

# MIGHTY ARROWS MAGAZINE

LIFE. GOD. TRUTH. FOR COPTIC YOUTH.

## SPIRITUAL WARFARE 101

## *your words* ON THE AIR

## *WHAT DOES JESUS SAY TO A GOOD MAN*

## The Christian World View

## COPTS AROUND THE WORLD

VOLUME 9 NO. 1 SEPTEMBER 2008

MIGHTY ARROWS MAGAZINE

A PUBLICATION OF THE COPTIC ORTHODOX DIOCESE OF THE SOUTHERN UNITED STATES

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**Mission Statement**

We, the magazine staff, have a mission regarding you, the reader: to encourage you on your Christian walk and to strengthen you through articles, answers and more about God's very special plan for you.

**Material Submission**

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# *My Beloved Youth,*

I would like to wish you all a happy New Coptic Year, praying that you grow every day in this year in the knowledge and love of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Coptic Year is called the year of the Martyrs to commemorate their limitless love for the Lord Jesus Christ to the extent that they shed their blood for His name's sake.

The word "martyr" is a Greek word means "witness" and it is known that the highest form of witnessing for faith is shedding the blood for it. The martyrs fulfilled the commandment of the Lord "you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1: 8).

We can witness to the Lord through many ways. We can witness by sharing His word with others "and this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations" (Matthew 24: 14). Evangelism is the responsibility of every believer. God gave us His word not to keep it to ourselves but to share it with others.

We can be witnesses by our deeds and behavior "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5: 16). St. Paul considers the believer himself to be the Epistle of Christ "You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart" (2Cor 3: 2, 3).

Life of love and fellowship is another form of witnessing. The fellowship life of the early church attracted many people to believe in Christ and join the assembly of the believers "now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2: 44 – 47).

Praising the Lord and worshipping Him in truth and spirit have a strong power to search people's heart and bring them to Christ "but if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all, he is convicted by all. And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you" (1Cor 14: 24, 25).

The Lord Jesus Christ came not to be served but to serve and through His service, He caught many souls to the Kingdom of Heaven. Serving one another with our gifts and talents bears witnesses to the Holy Spirit who is working in us and will draw many people to believe in Christ "as each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ" (1Peter 4: 10, 11).

The cross and suffering are essential elements in Christianity and discipleship that nobody can become a disciple of the Lord without the willingness to carry his cross and follow Christ. Suffering for the name of Christ and enduring pain for His sake is a testimony and witness to the Lord as He said to his disciples, "they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons. You will be brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony" (Luke 21: 12, 13).

Throughout our life and during everyday there are many occasions for testimony. I pray that the Holy Spirit may kindle our hearts by His divine fire and zeal so that we may bear witness to Him in every occasion and in all occasions.



Bishop Youssef
Bishop, Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

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# Editors note

To our readers around the globe,

As we begin a new year of publishing, many great changes have occurred in our magazine. Allow me to give you the grand tour. As we begin, you'll notice that the cover shows a featured article you'll be reading. We have various articles throughout the magazine to entice your interest and answer some of your questions.
We have a great line up: Christian Thinking and World View, What Does Jesus Say To ...?, How To Overcome ..., Spiritual Warfare 101, and H.G. Bishop Youssef's: Spirituality of Rituals.

There are also sections of the magazine that are not related to these articles. Like this one, **Inbox**. This is where all your suggestions and opinions appear. We want to hear from you. Did you read any books lately that captured your attention, changed your life, or that you want to have everyone read? Is there a saint that you really connect with or ask for his or her intercessions? Tell us why. Is there a prayer you wrote or a Bible passage or a Psalm you love to pray? Do you want to share with us the events going on in your local church or with your friends and family? Did you read anything in our magazine that you want to comment on? Do you have any suggestions for our staff? We want to hear it all! So here's how you do it, email mightyarrowsmagazine@suscopts.org. In the subject line give us a hint of what it's about, like "Question for the ladies" or "Prayer I wrote" or "Burning questions." You get the idea.

After the **Inbox**, you'll see **News and Happenings**; this is where we'll post all your pictures and the amazing activities going on in our churches and around our Diocese. A few pages after that you'll see our **Q&A FAITH** section. Ask anything about bible study, church tradition, confusing passages, or our faith and you'll get your answer in the next issue. Next, you'll see what was a suggestion become a reality, a question and answer section, one for guys and one for gals. The questions submitted are answered by "**Mary**" and "**Mike**." This is your chance, guys and gals, to ask about personal issues, friendships, relationships, anything that you want to ask a godly mentor. Gals, do you have any burning questions to ask our "Dear Mary?" Guys, are there questions on your mind that only a guy can answer? Look for their section halfway through the magazine.




If you write to us about a saint that really touched your heart, you'll come across your comments in our **Voice of the Saints** page. There, you'll see how we can relate and learn from the pillars of faith in our church, as it is our hope to one day stand in heaven next to them. Continuing with our tour, if you sent us a prayer you wrote during a time of meditation and quiet time, you'll see it published in the "**Prayer Warrior**" pages. For this issue, Prayer Warrior will be a how to. These are some of our spiritual diet articles, so to speak.




