasgow



Coming together with Kairos this February re-convicted me to fight for God's glory with all that I am. The teachings over the weekend reminded me personally of the solidity of decision that is needed for the Kingdom of God - that there's no standing unsure in the middle of battle. I have to decide for one side or the other and commit to my choice. The weekend gave me mental space to think, pray and rededicate myself. I want this. I want God's Kingdom. And I'll fight for it with community surrounding me and our King at the head.

Joanna Whittam  
UCO Dublin



This year, I was asked to serve as an MC for the Kairos weekend. When I received the invitation I was a bit uncertain that I was fit to handle the responsibility. But I realised that it was a great opportunity to serve God, to serve the people attending the weekend, to grow in faith and to learn to be more dependent on God. So I took a leap of faith and I trusted God to make me fit for it. I'm glad I accepted because I loved serving especially serving the Lord in way that I hadn't served him before. God showed me how important it is to serve and that when we serve we ought to do this with a loving and joyful heart. By serving with a loving and joyful heart we reflect Jesus' loving personality and experience His love.

This was my second Kairos weekend and I enjoyed and loved it. It's so encouraging to be together with other young people who are on fire for the Lord and have a strong desire to get to know Him better. You get to meet so many great, loving, wise and unique people who encourage, inspire and help you in this journey of getting to know God more. By going to these weekends I realise I'm definitely not alone on this journey to know God and to be formed by His love and grace. The people I have encountered during these weekends, who I can call sincere friends, brothers and sisters, have been a true blessing in my life. If you have this desire to know God more, to understand and experience His love and grace more profoundly, or if you're longing to grow in this desire, then I really recommend going to these weekends.

Jason Rahoens  
Pharos

Kairos Weekend was hosted and organised by Jerusalem Community in Belgium on behalf of Kairos EME.

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To learn more about Kairos in Europe and the Middle East visit their [website](#) and Facebook page.



## Purity of Heart and Love of Neighbor

– Fruit of the Holy Spirit that Glorify Christ in Our Mortal Bodies

by **Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa**

The following sermon was given during a Lenten retreat at the Vatican in March 2018.

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### **“PUT ON THE ARMOR OF LIGHT” Romans 13:12**

#### **Christian Purity**

In our commentary on the exhortations in the Letter to the Romans, we have now come to the passage that says,

The night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us conduct ourselves becomingly as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires (Romans 13:12-14).

St. Augustine in his *Confessions* tells us about the part this passage played in his conversion. He had now reached an almost complete commitment to the faith. But there was one thing holding him back: the fear of not being able to remain chaste. He was living, as we know, with a woman without being married.

In the garden of the home he was visiting, in the throes of this interior struggle with tears in his eyes, he heard

a voice coming from the house next door, a young boy's or girl's voice that kept repeating, "*Tolle, lege!* Take up and read, take up and read." He interpreted those words as an invitation from God, and having a book of St. Paul's Letters close by, he opened it randomly and decided to consider the first thing he read as God's will for him. The passage his eyes fell on was precisely the passage from the Letter to the Romans that we have just read. A reassuring light (*lux securitatis*) shone forth within him that made all the darkness of uncertainty disappear. Now he knew that with God's help, he could be chaste.[1]

The things that the apostle calls "the works of darkness" in this passage are the same things he defines elsewhere as "desires, or works, of the flesh" (see Romans 8:13; Galatians 5:19), and what he calls "the armor of light" refers to the things that he elsewhere calls "the works of the Spirit," or "the fruit of the Spirit" (see Galatians 5:22). Among the works of the flesh, he highlights sexual dissoluteness with two words (*koite* and *aselgeia*) that are contrasted to the work of light, which is purity. The apostle does not speak in great detail here about this aspect of Christian life. But from the list of vices at the beginning of the letter (see Romans 1:26ff), we know how much importance it has in his eyes.

St. Paul establishes a very close link between purity and holiness and between purity and the Holy Spirit:

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from unchastity; that each one of you know how to take a wife for himself in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like heathen who do not know God; that no man transgress, and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things... God has not called us for uncleanness but in holiness. Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you. (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8)

Let us, therefore, seek to take up this last exhortation from the word of God, reflecting more deeply on this particular fruit of the Spirit, purity.

## Christian Reasons for Purity

In the Letter to the Galatians St. Paul writes, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23). The original Greek word that is translated as "self-control" or "dominion over oneself" is *enkrateia*. It has a very broad range of meanings. One can in fact exercise self-control in eating, in speaking, in restraining anger, etc. Here, however, as almost always in the New Testament, it means self-control in a very specific personal area, the area of sexuality. We can deduce this from the fact that just above when he is listing "the works of the flesh," the apostle calls *porneia*, impurity, the thing that is opposed to self-control. (This is the same word from which we get the word "pornography.")

In modern translations of the Bible, the word *porneia* has been translated at times as "prostitution," at times as "sexual immorality," at times as "fornication" or "adultery," and at times with other words. The basic idea of the word, however, is that of "selling oneself," of using one's own body, and thus of prostituting oneself (*pernemi* in Greek means, "I sell myself"). Using this a word to indicate virtually all the manifestations of sexual disorder, the Bible says that every sin of impurity is, in a sense, a prostituting of oneself, a selling of oneself.

The words used by St. Paul tell us, then, that there are two opposing attitudes toward one's body and one's sexuality. One is a fruit of the Spirit and the other is a work of the flesh; one is a virtue the other is a vice. The first attitude involves maintaining control over oneself and one's body; the second instead involves selling oneself or using one's body, that is, using sexuality for one's own pleasure, for utilitarian goals that are different than those for which it was created. It makes the sexual act a venal act, even if the gain is not always

monetary as in the case of true prostitution, and makes selfish pleasure an end in itself.

When we speak of purity and impurity in simple lists of virtue or vice, without examining the matter more deeply, the language of the New Testament does not differ very much from the language of pagan moralists. Pagan moralists also, Stoics and Epicureans, praise self-control, the *enkrateia*, but only as applied to interior quiet, to impassibility (*apatheia*) and to self-mastery. Purity is governed, according to them, by the principle of “right reason.”

In reality, however, within these two ancient pagan words, there is now a completely new content that arises, as always, from the kerygma. This is already evident in our passage where sexual dissolution is set in significant opposition to, as its contrary, the idea of “putting on the Lord Jesus Christ.” The early Christians were able to grasp this new content because it was already a topic of specific catechesis in other contexts.

Let us now examine one of these specific teachings on purity to discover its true content and the true Christian reasons for this virtue, which come from Christ’s paschal mystery. It is found in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20. It seems that the Corinthians—perhaps misinterpreting a statement by the apostle—advanced the principle that “all things are lawful for me” to justify even sins of impurity. The apostle’s response contains an absolutely new motive for purity that derives from the mystery of Christ. It is not permitted, he says, to give oneself to impurity (*porneia*). It is not permitted to sell oneself or to use oneself just for one’s own pleasure for the simple reason that we no longer belong to ourselves; we are not our own but Christ’s. We cannot decide how to use something that does not belong to us: “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? ... You are not your own” (1 Corinthians 12:15, 19).

The pagan motive is, in a certain sense, turned upside down; the supreme value to safeguard is no longer dominion over self but “non-dominion over self”: “The body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body” (1 Corinthians 6:13). The ultimate motive for purity is, therefore, that “Jesus is Lord!” Christian purity, in other words, does not consist in establishing the dominion of reason over our instincts so much as it is establishing the dominion of Christ over the whole person, including a person’s reason and instincts.

This Christological motive for purity is made more compelling by what St. Paul adds in the same passage: we are not just generically “of” Christ, like his property or something that belongs to him, we are the very body of Christ, his members! This makes everything immensely more subtle because it means that when I commit an impure act, I am prostituting the body of Christ, I am performing a kind of horrible sacrilege. I am committing violence against the body of the Son of God. The apostle asks, “Shall I, therefore, take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute?” (1 Corinthians 6:15).

He quickly adds to this Christological motive the pneumatological one which concerns the Holy Spirit: “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you?” (1 Corinthians 6:19). To abuse one’s own body is thus to desecrate the temple of God. But if someone destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him (see 1 Corinthians 3:17). To commit impurity is to “grieve the Holy Spirit of God” (Ephesians 4:30).

Alongside the Christological and pneumatological reasons, the apostle also mentions an eschatological one that refers to the ultimate destiny of a human being: “And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power” (1 Corinthians 6:14). Our body is destined for resurrection. It is destined one day to participate in the beatitude and the glory of the soul. Christian purity is not based on disdain for the body; on the contrary, it is based on the great esteem for its dignity. The Fathers of the Church, in combatting Gnostics, used to say the gospel does not proclaim salvation “from” the flesh but salvation “of” the flesh. Those who consider the body as “an outer garment” destined to be abandoned here below do not have the reason a Christian does to keep it unspoiled.

The apostle concludes his teaching on purity with an impassioned invitation: “So glorify God in your body!” (1 Corinthians 6:20). The human body, then, is for the glory of God and expresses that glory when a person lives out his or her sexuality and all of physical life in loving obedience to God’s will, which is like saying in obedience to the very meaning of sexuality, to its intrinsic and original nature which is not a selling of oneself but a giving of oneself. Such glorification of God through one’s body does not necessarily require renouncing the exercise of one’s sexuality. In the chapter that immediately follows, 1 Corinthians 7, St. Paul explains in fact that such glorification of God expresses itself in two ways and through two different charisms: either through marriage or through virginity. The virgin and the celibate glorify God in their bodies, but the one who marries also glorifies him provided that each one lives the requirements of his or her own state.

