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## True Freedom in Jesus Christ

*For freedom Christ has set us free...do not submit again to a yoke of slavery (Galations 5:1)*

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## The Tyranny of Modern Freedom versus the Freedom of Jesus

by Gillis Harp

The 125th anniversary of Grove City College was marked by the publication of an institutional history entitled *Freedom's College*. The title was appropriate given the college's long-established defense of American political and economic freedoms. The title was also inspired by the famous Supreme Court case of the 1980s when the college defended her independence from federal interference.

It strikes me as very wise for a Christian college to enjoy a good deal of independence from intrusive state controls. The separation of church and state is one of the historical distinctives that helps account for the relative health and prosperity that Christian churches have enjoyed in the United States in contrast to the experience of Christianity in, say, Western Europe. This sort of freedom and other historic American political freedoms should definitely be celebrated and defended by Christians.

But I would like to address some problematic notions of freedom that have gained currency among American Christians, especially in recent decades. Some conservative Christians have, I fear, uncritically accepted ideas of personal and civil freedom that are at odds with traditional Christian teaching. Some have naively accepted what are essentially Enlightenment understandings of liberty that are at best in tension with what Scripture and Christian tradition teach.

First, I'd like to survey the sources of these popular views and clarify the problems with them. Next, I'll describe a Christian perspective on this subject. And, finally, to conclude, I'll try to offer a few practical suggestions about how

to resist this tendency. My main point is a simple one: that for the Christian, freedom can never be asserted in an unqualified, absolute sense, without limits or some higher end in view. In other words, the Christian must always ask, freedom *for what?*



### Undirected Freedom

For a long time, and especially since the Enlightenment, many in the West have defined freedom simply as the right to do as I choose, as long as I don't hurt others. Note how this open-ended definition has no larger good or final goal in view. It is primarily negative, i.e., my freedom is defined as the freedom from external restraint or from imposed restrictions.

It is often argued that individuals should be left free to pursue their particular ends without reference to some larger social good. Indeed, some enthusiasts assert that there is actually no larger social good. They go as far as to assert that there is no such thing as society! For some, that's just a meaningless abstraction. There are only individual goods, no general interest of the community in any organic or larger corporate sense.

Our self-centered consumerist society has latched onto this particular idea of freedom in recent decades. Of course, by doing so, it reduces our significant freedoms to trivial choices. I remember a promotional program that the convenience store Seven-Eleven ran back in the nineties. It was for their soda-fountain drinks. Big posters in red, white, and blue proclaimed: "Super Big-Gulp. America Loves the Freedom!" At the time, I wondered what foreign visitors would think about the American idea of liberty when it was reduced to being able to purchase a garbage-can-sized cup of Mountain Dew. Clearly, this is choice with no higher end in view, choice as an end in itself; choice reduced to just following my personal passion for soda or Slurpees.

William Cavanaugh, a theologian who teaches at St. Thomas University in Minnesota, addresses the question of this trivialized notion of freedom and how impoverished it is. He argues (drawing upon Aristotle and others) that this sort of freedom has no end; it is undirected freedom. Cavanaugh argues that for freedom to really constitute and create human freedom, there must be a *telos*, a goal or end in view. In his book *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire*, he writes, "The absence of objective goods [that is, moral ends worth pursuing] does not free the individual, but leaves him or her subject to the arbitrary competition of wills." It creates the sort of world vividly described by the inspired author of the Book of Judges: "In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25). Cavanaugh cites examples of areas in which such an extreme approach can actually produce what he calls "unfreedom."

Nor is this competition of wills fought out on a level playing field. Some commentators praise the consumer as

sovereign in our day, yet they overlook the fact that billions of dollars are spent to persuade him to choose certain things, as advertisers cleverly manipulate “goods that cannot be commodified, such as self-esteem, love, sex, friendship and success.” In such a system, Cavanaugh concludes, “You still exercise free will, but the dynamics of power have shifted because the situation is set up to advance the interests of others.”

## Free for God

This is clearly not the freedom celebrated by traditional Christian thinkers; they have never been indifferent about the particular ends for which one exercises freedom. For example, St. Augustine’s political thinking was founded on the idea that what a community loves profoundly shapes what sort of community it will be. Much modern political thinking tries to construct systems that are so flawless that no one *has* to be good in order for them to function. They run on their own, with no need of human virtue. Yet Augustine repudiated such an approach. He understood that he who worships the self will create a self-absorbed community. Undergraduates often experience this truth in their dorm life. A selfish roommate can easily destroy genuine community.

Instead, Christians have always hastened to ask, “Freedom yes, but for what?” In *Freedom, Faith and the Future*, Michael Ramsey, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, said that in the mid-twentieth century “we know what we want to free men *from*. Do we know what we want to free men *for*?” Freedom simply to follow my personal whims or passions is ultimately slavery. Just obeying my every desire can ultimately be a horrible bondage for sinners like you and me. Christians have historically seen such a model of freedom as mere license, not true Christian freedom.

By contrast, Ramsey contended that the Christian is always “free from someone and free for someone. He is free from self, and free for God.” Of course, Jesus himself is our most powerful example, with what Ramsey characterized as his amazing “blending of authority and self-effacement.” Significantly, Jesus is free, but free “into another.” Note how Christ says that he must be about his Father’s business, and how he asks in the Garden of Gethsemane before his crucifixion that not his will but the Father’s be done. Jesus allowed short-term concerns to be overridden by the Father’s larger redemptive plan.

Of course Jesus isn’t only our example in this realm of personal freedom; he is also the one who actually makes our real freedom possible. As Ramsey explains, “Christians see Jesus not only as the image of what freedom is but the *source* of freedom to us.” That is, in personal relationship with Jesus, we learn “about God as creator and saviour and about ourselves as creatures and sinners, we are set in the path which leads to the freedom of mature sonship.”

## The Blessing of Authority

But our challenge as Christians in today’s world is complicated. First, we are certainly called to fight the public injustices that destroy human freedom. In this struggle, we should cooperate with non-Christians, men and women of good will who share such concerns. But at the same time, our vocation is to proclaim a message that is offensive to the modern mind and therefore a difficult calling. It is a message about a higher understanding of freedom than that put forward by the Enlightenment and its followers. It is the message that the enemy of this higher freedom is, to quote Ramsey again, the “self,” and that the goal of this higher freedom is the “glory of God.”

American Christians haven’t always done a good job of making that latter point. Instead, we have often been seduced by the Enlightenment’s perspective and the narcissistic, consumerist version of liberty that blossomed during the twentieth century.



There was a time when Americans understood these truths better. The first governor of the Massachusetts Bay colony, John Winthrop, drew a helpful distinction between natural and civil liberty. The first was the freedom that individuals have to do whatever they want. It is the same natural liberty that animals enjoy. But, as Winthrop explained, “If you stand for your natural corrupt liberties, and will do what is good in your own eyes, you will not endure the least weight of authority, but will murmur, and oppose, and be always striving to shake off that yoke” (as documented in Judges). On the other hand, civil liberty for Winthrop was founded upon hierarchy and subjection to authority. We modern Westerners aren’t comfortable with those concepts! By contrast, we have embraced instead a very individualistic, rights-based attitude.

Studying Scripture can help us clarify our thinking on this subject. The Book of Judges and the Old Testament in general furnish many negative examples of this sort of individualism. Left to their own devices, individuals doing what’s right in their own eyes can make quite a mess of things. Commenting on the passage from Judges previously cited, John Wesley concluded, “Blessed be God for magistracy!” At the same time, in Galatians, the Apostle Paul explains what real freedom, Christian freedom, is for: “You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Gal. 5:13-14).



## Bolstering Family & Communal Duties

How, then, should we as Christians confront our culture’s destructive hyper-individualism, its unbalanced stress on individual rights? Cardinal George of Chicago commented recently that “in the United States, individualism as an

ideology is so closely associated with creativity and personal freedom that the Gospel's injunction to surrender oneself to Christ and to others in order to be free has become largely incomprehensible."

How can we make it more comprehensible? One thing we could certainly work on is the bolstering and promoting of mediating institutions, such as the traditional family. "If, in fact, we are able to strengthen family life," Cardinal George concludes, "when it seems to be dissolving, that would be a great step forward, because there people learn that they are not the most important person."

Perhaps we can also begin to change our political language, not always insisting on our rights but stressing our communal duties instead. Such a change of approach can certainly help both the private and public spheres – both our political life and our family life. May God grant us the grace not to be indifferent about our ultimate ends, but to always ask "Freedom for what?" and to use our freedom primarily in the service of others.

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## Freedom and Virtue

by Thomas Dubay

Most people conceive liberty to be an absence of law, regulation, and discipline. They possess a kernel of partial truth, but the kernel is secondary at best. Virtue, of course, implies a lessening of need for outer regulation, but that lessening derives from what is primary. At root freedom is first of all power, the power to be and to do. A medical doctor is free to perform surgery only to the extent of his knowledge and skills. Lacking these competencies, he may mutilate, but he is not free to heal. So also we are free to cook a meal, teach a course, play a game of chess precisely to the extent that we possess the requisite aptitudes and capacities, indeed the enabling powers and gifts – usually acquired by hard work. Virtue, coming from the Latin *virtus*, means power and, thus, goodness.

The virtues free a person to be fully human and to reach complete personal potential. Scripture is right on target when it defines freedom as capacities and goodnesses given by the Holy Spirit: love, joy, patience, kindness, gentleness, trustfulness, and self-control (Galatians 5: 22). This is why Jesus declared that his word sets us free: it is an empowering word. So, too, he pointed out that anyone who sins is a slave: to avarice, lust, arrogance, vanity, intemperance. Only if the Son sets us free are we free indeed (John 8: 31-36). Sinners are slaves; saints are sovereignly liberated.

...Newman once observed, while teaching at Oxford University, that worldly people commonly make the fatal error of assuming that they have the capacity and right to judge religious truth without a preparation of their hearts by virtuous living. This is like a tone-deaf critic claiming to pass judgment on a Mozart concerto or symphony. Part of their subjective darkness is that they do not see the night in which they live.



Mother Teresa's burning love for Jesus Christ fueled her compassion for orphans and the homeless, and for the dying outcasts of India's poor

Few people seem inclined to connect vivacity to virtue, but those with experience know well that men and women of profound integrity not only live on a deeper level but also live life to the hilt. Just as highly talented ballet dancers and concert violinists are more fully artists and musicians than those with lesser skills, so people who burn with love and are profoundly humble, magnanimous, strong, and gentle are much more vibrantly alive and fully human. Mediocre people excel in nothing and barely live, even though convention requires them to put on a smiling face. Saint Irenaeus, in the third century, captured the idea in his celebrated remark that “a man fully alive is the glory of God” – and, we might add, a joy to the human race.