If you've read a book that you want to tell us about, here's your chance. "**Book Expo**" is the section where we'll share with you books in our library and for you to share books from your library. Tell us why this book meant a lot to you and we'll post your recommendation to let everyone know about it. Last but not least on your tour, is the "**90 Day Challenge**." Our magazine staff challenges you to the next step in your spiritual life. Find out more on the two-page spread in the middle of the magazine. This year the theme is "YOUR WORDS *ON THE AIR"* where we will focus on the power of the tongue. As we end our tour, we the staff, ask each and every one of you to remember this magazine in your prayers.

I also like to remind you to check out our website as often as you can: www.suscopts.org/mightyarrows. You can contact us directly from there.

We love to hear what you think, so without further adieu, happy reading…



# GIVE JOY TO THE FACE OF THE EARTH

## CHRISTIAN THINKING AND THE ENVIRONMENT

BY MIMI IGNATIUS

This is a direct call to all humanity. Are you there? Our environment is rapidly deteriorating. Do you care about our natural resources? What is happening with the sea, the air, the landscape, the creatures, and the people? Who is to blame? Is it a foreign government or maybe a terrorist plot? No, the real perpetrators are carelessness and indifference. In fact, we are the cause. Can we be part of the solution? This is not about an earthly materialistic life. This is about being responsible for an incredible gift that has been taken for granted. Life is a precious gift from God. What have we done with the Earth that God provided to help shelter and sustain our lives until His awaited return?

The effect of neglect is painful and unacceptable. The abuse is evident. The environment is ripped and bruised with scars and wounds brought about by a series of over-indulgent generations. Global warming is consuming the earth. Climate change has impacted all life forms, especially animal life, by destroying their natural habitats. Big money and self-interest tolerate disposal of waste upon vulnerable lands and seas, the home of the innocent. Unnecessary destruction of forests results in the loss of homes of humans and wildlife alike in order to erect commercial dwellings. Acid rain, from over-industrialization of cities and communities, is polluting waters, decaying historic structures, and impairing vegetation. From every outlook, the earth is deteriorating before our eyes.

How do we correct our past blunders? A scope of possibilities exists. Nature's grandeur may never return to its original magnificence, but the devastation can be decelerated. If we really want to repair the damage, we must first begin to think differently about our environment and use Christian ethics to make sensible decisions. We need to be accountable for our actions and we need to become more engaged in discourse about the environment. Our consciences can no longer allow ourselves to participate in recklessness. It is time for our cavalier shrugs and "whatever" mind-set to be replaced with principled thinking. Conserve energy, use energy efficient products, preserve wildlife habitats, and recycle. Cliché as it may sound, actions speak louder than words. We need to change our lifestyle, set our priorities, be resourceful and not wasteful, and teach others. You can make a difference in your home, your community, and your world.

Making a change for the better is part of a Christian's daily spiritual life. If we take the time and look closely, we will see God in everything. In the heights and in the depths, He is there (Psalm 139). The more we strive to rid our environment of litter and pollution, the more we will be able to appreciate God's mercy by seeing it in His creations. In every layer of creation, is the Creator Himself. Who can see a piece of art and avoid looking at the signature of the artist. The earth's breathtaking beauty of glaciers and waterfalls, roses and sycamore trees, polar bear cubs and soaring eagles, oceans and forests all testify to the Almighty God, their Creator. Consider the earth an entrusted endow-



ment for us to wisely use and share and not an object for us to foolishly threaten and abuse. Even at the peak of nature's rage, God's imprint is in it all; recall how the frightened disciples' distress was eased when they recognized Christ the Lord calming the storms as He gently treaded upon the rough seas.

Respect me, says the earth, for I am His footstool (Isaiah 66:1; Matthew 5:35; Acts 7:49). Remember when He lived among us, as one of us, He walked on this terrain and ate from these seas. The lowly barn animals warmed the Holy Infant's cradle in the awkward manger beneath the beaming star. The river waters engulfed Him in baptism, and the Holy Spirit descended from heaven upon Him. Sturdy mountains heard His sermons and the highest hill saw His glorious transfiguration. When the time came near, on bent knees, He prayed in a garden. His parables resembled the language of the earth in what it has to offer, differences in soil, a vine dresser, a vineyard, and an unforgotten sparrow. The hidden sun rays and the explosion of clouds marked their shame at His crucifixion. He put in plain words the real meaning of the fruit of the Spirit so that Christians would learn to live productive lives resembled by the sweetest fruit, rich in virtue, unlike the fraudulent fig tree. With the finest wheat and the fruit of the vine, He instituted the great Mystery for the remission of sins for all generations to partake (Divine Liturgy). He accepted the earthly to give us the heavenly, and throughout it all, He taught us to have respect for all life.