## Purity, Beauty, and Love of One’s Neighbor

In the new light deriving from the paschal mystery and illustrated for us up to this point by St. Paul, the ideal of purity holds a privileged place in every summary of morality in the New Testament. One could say there is no letter by St. Paul in which he does not dedicate space to purity when he is describing the new life in the Spirit (see, for example, Ephesians 4:17-5:33; Colossians 3:5-12). The basic requirements of purity are specified, from time to time, according to the diverse states of life for Christians. The Pastoral Letters explain how purity needs to be configured in young people, in women, in spouses, in the elderly, in widows, in presbyters, and in bishops. These letters present purity in its various facets of chastity, conjugal fidelity, sobriety, continence, virginity, and modesty.

Taken as whole, this aspect of Christian life determines what the New Testament—and the Pastoral Letters in a special way—call the “beauty” or the “beautiful” character of the Christian vocation that, joined with the other characteristics of goodness, form the unique ideal of “good beauty” or “beautiful goodness” (in Greek, *kalokagathia*). Christian tradition, calling purity the “beautiful virtue,” has grasped this biblical vision that—despite the abuses and the often one-sided emphases that have occurred—expresses something profoundly true. Purity is in fact Beauty!

This kind of purity is a lifestyle more than it is an individual virtue. It has a range of manifestations that go beyond the specifically sexual sphere. There is a purity of the body, but there is also a purity of the soul that rejects not only acts but also “evil” desires and thoughts (see Matthew 5:8, 27-28). There is a purity of speech that consists, negatively, in refraining from obscene language, vulgarity, and silly or suggestive talk (see Ephesians 5:4; Colossians 3:8) and consists positively in sincere and straightforward speech, that is, in saying “yes, yes,” and “no, no” in imitation of the spotless Lamb in whom “no guile was found on his lips” (1 Peter 2:22). Finally, there is a purity or clear-sightedness of the eyes and of one’s gaze. “The eye,” Jesus said, “is the lamp of the body” (see Matthew 6:22ff; Luke 11:34). St. Paul uses a very suggestive image to indicate the manner of this new life: he says Christians, born from the Passover of Christ, should be characterized by “the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:8). The word the apostle uses here, *eilikrineia*, (from *eile*, splendor of the sun, and *krino*, to discern) contains in itself the image of a “solar transparency.” In the passage we began with in Romans he speaks of purity as “the armor of light.”

Every day people tend to contrast sins against purity with sins against a neighbor and to consider just the sin against a neighbor a real sin. Sometimes people mock the excessive value accorded in the past to the “beautiful virtue.” This attitude is somewhat understandable: in the past morality emphasized the sins of the flesh so unilaterally that it led to real neuroses at times, to the detriment of concern for the duties toward our neighbor and to the detriment of the virtue of purity itself. Because of that, this virtue became impoverished and reduced to something that was almost only negative, the virtue of being able to say “no.”

However, we have gone to the opposite extreme, and people tend to minimize sins against purity in the interest

of concern (often only verbal) for one's neighbor. The basic error here is in putting these two virtues against each other. The word of God, far from setting purity against charity, instead links them closely together. We only have to read the continuation of the passage from the First the Letter to the Thessalonians that I cited at the beginning to realize how these two virtues are interdependent according to the apostle (see 1 Thessalonians 4:3-12). The single goal of both purity and charity is to be able to conduct a life "full of dignity," that is, integrated in all its relationships whether with oneself or with others. In our passage, the apostle summarizes all this in saying, "let us conduct ourselves becomingly as in the day" (Rom 13:13).

Purity and love of neighbor represent dominion over self and the gift of self to others. How can I give myself if I do not possess myself but am a slave to my passions? It is an illusion to think that we can combine genuine service to brothers and sisters, which always calls for sacrifice, altruism, forgetting ourselves, and generosity, with a life that is personally disordered, all aimed at pleasing oneself and satisfying one's passions. It inevitably ends in using brothers and sisters, just as one uses one's body. Those who cannot say "no" to themselves cannot say "yes" to brothers and sisters.

One of the "excuses" that contributes the most to justify the sin of impurity in people's minds and to relieve them of all responsibility is that it does not hurt anyone else, it does not violate the rights and freedom of anyone unless they say, it involves sexual abuse. But apart from the fact that this approach violates God's fundamental right to give his creatures a law, this "excuse" is also disingenuous in regard to neighbors. It is not true that the sin of impurity ends with the person who commits it. There is a solidarity among all sins. Every sin, wherever and whoever commits it, infects and defiles the moral atmosphere for human beings. Jesus calls this infection "scandal" and condemns it with some of the most horrific words in the whole gospel (see Matthew 18:6ff; Mark 9:42ff; Luke 17:1ff). Even evil thoughts that linger in our hearts, according to Jesus, defile a person and thus the world: "Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication... These are what defile a man" (Matthew. 15:19-20).

Every sin erodes values and all of them together create what Paul defines as "the law of sin" whose power over all human beings he illustrates (see Romans 7:14ff). In the Jewish Talmud, we can read a parable that illustrates well the solidarity between sin and the harm that all sin, even personal sin, causes for others. "Some people were on board a boat. One of them took a drill and began to drill a hole under his seat. The other passengers, watching him, asked, 'What are you doing?' He answered, 'What business is that of yours? Am I not drilling a hole under my own seat?' But they reply, 'Yes, but water will come in the boat and will drown all of us!'" Nature itself has begun to send us ominous protest warnings against certain modern abuses and excesses in the area of sexuality.

## Purity and Renewal

In studying the history of the origins of Christianity, one can clearly see that there were two principal instruments by which the Church succeeded in transforming the pagan world of that time. The first was the proclamation of the gospel, the kerygma, and the second was the testimony of Christians' lives, their witness. And one can see how, in the area of life testimony, there were again two things that most amazed and converted the pagans: brotherly love and the purity of the Christians' morals. The First Letter of Peter already mentions the amazement of the pagan world before the standard of life that was different among the Christians. He writes,

Let the time that is past suffice for doing what the Gentiles like to do, living in licentiousness, passions, drunkenness, revels, carousing and lawless idolatry. They are surprised that you do not now join them in the same wild profligacy, and they abuse you. (1 Peter 4:3-4)

The Apologists, the Christian writers who wrote in defense of the faith in the first centuries of the Church, attest that the pure and chaste manner of life of the Christians was, for the pagans, something “extraordinary and incredible.” In particular, the restoration of the family had an extraordinary impact on pagan society, which the authorities at the time had wanted to reform, but they had been powerless to slow down its disintegration. One of the arguments on which St. Justin Martyr based his *Apology* addressed to the emperor Antoninus Pius was this: Roman emperors are concerned about improving morals and the family, and they are attempting to promulgate laws for that goal. However, these laws have been shown to be insufficient. Well, why not recognize what Christian laws have been capable of achieving for those who live by them and acknowledge the help they can also give to civil society?

This does not mean that the Christian community was completely free of sexual disorders and sins. St. Paul even had to deal with a case of incest in the Corinthian community. But such sins were clearly recognized as sins, denounced, and corrected. It was not required to be without sin in this area, as in other areas, but to fight against sin.

Now let us move from early Christianity to today. What is the situation in the world today regarding purity? It is the same if not worse than the ancient situation! We live in a society, in terms of morals, that has fallen back into full-blown paganism and full-blown idolatry of sex. The terrible denunciation that St. Paul makes of the pagan world at the beginning of the Letter to the Romans applies, point by point, to today’s world, especially to the so-called affluent society (see Romans 1:26-27, 32).

Today as well, these things and other worse things are being done, but people try to justify them, to justify every moral license and every sexual perversion provided, they say, it does not harm others and does not infringe on the freedom of others. Whole families are being destroyed and people still say, where’s the harm in it? It is undeniable that certain judgments about traditional sexual morality are being revised and that modern sciences about human beings have contributed to shedding light on certain inner workings and conditionings of the human psyche that remove or diminish moral responsibility for certain behaviors that were considered sinful at one time.

But this progress has nothing to do with the pansexualism of certain pseudo-scientific and permissive theories that tend to negate every objective norm about sexual morality, reducing everything to a spontaneous evolution of morality, that is, a cultural matter. If we closely examine what is being called the sexual revolution of our day, we realize with shock that it is not simply a revolution against the past but is also often a revolution against God and at times even against human nature.

## Pure in Heart!

But I do not want to linger for too long on describing the situation around us today that all of us already know so well. Instead, I would like to discover and transmit what God wants of us Christians in such a situation as this. God is calling us to the same task to which he called our first brothers and sisters in the faith, to “stand against this wild profligacy.” He is calling us to make the “beauty” of Christian life shine again before the eyes of the whole world. He is calling us to fight for purity, to fight with persistence and humility—not necessarily to be immediately perfect.

Today the Holy Spirit is asking us to do something new: he is asking us to bear witness to the world to the original innocence of creatures and things. The world has sunk very low, someone has written that sex has gone to our brains. We need something very strong to break this kind of narcosis and intoxication with sex. We need to reawaken in human beings a nostalgia for the innocence and simplicity that they long for in their hearts, even if those hearts are quite often covered with sludge. I am not referring to the innocence of creation that no longer exists but the innocence of redemption that Christ restored to us and offers us in the sacraments

and in the word of God. This is what St. Paul has in mind when he writes to the Philippians “that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life” (Philippians 2:15-16). This describes what Paul calls in our passage “putting on the armor of light.”