Jesus went out of his way to say that he is life itself and that he has come to give his own a new life, a life far beyond mere biological well-being. Indeed, his aim is to give life to overflowing, in an abundance. To put this point a bit differently, we may say that each of the virtues, and especially all of them together, rid us of our self-encasements, our egocentrism.

We ourselves are completed in our own beings as we give ourselves to others and help them to mature – all while both we and they grow in delight and fulfillment. Most of all, when we practice the theological virtues [faith, hope, and love], we find completion and supreme joy in the fountain who slakes every thirst in an entire quenching. When we drink at this fountain, our very heart and flesh sing in delight (Psalm 84: 2). This is the vivacity God has prepared for those who love him (1 Corinthians 2: 9). No one but the Lord would dream of making these promises. And, best of all, he keeps them both in this life and in its consummation in the next. Truth is indeed symphonic.

Which suggests our final reflection: in each of our human actions, even the smallest and the least noticeable, we are fashioning our eternity. One of the glories of human freedom, a fearsome glory, no doubt, is that by our free choices we decide what we shall be forever. We daily make decisions that have eternal consequences. Day by day in each of

our willed actions and omissions we are making ourselves lovable or hateful: in our major decisions – to choose the real God or to choose an idol – we are choosing eternal ecstasy or eternal disaster. Jesus on his torturing Cross is the picture of how unspeakably God loves the sinner, begging, but not forcing, him to repent. In him, risen victor King, the saints are the world's ultimate winners, wearing wreaths that can never fade.

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This article is excerpted from [The Evidential Power of Beauty](#), Chapter 13, *The Beauty of Sanctity*, by Thomas Dubay, S.M., copyright © 1999 Ignatius Press, San Francisco. Used with permission.

[Fr. Thomas Dubay (1921-2010) was a well-known Catholic spiritual director and retreat master who traveled extensively throughout the United States and Canada. He wrote 20 books and was a member of the Marist Fathers and Brothers religious order.]

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Adam and Eve driven from the Garden of Paradise

## Freedom or Responsibility?

by Niceta Stethatus (1005-1090 AD)

*I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live - Deuteronomy 30:19.*

God created human beings to have free will. He honored them with reasoning and wisdom and placed before their eyes the choice between life and death. If by their free choice they walk the way of life, they can live for ever. But if by choosing evil they tread the road to death, they will be punished in eternity.

The features of our human nature that we cannot alter deserve neither praise nor blame. No one was ever accused in court of being white or black skinned, or tall rather than short, because we have no choice in these matters. It is to what we can freely choose that punishment and praise belong.

In either case there is need, on the one hand, of our choice and our will, and on the other hand, of God's liberty. Our free will is never over-ridden or crushed. Furthermore, we have received from God commandments which can make us to be like him, by helping us to lead sinless lives and become like angels among our fellow human beings [See Deuteronomy 30:19].

[excerpt from *The Spiritual Paradise*, 2, translated by Paul Drake]

Niceta Stethatus (1005-1090) was a Byzantine monk and writer. As a young man he entered the monastery of Studios in Constantinople. He was devoted to the teaching of St. Simeon the New Theologian, a monk who died in 1022. Niceta collected Simeon's works and wrote a biography entitled *Life of Simeon* as well. Niceta earned the name "Stethatus" which in Greek means *courageous*.

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## Stations on the Road to Freedom

by Dietrich Bonhoeffer(1906-1945)

Bonhoeffer wrote this prose poem a few months before his execution by the Nazi regime in 1945, translated by Frank Clarke.

### Discipline

If you set out to seek freedom, then learn above all things to govern your soul and your senses, for fear that your passions and longings may lead you away from the path you should follow.

Chaste be your mind and your body, and both in subjection, obediently, steadfastly seeking the aim set before them; only through discipline may a man learn to be free.

### Action

Daring to do what is right, not what fancy may tell you, valiantly grasping occasions, not cravenly doubting – freedom comes only through deeds, not through thoughts taking wing. Faint not nor fear, but go out to the storm and the action, trusting in God whose commandment you faithfully follow; freedom, exultant, will welcome your spirit with joy.

### Suffering

A change has come indeed. Your hands, so strong and active, are bound; in helplessness now you see your action is ended;

## Tribute to Bonhoeffer

by Donald Bloesch

In perhaps no other century has the church seen so many confessors and martyrs to the faith as in this one. Countless Christians have placed their lives on the line for the gospel. Most of these witnesses to the passion and victory of Christ are relatively unknown, but some have become public signs of God's kingdom. I have in mind a number of candidates for sainthood in the new religious situation in which we find ourselves – people who have refused to bow the knee to Baal and whose stories have increasing significance for our time.

[In the 1930s] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a then relatively unknown German Lutheran pastor and theologian, aroused the ire of the Nazis by his radio address attacking the Nazi leadership principle and also by his open support of the Confessing Church movement. Having founded what soon became an underground seminary at Finkenwalde in Pomerania, he demonstrated in his own life what he had urged on others - that fidelity to the kingdom of God takes precedence over all other loyalties, including that which we owe to our nation. By the late 1930s, Bonhoeffer's activities were greatly restricted by the Gestapo. Two of his former professors at Union Theological Seminary in New York succeeded in bringing him safely to America but he could not allow himself to remain in refuge, detached from the sufferings of his people. Against his teachers' advice, he boldly decided to return to Germany, even though by this time he was a marked man.

After the war began, Bonhoeffer, despite his pacifist convictions, was led to participate in

you sigh in relief, your cause committing to stronger hands; so now you may rest contented.

Only for one blissful moment could you draw near to touch freedom; then, that it might be perfected in glory, you gave it to God.

### Death

Come now, thou greatest of feasts on the journey to freedom eternal; death, cast aside all the burdensome chains, and demolish the walls of our temporal body, the walls of our souls that are blinded, so that at last we may see that which here remains hidden.

Freedom, how long we have sought thee in discipline, action, and suffering;

dying, we now may behold thee revealed in the Lord.

[source: *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Letters & Papers from Prison*, (c) 1953, SCM Press, LTD]

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Dieterich Bonhoeffer was born into a family of seven children in Breslau, Germany. He grew up in Berlin, where his father worked as a prominent professor of psychiatry and neurology; his mother was one of the few women of her generation to obtain a university degree. At the age of 14 he decided he would become a Lutheran pastor and theologian. He was the first of the German theologians to speak out clearly against the persecution of the Jews. He was 39 years old when he was taken out of his prison and hanged as a Nazi traitor in 1945. As he left his cell he said to his companion, "This is the end – but for me, the beginning of life."

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Bonhoeffer in the courtyard of Tegel Prison, summer of 1944

photo source:  
Christian Kaiser Verlag



> See related article, [Costly Grace](#), by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

a resistance group that eventually plotted to assassinate Hitler. In April 1943 he was arrested by the Gestapo and imprisoned at Tegel in Berlin. While in prison, he had an opportunity to escape, but he called off the escape plans for fear of reprisals against his family. Although often tempted to despair, he radiated a joy and peace that were a constant source of inspiration to his fellow prisoners. He was hanged on the gallows in the Flossenburg prison camp in April 1945.

Bonhoeffer was arrested because of his illegal activities in the resistance movement. Bonhoeffer has been hailed by secular and political theologians as an outstanding example of political involvement on behalf of the oppressed. What they have not sufficiently discerned is that Bonhoeffer's political acts were motivated by a deep religious faith in the God of the Bible, by an unequivocal commitment to the gospel of reconciliation and redemption. Bonhoeffer will come to be appreciated in this new age of persecution for his devotion to Jesus Christ and not simply for his political heroism.

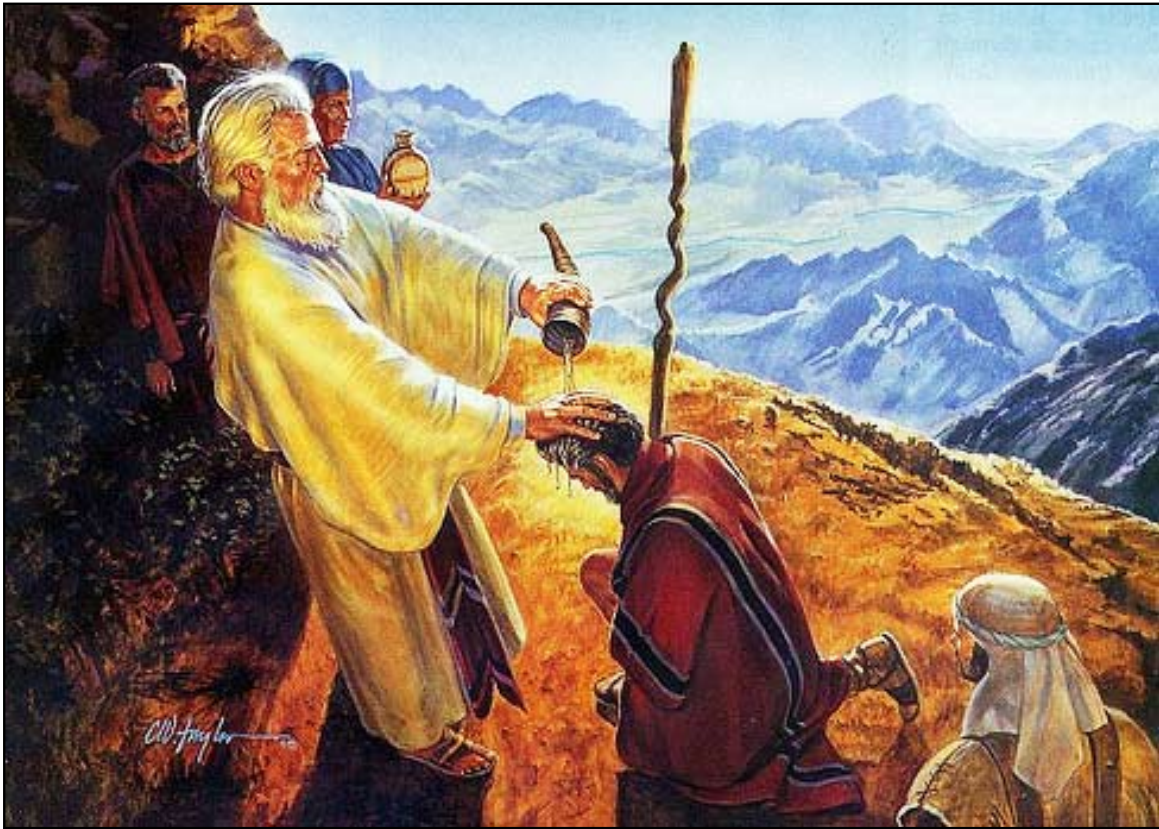
[Excerpted from the book, *Crumbing Foundations*, by Donald Bloesch (c) 1984 by The Zondervan Corporation, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Used with permission.]