The heavens were first, then the earth, and then you and me. This was the order of creation. Each creation takes delight in praising God in a very special way. Psalm 148 highlights the desire and delight in praising the Lord. Praise is accepted from two realms of life: One source of praise comes "from the heavens … in the heights … all His angels … all His hosts … sun and moon … stars of light … heavens of heavens … and waters above the heavens" are all commanded to praise Him. The other source of praise comes "from the earth, You great sea creatures and all the depths; Fire and hail, snow and clouds; Stormy wind, fulfilling His word; Mountains and all hills; Fruitful trees and all cedars; Beasts and all cattle; Creeping things and flying fowl; Kings of the earth and all peoples; Princes and all judges of the earth; Both young men and maidens; Old men and children." In addition to the decree of praise, each cluster was given responsibilities towards humanity. His angels and hosts pray for us, the sun, moon, and stars give us days and seasons, the earth gives us food, shelter, and medicine. All in all, we are surrounded by nature's splendor. With His beautiful signature throughout all His creation, how then can we find it acceptable to share in the destruction of the earth which God so kindly and lovingly gave to us? Therefore, let us be mindful of our actions, steadfast in our petitions, and prayerful in every Divine Liturgy: "Give Joy to the Face of the Earth."

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http://www.epa.gov/





At the top of the mountain at the cave of St. Antony

# Egypt Trip 2008

May 2008 marked the 7th year the Southern Diocese planned a Diocese trip to Egypt. For anyone looking at the trip schedule, it is not for the faint at heart, but every year participants leave Egypt with a blessing they could never replace. Day in and day out, churches and monasteries are visited, at one point they all start to look the same, however looking back at the pictures taken and the memories made it is definitely a life changing event. For those who are looking for a different Egypt experience, one that is far from relatives and family dining aka "azoomas", this is the trip for you. Most families go to Egypt once a year to visit relatives they haven't seen in a while, as well as relatives they didn't know they were related to. The Southern Diocese trip offers a different taste of Egypt. The trip lasts approximately 10 to 14 days, and although it sounds short, the days are condensed with monasteries, churches, and sites that most couldn't imagine seeing in a 3 year visit.



At the tomb of Fr. Bishoy Kamel in the church of St. George in Sporting, Alexandria

The trip has evolved from being family oriented to being more youth-focused. The idea of serving Christ in Egypt was introduced in the 3rd year of its conception and with this past trip has reached new levels. The service element of the trip lasted approximately 7 days. As a group, we brought clothes, school supplies, gifts, health and beauty supplies for those in need. We visited many homes in rural parts of Egypt, we purchased food and passed it out to those in need as well as visited orphanages, schools for the mentally disabled, and nursing homes. The servants of St. Mark's Church in Heliopolis and St. Athansius's Church in Madinet Nasr in Cairo guided our service schedule and came along on many of these trips. An added bonus was serving the area of St. Barbara's Church in Old Cairo and the Service Diocese of H.G. Bishop Botros in the area known as Patmos. There we also passed out food and supplies to day care centers, schools, nursing homes and to local families in the area who needed a word of encouragement and love as well as a memory and blessing from their Coptic brothers and sisters in America. Overall, the service portion of our trip was extremely successful and we pray that we can continue to pass on this blessing and opportunity to more Coptic youth in our Diocese as well as the rest of America.



Visiting one of the classrooms at the Coptic School in



After praying a Liturgy in a church in Patmos, in the center is Sister Demiana, formerly kno
Ms. Fausta - Former Principal of St. Clement Coptic School in Nashville, TN.

As for the tour portion, words would not do it justice. To fully understand a Southern Diocese Egypt Trip, one must experience. This year we changed the itinerary to make the trip less hectic and also to give more time to the Service aspect. In years passed we took great pride in our "Upper Egypt" portion of the trip. To tour Upper Egypt, takes a skilled bus driver and lots of faith. Not many churches and monasteries in Upper Egypt have a clear defined route or road and a driver