It is no longer enough to have a purity based on fear, taboos, prohibitions, and men and women avoiding each other as if the other is always necessarily a snare and a potential enemy rather than a “help.” In the past purity was at times reduced, at least in practice, precisely to this combination of taboos, prohibitions, and fears as if this virtue needed to be ashamed in front of the vice instead of the vice being ashamed in front of the virtue. We need to aspire, thanks to the presence of the Spirit in us, to a purity that is stronger than its opposite vice—a positive purity, not just a negative one, that is able to make us experience the truth of this word from the apostle, “To the pure all things are pure” (Titus 1:15), and of this other word from Scripture, “He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

We need to begin with healing the root, which is the “heart,” because everything that defiles a person’s life comes from the heart (Matthew 15:18). Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God!” (Matthew 5:8). They will truly see, they will have new eyes to see the world and God, clear-sighted eyes that know how to discern what is beautiful and what is hideous, what is truth and what is a lie, what brings life and what brings death—eyes, in brief, like Jesus’ eyes. How free Jesus was to talk about everything: children, women, pregnancy, childbirth ... Eyes like Mary’s eyes. Purity no longer consists, then, in saying, “no” to creatures but in saying “yes” to them—insofar as they are creatures of God who have been and remain “very good.”

Let us not deceive ourselves. To be able to say this “yes,” we need to go through the cross because after sin, our gaze on creatures has become clouded; concupiscence has been unleashed in us; sexuality is no longer peaceful and has become an ambiguous and threatening force that drags us away from the law of God against our will. The daily news of abuses and scandals in this field, included among members of the clergy and religious people, are there to remember us of this bitter reality. In the first meditation for this Lent, we emphasized one aspect that is particularly relevant and necessary for mortification: the mortification of the eyes. A healthy fast from images is more important today than fasting from food and drink.

Let us conclude by recalling the experience of St. Augustine mentioned at the beginning. After that experience of deliverance, he started praying for chastity in a new way: “Lord, he said, you command me to be chaste. Give me what you ask me for and then ask me whatever you will”. A prayer we can make our own, knowing that in this as in any other field by ourselves we can do nothing.

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[1] St. Augustine, *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, 8, 11-12, trans. John K. Ryan (New York: Image Books, 1960), pp. 199-202.

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Translated from Italian by Marsha Daigle-Williamson

Source: <https://zenit.org/articles/father-cantalamesa-put-on-the-armor-of-light/>

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Living in Harmony with God's Purpose for Our Lives



Joseph and Potiphar's wife - Genesis 39

## Getting Free of Sexual Sin

Toward a spiritual solution to a spiritual problem

by Ralph Martin

God made us sexual beings. He gave us a sexual identity and free will, and he was pleased with what he created. God designed men and women with the ability to have a sexual union with each other, with the ability to bring forth other creatures with eternal destinies.

We are happy when we live in harmony with God's purposes for his creation. When we don't, we run into trouble.

Sex has the potential to bring us happiness or trouble. It is a power that taps the very creative nature of God. It is so intensely personal that it profoundly affects our character and outlook. Sex has the potential to wonderfully enhance our human dignity and identity and personality, or it can consume and destroy us. It vies for lordship in our lives and wants to be worshiped, wants to be followed, wants to be obeyed, wants to rule. If we allow it, sex will take the place of God in our lives.

## **A Miserable Exchange**

What happened to God's plan for sex?

It grew hideously distorted when the first human beings exercised their freedom wrongly. Original sin introduced shame, guilt, accusation, defensiveness, self-deception, and radical selfishness. God's plan was distorted. Selfishness took the place of self-giving; looking out for oneself took the place of caring for others. Our sexual powers opened up to sin. The power of sexual union in marriage degenerated into lust, oppression, domination and adultery. The relationship between husband and wife was grievously wounded. The man began to oppress the woman; the woman began to be dependent on the man with a frustrated desire.

The sin of our first parents, a sin we all share, set a downward spiral in motion - the downward spiral that leads to fear, war, exploitation, oppression, sexual bondage, perversion, and immorality.

This immorality starts in the mind and the spirit, in the fundamental choices we make regarding our relationship to God. The core perversion that afflicts the human race is not sex or money or power. It is rebellion - rejection of God's authority and plan, the refusal to submit to God and accept his truth.

Sexual bondage is a consequence of rebellion, not a cause of it. Because he refused God's authority, man was delivered up in his lust to unclean practices. Men engaged in the mutual degradation of their bodies. They perverted God's gift of the human body, exchanging the truth of God for a lie, and they worshiped and served the creature rather than the creator.

“Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever! Amen” (Romans 1:24-25).

### **What a miserable exchange.**

We trade the way of truth and life for a way filled with meanness and betrayal. We trade the path of fidelity, mercy and love for a way filled with sexually transmitted diseases and broken relationships and broken promises.

### **Restoration through Jesus Christ**

Jesus restored the human race to a relationship with God. His repair work included restoring sex to the place God intended it to have when he created us. We misused the freedom God gave us. Jesus came to free us and empower us with his Holy Spirit, so that we might be able to choose rightly. God wants us to be fully transformed into his image in the core of our being.

The new way living for Christians, in the power of the Holy Spirit, puts sex in its proper place. Sex becomes a servant of God's purpose and not our master. God's purpose for sex is to bring a man and woman together in a lifelong union that is open to the creative action of God bringing forth children.

When sex is fulfilling this purpose, it glorifies God. When it serves some other purpose, we become its slave. We are particularly vulnerable to self-deceit in the area of sex. We rationalize and justify our wrongdoing; we make excuses or exceptions for ourselves. Premarital sex, extramarital sex, adultery, homosexual acts, pornography, lustful fantasizing, and solitary sex are all perversions of God's purpose in creating us as sexual beings.

How can we be free from bondage to immorality? How can we make sex a servant and not a master in our lives?

## Freedom from Bondage

Sexual bondage is a spiritual problem that needs a spiritual solution. Jesus Christ offers us that solution through his redemption and our relationship with him. Here are eight steps we can take to secure this freedom, peace, and good order to our lives.

### **Be converted.**

It's impossible for Jesus to be Lord unless we are converted. Conversion means surrendering ourselves to Jesus, acknowledging him as our savior, and submitting to his lordship over us. It is a process that happens at different stages and in different ways.

Sometimes conversion happens all at once, suddenly and dramatically; sometimes it occurs in stages, more gradually. But even when it happens all at once, it still takes time for Jesus to become lord over all the different areas of our lives. Conversion is a lifelong process, again and again turning our lives over to Jesus, more and more embracing the union we have with him.

### **Accept the truth.**

The next step is to squarely face and accept the teaching of Christ regarding sex and sexuality. "If you live according to my teaching," Jesus assures us, "you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free" (John 8:31-32). The truth of what God says in this area is challenging, hard, painful, and potentially revolutionary in our lives - but it brings freedom. If we don't get clear in our minds what God teaches as inappropriate and sinful in this area and then wholeheartedly accept it, we will never get free.

### **Confess sin.**

We need to concretely confess to God our wrongdoing in this area. We need to specifically identify those things that are not right in our sexual behavior, those things that are sinful offences against God, and admit them to him. We need to clearly call sin sin and not excuse it or rationalize it away. Then we must confess it to God and receive his forgiveness.

### **Ask for God's help.**

We are dealing with spiritual powers and perhaps with lifelong habits. We may be dealing with indoctrination from the world trying to convince us that Christian morality is old-fashioned, inhuman, repressive, unhealthy, or inhibitive. We need to ask God's help and then be patient and persevering, not becoming discouraged if it takes time to gain freedom in different aspects of our sexual lives.

### **Live a God-filled life.**

The downward spiral for the human race began with a refusal to acknowledge God and to glorify and thank him. The key to reversing this spiral that ends in bondage and lust is to undo this refusal to honor and worship and obey God. As we fill our lives with Jesus Christ and his Holy Spirit, we'll find ourselves getting progressively freer in this area.

The perversity didn't begin with sexual perversity; it began with a rebellion of the spirit and mind. It was a rebellion against God's word and God's law that led to the first sin. Similarly, patterns of lust often begin with rebellion against God, against parents, and against lawful authorities in our lives. The whole undoing of the human race was rooted in rebellion, and our own personal rebellion opens us to other spirits.

Just as one man's sin and rebellion brought death to the whole world, so one man's obedience, the obedience of Jesus Christ, brings salvation to the whole world (see Romans 5:18). Getting free from sin is rooted in overcoming rebellion and fully submitting to Christ and his authority.

Resentment and anger may also weaken us and make us vulnerable to lust. Dealing with resentment, resolving difficulties in relationships, and releasing people toward whom we hold resentment clear the way for God's Holy Spirit to bring healing, power, and self-control into other areas of our lives.

### **Face the pain.**

We shouldn't be afraid of the pain involved in denying ourselves in this area. We won't die from abstaining from sexual immorality! We need food and water to live, but we don't need sex to live. We need sex to be one with our spouses and to bear children, but we don't need sex to live. We don't need sex to live as fulfilled, healthy, happy human beings, and as a productive and joyful people. The need for sex is a lie that Satan and this sexualized society have tried to deceive us into believing.

In fact, immoral sex leads us into bondage and destruction. There is a pain to saying no to sin and denying oneself, but it is a pain that ultimately leads to life. It may hurt like hell to say no to sin. But better a little hurting now than an eternity of hurting.

### **Establish a healthy Christian lifestyle.**

Many people are not able to get free in this area because they are foolish. They say that they want to get free of sexual sin, but they continue to expose themselves to all kinds of invitations, temptations and stimulation to immorality. We need to stop going to those places that stimulate us, stop doing things or hanging around people who weaken our desire to follow Christ. If we want to get free - and stay free - of sexual sin, we can't expose ourselves to those things that lead us right into it.