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Vice President of the Sword of the Spirit speaks to a new generation...



Moses anoints Joshua "Be strong and of good courage, the Lord your God will be with you" (Joshua 1:9)

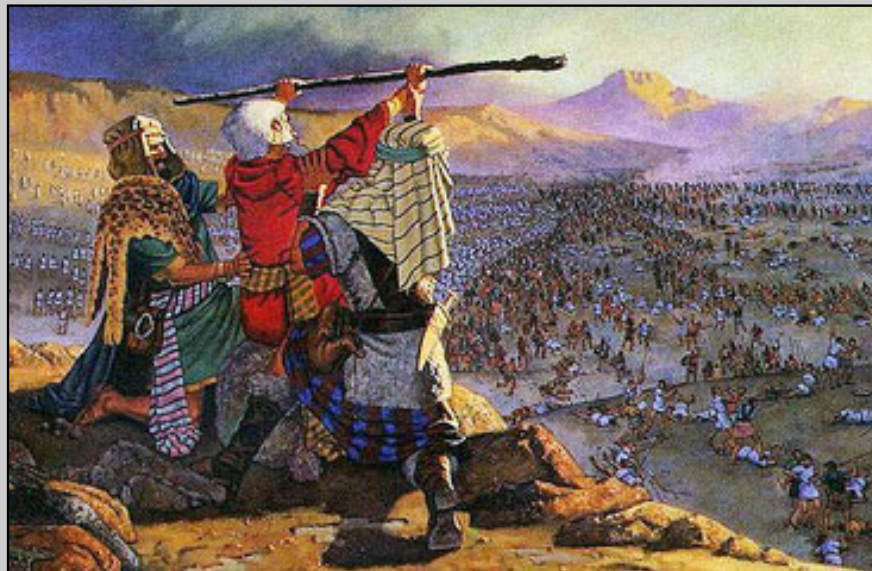
## Joshua Takes the Lead: "Be Strong and of Good Courage"

Adapted from a presentation by John Keating given during the [Adelante Conference](#)

### Who is Joshua?

Joshua succeeded Moses in leadership. Like Moses he represents not just one individual but a generation of people who have been called by God. What do we know about Joshua from the Scriptures? And what do we know about his role in relation to Moses, and among the people of Israel, before Moses' death? We can see some significant preparation of this man, from his youth, in order for him to step into the shoes of Moses.

## Some background on Joshua's early years



Joshua's first appearance in Bible is found in Exodus Chapter 17. This chapter describes the battle of the people of Israel against the Amalekites. Joshua is appointed by Moses (17:9-10) to choose the fighters from among the people and to go out and fight Amalek, while Moses prays from the top of the hill above them. The battle tends to go according to the position of Moses' hands and the rod which he holds. With the help of Aaron and Hur, Moses holds up his hands all day, and Joshua mows down Amalek with the edge of the sword (17:13). The Lord commands Moses to write as a memorial in a book and to recite in the ears of Joshua that God will utterly blot out Amalek (17:14).



Then when Moses goes up on the mountain to meet God and to receive the Law, he takes his servant Joshua with him (Exodus 24:12-13). When Aaron makes the golden calf for the people, Joshua is on the mountain with Moses (Exodus 32:17). As they head down the mountain with the tablets of the law, he tells Moses that there is a noise of war in the camp.

**Exodus 33:11.** Moses would go out to the tent of meeting to seek the Lord, and the pillar of cloud would descend upon the tent. All Israel would watch, and then worship. The LORD would speak to Moses face to face. When Moses returned to the camp, "his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tent." It seems, then, that during the times that Israel was in camp, Joshua would remain in the tent of meeting. He was given unique and privileged access to Moses' special relationship with the

Lord, and it would appear that he had himself more time in the courts of the Lord than anyone else in all of Israel.

**Numbers 11:28.** Joshua, “the servant/minister of Moses, one of his chosen men,” asked Moses to forbid the prophesying of Eldad and Medad, two elders who remained back in the camp while the assembly of elders met with Moses in the tent of meeting.



**Numbers 13-14.** Moses is commanded to send 12 spies a leader from each tribe, to spy out the land. From the tribe of Ephraim, Moses chooses Hoshea, the son of Nun. Before they are sent out, Moses changes Hoshea’s name to Joshua (13:16). (Essentially a change from being called “salvation” to “the LORD is salvation” or “the LORD saves.” Joshua, together with Caleb, rend their clothes after the majority report causes the people to despair, and Joshua and Caleb give their faith-filled minority report (Numbers 14:6). The Lord is displeased with the response of the people and decrees that all those over 20 years old, with exception of Caleb and Joshua, will die during the 40 years in the desert (14:30). He strikes down the spies, with the exception of Caleb and Joshua (14:38). In the census of the new generation, commanded by the Lord and taken by Moses in Numbers 26, only Caleb and Joshua remained of those numbered by Moses and Aaron before Sinai (26:65). See also. Numbers 32:12.

**Numbers 27.** Joshua is appointed by the Lord as Moses’ successor. God says of him that he is “a man in whom is the spirit” (27:18). Moses lays hands upon him, investing him with some of his authority and commissioning him to lead Israel (27:22). See also Numbers 32:28. In Numbers 34:17, the Lord names Eleazar the priest and Joshua to be the ones to divide out the land for the inheritance of the people.



**Deuteronomy 1:38.** Moses tells the people that he will not enter the land of promise, but that Joshua will lead them in. They are to encourage him.



**Deuteronomy 3:21.** Moses tells the people that, after the defeat of Sihon and Og, he commanded Joshua not to be afraid –“It is the Lord who fights for you, and who will do the same to all the kingdoms on the other side of the Jordan.” God had then commanded Moses: “Charge Joshua, and encourage and strengthen him; for he shall go over at the head of this people” (Deuteronomy 3:28).

**Deuteronomy 31.** Joshua is formally commissioned by the Lord as Moses’ successor. Moses tells the people that God had told him that Joshua would lead them into the land (31:3). Moses summons Joshua and in the sight of all Israel tells him: “Be strong and of good courage; for you shall go with this people into the land...It is the Lord who goes before you; he will be with you, he will not fail you or forsake you; do not fear or be dismayed” (31:7-9). Then the Lord calls Moses and Joshua before the tent of meeting (31:14), and himself commissions Joshua in the same words: “Be strong and of good courage; for you shall bring the children of Israel into the land which I swore to give them: I will be with you” (Deuteronomy 31:23).

**Deuteronomy 32:44.** The great song of Moses, spoken before all Israel shortly before his death, is recited by him and Joshua before the people.

**Deuteronomy 34:9.** After recounting the death and burial of Moses, and the mourning of Israel, and shortly before the last verses of the Pentateuch, this is said of Joshua: he was “full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands upon him; so the people of Israel obeyed him, and did as the Lord had commanded Moses.”

### A brief summary of some key things that we see about Joshua in the Pentateuch:

- He, too, is a young man at the point that we first meet him.
- He is one of Moses’ chosen men, a trusted servant/minister from his youth. He is an important protagonist in the life and history of his people, even before the first generation is gone. He is not passive, without an important role, “sitting on the bench” and waiting for his turn to lead something. He serves. He fights.
- He is a warrior before the people, and leads them to victory against Amalek. Joshua learns in this process that he fights as part of a team – his own leadership role is crucial, but Israel would likely have lost the battle were it not for Moses’ role of intercession.
- He is a leader on other levels within his tribe and among the people, chosen by Moses to spy out the Promised Land. Only he and Caleb return with a faith-filled perspective about what obedience to the Lord can produce in battling the greater inhabitants of Canaan. He and Caleb are the only people who have actually seen/walked the promised land of all those who will enter it.
- He is with Moses on the mountain when Moses receives the Law. He does not participate in any way in the false worship of the golden calf.
- He is a man intimately familiar with the courts of the Lord. He is with Moses in his encounters with the Lord in the tent of meeting. When Moses returns to the camp, Joshua remains in the tent of meeting.
- The Lord himself identifies Joshua, and calls him to be Moses’ successor (more so even than Moses himself, or a vote from the people). The Lord makes sure that Joshua is commissioned in the sight of all

the people, including through the laying on of Moses' hands and of his own commissioning shortly before Moses' death.

- The Lord's message to Joshua as Joshua assumes leadership could not be more consistent and clear:
  - Be strong and of good courage
  - Do not fear or be dismayed
  - I will be with you. I will go before you; I will not fail you or forsake you.

## Some Lessons for intergenerational community today

What are some lessons we might draw from these passages for our own situation as an intergenerational community of disciples on mission? Perhaps God may see fit to remove all of the leaders of the founding generation of the Sword of the Spirit from the scene, as he did with the generation of Moses. That isn't always the Lord's preferred pattern for intergenerational transfers of leadership, though. There were special reasons (the 40 years of purification in the desert) for why all of the original generation who had died by the time Joshua and Caleb (the only two left) led their people into the Promised Land. The Lord may choose to have mercy with us, and to remove the founding generation in a more gradual manner. If so, it won't be quite as challenging for the new generation of the Sword of the Spirit leaders as it was for Joshua. In his case, Moses was dead, as were all others of his generation, including its leaders, with the exception of Caleb. Joshua had every reason to feel himself a bit alone, over his head, loaded down with too heavy a weight to bear.

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## Joshua takes the lead

a look at Chapters 1- 5 from the Book of Joshua

### Chapter 1 - Joshua's Call and invitation

God's call and invitation to this son, called Joshua, who would carry the same name as that of God's only begotten Son, Jesus, which means "God Saves."

"After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, "Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land which I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, as I promised to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory. No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. Be strong and of good courage; for you shall cause this people to inherit the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded you; turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. This book of the Law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; be not frightened, neither be dismayed; for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go"" (Joshua 1:1-9).

"Be strong and of good courage" is the keynote sounded by God in his call, invitation, and exhortation to Joshua. God says this in slightly varying ways three times within 4 verses in Joshua 1, and the chapter closes with the people saying the same thing to him.

What is the basis of this strength and courage? "The Lord your God



is with you wherever you go.” “As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you.”