At Abou Makar (St. Makarious) Monastery in Wadi El-Natroun



At St. Paul's Monastery at the Red Se



up picture on the steps of St. George's church in Sporting, Alexandria

must have been to many of these places before in order to get there, in a timely fashion, before sundown. To do a tour of many historic Christian Upper Egypt sites, it would be very hard to go about it on your own. This trip has served many people in the Southern Diocese the opportunity to see these Holy and historic sites. Among many of the sites visited was Muharraq Monastery (the altar in the midst of Egypt), St. Mary's Monastery in Drunka, Abouna AbdelMessieh's Church, Anba Sarabamon Abou Tarha, Church of Anba Makarious, Church of the Martyrs and many others. Upper Egypt sites were complemented with the famous sites in Cairo as well St. Mina's monastery and the monasteries of Wadi El Natroun. Many sites visited were places the Holy Family stayed in during Their exile to Egypt. This year however, we took a different route: St. Mary's Church in Zeitoun, St. George's Convent, Abu Sefein's Convent, St. Barbara Old Cairo, St. George Old Cairo, Abu Sefein and Anba Barsoum the Naked in Old Cairo, St. Mary's Church Asrayit el Rahan, St. Mary's Muallaqa Church, St. Mary Damshireya, Mukatam Mountain, All 4 Wadi El Natroun Monasteries (Soryan, Anba Bishoy, Baramous, and Abu Makar), St. Mina's Monastery in Maryot, St. Mary's Church in Maadi, St. Antony and St. Paul Monasteries on the Red Sea, Climbing the Mountain to the cave of St. Antony, St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai, St. George Sporting Alexandria, and St. Mark's Cathedral in Alexandria. Other events attended this year included welcoming of the Pope to Egypt from his trip back from America, meeting the Syrian Patriarch Mar Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, youth meeting with H.G. Bishop Makarios, and servants meeting given by Fr. Daoud Lamaee at St. Mark's Church in Heliopolis. Many other experiences took place, which if all were written, could fill an entire book, but as this is just a glimpse into our journey the rest is up to each individual to taste and see for themselves the many blessings that Christian Egypt has to offer.



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Visiting an all-boy orphanage in Cairo



Group picture with Abouna Raphael Avva Mina at the monastery of St. Mina in Maryot



At St. Antony's Monastery also by the Red Sea



Visiting a day care at St. Barbara's church in Old Cairo



Group picture with Mar Ignatius Zakka I Iwas



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News and happenings at your local church? Tell us!

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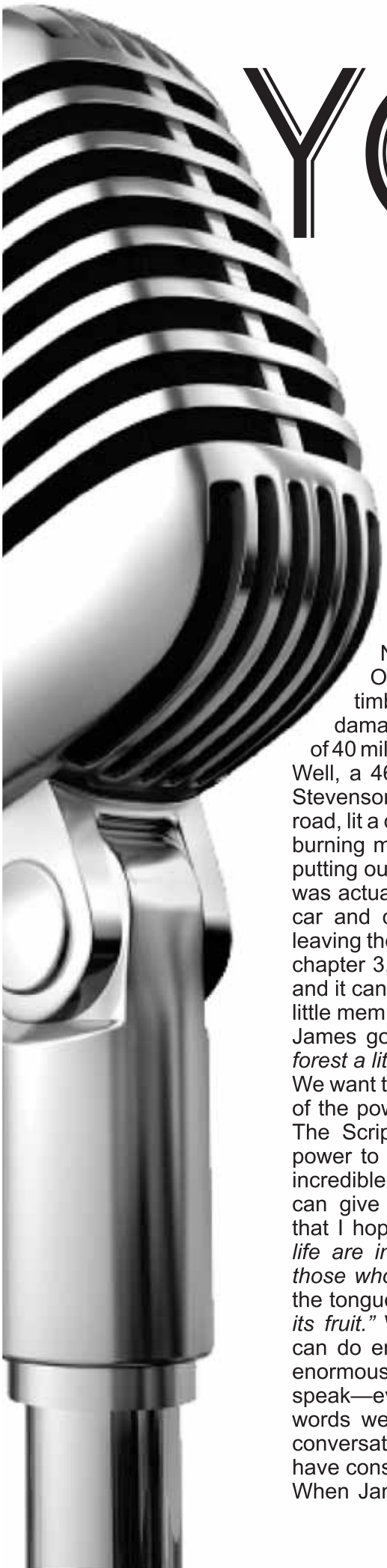
# Dear Mary

What can I do about my best friend... She was raised in the church but lately has been straying away further than ever before... I'm only friends with her now hoping to help her but even that is a struggle. We started college last fall and just in the past six months, she has changed tremendously. Without getting into detail, she has lost her purity, her sensitivity, and her desire for God all together. Her lifestyle has completely changed. How can I help her? Also, I'm a bit concerned about my reputation being around her too. Should it bother me that people are thinking I'm doing the same things, just because we're friends?
- A friend

Dear Friend,

It is always sad when our dear friends choose a different path; especially when it is one away from God. The best thing you can do is be there for her and pray that she finds the light in her dark path and in turn see the way back. Often enough one does not realize how important it is for our friends to know that we have not abandoned them, that we are here for them especially when they need it. It would also be appropriate to lovingly bring your concerns to her without judgment being as honest as possible about what is truly bothering you. If she listens to you, you have won your friend over. Apart from this, continue to live your life in pursuit of righteousness and keep the door to friendship open by only doing things together that are fitting lest you also fall. Remember that you are susceptible to straying as well and look upon your friend with humble eyes realizing that sin has cast down many wounded, and all who were slain by her were strong men. (Proverbs 7:26) Regarding your reputation, it may be helpful to remember that Jesus ate with the sinners. Consider Matthew 9:10-13 Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners? When Jesus heard that, He said to them, Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice. For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance. May God bless you and grant you strength to fulfill the law of love with your friend.

-Mary



By Nancy D.