Identify those things in your life that stir up sexual desire or lead you into temptation, and stay away from them or eliminate them from your activities. Find alternative forms of entertainment and good hobbies for relaxation if going to the movies is a source of difficulty for you.

### **Get support.**

It can be very helpful to share how you are doing in this area with a mature Christian in whom you can trust and have confidence. There are even "sexaholic anonymous" groups that are available for people who are locked in bondage in this area. Some of the same principles that Alcoholics Anonymous uses, such as depending on God and confessing sin, are applicable in this area.

Sex is meant to be your servant and not your master. You can live as a freedman, not as a slave under bondage to sin. Take the steps you need to live out God's truth in your life. The truth will make you free.

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## When Good Kids Get Into Bad Trouble

Why so many young people fall into sexual immorality  
– and how to help them get out of it.

By Bill Baer

To whom it may concern:

I am writing to you because I don't know where else to turn. My 19-year-old son Keith has gotten into a big mess. His mother and I have done everything possible to raise him as a good Christian. We sent him to Catholic schools; we've tried to be a good example. But since he went off to college, he's left the church and is involved in all sorts of immoral things. What are we to do?"

It's a sad, familiar story. As a Christian youth worker at a large state university, such desperate requests from heartbroken parents come across my desk with alarming frequency.

Teenage pregnancy, abortion, sexually transmitted disease, and "date rape" are the rapidly spreading crises that fill our headlines and plague our young people's world. Yet these crises all seem to occur "out there," with bad

kids from broken homes, among families that lack solid spiritual foundations. Until it hits home your own Christian home. A shattered daughter breaks down and confesses that she has had an abortion. A son returning home on spring break announces to his parents that after years of Catholic schooling, "I'm no longer going to mass, and by the way, uh, I've also moved off campus with my girlfriend." Sometimes the parents' discovery is sudden: hidden contraceptives or pornography; a shocking announcement of an unwed pregnancy. At other times the parents simply watch in resignation as their children slowly slip away from godly morality, from the narrow way that leads to life.

## Why are so many good kids getting into bad trouble with sexual wrongdoing?

The problem is devastating and widespread. Recent studies have found that between 60 and 80 percent of practicing Catholic and evangelical Protestant young people engage in sexual intercourse before marriage. Other experts put the actual figures even higher. Yet many Christian parents are caught unawares by their children's immorality and feel helpless in responding to it. In this article I would like to draw on my eight years of youth work with high school and university students to examine why so many Christian teenagers, despite the best efforts of their parents, have been losing the battle for godly moral character. I would also like to suggest how we can begin, with God's help, to reverse the trend.

First, let's look at the "morality gap." If you think you and your kids see eye-to-eye on morality, look again! The "morality gap" is my name for the difference between the moral viewpoints of today's Christian parents and their teenagers, as well as the parents' unawareness that such a gap even exists.

It can be illuminating for Christian adults to look through the eyes of a typical, good-natured, but spiritually naive Christian young person. What do they see? How have they been seduced by the phony promises of an immoral youth culture? (In fact, all of us, young or old, single or married, could benefit from an Occasional self-examination to see how we have been duped by the false allure of the world. I have observed that the same worldly seduction blinds older Christians, including the very parents who are alarmed at their own children's perilous ways!)

## Here are five moral deceptions that are seducing many Christian young people today:

### **Moral Deception #1:**

"Hey, good kids who have sex still seem like good kids. Nice people are doing it, all the best athletes, all the prettiest girls; only the nerds and outcasts aren't. And besides, I haven't seen anybody struck down by lightning lately!"

Our children's attractive and promiscuous peer models do not appear to be suffering from instant divine judgment, nor from any of those horrible consequences that parents are so worried about: venereal disease, AIDS, abortion, divorce, misery. To today's teenagers, most of the harsher realities of fornication are not apparent (at least not yet): Rare is the friend at school who openly brags about an abortion or a herpes infection.

### **Moral Deception #2:**

"So what's the big deal? The whole adult world is full of sexual immorality. Sports heroes, presidential candidates, TV preachers, well-todo relatives and neighbors—all the grownups are doing it, just like they've always been doing it."

Kids can get tired of sermons against "teenage peer pressure," especially when they look around at the adult world awash in moral decay. Our children also have an extremely limited historical perspective. Parents, catch your breath: Some of your children can't even remember a time when Ronald Reagan wasn't president! How can they be expected to see today's youth culture as a tragic decline from the moral standards of earlier generations?

### **Moral Deception #3:**

“How can anything that feels so good and natural be as bad or dangerous as my parents say it is? It's not evil, it's love.”

Young people are easily disoriented as they encounter unfamiliar and overwhelming sexual desires. That has been true as long as there have been teenagers. But in past generations there has never been such an exaltation of romantic adolescent passions as we see today in movies, music, and the youth culture.

Most often Christian teenagers are seeking not so much for sexual pleasure as for approval, identity, and emotionally satisfying relationships. However, they fail to realize that today's youth culture gears that search to end in serious sexual wrongdoing.

### **Moral Deception #4:**

“I can do whatever I want in every other part of my life. What's the big problem with doing what I want in this part, too?”

In today's world of instant gratification, we adults have done little to foster such character traits as self-control and discipline in our young people. Yet we expect them to find within themselves the moral restraint and rectitude to say no to their most deep-seated passions. That just doesn't seem consistent to them.

### **Moral Deception #5:**

“It's only wrong if you get caught.”

Let's face it: Many of our kids have been living double lives for years before getting caught in flagrant sin. Lying, cheating, cursing, smoking, drinking, making out, masturbation, and pornography may all be going on “under our noses” for years. The serious immorality that appears “out of the blue” to shocked parents is often merely the first episode to be detected.

Deception, temptation, hidden sin: In the face of these challenges, what are Christian parents to do? What do our “good kids” need in order to grow into responsible and righteous Christian adults?

Frankly, they need a lot!

First, let's remember that God's grace is with us. He loves our children even more than we do, and he promises to assist us in the challenging task of raising young disciples for the Lord. “All your sons will be taught by the Lord, and great will be your children's peace” (Isa. 54:13). Jesus has overcome the world (see John 16:33), and he will help our children resist this world's fatal attractions.

In my job as a Christian youth worker, I learned long ago that daily intercession on behalf of the kids I work with is absolutely essential. Let's give our young people back to the Lord every day.

Second, as we come face-to-face with our children's entrapment in sexual wrongdoing, let's not succumb to self-condemnation and finger pointing. Anxious hand-wringing and cries of, “Where did we go wrong with Suzy?” will probably not help you or Suzy or the Lord in his efforts to reclaim a wandering son or daughter. And remember, God doesn't have any grandchildren! As our children approach the moral responsibilities of adulthood they must ultimately make their own choices between the wide and narrow roads.

This is not to say that simply hoping for the best will turn things around. In these days when moral standards have descended to those resembling pagan times a radical response is a sensible response. The world around us is redefining what it means to be a good kid, and today's “good kids” are heading down a highway to hell. Jesus has not called us to produce well educated, well-dressed, nice young people who will not enter the kingdom of

heaven He has called us to help him raise up young disciples and saints.

### **Three essential sources or strength and support**

Let's consider three essential ingredients, three sources of strength and support necessary for Christian youth to walk righteously amidst today's jungle of promiscuity and self-indulgence. All three are familiar to any reader of today's "how to" Christian family literature, but each needs to be applied fully enough to successfully safeguard moral purity. Here are the three ingredients—plus."

#### **1. A personal relationship with Jesus -- plus.**

It seems so obvious: If teenagers are to live as dedicated Christians, they must first become dedicated Christians, consciously choosing to follow Jesus and growing in relationship with him. Yet we often settle for less, hoping that our children can successfully ride piggyback atop our faith without ever personally dedicating their lives to the Lord.

"But honestly," we say, "I didn't have much of a personal relationship with Jesus as a teenager, and I came out okay. That may be true, but consider how much more deChristianized society as a whole has become since we were in high school.

Now more than ever, kids need Jesus. He is a living source of grace, strength, self-control, holiness, and confidence. Knowing Jesus personally is essential to maintaining a healthy "fear of the Lord" as a deterrent when temptations and peer pressure seem so insurmountable. And the more our children know the Lord, the more they will desire to please him by "offering their bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, as their spiritual worship" (see Rom. 12:1).

**And now the plus:** If a teenager is to know Jesus, he or she needs to be baptized in the Spirit. It is ironic that many Christian parents who first opened their lives to the action of the Holy Spirit as young people don't expect that same Holy Spirit to reach their own children! Yet I have personally known hundreds of teenagers who heard the call to follow Christ, and who answered that call with a level of commitment and joyful dedication that their own Christian parents would never have thought possible.

Of course, a relationship with Jesus means just that: communication and interaction with God. If daily prayer and Bible reading are essential for older Christians, they are certainly essential for younger Christians. Every single day our teenagers encounter temptation, falsehood, and despair. Every single day, therefore, they must encounter Jesus, the way, the truth, and the life.

#### **2. Good peer environments — plus.**

We all know how influential peer groups are for young people. And as concerned Christian parents, we want our children to have friends who will not lead them down the road to sexual immorality.

Yet, if we want our children to have a decent shot at living in moral purity, we must consider a sobering fact: Most young Christian peer environments today are every bit as sexually promiscuous as those "bad crowds" out there. In fact, many church youth groups provide a convenient avenue for our teenagers to engage in unrighteousness. We cannot assume that Christian young people can or will support and encourage one another in righteous standards simply by hanging out together. The plus-factor is that they need to be explicitly committed as a group to God's commands for godly living, and their life together needs to foster purity and self-control.