There are other key directions given to Joshua as well: meditate on God’s word and teaching day and night, and be careful to do all that it says; turn not to the right or to the left. These were to be key to prospering in all that lies ahead.

God’s command strikes to the heart of Joshua: “Be not frightened; neither be dismayed.”



Joshua, as well as Caleb, have a special relationship to the Promised Land. They are among the first to see it. Moses never entered. Joshua entered it as a young man (as a spy), filled with trust and hope, but his people were not ready to go in. God now brings him back, along with Caleb, after 40 years of testing and training for the people, and Joshua is to lead them into the land. He will lead their battles. He will apportion out the inheritance of the tribes and clans.

**Chapter 2:** Joshua, too, sends out spies. They learn that the Lord is working for them, preparing the way before them.

**Chapters 3 and 4:** Joshua leads the people of Israel across the Jordan. Once again, a miracle of crossing, the people passing over on dry land by the intervention of the Lord. A miracle of grace very much like what God did through Moses at the Red Sea, yet it’s not the same – it is a new crossing into a new season, with a new grace from God for his people.

**Chapter 5:** Joshua’s lesson before the siege of Jericho:



“When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man stood before him with his drawn sword in his hand; and Joshua went to him and said to him, “Are you for us, or for our adversaries?” And he said, “No; but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come.” And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and worshiped, and said to him, “What does my lord bid his servant?” And the commander of the LORD’s army said to Joshua, “Put off your shoes from your feet; for the place where you stand is

holy.” And Joshua did so.”

## What are the key things that happen in Chapter 5?

- Fear and dismay among the Lord’s enemies.
- Circumcision of a new generation.
- Celebration of the Passover. End of manna, and beginning of eating from the land.
- Joshua’s encounter with the angel, commander of the Lord’s army. Taught Joshua an entirely new way to think about the conquest, the conflict, the mission. Not “are you for us or for our enemies?” for the angel’s response to that question is simply “No.” Then he states that, as commander of the Lord’s army, he has come. Joshua’s got the categories wrong: it’s not about who is with him and who is against him. It’s about who is with God and who is against God. And now Joshua recognizes his true place – on his face before the Lord, asking what the will of the Lord is. The initial response is not a strategy of warfare and conquest, but putting first things first: “Put off your shoes from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy.”
- The subsequent history, with its own ups and downs, its successes and failures, is that of the conquest of the Promised Land by the grace and power of God. Joshua, too, fulfills his call and his mission, and then passes on to the next generation the mission of living in a land that has been won and settled.



## Some observations for the second generation in Sword of the Spirit

I want to close with some observations:

Joshua’s role as a “second generation” leader: he is not the founder of his people. In the most important sense, the Lord himself has founded this people. On the human level, Moses has been the founder and establisher of the people, and the people doesn’t need of a second founder. Nor do they need another “lawgiver.” Nor is someone needed to take them through the desert to the Promised Land. That whole season in their life is completed, and now they need a different kind of leadership.

In the second generation, in this new season, there will be a different thrust, and God will give to those who lead a different anointing. Joshua isn’t just a follower of Moses, picking up where Moses left off, and doing what he had seen Moses do. He has himself been called and chosen by the Lord. The Lord has promised to be with him and to lead him, just as he did with Moses. But the waters are new and uncharted, and Joshua must be careful to follow the Lord where he leads. Joshua is a seasoned warrior, and he will lead his people in battle. He will lead them into new territory, the land that the Lord has intended and promised to his people. The people must fight to gain this territory, but the battle and the victory will be the Lord’s. Joshua will also help the people to find their

place in the new land, and to begin to settle it.

## What the Lord is saying today

What might the Lord be saying to the young men and women of the Sword of the Spirit at this time? Surely, the fundamental message to Joshua – “Be strong and of good courage; do not fear or be dismayed; I will be with you.”

With the inevitable passing of the older generation of Sword of the Spirit leaders, I see something in Joshua’s experience that accords with my own sense from the Lord for the new Joshua generation who will replace the older one.

While God has done marvellous things in the lives of the pioneer generation, and has laid the foundations of this people, the future is not to be “same old, same old.” Some key expressions of what this people was created for are still to be realized. The fuller expression of this people’s life and mission lies ahead, and the next generation will lead the people into it.

While the previous generation of leaders may be involved in the commissioning, it is fundamentally a question of the Lord’s commissioning – giving the leadership of the people into the hands of the next generation, with his promise that he will go before you, he will fight for you, he will not fail you or forsake you. Be strong, then, in the strength of his might. Be courageous in the grace of God. Humble yourselves under his mighty hand, and obey him, turning not to the right or to the left. And watch what he will do.



John Keating is Vice-President of the [Sword of the Spirit](#) and a frequent speaker for [Kairos](#) and Sword of the Spirit conferences and seminars. He is an elder in the [Servants of the Word](#), a missionary brotherhood of men living single for the Lord. He currently lives in Manila, Philippines.

See previous articles

- > [Going Against the Tide: Lessons in Faith and Courage from the Book of Daniel, Part 1](#)
- > [God’s Servants in the Fiery Furnace – Lessons from the Book of Daniel, Part 2](#)

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## Martyrdom – For You and for Me?

by Tom Caballes

Recently, my father-in-law passed away. He was 86 years old and he had lived a good life. Before he died, he was able to be reconciled with his loved ones and was able to prepare well spiritually. For me, that was a good way to die – all set and ready to meet his Maker.

Before my father-in law's death, I have had reflections about athletes who excel in their fields of expertise – those who are multiple champions, or consistent in their brilliance and endurance. But nothing beats entering or ending a sports career with a flash, like winning a championship as a newcomer, becoming the rookie of the year, or leaving the field as a champion. There are very few sports figures who achieve these goals at the start or at the end of their careers, at the beginning or at retirement.

Combining these thoughts brought me to an anticipation of my own "retirement." Like an athlete, I know that life on earth is not permanent, and sooner or later I will pass on to a more permanent state. I do not know where and when it will happen, but wouldn't it be great to "go with a bang," as a "champion," and an exalted way to enter into the more permanent state of being?

As a Christian, how can I go "with a bang?" What is the best way to die, if there is ever one? Death is one of those things that will surely come, sooner or later. Shall a disease, an accident, or old age be my passage way? I do not know. But one thought came to my mind as possibly the best way to die: through martyrdom.

Is the thought of martyrdom too radical or too extreme at this time and in this age? In the past, dying as a martyr was widespread. Persecutions and tortures for the faith were ordinary. Some of our forefathers in the faith had to shed their blood, and faced many forms of torture, including being whipped, in chains, imprisoned, and stoned. Some of them were sawed into two, thrown into the fire, or beheaded. There was nothing idealistic or romantic about dying as a martyr during those times. It did not look good and it did not feel good – but they glorified God literally with their own bodies.

As I reflect on passages in the Bible, I am more convinced that we should aspire to martyrdom. Didn't Jesus say, "No one has greater love than this that a man lay down his life for his friends"? and, "Whoever loses his life for my sake and for the gospel will save it"? What about the disciples: their words and their lives? Most of the disciples died for their faith. The Lord Jesus honoured Stephen with a vision of heaven as he died the first martyr. Didn't he die with a bang, and make a magnificent entrance into heaven? Saint Paul wrote in his letter to the Galatians: "I have been crucified with Christ, and I live; yet no longer I, but Christ lives in me. And that life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith toward the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself on my behalf." And Paul died as a martyr according to Christian tradition.

Living in this time and age, most of us experience little or none of the persecutions or trials that the first Christians faced. There are now few opportunities to die for our faith, to live and die as a martyrs. Does that mean we will not get a chance to die for God? We don't know. I do not think we are all called specifically to die as martyrs, to seek to go where Christians are likely to be killed for their faith. To die as a martyr is a grace that God gives to some of us – and we cannot and should not "force" ourselves to martyrdom.

But I believe that God calls all of us to be martyrs in our hearts. Do our lives belong to God? Are we not citizens of heaven? Are we not called to die to ourselves day by day? Are we not supposed to sell all that we have, in order to gain something of greater value? If God is worthy of our lives, is he not worthy of our deaths? What do we value most, and what can we give God that is best? Are not our lives no longer our own anyway? How can we glorify God best with our life and also with our death?

I believe that as a Christian, I am called to become a "sleeper agent" who is willing to die for the cause that I believe in. "Sleeper agents" are spies who are placed in a target country or organization, not to undertake an immediate mission [that is where the comparison fails – we do have a mission], but rather to act as a potential asset if *activated*. Sleeper agents are also popular plot elements in espionage fiction and science fiction. But in reality, I believe I am called to become a sleeper agent for God, willing and ready to die for the glory of God if and when called to do so. And if and when that time comes, I think it will not be easy, or romantic, or idealistic. It will be a real test of faith – and I hope that I will succeed in the test.

What is modern martyrdom? For me, it is a life of sacrifice, a life of discipleship, to follow in the Master's footsteps, and dying to my self-will, day by day. I want to practice the ideals that my life is no longer my own and I want to glorify God with my body. God is calling me to die every day to my selfishness, to the works of the flesh, to anger, and greed, among many other things, in order to become like him more and more.

One thing I do: I pray and hope that I will end in a high note and begin my life in heaven with a glorious entrance. I want to desire martyrdom. I want to aim for it. I want to set my eyes high! If I aim low, can I expect a noble ending with my life and a grand entrance to heaven?

May God give us the grace to die well, prepared to meet him face to face. But greater still, may God give us the grace to die for him – he who is our all – through dying to ourselves daily, or in one single act of martyrdom, to the glory of God. Whichever way, may we hear those glorious words that all of us await: "Well done my good and faithful servant! Enter into the joy of your master!"

[See related article: [Lessons from the Martyrs](#), by James Munk]



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.

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## Seeds of hope for a new generation in Detroit

[YouthWorks-Detroit](#) is an inner-city ministry in Detroit, Michigan, USA.

YouthWorks equips young people to love God and others through a life of Christian service and leadership. YouthWorks serves as a bridge, uniting Christians from different cultures and traditions. It serves not only the at-risk youth and poor who participate in its programs, but also the volunteers who staff this ministry. It offers opportunities for individuals and groups to participate in short-term mission trips and for young adults to spend the summer interning in its Detroit Summer Outreach program. [Word of Life community](#) and also [Kairos North America](#), a regional youth ministry of the [Sword of the Spirit](#), provide pastoral support and training, and recruiting volunteers from Christian communities and outreaches around the world.