# YOUR WORDS ON THE AIR

You may remember reading a news report a few years ago about a wild fire in the Black Hills National Forest of South Dakota. Over 80,000 acres of valuable timber were destroyed, and the damage was estimated to be in excess of 40 million dollars. How did that fire start? Well, a 46-year-old woman named Janice Stevenson admitted that she stopped by a road, lit a cigarette, and then tossed the still-burning match on the ground. Rather than putting out the fire—she saw that the brush was actually on fire—she got back into her car and continued on to her destination, leaving the fire to rage out of control. James chapter 3, tells us that the tongue is a fire, and it can be a wild fire. It is caused by that little member of our body called the tongue. James goes on to say, *"See how great a forest a little fire kindles"* (verse 5).

We want to focus just on this general matter of the power and the impact of our words. The Scripture says that our words have power to kill and to give life. That's pretty incredible power. Conversely, those words can give life. Proverbs 18:21 is a verse that I hope you will memorize *"Death and life are in the power of the tongue. And those who love it,"* that is, those who love the tongue, those who love to talk, *"will eat its fruit."* What is that saying? Our words can do enormous good, and they can do enormous damage or evil. The words we speak—even the thoughtless and careless words we just throw off when we're in a conversation not thinking—those words have consequences.

When Janice Stevenson threw that match carelessly into the dry brush of that national forest, she had to live with the consequences. When she threw that match out, she wasn't thinking about the fact that her careless decision had consequences. We so often don't think about the fact that the words that we just throw out have consequences. When we throw out words that are not life giving, words that are destructive, we're going to live with the harvest and the consequences that result. They can be like a spring to a weary traveler in the desert, to someone who is thirsty. Our words have power to wound or to heal. Proverbs 12:18, *"There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword"*—sharp, cutting, reckless, piercing, hurtful words. Some of us just fling that sword around without any thought to who may be at the other end of it or the damage that it may be bringing to those who are at the receiving end. *"But,"* he says, *"the tongue of the wise promotes health."* They can lift our spirits. Words of kindness, truth, blessing can be healing.

Proverbs 10:14: *"Wise men store up knowledge, but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction."* You see, wise people are restrained in what they say. They don't just blurt out everything that comes to mind. But



**Death and life are in the power of the tongue. And those who love it will eat its fruit**

foolish people just spout off. Scripture says the mouth of the foolish is near destruction. Eventually fools come to ruin themselves because of wrong things that they have spoken. Unfortunately, that often isn't until after they've ruined a lot of other people in the process. Now, when we read verses like those, it's easy to think of someone else. But as I've been pondering these verses, meditating on them, asking God to show me my need, God keeps pointing the finger back at my own heart and saying, "Many times you are this foolish person."

Our words are no small thing. Well, in a sense they're small, but in another sense the impact that they have is enormous. Our critical spirits, our gossiping mouths, our complaining, murmuring, angry words, our petty words, our careless words are like that match that Janice Stevenson threw out into the national forest. It happens in our homes, our schools, our workplaces, and (unfortunately) our churches if we don't guard our tongues when we speak angry words, sarcastic words, cutting words, belittling words, slanderous, gossiping words.



**Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.**

The problem is that out of the same mouth often come the kinds of words that heal and the kinds of words that destroy and wound. One of the themes that come through many times in the book of Proverbs is the connection of our words to our heart. The connection is made over and over again. The contrast, for example, in chapter 10, verse 20: *"The tongue of the righteous is choice silver, but the heart of the wicked is worth little."* You're seeing a connection to the tongue and to the heart. The tongue is connected to the heart. Proverbs 15:7: *"The lips of the wise disperse [or spread] knowledge, but the heart of the foolish"*—why doesn't it say "the mouth of the foolish"?—*"does not do so."* The contrast is between the lips of the wise and the heart of the foolish. Why? Because there's a connection between what we say and what's in our hearts.