Furthermore, while most Christian parents do not wish their children to engage in sexual intercourse, they have

few qualms about their kids entering into dating relationships with members of the opposite sex. Yet in today's youth culture, dating equals sex. With years of counseling Christian teenagers behind me, I have concluded that "Christian dating" equals sexual wrongdoing just as consistently. Even when Christian young people never intend to "go all the way," the exclusive, intimate, stimulating nature of the dating scene gets them into serious moral trouble before very long.

Ironically, young people are the first to admit this. Hesitance to face the "facts of dating life" usually comes from naive Christian parents, who may be more concerned that Suzy meets a "nice boy" than that Suzy remains steadfast in moral purity.

Not long ago a young man named Dan, who was raised in an upstanding Christian family, joined our university outreach group. Dan was dating a girl and had begun to get into rather serious immorality with her. In fact, they had just reserved a motel room in Canada where they would spend the night together after an upcoming fraternity "formal." When Dan informed me of the "deep waters" he and his girlfriend were getting into, I spoke to him about God's purposes for sexuality and marriage, and frankly warned him about the moral dangers of fornication. Unfortunately, Dan's parents (who, not surprisingly, were kept unaware of the adventures over the border) took offense at my discussions with Dan and objected strongly to the interference of a Christian group in their son's "personal life." Yielding to the encouragement of his parents, Dan left the Christian group, became more deeply embroiled in sexual wrongdoing, and now admits that he no longer wishes to live the Christian life.

Christian young people need peer environments that resist the exclusive, one-on-one dating patterns of today's youth culture, and that instead foster opportunities for lively worship and sound Christian teaching, for service to the needy, and for recreation and socializing that promote righteous Christian friendship and character-building.

### **3. Good home training and example -- plus.**

A fellow youth worker once noted, "When it comes to young people, the apple doesn't fall far from the tree." In considering how a teenager is faring in areas of self-control and moral purity, one often does not need to look any farther than the kind of training and example that was given-or not given-in the home. "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). It's a simple fact: If children are given love, discipline, and a godly example in the home, the chances are much better that they will walk uprightly in the ways of the Lord once they're "out of the nest."

This is obviously true in the specific area of moral training. Yet many Christian parents have left their children's moral formation in the hands of secular educators, media celebrities, and self-styled "youth specialists," powerful shapers of moral character who, unfortunately, often lack both morality and character!

The age at which today's youth are tempted to promiscuity is getting shockingly younger and younger. Let's not wait until tragedy erupts to train our young people in righteousness. Establishing patterns of moral purity, self-control, accountability, and personal confidence before there is the potential for getting into trouble is the needed plus.

### **Where to start?**

Try a discussion with your teenager about the five moral deceptions mentioned earlier. You may be amazed at how thoroughly your children have been beguiled by an alien moral worldview. But more importantly, your children will be amazed to discover the tremendous truth, freedom, and power in God's worldview, in the way of the Lord.

Teach your children to say no to sexual temptation by saying no to the sources of sexual temptation. And start with your own example. Have they ever seen you turn off a television program because of its immoral content? Share with them about the moral challenges you face on the road as a Christian businessman. Your children will be surprised that their parents also fight sinful peer pressures, and they will be inspired by the power of purity that is demonstrated in your marriage.

These are challenging tasks. But let's face it: These are challenging times, and the sugary remedies offered by many of today's youth experts haven't exactly raised up an upright generation. There is a battle for the young generation raging all around us. And some of the greatest modern heroes are mothers and fathers and teachers and youth workers who, with God's help, are willing to make the necessary sacrifices and take the often unpopular steps so that their "good kids" may one day say with the psalmist, "Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

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This article originally appeared in *New Covenant Magazine*, Volume 18, Number 9, April 1989.

Beginning in 1984, Bill Baer was actively engaged in University Christian Outreach work with the Servants of the Word in Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA. Bill moved to St. Paul, Minnesota to join the Companions of Christ and to study for the Catholic priesthood. He was ordained in 1996 on his 39th birthday. He taught for several years at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, and he also served as rector for St. John Vianney Seminary. He passed away in January 2018 and was remembered by many people who knew him well as a man of conviction, focused faith, and preaching.

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top illustration by (c) Kevin Carden



## Helping Youth See the Truth

by Michael Shaughnessy,

What is so amazing about Scripture? What was written thousands of years ago continues to speak so clearly today.

Although the passage below was written to the Romans about the culture in which they lived, it could have been written to us about our culture. (It is edited for brevity.)

Paul simply notes that when we fail to honor God (obey him) our minds grow dark. That leads to wrong behavior, which brings bad consequences, and finally the outright approval of evil.

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against the ungodliness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. Although they knew God they did not obey him as God but became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools.

Therefore God gave them up to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator. For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural, and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error. They were filled with all manner of wickedness. Though they know God's decree that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only do them but approve those who practice them.

- Paul's Letter to the Romans, Chapter Romans 1

Youth struggle with the desire to fit into the culture of the world around them, especially when that culture speaks strongly but wrongly.

Helping youth to see the truth amid a flood of lies is not easy. Sometimes the “naked” Scripture says it best. When we fail to obey God, the consequences lead from bad to worse.



Michael Shaughnessy is the [Kairos](#) director for the Sword of the Spirit both in North America and Internationally. He is the editor of the [Kairos Youth Culture Newsletter](#). Kairos is an international federation of outreaches to high school, university and post university aged people.

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CHALLENGES IN LIVING TOGETHER AS COMMUNITY



**Guided by the Truth of The Imminent Two-Option Eternity**

by Tom Caballes

***"For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more." - Psalm 103:14-16 ESV***

Father time has a 100% success rate – all who lived on earth eventually passed away. The question we all face is when we will die, not if. Beyond the veil of the busy-ness of life - assignments, job, bills to pay, etc. – that all awaits us is eternity; either eternal life with God or eternal separation from Him. There are no other options. So, to a great degree, what we accomplish or accumulate in this life isn't that important; we will have to give them all up. But how we conduct our lives now will determine which type of eternity we will have. Is the life we live today directed towards the fact of upcoming eternity? Are we preparing well for the inevitable? Are our priorities, our values, and our whole lives directed towards heaven?

***So How Do You Live Your Life with The Forthcoming Two-Option Eternity in Mind?***

1. Let God be the center of your life. *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.* [Matthew 22:37 ESV] Putting God first means you surrender ALL that you have – including what you do with your time and money. It also means walking through the narrow road. [See Matthew 7:13-14.] Let Him be your best thought as you rise in the morning and as you lay to sleep at night. Be dead set in reaching heaven. Make God your true security and your highest joy.

2. Make your life count towards eternity. You can only do so much in a day, a week, a month, or a year – or in a lifetime. It is better to be faithful with some commitments rather than try to do everything but live a stressful and unfaithful life. Don't do things that you will regret later. Be purposeful – make whatever you do count! Avoid pursuing things that will keep your focus from eternity. Be wise in the way you use your time, talent, energy, and money. Aim to please and glorify God in everything. Do not procrastinate – do what you can do today instead of tomorrow. Remember - you only have one short life to live.
3. Have an eternal perspective as you face difficult situations in life. Do not compromise short-term delight or pleasure for the sake of long-term [as in eternal] happiness. *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.* [Romans 8:18 ESV]
4. Aim to grow in holiness as you put up with your sinful nature. It is like you have a stubborn and selfish child in you that needs taming and disciplining. The reality is that at times, you will fail in reaching God's standards. But the grace of God is there for you to receive the gift of repentance.
5. Know well that it's not only you who will face the two-option eternity – but also all your friends, family, neighbor, office mates, and everyone else. Be eager to share the gospel with them so that they can also make the right choice in which eternity they will be going to – with God or without Him.

### Other Scripture passages:

1. *He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.* [Ecclesiastes 3:11 ESV]
2. *O LORD, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am!* [Psalms 39:4 ESV]
3. *Other references: Psalm 39:1-7; Matthew 7:-13-14; and 1 Peter 1:3-9.*

### For personal reflection or group sharing

1. Is your life guided by the truth of imminent two-option eternity? How?
2. In what ways are you distracted from focusing your life for God?
3. When you make significant decisions in life or face trials, do you have an eternal perspective?



Tom Caballes is the National Senior Administrator and a National Coordinator of the [Lamb of God](#), a community of the Sword of the Spirit with 7 branches located throughout New Zealand. Tom also leads [Kairos New Zealand](#), an outreach program for high school, university, and post-university aged people.

Tom and his wife Mhel and their two daughters live in Wellington, New Zealand.

CHALLENGES IN LIVING TOGETHER AS COMMUNITY



## Redeeming Your Broken Life

by Tom Caballes

***"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."***

**- Romans 8:28 ESV**

We all probably have not lived a fairytale life, where everything is just hunky-dory. We all have faced failures, heartaches, and disappointments in life - redundancy at work, broken relationships, illnesses, unfulfilled dreams, rejection, unanswered prayers, and so on. In a way, we can say we are all living broken lives. But do you know what? We can still live a fairy tale life in spite of all our brokenness, mistakes and failures. God can turn the worst experiences in life into gold. Romans 8:28 says, *"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good."* Jesus can redeem our past into something noble. Not only that, we are truly destined for a true fairytale ending - but instead of just "living happily ever after," we will live happily with God and His people forever! Do you know the riches and the greatness that awaits you? It is worth the wait!

### ***So How Do You Live A Broken But Redeemed Life?***

1. Offer to God your past, especially the darkest memories you have had. We all have hit rock-bottom at least once in our lives, yet God can work wonders in that rock-bottom situation if we allow Him. Let

God heal you. Learn from your mistakes and move on. Let God transform you into the man or woman He wants you to be.