### Signs of hope and transformation

by Joshua Rock, Director for YouthWorks-Detroit

Detroit was once known as the jewel of industrial America – one of the finest, wealthiest urban centers known to man. Yet after decades of misspent funds, greed, neglect, and devastation, the city as a whole appears like the carved out husk of one of its myriad abandoned buildings. From the outside, Detroit might appear no more alive than a decaying stump of a once majestic oak tree. “Who saw this house in its former glory? Does it not now seem like nothing?” (Haggai 2:3).

But as in the days of Haggai, God says to us, “Be strong. Be strong and work, people of the land” (Haggai 2:4). He is doing something new among us, and even these ruins will rejoice to the song of a

Some personal reflections

Seek first his kingdom  
by Bianca Bronson



It wasn't until high school during my two summers with YouthWorks-Detroit's StreetTeam Leadership Program (summers of 2006 and 2007), that I actually took this “Christian” walk seriously. Not only was it a paying job (something so many youth desire), but the thing that most got me was the Christian leadership aspect of the program.

The two summers I worked on StreetTeam were when and how I truly learned what it is to have a relationship with God and when I learned of his love, and so much more. I could not explain how much this program impacted me – especially the interns.

One thing that really touched me was hearing the interns' testimony and them just being completely “real” with us. That stirred up the desire in my heart to know God on a deeper, more personal level. It was powerful just talking to the interns about why they decided to spend their summer in Detroit working with us, and hearing how they felt called to serve and share God's love. That really touched me. I was able to see his LOVE in action.

God who brings life from the dead. So let us be strong and work, for God himself is with us.

[Joshua Rock is the Executive Director of YouthWorks-Detroit. He is married to Yvette and is raising his family of four children in Detroit. He moved to Detroit in 2001 after doing a Detroit Summer Outreach (DSO) internship in 2000.]

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The following personal reflections are written by Gappers and participants of YouthWorks-Detroit. You can read more reflections at <http://youthworksdetroit.tumblr.com/archive>.

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### True Freedom in Christ by Emily Ferstle



In the past several months, the Lord had been speaking to me very clearly about what he wanted for me in the next step in my life. I had been volunteering with my church's youth group, and at a youth minister's retreat I heard Ed Conlin speak. When Ed talked about his life and ministry in Detroit, his testimony resonated with me. God made it clear that he wanted me to be a part of Detroit Summer Outreach. The Lord's call was clear and direct. However, the sacrifice required in answering this call scared me.

A big struggle throughout my life had been obedience. The idea of giving up control over my own life to some authority was terrifying – even if that authority was God himself. When I recognized this fear in myself, I prayed that the resistance to handing over my pride – my will versus God's will – be dissolved. So, despite my fear, I agreed to join the DSO staff for the summer.

The cultural adjustment in the first few weeks was extreme to say the least, but nothing compared to the spiritual transformation I have experienced since then. When I was baptized in the Holy Spirit, the internal conflict between my own will and my desire for the Lord vanished; the battle within me was won for me. When the Holy Spirit came upon me, my resistance fled way.

Since then, my life has not been the same. I realized it was more than just a set of "rules;" it was about knowing this wonderful, loving God for yourself and having a relationship with him and sharing this wonderful gift with others. Those things actually encouraged and influenced me to go where I've gone and do what I've done thus far.

Not only is God using me to help his children grow, and learn more about him and his love, but he is also using all this to call me into a deeper relationship with him, a whole new place in him. And this new place is beautiful. My desire, hope, and prayer is to one day (soon) come back and do a summer as a DSO intern.

[Bianca Bronson is originally from Detroit and is currently attending Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti, Michigan. In 2006-2007 she was a youth worker with YouthWorks-Detroit's StreetTeam Leadership Program.]

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### My second family in Christ by Christopher Parish



Christopher (right) on football field with Chris Diroff

I've been part of StreetTeam for two summers, and then got involved with the youth group program. I have been so blessed to be able to worship and share in my men's youth group. Growing up with one parent in the household, it has been a struggle at times. But being able to talk and have a good time with guys who love and care for me is magnificent.

I now see that this battle was never mine to win. I could not overcome my human fear and rebelliousness on my own. Only the grace of the Lord, through the Holy Spirit, could accomplish this conversion within me. This is true freedom. By allowing the Lord to overcome my delusion of what it meant to be free, I now better understand and experience the true freedom that Christ offers through life with him.

[Emily Ferstle is currently living in Detroit and is actively involved in Detroit community outreach. She served on staff with Detroit Summer Outreach in 2011.]

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## Radical discipleship

by Simon Luyts



Living in Detroit this past summer and participating in Detroit Summer Outreach (DSO), was an awesome experience. Before coming to Detroit, I did a Gap-year in Monterrey and I was afraid that my experience would be too similar, but the contrary was true. It was a completely different experience and they have complemented one another perfectly. Outwardly, Detroit is perhaps not the nicest place in the States, but God is definitely at work here. When you walk down the streets and talk to the people, it's impossible to ignore the fact that there is a God – a God who, throughout all the misery, never abandons his children – a God who uses the poor and the outcasts of the society to show the rich what life really is about – and a God that reveals the real pearl of great price. The Lord has also shown me that material wealth doesn't bring you far in reality as a man or woman of God. It is rather an obstacle in the race for the Kingdom of God because poverty, combined with trust in God, is a powerful gift that can free you to serve without seeking reward.

I think that DSO is a powerful tool that God uses to educate his children. It is a huge blessing and perfect opportunity to become a radical disciple. In this short amount of time, I have experienced

God has opened new doors in my life. Not only have I met wonderful new people, but now I have become able to live my life for Christ. I have experienced overflowing love and care from my men's group. It has shown me that God has control over all aspects of my life. We learn from one another, and give each other feedback. My youth group is like my second family, because of the bond we closely share with one another. I can truly say that I wouldn't be the young man I am today if I weren't a part of the youth group.

[Christopher Parish is from Detroit, and is currently a student-athlete at Bluffton University in Ohio. He worked on StreetTeam and joined the youth group program between 2008 - 2011.]

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## A Year to remember

by Tanesha Hill



YouthWorks-Detroit is an awesome organization. I help out with Bezael Project and the youth group and I can see how we are changing these kids' lives.

My life has been changing as well. I got my first job last March working as an intern at Covenant Community Care Clinic. My top highlight right now is helping with a mobile medical trailer here in Detroit. We go to different sites and offer free medical and dental screening. I love meeting the different patients and families and I love that we are there to help them in their time of need. I also

being transformed as a person and I am able to see a closer paradigm of Christ who became poor for my sake and who died to give me new life.

[Simon Luyts is originally from Jerusalem Community in Belgium. This past summer he participated as an intern in the Detroit Summer Outreach program. He had served for a year in the Kairos Standing in the Gap Program in Monterrey, Mexico, before moving to Detroit in the summer of 2011.]



On a Sunday in late September after a tremendous thunderstorm, as my wife and I drove towards home, we witnessed the brightest rainbow arching over the city of Detroit. As we came off the highway exit onto Trumbull St., we looked towards downtown, and we could see the Renaissance Center and other downtown buildings literally through the end of the rainbow. For 30 minutes we watched, and the rainbow neither faded nor dulled in intensity. While our country and even our city suffers from various and sometimes tragic setbacks, we cannot deny that this is a time of special grace for Detroit, and that God's promises are resting upon our city. And, like the rainbow, maybe you have to be here to see it. - Joshua Rock [photo by Yvette Rock ©2011]

### “My Cup Runneth Over” (Psalm 23:5)

by Ellen Karagoulis

“The Lord gives strength to his people; the Lord blesses his people with peace.” – Psalm 29:11

My best friend's little brother once sang happily to himself, “I have everything I need, I have a wallet to put my stuff in! I have everything I need.” If it's just that simple, then why do I get so overwhelmed? Contentment is having what you need... just for

enjoy helping lead them to Christ.

I am realizing that this is the route God wants me to pursue. At first I thought my calling was education, but more and more I see how I am changing peoples' lives – it makes me want to do more. I'm now attending Wayne State University to become a doctor!

[Tanesha Hill is originally from Detroit. She attended Cornerstone School in Detroit – Joshua Rock was one of her teachers at that time. She has been actively involved with YouthWorks-Detroit since 2009. She is currently a part-time volunteer staff worker with YouthWorks-Detroit.]

### Summer of radical change by Chad Shellabarger



I hear the words “Detroit Summer Outreach” and I immediately associate it with radical transformation. Coming from a place that has never heard of this community or urban encounter, it was a “leave everything and come follow me” type of calling I received from the Lord.

This program successfully touches on and molds nearly every aspect of a young man's or woman's spiritual journey into an even more beautiful story.

I entered into this program with depression and cynicism and left with joy and love. This truly was a “summer set apart for a lifetime set apart,” and I simply pray that the Spirit within me will

today.

Mission work in Detroit is intense, to say the least. You see the enormous poverty, and feel the crushing burden to help in some way. I have had many times, like today, where I've reached my "boiling over" point. Before I came here, I never could've imagined that, "my cup runneth over" (Psalm 23:5) was sometimes similar to reheating soup too long in the microwave. Sometimes you are quite literally suffocated by the Lord's "blessing." You give and serve and help faithfully until you explode, and then, miraculously, you get up again and do it another day. "It be like that sometimes," as some of our young people say here.

As I'm learning now, being the Lord's servant is not a full time job. A full time job is 40 hours a week. No, serving the Lord is like a lifelong Tour of Duty in the military. You serve all day at your job/ministry/vocation (i.e. moms), and then you come home and serve some more (or, as our moms know, you never leave!) It's not like you can say to the world, "I put in 8 hours of sanctification, now it's time to rest (or backslide) for 4 hours before I go to bed." If only vice made you feel rested after a hard day of holiness....

Many of my friends have given up the Christian life because they astutely recognized it requires EVERYthing. When God is done working in and through you, there is none of the old you left!

Lest you despair after reading this, let me leave you with some hope (because I'm obviously still living to tell about "it"!) What my lapsed Christian friends have failed to realize is that once they have run out of themselves, they can ask God to fill them, and they start giving Jesus; and he is in infinite supply. Rather than a mug of overheated soup, this transformation can be compared to yesterday's stale coffee being rinsed out with fresh water. You fill it and fill it until it's replaced the old dregs and is now usable again.

Once I learned to give up the fight (or, rather, am learn-ING), I could see the glorious joy of having my own self-centered life sucked out of me. Since I've already explained everything with quirky metaphors, I'll leave you with one more: our very valuable color printer/scanner/fax/copier broke this week. We turned it off and turned it on again, and when that didn't work, we had to hang in the towel and despair for the lack of a printer. But lo and behold! We discovered we were part of the "Canon Loyalty Program" and they replaced our dead and lifeless printer with a sparkling new, up-to-date model for the mere price of the ink to fill it.

consistently overcome my flesh when I head back to university – deep into the refining fire once again.