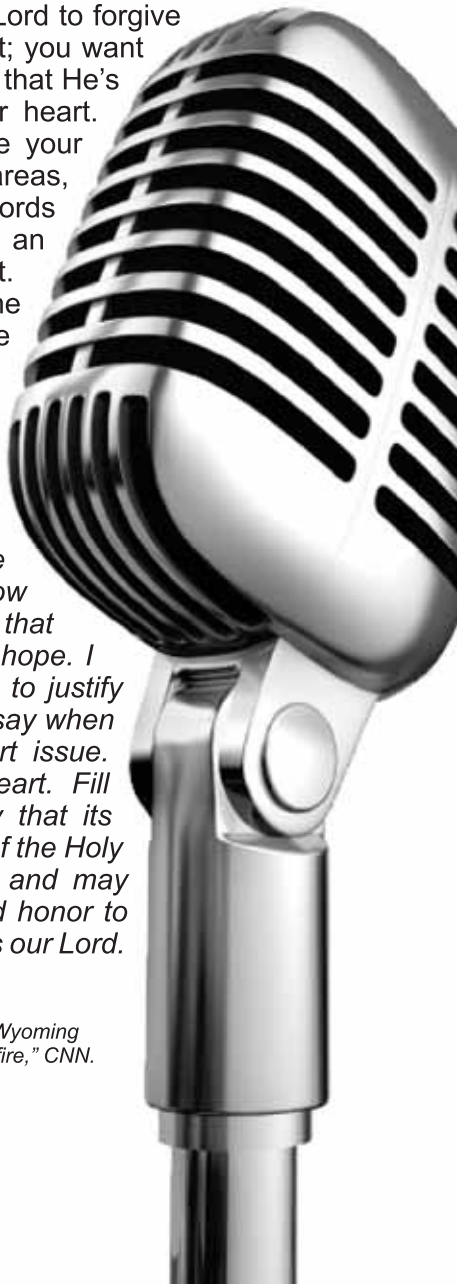
Jesus said, *"Out of the abundance [or overflow] of the heart, the mouth speaks."* So if I have a critical heart, what kinds of words are going to come out? Critical words. If I have a mean-spirited heart, what kinds of words are going to come out of my mouth? Mean words, unkind words. A heart that is selfish is going to talk about what? Self. Conversely, if we have a pure heart, a righteous heart, the overflow is going to be words that are pure and righteous. If I have a humble heart, I'm not going to be saying arrogant things; I'm going to be saying humble things. I'll have the attitude of John the Baptist who said of Jesus, *"He must increase and I must decrease."* Where do those words come from? A humble heart.

So let me ask you this: What do your words reveal about your heart? But as you go back into your home, as you go back into your school and/or workplace, as you get back on the telephone, as we carry on conversation, ask, "What do my words reveal about the condition of my heart?" Let God search your heart now. If you want your words to change, it's not enough to focus on changing your speech. What we really need is a heart change. Some of us need major heart surgery; to say honestly before the Lord and maybe before your father of confession who would help hold you accountable, "I realize that the words that I speak show that I've got some issues in my heart that are very serious. I'm seeing that those quick, thoughtless, careless, unrestrained, gossiping words reveal a condition of my heart that needs to be repented of."

How many of you would be honest enough to acknowledge that even over these last few moments as you have been reading, the Spirit of God has pointed at your heart, and you have seen that there is an issue, maybe more than one issue, in your heart that needs to be repented of, and that your words are just a reflection, an expression, of what's deep in your heart?

You just want to ask the Lord to forgive you, to change your heart; you want to repent of whatever it is that He's shown you that's in your heart. You want God to change your heart in those specific areas, knowing that then the words that come out will be an expression of a pure heart.

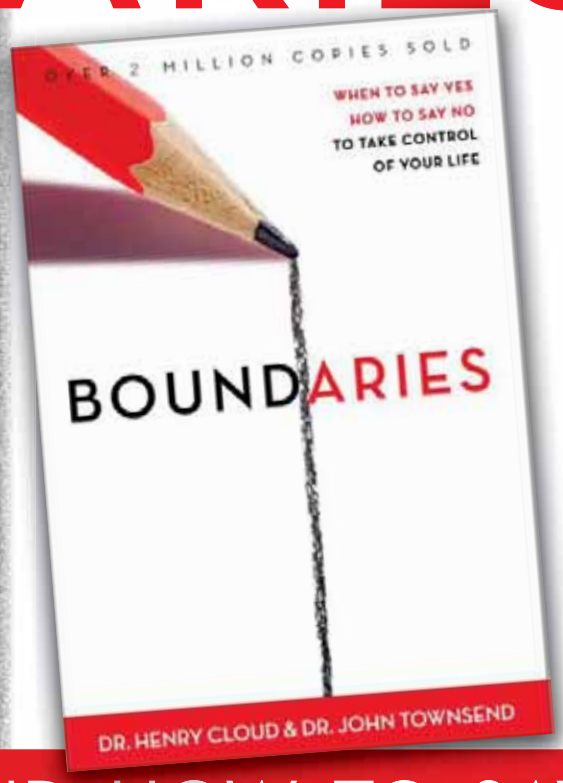
If that's true of you in some specific issue that we've addressed, or maybe something the Holy Spirit has poured out to you, would you just be honest enough to pray? *"Merciful Lord, reveal to me how my words are hurtful and damaging. Show me how to speak words that give grace, blessing and hope. I confess that I often want to justify and trivialize the things I say when they really reflect a heart issue. Give me a repentant heart. Fill my heart in such a way that its overflow will be the Fruit of the Holy Spirit. Change my heart and may my words bring glory and honor to you. Through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen."*