2. Forgive from the heart all those who have wronged and abused you, especially those who are closest to you. We sin against others like others sinned against us. Do not hold a grudge against others. Release your offenders from your mental prisons – it is you who are imprisoned, not them. Forgive others from the heart, as hard as it may be. This is key for you to live a truly redeemed life; you are allowing yourself to be a new person in Christ, free from any bondage of bad memories, hurts, and anger.
3. *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.* [2 Corinthians 5:17] You are a new person in Jesus. Your past does not define or dictate who you are now – Jesus does. You can break the chains of the past. You don't have to repeat the past mistakes. With the power of the Holy Spirit, you can start a new path if you need to – don't be limited or be imprisoned by your past. Be free!
4. Make your main goal in life to love as Jesus would. Love should be your motive in all your relationships. Do not let your past memories and experiences affect your motive and goal in life.
5. Make the most of your relationships – do not take people for granted. Outdo one another in showing honor. Enjoy the gift of friendship now, which can be a start of an eternal friendship - with God in heaven.
6. Live your daily life in the light of your eternal destiny. Don't endanger your spiritual treasure and legacy with the pursuit of something fleeting, no matter how good it feels at that time. The highest joy you can have in this life is only for a fleeting moment. What God has in store for you lasts forever - see Matthew 6:19-20.
7. Rejoice in the hope that you have in Jesus - because within your grasp is a fairytale life with God forever, where there is no mourning, crying, or pain anymore [Revelations 21: 4].

### Other Scripture passages:

1. *For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.* [Jeremiah 29:11 ESV]
2. *When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* [1 Corinthians 15:54-57 ESV]
3. *Others: 1 Peter 1:3-9; Romans 5:3-5; Isaiah 40:31; Psalm 31:24; and Romans 8:31-39..*

### For personal reflection or group sharing

What brokenness are you still suffering from your past? How can Jesus redeem that memory?  
What do you need to do to forget what lies behind and strain forward to what is ahead  
[Philippians 3:13]?



Tom Caballes is the National Senior Administrator and a National Coordinator of the [Lamb of God](#), a community of the Sword of the Spirit with 7 branches located throughout New Zealand. Tom also leads [Kairos New Zealand](#), an outreach program for high school, university, and post-university aged people.

Tom and his wife Mhel and their two daughters live in Wellington, New Zealand.



## Codependent Kids

by Sam Williamson

In the last month, each of my four grown kids asked me for advice: one asked about buying a camera lens, one about the best way to help a friend, one about dealing with his boss, and one about buying a dishwasher. It is so much fun, connecting *with* my kids when they ask for advice rather than disconnecting *from* my kids when I offer it unsolicited.

But this last week I talked with a grown man, about the same age as my kids, who asks his father about every decision he makes: where to work, what to say to unreasonable people, and even where to take his friends to lunch.

One of my kids (the sneaky devil) once told me he asks for advice because he then feels more free to disregard it. And he's right. When he asks and then does something else, I'm perfectly fine. At least I felt heard.

But the man I talked with last week seemed to have an excessive reliance on his dad for approval and identity. When he asks for advice, he literally lives out the phrase, "Your wish is my delight."

It felt kind of weird. Isn't he a grown man? As far as I could tell, he was smart, respected (though not always

liked), and spiritually mature. His relationship with his dad felt codependent.

That codependent kid is Jesus.

## **Codependent Jesus**

Imagine a grown, thirty-year-old man saying things like:

- I can do nothing by myself. I only do what I see my Father doing.
- The Father who sent me has commanded me what to say and how to say it.
- I came down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.

If you were a counselor, what advice would you give him? My inclination (totally unsolicited, of course) would be to tell him to “Get a life.”

Yet he is the one telling me to get a life; and he tells me how to find it.

## **We Are Child-like**

When God describes the patriarch Job, he says, “There is no one in all the earth like my servant Job.” Yet when Job questions what God has allowed in Job’s life, God interrogates him:

Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? ... I will question you! Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? ... Can you take charge of the lightning bolts and have them report to you for orders? (from Job 38)

The richest life we long for is found wholly and solely in being child-like before God. Dependent even. Not that we reject maturity, but that we understand that in the highest peaks of our greatest moments of maturity, we are still childish before God.

As human children, we begin wholly dependent on our parents, and we grow into healthy independence. As spiritual children, we begin wholly independent of God and we grow into holy dependence. John Newton once wrote:

Our pleasure and our duty,  
Though opposite before,  
Since we have seen his beauty,  
Are joined to part no more.

To see the law by Christ fulfilled,  
And hear his pardoning voice,  
Transforms a slave into a child,  
And duty into choice.

God’s ways are beyond our wildest imaginations. It is precisely in child-likeness, a healthy fear of God bound up in love, that we find the voice of the Father we’ve always longed to hear.

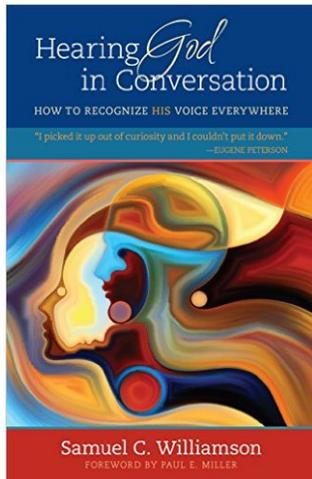
Sam

P. S. We may long to hear the Father's voice, but the Father longs for us to hear him even more than we do. We simply haven't learned to distinguish his voice from the dozens of other voices we hear throughout the day.

God is the good Father who wants to enter into a divine dialogue with each one of his kids.

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Sam Williamson has published numerous articles and has written two books. He has a blog site, [www.beliefssoftheheart.com](http://www.beliefssoftheheart.com), and can be reached at [Sam@BeliefssoftheHeart.com](mailto:Sam@BeliefssoftheHeart.com).

[Hearing God in Conversation: How to Recognize His Voice Everywhere](#), by Samuel C. Williamson, published by Kregel Publications, 2016, available from [Amazon](#)

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## Living a 4th Quarter Life

by Sam Williamson

One hundred and twenty-two months ago today, I sat at my desk with no appointments, no tasks to perform, no clients to serve, and no employees to pacify. My desk was empty. So was my mind. *I had absolutely no clue what I should do for the next ten minutes of my life.* Much less the next ten days or their following ten years.

Until that purposeless day, years ago, my entire life had been directed by others. Oh, I had flickers of freedom, twinkles of time when I chose to watch a movie or play my guitar. But all the sparkles of significant activity in my life were dictated by other people.

My parents told me what friends I could see and when to go to bed; my teachers told me what books to read and which assignments to turn in; and my bosses told me where to sit and which clients to serve. Even when I became a boss, higher-up bosses assigned budgets, projects, employees, and deadlines.

In 1989, two friends and I bought a software company. We no longer had bosses, not even shareholders to please. We were the bosses and shareholders. But even then, my daily activity was determined by clients, employees, and industry competition.

My life was not my own, except for the merest flashes of freedom when I golfed or scuba dived.

Ten years ago, I quit that job to pursue ministry, but on day-one, I woke up with a sterile desk and no parent, teacher, or boss to hint at what I should do for the next ten minutes.

## Living a Prepared Life

When Winston Churchill became prime minister of Britain, at the beginning of World War II, he said, “I feel like my whole life has prepared me for this moment.” Personal preparation is the pattern of God’s hand in our lives:

- Joseph was hand-groomed by God to be the prime minister of Egypt;
- God invested eighty years to teach Moses to lead his people home;
- David was trained as a shepherd, so he could battle Goliath (David himself sang, “You trained my hands for war and my fingers for battle”);
- Esther was brought to the palace “for such a time as this.”

God’s personal preparation is not reserved for the big-wigs of history. He acts the same with us.

Churchill’s comments are completely consistent with the Father’s work in our lives. God orchestrates our entire journey—up to the last tick on the clock—to train us for this second. And he uses this moment to get us ready for the next.

### Living a 4th Quarter Life

Professional football players are trained from the first day they tackle their little brother; and in the Super Bowl, it all comes down to the fourth quarter. Even the first three quarters of that game are just training-ground for those last fifteen minutes.

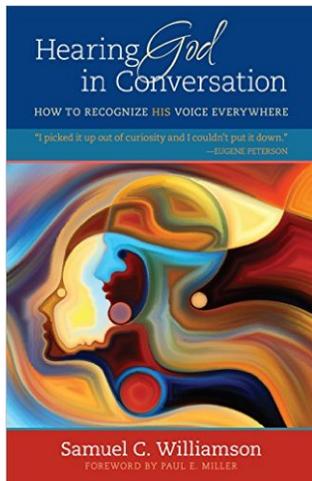
The question for all of us is simple: *What are we going to do with our last quarter?* What purpose has God invested years equipping us for? God used past coaches—parents, teachers and bosses—to prepare us to lean on him alone in this, our endgame.

What has God so strongly put on our hearts that we’ll do it when our parents aren’t there, our teachers are silent, and our bosses retired? What are we unstopably willing to pursue, even if there is no money, audience, or fame, and even if we lose friends, family, or die because of it?

We are right now—no matter our age—living in our fourth quarter. What will be our game? Let’s not dabble-away our most significant moments playing golf.

Sam

God still personally prepares us today, with words, circumstances, friends, and family; but especially with His Words. He wants us to learn to recognize his voice when we drive to work, wait in line, and engage in prayer.



Sam Williamson has published numerous articles and has written two books. He has a blog site, [www.beliefoftheheart.com](http://www.beliefoftheheart.com), and can be reached at [Sam@BeliefoftheHeart.com](mailto:Sam@BeliefoftheHeart.com).