[Chad Shellabarger is originally from Ohio and is currently attending university in Huntington, Indiana. He served as an intern with Detroit Summer Outreach (DSO) in the summer of 2010, and was on staff with DSO in the summer of 2011. Over the past couple of years he has also participated in a few week-long mission projects in the Urban Encounter program in Detroit.]

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## God's Smuggler

by Mary Schaefer

Last autumn, as part of our GAP training, we read the book *God's Smuggler*, by Brother Andrew. In this book, there was a monkey to whom the main character was very attached; it was his best friend.

The time came for him to release the monkey into the wild. Once the monkey was removed from his life he felt lonesome and disconnected, as though he lost the one thing upon which he could depend. However, this was also the moment he started to recognize his need for something more: God. Once he developed a relationship with God, he found a purpose and was able to hear God's call on his life.

What are the monkeys in our lives? The things that we look to for comfort, for acceptance, for love; the things that draw us away from God?

[Mary Schaefer is originally from the Work of Christ community in Lansing, Michigan. She was an intern in the Detroit Summer Outreach (DSO) program in the summer of 2009. This year she is living in Detroit and serving as a Kairos Standing in the Gap volunteer staff worker for YouthWorks-Detroit.]

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Sometimes we have to surrender ourselves in order to be transformed into our most glorious and beautiful selves. Yet, we find that the cost is never as much as the value. So I will say to my Lord, “Fill ‘er up till it runneth over!”

[Ellen Karagoulis is originally from the Work of Christ community in Lansing, Michigan. She is currently living in Detroit and serving as a Women's Mission Leader for YouthWorks-Detroit. She and her fiance, Erik Sellstrom from Word of Life community in Ann Arbor, plan to marry this coming May.]



Noel teaching at Cornerstone school in Detroit

## Man Up!

by Noel Bradley-Johnston

This past October, we took our youth group kids to a concert event called Man Up Detroit. It was organized by a group of Christian Gospel rappers including Lecrae, Trip Lee, Tedashii and a few others, who together are called 116 Clique, and were part of a tour that is hitting the major cities of the USA. The theme of the event was to inspire within the young men of the city a sense of what it means to be a man of God. There are a lot of not-so-good male role models in today's society, and more so in the hip hop culture, and it was a great event that showed how different being a “modern man” and being a man of GOD really is.

Although it was an inspiring event for our young people, it also really got me thinking about myself and my life. How do I live as a man of God? Do I even? It was time to face the facts! And the fact is that I'm not anywhere near perfect in any aspects of Godly manhood. In fact, in some areas I'm actually quite bad. And this has really struck me, because I hadn't thought of it like this before now. It's really opened my eyes to the work I have ahead of me, and I thank God I have a GAP year to allow me to focus my attention on these issues without any distractions.



Anna (right), with Jaci and Hannah, on their way to a summer camping trip

## Diamonds in the rough

by Anna Bode

When I was about to leave Minnesota to embark on my new journey in Detroit, I felt that God wanted me to let go of all my treasures which I was clutching so dearly – my family, close friends, my community of believers, financial stability, all the comforts and familiar things – and leave them behind. God was gently asking me to open my hands and let them go. At first I felt angry with God that he would do such a thing. But then a small hope began to grow in me – God was asking me to let go in order to place something even greater in my hands.

And he did. He has shown me new treasures – treasures that are hidden in deep and rough places, but yet still shine with a beautiful brilliance beyond what the human eye can see. I find these treasures from him when I am invited into the homes of the kids we work with here in Detroit and receive such warmth and hospitality from their parents. I see the treasures most, though, when I am handing out bagged lunches to men and women who are homeless and who smile and say, “God Bless you!” or when I am overwhelmed with the profound truth of God's mercy and goodness that I experience from the people I meet at the soup kitchen – people who have so little. Everyday, when I look past the worldly brokenness of Detroit, the Lord surprises me by lavishing me with his treasures in this city. He is so good!

[Anna Bode is originally from Minnesota. She was an intern for Detroit Summer Outreach (DSO) in the summer of 2009. She returned to Detroit in the summer of 2011 to

[Noel Bradley-Johnston is Irish (he has the passport to prove it). He grew up in Belfast, Northern Ireland. He first applied to the Kairos Standing in the Gap program at the age of 16. When he turned 18 he was accepted to the program and is now serving as a year-long Standing in the Gap volunteer staff worker in Detroit for 2011-2012.]

serve for a year as a Kairos Standing in the Gap volunteer staff worker.]

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See also > [The Greening of Detroit](#) by Dan Propson

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## The Greening of Detroit

by Dan Propson

The greening of Detroit has already happened. Where once there were houses, there are fields. Where once there were communities, there are weeds. Where once there were families, there are tall, tall trees.

Nature is winning in Detroit, repopulating a diminished city with new growth, with animals, plants, and trees — with everything that a city is not. It is often quite pleasant, but not exactly what we think about when we think about urban renewal.

Yes, there are many empty lots filled with trash, but more of them are filled with grass and wildflowers. The force of nature has become a stronger power against blight than any legislation ever could be.



And yet the empty houses remain. And the empty stretches of land, however pleasant, are considered an indication of the failure of Detroit, the hopelessness of housing values, the lack of vibrancy in this once and future city.

“Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.

“The beast of the field shall honor me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen.” –  
Isaiah 43

This is my question: Is God doing a new thing here in Detroit, something unprecedented? Are we supposed to be a new kind of city, a city built from the ashes? Are we being reduced to a wilderness, because only in the wilderness can we truly respond to His word?

These are crazy questions, I know. But it takes somebody crazy to believe in Detroit right now, and I'm just crazy enough to do it.

**[See also > Seeds of Hope for a New Generation in Detroit](#)**

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Dan Propson has been actively involved in Detroit Community Outreach since the summer of 2000 when he first joined the DSO summer program. He moved to Detroit shortly after the summer program. He married Priscilla in 2005, and is raising his four children here in the city. He is currently pursuing a PhD in Philosophy at Wayne State University in Detroit.

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## The Power of Hope

by Sam Williamson

Imagine two men who are given year long jobs in a sweat shop. Each man works the night shift in a hot and humid factory. Their bosses are overbearing and perhaps even brutal; the tasks are tedious and tiring; and the hours long and dreary.

The first man is told he will receive twenty-five thousand dollars at the end of the year. The second man is told he will receive twenty-five million dollars at the end of the year.

How will they react to the harsh conditions? The first man will hate every moment and probably give up after a month. The second man will whistle while he works.\*

What is the difference? The circumstances are identical (hot, humid, long hours with overbearing bosses) and yet the actual experiences of those circumstances are wildly different.

The essence of **hope** is simple. Our belief in future determines our experience of today. When we know – believe in our hearts – that our future is something glorious, then our experience of today’s problems can be swallowed up in joy.

What do we need most today, at this very moment? We think we need relief from a current stress (financial,

emotional, directional, or relational). But that is not our deepest need. Our deepest need is a deep belief of the heart. We need hope.

How can we endure difficulties? In Romans, Paul says,

We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us...

- Romans 5: 3-5

Notice the end result: suffering produces **hope**. And notice that hope is not wishful thinking; instead, "Hope does not disappoint us." God is producing in us a firm certainty of his future for us. In fact, he is using the very circumstances which we hate to create in us something that we'll love. He is creating **hope**. And we need this far more than we need a fix for any set of bad circumstances.

God wants us to possess strength of character – **hope** – that empowers us right in the middle of the harshest of circumstances. Like the factory worker who knows he'll receive twenty-five million at the end of the year, we'll be able to whistle while we work because of a bigger promise, a firmer certainty, and a greater future.



Let's say we want to strengthen our muscles. So we pick up some dumbbells and begin curling iron. After five minutes our biceps are screaming and our body says to us, "I'm not getting stronger, I'm getting weaker!" Our trials can feel like that, but God is using them to build strength.

I don't mean to be glib about our difficulties. Sometimes these are merely passing insensitive comments, but other times they are the loss of a loved one. My sister Becky lost her ten year old son in a car accident. She wrote,

To see my lovely, living and breathing child suddenly turned into nothing but an empty, lifeless shell seemed to me to be an unspeakable perversion. It left a huge gaping hole in my heart and life. I saw death as a monstrosity, repulsive – a thief who had the power to rob me of life and joy.

Later she wrote,

But because of what Jesus has done for us by dying for our sins and being raised from the dead, death can ultimately no longer rob us of anything. My son Robby is right now in the presence of God.

The Bible teaches us that when we die, we go immediately into the presence of Christ. “Today you will be with me in paradise,” Jesus said to the thief on the cross. St. Paul said, “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” Death can only be gain if we are alive in the presence of God. Revelations 14:13 says: “Then I heard a voice from heaven say, ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’”

The biblical attitude towards death can be summed up in one great statement. It is a blessing. Jesus Christ has changed the meaning of death for the Christian.

Death is no longer our executioner, but has become our gardener.

What is the controlling reality of our hearts? Is it pejorative comments made by insensitive people? Is it hopeless lies which come from tragedies? Or is it the deep reality of what Christ promises us?



In the *Lord of the Rings*, at the Battle of Pelennor Fields [Book 3: *The Return of the King*], the battle has been fierce and bloody, the evil Lord of the Nazgûl is dead, but casualties of dear friends also lie strewn about like refuse, the enemy's forces seem unlimited, and all hope is lost. Into this darkness rides Aragorn on a fleet of ships. Then Éomer sees Aragorn, “and wonder took him, and a great joy ... and he sang.” That is hope for us. We see the future, arriving.

One of my favorite hymns is *For All the Saints*, and my favorite verse in that hymn is this:

And when the strife is fierce, the warfare long,  
Steals on the ear the distant triumph song,  
And hearts are brave, again, and arms are strong.  
Alleluia, Alleluia!

This verse summarizes the ending of the Battle of Pelennor Fields (in far fewer words!), and it perfectly illustrates how hope and the Holy Spirit work in our hearts. When our strife is fierce and our warfare is long, the Holy Spirit opens our ears and our eyes to the distant triumph to come. That knowledge of the future – our true **hope** – pours bravery back into our hearts and strength back into our arms.

We can face the day and all that it throws at us. We already know the outcome – eternal and glorious life – and we hear the victory song.

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\*I first heard this harsh-factory metaphor in a sermon series by Tim Keller, [Living in Hope](#). I highly recommend the series.