*+ Reubel Shelly, Nashville, TN; "Wyoming Woman Accused of Starting Wildfire," CNN. com*

by Sallie Boulos

# BOUNDARIES



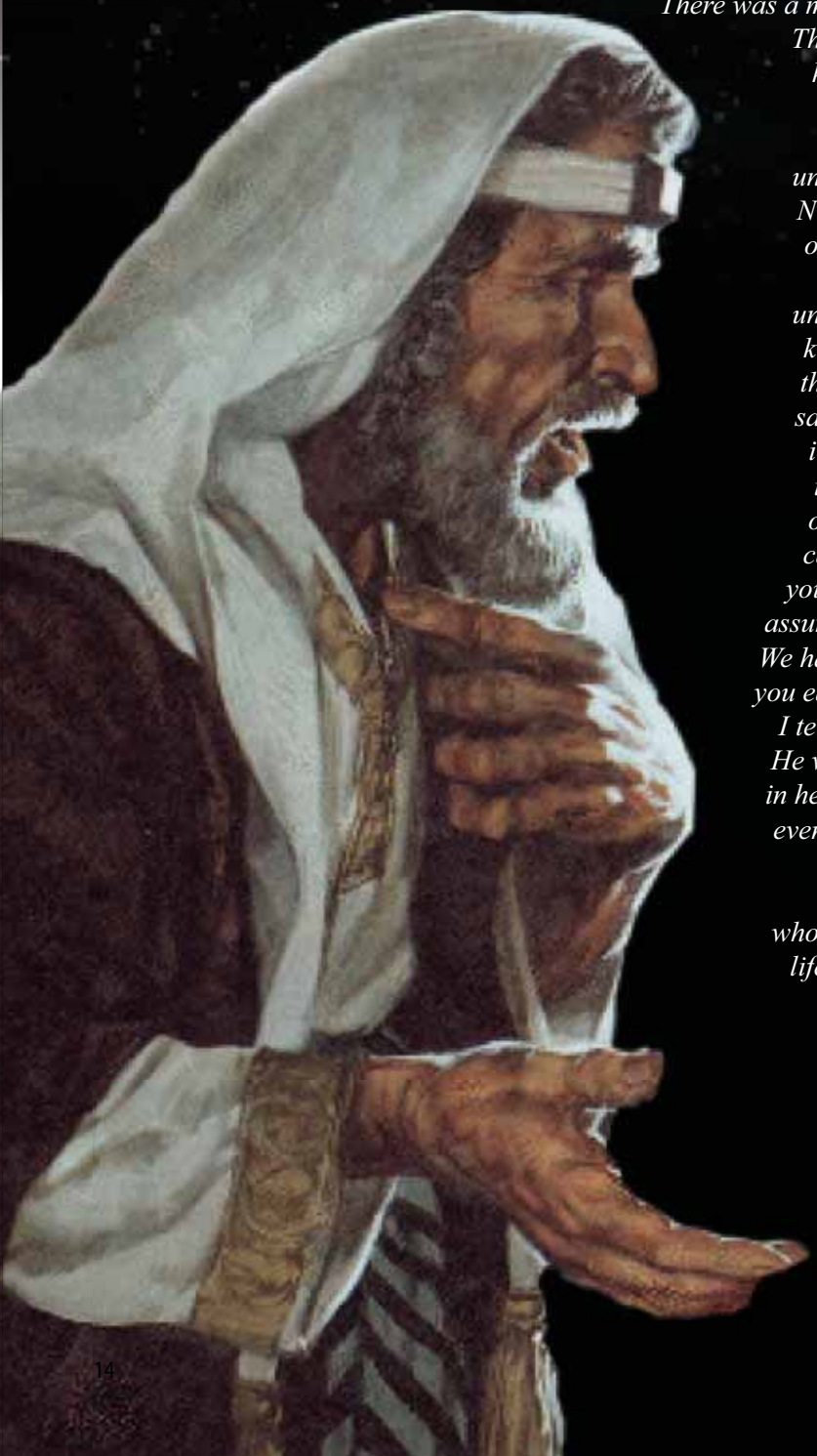

*Amanda is the type of person everyone loves, because you can always count on her for anything. She's a Sunday school servant at her church, she is a full-time college student, she works part-time at her campus bookstore, and on top of that she is heavily involved as an officer of a Christian campus organization. Amanda's friends know she is the go to person for any and everything: a ride to work, help with homework for that awful stats class, and you can always call Amanda to vent about your day or talk about your latest crush, she is a great listener and really sympathetic. Amanda sounds like a great person, she loves to serve others and be helpful, and after all she feels it's her Christian duty to "love your neighbor as yourself". However, what her school friends and church community can't see is that Amanda is drowning in her helpfulness. She goes to sleep in the early morning hours every night just to finish studying because between her work, her extra-curricular activities, and her friends, she just really doesn't have much time for herself. Amanda puts on a brave and cheerful face, but her heart is filled with resentment because none of her friends ever returns her love; she feels like a doormat, but then quickly banishes these thoughts feeling guilty for not being a more loving person.*

## WHEN TO SAY **YES** AND HOW TO SAY **NO** TO GET CONTROL OF ***YOUR*** LIFE

This struggle Christians face balancing loving others while maintaining appropriate boundaries that protect our time, energy, and emotions is precisely what Drs. Cloud & Thompson enumerate in their book Boundaries. The authors begin the book by first defining what a boundary is and how boundaries are developed from childhood into adulthood, and the impact our early experiences with our family of origin and our environment have played in developing boundaries whether healthy or unhealthy. Cloud & Thompson then explain how God has set up spiritual boundaries and principles that are meant to teach us how to be responsible healthy adults such as the law of reaping and sowing, basically taking responsibility for your actions and accepting the consequences (p.86). After explaining what boundaries are, how they develop, and Godly principles that guide development of healthy boundaries and correct unhealthy choices, the authors then highlight how boundaries are useful and play out in various types of relationships such as with parents, friends, spouses, within ourselves, and most importantly with God. They explain what unhealthy boundaries look like and then steps you can take to change your boundary problems.