[Hearing God in Conversation: How to Recognize His Voice Everywhere](#), by Samuel C. Williamson, published by Kregel Publications, 2016, available from [Amazon](#)

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## The Bloody Shamrock

by Sean O'Neill

Sean O'Neill is a prolific writer and poet who has recently published his 8th book of poems, entitled [Leap Pretty Target](#). His poetry evokes some of the post modern musings of T.S. Eliot and the beautiful cadence of Gerard Manley Hopkins's spiritually charged verse. The following poem, *The Bloody Shamrock*, based on Ireland's landscape, history, folklore, and spiritual heritage, is featured in Sean's 7th book of verse entitled [An Act of Courage](#). - ed.

The pound of the shamrock underfoot,  
ground out like a lesser weed, spotted,  
dashed, filtered through the winsome air,  
fixes in the mind's wash the eddy and smell  
of dew on the hook of the bramble thorn,  
the taste of the sweet lilac blooming  
from sudden cradle to grave in a blink,  
the shimmer of tooled Celtic brass  
enameled with the souls of the virtuous  
running through the stubble like fire,  
the melancholy song of the north wind  
coming off the moors where sodden turf  
sinks under the centuries of chiming life,  
memory's longitude rack-and-pinioned up  
into the consciousness of ancient gods  
among foothills and the native hinterland,  
aboriginal meadows doused in the treacle  
of preserved peat-bog bogies ringing softly  
through the gaunt air like bloodless bells,  
dark waters of heritage frothed with white,  
like grave-lime eating at the face of time  
to say: this is your father, this is your mother  
working the tilled land till the potato shoots  
burst the bonds of topsoil into the green  
of living table fodder and plump floury nubs,  
the butter melting on the grateful tongue.

That same shamrock, worn to ward off evil,  
totem of the godhead's multipersoned love,  
crushed under Cromwell's heathen boot,  
rose again to freedom, seizing the tongues  
of tilting oppressors and philistine men  
to dash their heads against the Blarney Stone,  
it's green a staunch rebuttal to the notion  
that singing is the weakling's industry,  
poetry the truck of idle, low, bucolic minds,  
discourse only for the politics of wrath,  
and music the bread and circuses of fools.

In dreams they haunt me, those raucous men,  
whose short lives were spent for a patch of green,  
for a hank of doom laid down in rows  
where the sower's seed fell on stony ground.

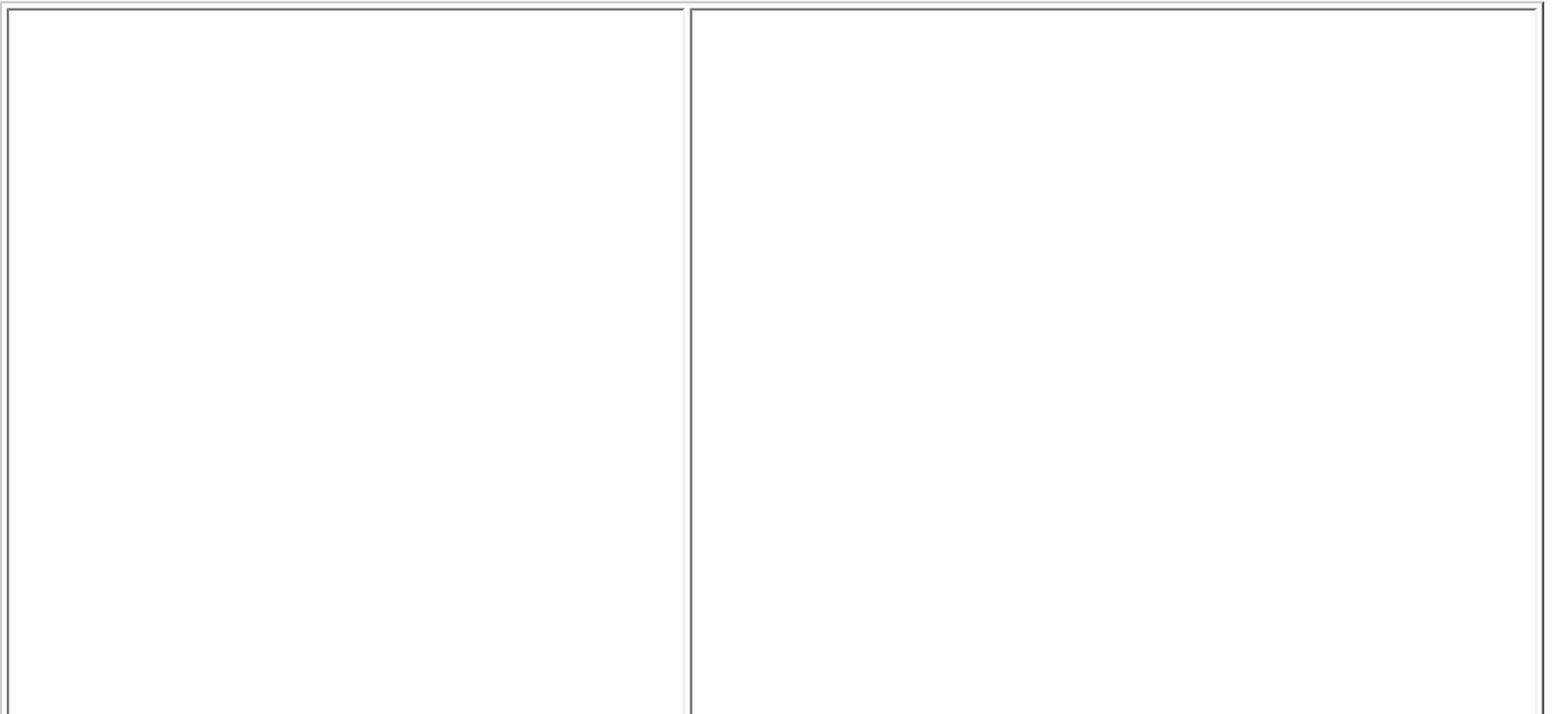
Where is the tincture, the touch of my native land?  
Gone where the rudder of jealousy jerked it sudden  
into the perilous currents of an angry sea,  
to where the sour decay of hope festers still  
and where the breezy language of freedom  
sank and died in its sleep from too much porter.

But the language of Eden can still be heard,  
mumbling in a fever of love and dreaming,  
a consumptive patient battenning on hope,  
staggered on the precipice of darkness,  
the honest sweat of tussle and  
scrap standing out on the fevered brow,  
till the day when the long sickness breaks  
and the patient stands on tottering legs  
to deal his wisdom to a thirsty world  
and say: in weakness strength lies  
and in sorrow joy.

The trefoil shamrock breaks in a breath of wind,  
but nothing steals its green away.

> See other poems in Living Bulwark by [Sean O'Neill](#)

photo credit above of a fallen cemetery cross in Ireland (c) by DejaVuDesign at bigstock.com





[An Act of Courage](#) is Sean O'Neill's seventh collection of poetry. The poems explore courage in the face of weariness; of loss of domestic and spiritual illusions; of the frightening approach of personal intimacy; above all, in the face of the transience of life and the prospect of a final reckoning.

These poems are, by turns, haunting, consoling, bracing and surprising.

Book available at [Amazon](#).



## How Do You Write a Poem?

by Sean O'Neill

Sean O'Neill is a prolific writer and poet who has recently published his 8th book of poems. The following is an excerpt from Chapter 1 of his book, [\*How to Write A Poem: A Beginner's Guide\*](#). (NB. Any unattributed poems in this chapter and book are the work of the author.)

### Choosing a Subject

How do you pick a subject for your poem? Some subjects seem to pick us. Sometimes we are so struck by the sadness or the delightfulness of a scene or an event that we want to write about it. Failing that, however, there are several main areas we can explore to come up with a theme.

### Place:

Think of somewhere you have been that has had an effect on you. It might be an abandoned warehouse, or a room in the home in which you grew up, or a bridge over a river, or a city just before dawn. W.B. Yeats's poem "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" is an example of how a place can take on a character of its own through your poetry. It begins:

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,  
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;

Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,  
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

### **A past experience:**

Any kind of experience can be used. For example sitting an exam, going for a walk, losing your phone, running for a train, being told that someone you know has died. John Milton's long poem "Lycidas" was written on the occasion of the poet, Edward King's, death. It begins:

Yet once more, O ye laurels, and once more  
Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,  
I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,  
And with forc'd fingers rude  
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.  
Bitter constraint and sad occasion dear  
Compels me to disturb your season due;  
For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,  
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer.

### **A particular person:**

This could be someone related to you, or a complete stranger you pass in the street. It might be someone famous, or a historical figure, or a traffic cop, a friend, or an enemy. A lot of poems that are directed at a specific person, for example love poems, can say a lot about the person writing them. John Donne's love poem "Twickenham Gardens" has that quality, where the poet expresses, more than anything else, self-reproach. It begins:

BLASTED with sighs, and surrounded with tears,  
Hither I come to seek the spring,  
And at mine eyes, and at mine ears,  
Receive such balms as else cure every thing.  
But O! self-traitor, I do bring  
The spider Love, which transubstantiates all,  
And can convert manna to gall ;  
And that this place may thoroughly be thought  
True paradise, I have the serpent brought.

### **An object:**

This might be anything as varied as a cup of coffee or a child's toy. It could be a car, the sun, a desk, a melon or a house porch. The poem, "The Day My Car Died," whose subject is what it sounds like, begins:

A point of gunmetal gray  
tarnished by the workhorse years  
a flange, a nipple, a block  
enclose the miracle of movement  
under the black hood.  
Ratchet, piston, valve, plug  
plot out their kinetic wonder  
beating out microscopic failure  
in a matter of time  
if only time were good.