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Sam Williamson grew up in Detroit, Michigan, USA. He is the son of a Presbyterian pastor and grandson of missionaries to China. He moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan in 1975. He worked in London England from 1979 to 1982, helping to establish [Antioch](#), a member community of the Sword of the Spirit. After about twenty-five years as an executive at a software company in Ann Arbor he sensed God call him to something new. He left the software company in 2008 and now speaks at men's retreats, churches, and campus outreaches. He is married to Carla Williamson and they have four grown children and a grandson. He has a blog site, [www.beliefs-of-the-heart.com](http://www.beliefs-of-the-heart.com), and can be reached at Sam@BeliefsOfTheHeart.com.



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## Freedom from Sin and Death

### “A New Creation”

By Jeanne Kun

“For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (Galatians 5:1)

“If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Before Christ’s incarnation, sin and death ruled over humanity’s fallen nature and no one could break their stranglehold on us. But Christ took on our human nature – becoming flesh and blood like us – “so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death” (Hebrews 2:14-15).

We were alienated from God and death and sin infected humankind through the disobedience of Adam: “sin came into the

## Romans 6:3-14

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

## Understand!

1. According to St. Paul, how are we “united with Christ in a death like his” (Romans 6:5)? What are the consequences of this?
2. Note all the expressions that Paul uses to describe the effects and fruits of being buried with Christ in baptism. What dominant theme do you find in all these expressions?

world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned” (Romans 5:12). But this infection was counteracted by the obedience and righteousness of Christ. For, “just as one man’s [Adam’s] trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man’s [Christ’s] act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all” (5:18). His act and its significance are so profound that Jesus is frequently called the “new” or “last” Adam, the beginning of a new creation and a “life-giving spirit” (1 Corinthians 15:22, 45).

By his crucifixion and resurrection Christ delivered us from the power of Satan, slavery to sin, and fear of death. When we are united with Christ’s death and resurrection through baptism, we actually experience this freedom, for we enter into communion with Christ, are buried with him, and rise to newness of life with him (Romans 6:3-4). As St. Basil the Great explains, spiritually we

imitate Christ’s death by being buried with him in baptism. If we ask what this kind of burial means and what benefit we may hope to derive from it, it means first of all making a complete break with our former way of life, and our Lord himself said that this cannot be done unless a man is born again. In other words, we have to begin a new life, and we cannot do so until our previous life has been brought to an end. When runners reach the turning point on a racecourse, they have to pause briefly before they can go back in the opposite direction. So also when we wish to reverse the direction of our lives there must be a pause, or a death, to mark the end of one life and the beginning of another.

*(On the Holy Spirit)*

“Christ has set us free” (Galatians 5:1). Now we are “a new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17). However, there is a difference between knowing these truths and seeing them applied in our lives. Concretely experiencing this freedom and newness of life depends upon our allowing the cross to do its work in us, breaking the strongholds of sin and replacing them with the fruits of the Holy Spirit. It is as we remind ourselves that “our old self was crucified with [Christ] so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin” (Romans 6:6) that the power of the cross is released in us. It is as we place our faith and trust in Jesus’ cross that our slavery to sin – our bondage to anger, jealousies, and lying, to immoral patterns and harmful addictions – is broken.

3. Why does death no longer have dominion over humankind (see Romans 6:8-9)?

4. Do you think that Paul’s statement, “There is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” (2 Corinthians 5:17), is an apt description of what is accomplished in us when we put our faith in the power of the cross? In what way do you think that Paul had personal experience of this truth?

5. Explain in your own words what Paul means when he says that we are to “no longer present [our] members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present [ourselves] to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present [our] members to God as instruments of righteousness” (Romans 6:13). What happens when we follow Paul’s exhortation?

### In the Spotlight ***Baptized into Christ's Death***



Being baptized into the death of Christ means having Christ dwell in us, now glorious and raised “through the glory of the Father.” In his power we are able to die to sin. The word sin refers not primarily to our individual acts of sin but to the whole regime of sin, that complex of human rebellion and inhumanity that finds expression in the structures of the whole mode of life that characterizes “the world.” When we die to sin, we are free of the power of that complex of social, political, cultural, economic, psychological, and spiritual forces that rule the world.

Our individual acts of sin are the ways in which we connive in and yield to these forces. We appropriate sin and make it our own. Paul tells us [in Romans 6:6-11] that we are free

To live a life filled with the power of the cross and with baptismal grace – a life in which “sin will have no dominion over [us]” (Romans 6:14) – we must let go of our past way of life and open ourselves to God’s grace and transforming power. Although our dying is spiritual and symbolic – we have not been physically nailed to the cross as Jesus was – it is not simply theoretical. In a real way, we must commit ourselves to enact and actualize the “death” of our baptism daily, allowing our sinful nature to be crucified with Christ. In other words, baptism is a crucifixion of our sinful condition, so that the “old self” no longer controls our behavior. And the fruit of baptism is “a rich reality that includes forgiveness of original sin and all personal sins, birth into the new life by which man becomes an adoptive son of the Father, a member of Christ and a temple of the Holy Spirit” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1279).

Paul’s great declaration in Romans 6:3-11 is proclaimed each year at the Easter Vigil, following the seven Old Testament readings that recount our salvation history. The third reading in particular – Exodus 14:15–15:1, which describes Israel’s deliverance from the oppression of the Egyptian Pharaoh through God’s miraculous parting of the Red Sea – foreshadows our deliverance from sin and death and the transformation effected in us by baptism. It is also, fittingly, at the Easter Vigil that the waters of the baptismal font are blessed, catechumens are baptized – dying and rising with Christ – and received into the Church, and the faithful renew their baptismal vows, rejecting Satan and all his works and empty promises as well as sin and the glamour of evil and resolving to live with Christ.

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## Reflect!

1. In his *Homily on Romans*, St. John Chrysostom notes: “So as to stay dead to sin after Baptism, personal effort is called for, although God’s grace continues to be with us, providing us with great help.”

Reflect on the effects of the Sacrament of Baptism in your own life, and ask God for his grace and help in making the personal effort “to stay dead to sin” that John Chrysostom urges.

2. Read and meditate on the following passages to increase your awareness and appreciation of how God has set you free from slavery to sin through the sacrifice of Christ:

from this power if we consent to the new power at work in us. Jesus Christ, by his love and obedience in death, died to the forces that make up sin in the world. Because he lives in us, we, too, have been transferred to a new realm of existence. We can experience this, not as a theory but as an actual fact, if we call upon that power when we are faced with those memories and habits of sin that keep us slaves to sin.

—Francis Martin, *The Fire in the Cloud: Lenten Meditations*

## Grow!

1. Choose several adjectives that you feel characterize you as a “new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17) in Christ. What word best explains what has been accomplished in your life through the Sacrament of Baptism?

2. In what areas of your life do you most need or want to experience God’s power setting you free? How might God help you (perhaps through prayer, confession, spiritual direction, a trusted friend, professional help, etc.) to break a sinful pattern or overcome an habitual failing?

3. In what concrete ways have you already “died with Christ to sin” and broken with your old life? In what ways has Jesus set you free? How can you best nurture this new life in you?

4. How often do you turn to the cross to be set free from habits and attitudes that, although not sinful in themselves, keep you from experiencing new life in Christ? What are some things that particularly plague you (maybe excessive anxiety, fear, pessimism, negativity)? When you are beset with such attitudes, how could turning to a crucifix help you?

5. Why is it significant that the church celebrates a renewal of baptismal vows with the congregation each year during the Easter liturgy? How can this renewal help us to deepen our relationship with Christ?

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned – sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come.

But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. And the free gift is not like the effect of the one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. If, because of the one man's trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. But law came in, with the result that the trespass multiplied; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, just as sin exercised dominion in death, so grace might also exercise dominion through justification leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 5:12-21)

[T]he message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (1 Corinthians 1:18)

[When] you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses, erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross. (Colossians 2:13-14)

Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. (Hebrews 2:14-15)

## Act!

Set aside an hour or two of time to rest in a quiet place where you will not be interrupted by others. Clear your mind of distractions, and in the silence and stillness recall as many of the ways that Jesus has freed you from sin and healed you as you can.

Make a mental or written list of the victories Christ has won for you and how he has transformed you. Then, in response, pray in your own words a "litany of thanksgiving."

### In the Spotlight *Baptism Is a Symbol of Christ's Passion*



You were led down to the font of holy baptism just as Christ was taken down from the cross and placed in the tomb which is before your eyes. Each of you was asked, "Do you believe in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit?" You made the profession of faith that brings salvation, you were plunged into the water, and three times you rose again. This symbolized the three days Christ spent in the tomb.

As our Savior spent three days and three nights in the depths of the earth, so your first rising from the water represented the first day and your first immersion represented the first night. At night a man cannot see, but in the day he walks in the light. So when you were immersed in the water it was like night for you and you could not see, but when you rose it was like coming into broad daylight. In the same instant you died and were born again; the saving water was both your tomb and your

## In the Spotlight

### ***Witnessing to the Power of the Cross***

In this imperfect world, we often find that theory and reality don't always see eye-to-eye. For instance, we can know in a theoretical way that our old life of sin was crucified with Christ and that through faith in the cross we can be set free from the power of sin. But when it comes to the reality of our daily lives, we can find ourselves subject to the same kinds of sins over and over again. Here is the story of a man who made the connection between theory and reality – and experienced the power that flows from Jesus' cross.

For twenty-five years, Jim had been a chain smoker. For most of that time, he tried countless strategies to kick his habit. He tried self-discipline. He made bets with his friends. He wore a nicotine patch. He even went to a retreat to help him quit. Eventually, after years of failed attempts, Jim resigned himself to being in the grip of this ugly habit.

A couple of years ago, however, a routine X-ray revealed a spot on one of Jim's lungs, and he grew worried. He didn't want to go back to the old failed attempts, but he knew he had to do something. That's when his wife, Janet, told their parish priest about Jim's X-ray. The priest told Janet that Jim didn't have to feel hopeless. He told her about Jesus' cross and about the freedom that Jim could experience if he turned to the Lord. He even gave her a simple prayer that she and Jim could pray: "Lord Jesus, we believe that you died to set us free. We ask you, by the power of your cross, to free Jim from his addiction. Jesus, we trust in you and in your love for us."

Jim and Janet prayed this simple prayer every morning and night. Jim also prayed it every couple of hours at work – especially when the urge to smoke was strong. As he got closer to the Lord through this prayer, Jim felt his desire to smoke gradually diminishing—to the point where it has been fifteen months since his last cigarette.