### **An emotion:**

Often the reason someone might want to write a poem in the first place is because of an emotion, whether it be hate or love, embarrassment or contentment, excitement or sadness. Allen Ginsberg's classic poem, "Howl" is a long rant full of anger, but is nevertheless very effective poetically. Here's a short section from the beginning:

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked,  
dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an angry fix,  
angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in the  
machinery of night,  
who poverty and tatters and hollow-eyed and high sat up smoking in the supernatural darkness of cold-  
water flats floating across the tops of cities contemplating jazz...

### **An event:**

You could write about a wedding of someone you know, a funeral you attended, a football game in which your team won or an election that had a surprise outcome. Here's a snippet from a sonnet that is simply called "The Wedding."

The man stood, stolidly to attention  
up front. There were, in the church's narthex,  
presentiments of crying or car wrecks  
to account for the bride's absence. Tension  
stalked down the aisles like a collection plate.  
Then murmurs, crushed silk, sighs, and they began.  
The organ played the march, she almost ran,  
and white married gray at long last, though late.

### **A landscape or seascape scene:**

This topic gives you a lot of scope to describe different types of trees, grass swaying in the wind, waves lapping on the shore, the horizon melting into the land, an angry sky, misty mountains and hills. The free-verse poem "Cairngarroch Beach," describes the shoreline near a fishing village on the west coast of Scotland.

The wheedling of the great sea  
bent down upon the nose of the shore,  
clogged with rotting kelp and the clutter  
of a thousand frantic visitors,  
and spent the balance of days  
breaking the rocks all to sand.  
When I took the swoop of the road  
down to the beach, seagulls  
were fighting over garbage  
or a spill of shellfish on the pier,  
and when I looked out under my hand  
the breakers were rolling in to the birthplace.

### **A time of year:**

Some of the most famous poems have been about endless summers, or harsh and brutal winters. But you could also write about someone's birthday – and give the poem to them as a birthday gift, or about Christmas, Hanukkah or

New Year's Day. Thomas Hardy's "The Darkling Thrush" commemorated the turn of the century over a hundred years ago. Here is stanza two, by way of example:

The land's sharp features seemed to be  
The Century's corpse outleant,  
His crypt the cloudy canopy,  
The wind his death-lament.  
The ancient pulse of germ and birth  
Was shrunken hard and dry,  
And every spirit upon earth  
Seemed fervourless as I.

### **A time of day:**

This subject can include getting up in the morning full of life and energy, going to bed at night exhausted (or vice versa if you're on night shift!); the regularity of the working day or the peace of leisure time; watching a glorious sunrise or sunset. Walt Whitman's "I Hear America Singing" celebrates work at various times of day. Here are a few lines from the poem:

I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,  
Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe and strong,  
The carpenter singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work,  
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the deckhand singing on the steamboat deck,  
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing as he stands...

### **Weather:**

Deafening thunderstorms, sinister fog, a day under the scorching sun, a day of miserable drizzle, an overcast or cloudy day, heavy snow, pelting hail, lashing rain and wind: any one of these could play a part in your poem. T.S. Eliot has a much quoted image of fog as a dog from "The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock":

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,  
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes  
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,  
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,  
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,  
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap, And seeing that it was a soft October night,  
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

### **An animal:**

This can be a domestic animal like a dog or cat, or something exotic like a gorilla or a snake. I often find it useful to do some background research on a particular animal to give me some material to work with. "Baby Tortoise," by D. H. Lawrence is a good example of an animal poem. It begins:

You know what it is to be born alone,  
Baby tortoise!  
The first day to heave your feet little by little from the shell,  
Not yet awake,  
And remain lapsed on earth,  
Not quite alive.

A tiny, fragile, half-animate bean.

### **An activity:**

This can range from harvest time in the fields to filling out a tax form; from fixing a car to shaking someone by the hand; and from painting a wall to roller-skating down a hill. Here's the first part of Wilfred Owen's painfully poignant poem "Dulce et Decorum Est" about walking back to the barracks after a day fighting during the First World War:

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,  
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,  
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs,  
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.  
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots,  
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;  
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots  
Of gas-shells dropping softly behind.

### **A piece of music or a work of art:**

The poet William Carlos Williams wrote a poem based on Breughel's painting, "Landscape with the Fall of Icarus" and John Keats wrote his "Ode on a Grecian Urn." Robert Pinsky wrote "Street Music" and John Dryden his "The Power of Music." Music and art, therefore, are quite legitimate subject matter for a poem. Here's part of a poem on the famous painting by Picasso depicting the massacre that took place in the Basque village of Guernica:

When Pablo has word about the raid,  
his outrage blooms into twisted  
bodies, tortured faces and limbs.

He takes one day to calmly sketch  
and by evening all the elements  
coalesce into finality.

His arm, like a conduit of rage,  
describes the overarching doom  
of the seventeen hundred dead.

Some ran. Others died where they  
stood, in fractured shards of bone  
and grayscale evisceration.

### **An anecdote or narrative:**

Your memory holds an immense font of anecdotes or happenings from the past. In addition to that, we have stories that have been reported to us by other people. Any one of these could be the subject of a poem. In the following excerpt Alfred, Lord Tennyson describes "The Charge of the Light Brigade" which was a British light cavalry charge led by Lord Cardigan against Russian forces during the Battle of Balaclava on 25 October 1854 in the Crimean War.

Half a league, half a league,

Half a league onward,  
All in the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.  
"Forward, the Light Brigade!  
"Charge for the guns!" he said:  
Into the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.

"Forward, the Light Brigade!"  
Was there a man dismay'd?  
Not tho' the soldier knew  
Someone had blunder'd:  
Theirs not to make reply,  
Theirs not to reason why,  
Theirs but to do and die:  
Into the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.

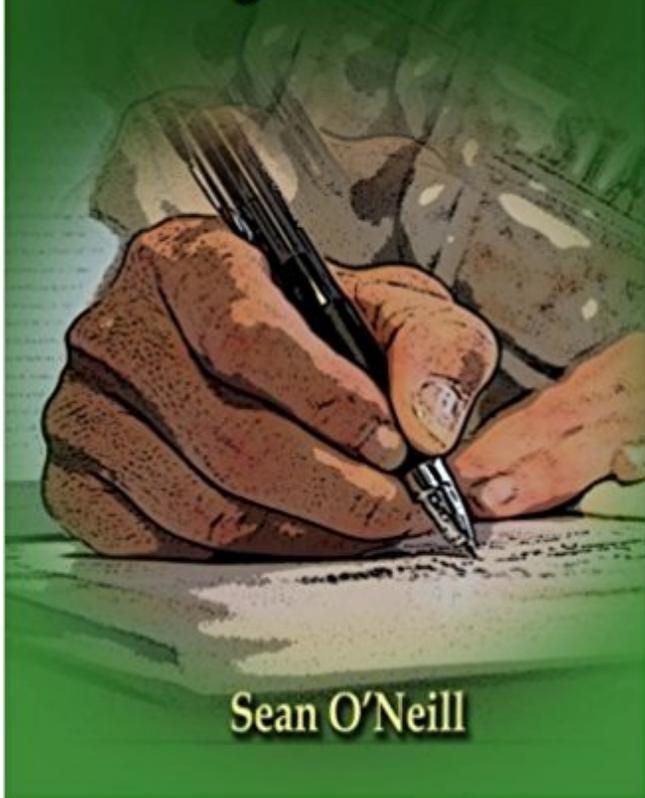
Cannon to the right of them,  
Cannon to the left of them,  
Cannon in front of them  
Volley'd and thunder'd;  
Storm'd at with shot and shell,  
Boldly they rode and well,  
Into the jaws of Death,  
Into the mouth of Hell  
Rode the six hundred.

No doubt there are other categories and some subjects that span more than one category. However, it is important to have something to latch your words onto with a poem. Otherwise the poem can easily become vague and rambling and end up saying nothing much at all.

> See poems in Living Bulwark by [Sean O'Neill](#)

I have been reading Sean O'Neills poems for several years now. He is a voracious reader of poets from the past and present, and he is a gifted writer as well. He has authored and published 8 books of his own poems - and I suspect he has many more volumes of poems

# How to Write a Poem: A Beginner's Guide



Book available at [Amazon](#).

I have been reading Sean O'Neills poems for several years now. He is a voracious reader of poets from the past and present, and he is a gifted writer as well. He has authored and published 8 books of his own poems - and I suspect he has many more volumes of poems waiting to come to life as well.

The sheer breadth of his varied subject matter, and the beauty of his cadence and rhythmic style, and the rich use of images, metaphors, and experiences from life and nature, give him an ever expanding breadth and depth to his work.

His book on [How to Write a Poem: A Beginner's Guide](#) (ten chapters) is a must read for anyone interested in learning how to write poetry of their own when the mood, subject, or occasion strikes them. This is a very practical and easy to read guide. If you are a beginner or someone who wants to improve your writing skills, this is a great guide that will give you all the tools you need to write to your heart's content.

Emily Dickinson (1830-1866) wrote more than 1,775 poems - most were penned on scraps of paper or backs of envelopes. Very few were published in her lifetime. Her strongest influences were the Bible and Shakespeare. But the sheer volume and practice of writing day after day and year after year must have been a very satisfying and rewarding experience for her.

Give it a try yourself - and maybe you will be caught by wonderment, joy, and pleasant surprise.

Reviewed by Don Schwager

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Links to other seasonal spiritual readings:

- Spiritual Reading on the [Resurrection of Christ and the Easter season](#)
- Spiritual Reading on [Pentecost and the Gift of the Holy Spirit](#)



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