Jim's story has a message for anyone who struggles with addiction, whether to cigarettes, alcohol, food, or even sex. Whatever the bondage, simple prayers like the one Jim prayed can be very powerful weapons to help break the grip of addiction. God doesn't want to see his children in bondage. He is waiting for us to turn to him, to trust in the power of his cross, and to ask for the grace to be set free.

–*The Word Among Us*, Lent 2007

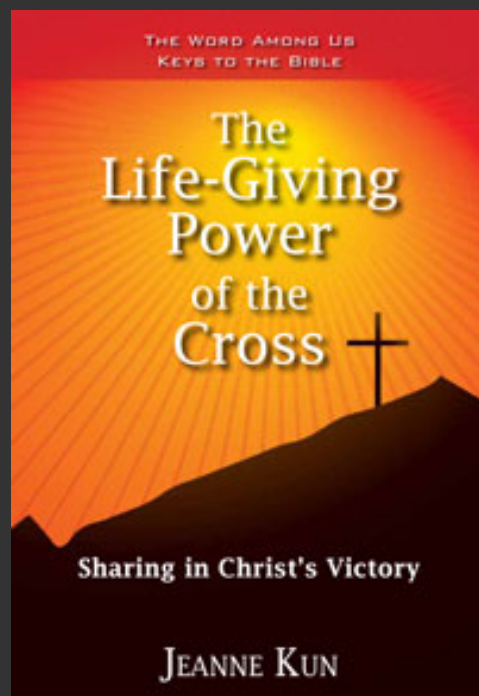
Excerpted from [\*The Life-Giving Power of the Cross: Sharing in Christ's Victory\*](#), by Jeanne Kun ([The Word Among Us Press](#), © 2011).

Used with permission. This book can be ordered [online](#).

mother. . . .

It was not we who actually died, were buried and rose again. We only did these things symbolically, but we have been saved in actual fact. It is Christ who was crucified, who was buried and who rose again, and all this has been attributed to us. We share in his sufferings symbolically and gain salvation in reality. What boundless love for men! Christ' undefiled hands were pierced by the nails; he suffered the pain. I experience no pain, no anguish, yet by the share that I have in his sufferings he freely grants me salvation.

– *Jerusalem Catecheses*



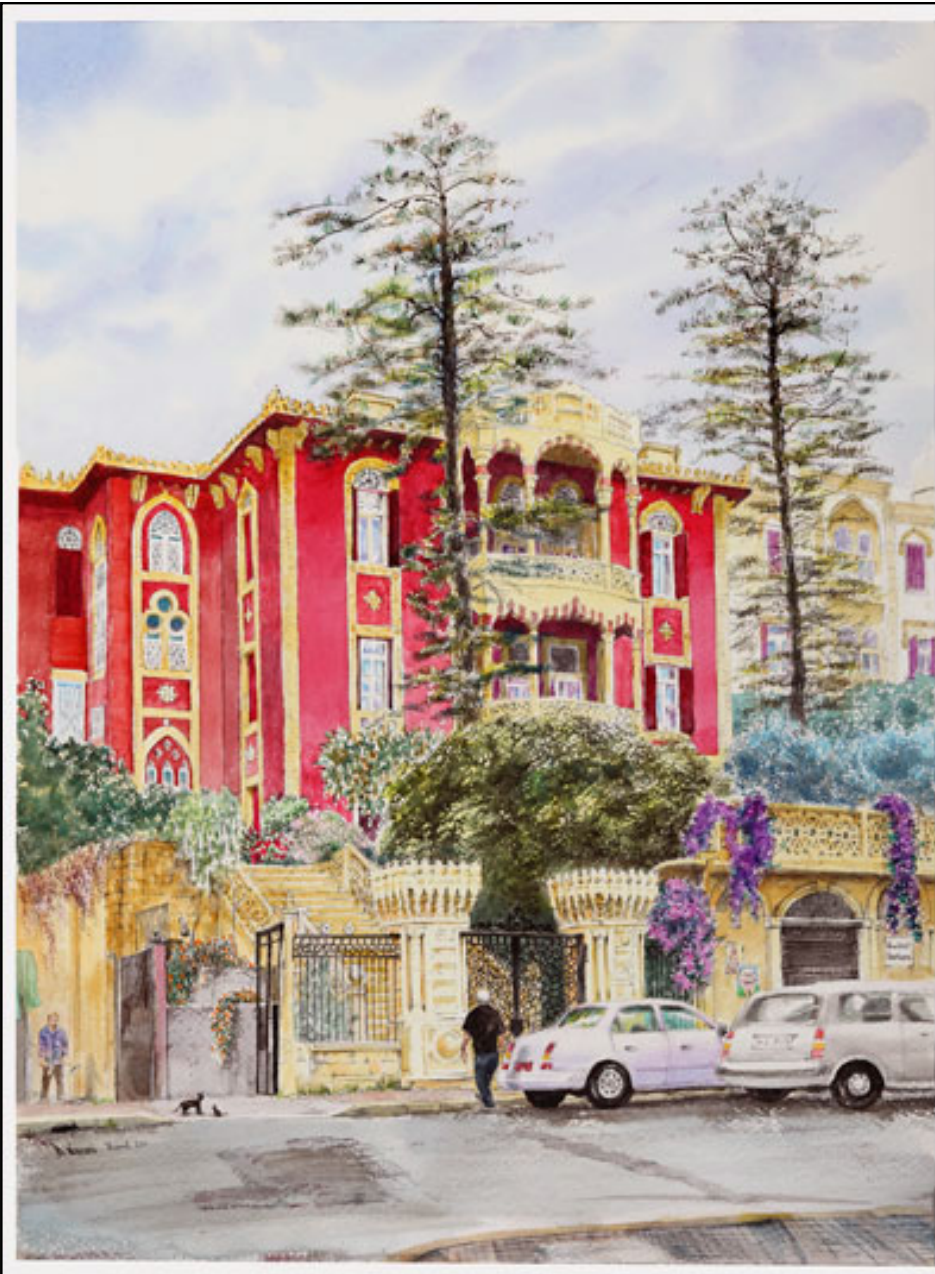


Rainy day in Beirut, Lebanon, watercolor, 47x62 cms, by David Kurani

## Street Scenes in Beirut

Springtime in Lebanon art work series - Part 3  
by David Kurani

David is a noted Lebanese landscape artist. He teaches classes in art and theater at the American University of Beirut, Lebanon. David has exhibited widely in art galleries and private collections throughout Lebanon, Europe, and the USA. He recently completed a 6-month sabbatical dedicated to painting the Lebanese landscape. He and his wife Gisele and their three sons are active members of the People of God in Lebanon, a member community of the Sword of the Spirit.



Street in Beirut, Lebanon, watercolor, 62x47 cms, by David Kurani

From the artist: I have always enjoyed paintings scenes of houses in Lebanon. I usually did them as part of a larger landscape. I love to depict not only the beauty of the natural landscape, but the beauty of lovely homes made with care and craftsmanship. For me, depicting a house within its wider setting symbolizes man as a co-creator within God's work of creation.

Having lived through 15 years of civil war in Lebanon (1975-1990), I find that the verse from Isaiah 32:18, "In safe houses shall my people dwell" has a much deeper meaning and significance. During the war my yearning was for physical safety; nowadays financial security is the bigger issue. But my experience of living through the war taught me that there is no such thing as a "securely built house" that can withstand bombs falling from the sky. The only really "safe house" is our "dwelling place" with the Lord Jesus himself.



Street in Beirut, Lebanon, watercolor, 62x47 cms, by David Kurani

Also see [Springtime in Lebanon > Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#) art work by David Kurani

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## On Examining a Lump of Earth

poem by Sean O'Neill

Taking this clod of rosy clay in my hand  
I see rivers crawling with trilobite  
Gripping the water's bed.  
And, blackening off near the end,  
Their tails whipped the rock  
And chased up leagues of atomic silt  
That hung, waiting for its time,  
Stirring with cloudy intelligence

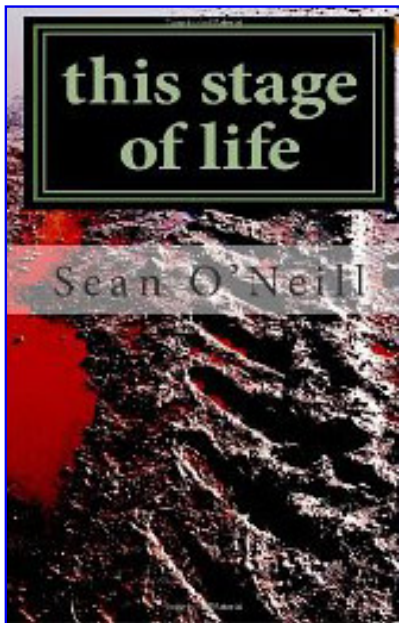
Pinching these pointed pebbles of fragmentary cliffs  
I see a mind calculating monsters  
From our small edgewise dreams.  
And even in their long element  
The torn and ragged roots  
Of our poor imaginations  
Falter like wingless particles

## Caught in the rude gusts of God

Plucking the small suspended tendril  
I trace its ancestry of earth-breakers  
With a single sweep of the stem.  
From every cell broken by the brute ground  
This natural air goes up,  
Riding the whispering words of God,  
To other fields  
Where life despoils its seed.

Prising out the tuft of this quivering fur  
I save the memory of blood  
That tangles in the throat of this dust;  
The sap of calves  
Who trod down mountains  
And raised this bursting fallow mould  
For next season's joys  
And the land's eternal rest.

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



This collection of Sean O'Neill's poems is his first. The poems cover periods when the poet lived or worked in London, England; Milan, Italy; Drummore, a small fishing village on the West Coast of Scotland; and St. Paul, USA. The subject matter of the poems therefore varies from the grittily descriptive 'Bridges' and 'Sweet Thames', which are set in London, to the pastoral 'The Hill' and 'in this atlas of headland' set in the South Rhins peninsula. The poems cover several years and a multitude of situations and yet a consistent voice emerges finding meaning in apparently insignificant details, and clothing mundane events in a tapestry of rich wordplay. Several poetic sequences are contained in this collection including the four-part 'this stage of life' a wry commentary on modern life and 'Winter 2011' which centers on the view from a window during the harsh weather conditions of that year. Some of the poems are satirical; others celebrate the joy of simple things. Some are dark while others are full of hope. Whatever the reader's disposition he or she will find something valuable in this volume that echoes the mood of the moment or the season of life. Book available at [Amazon](#).

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