I found this book very helpful to better understand how my boundaries have developed and the areas in my life and the relationships in which I need to establish better boundaries. I also gained insight into how people use guilt, anger, manipulation, and "God talk" as ways of crossing your boundaries, and trying to make your no a yes. This book is useful for anyone who has struggled with asserting themselves, and questioned why they feel guilty or feel like they have to explain themselves when they say no or disagree with another person. The authors give very good examples of what unhealthy boundaries and what appropriate responses look like, and give step by step instruction on how to establish boundaries or amend them if they are weak. In addition, these authors give Biblical references and use Bible stories as examples of how God is calling us to establish boundaries, and often uses Jesus as a model for how to balance loving people, and taking time for yourself. These principles free you to respond truthfully to others so that when you say yes, your heart and tongue are in agreement, and when you say no, you have the freedom to choose to say no: *"Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body"* Ephesians 4:25.

# what does



*There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things? Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."* John 3:1-21

# Jesus say to a very good man?

by Emad Massoud

One day a man named Nicodemus came at night to see our Lord. We learn from the Gospel story that he was a prominent elder, a Pharisee and a member of the ruling council. He came at night to keep this visit not only private, but also secret. Before we ask why he came to Jesus at night, we may wonder: ***What made him desire to see Jesus in the first place?***

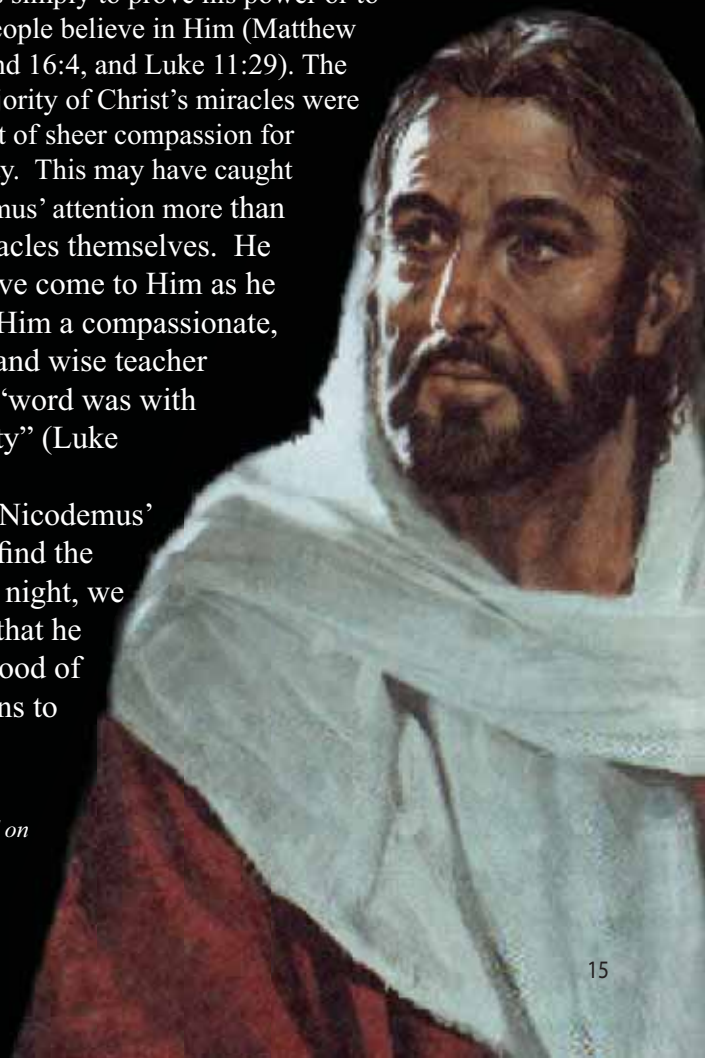
This passage is found in the early chapters of the Gospel of John, which suggests that the visit took place at the beginning of our Lord's public ministry. We know from the Gospels that Christ started his ministry in Galilee, in the North of Israel. John 2 recounts Christ's first miracle at the wedding of Cana of Galilee. The reading of the Gospel of John shows that Jesus visited Jerusalem every Passover during the three years of His public ministry. This was the first of these visits. In short, Nicodemus could not have had the opportunity to get to know Jesus well. So what really made such a well-respected elder seek to meet with this 30 year old carpenter-turned-teacher? What wisdom is this wise Jewish leader seeking from this much younger "Rabbi"?

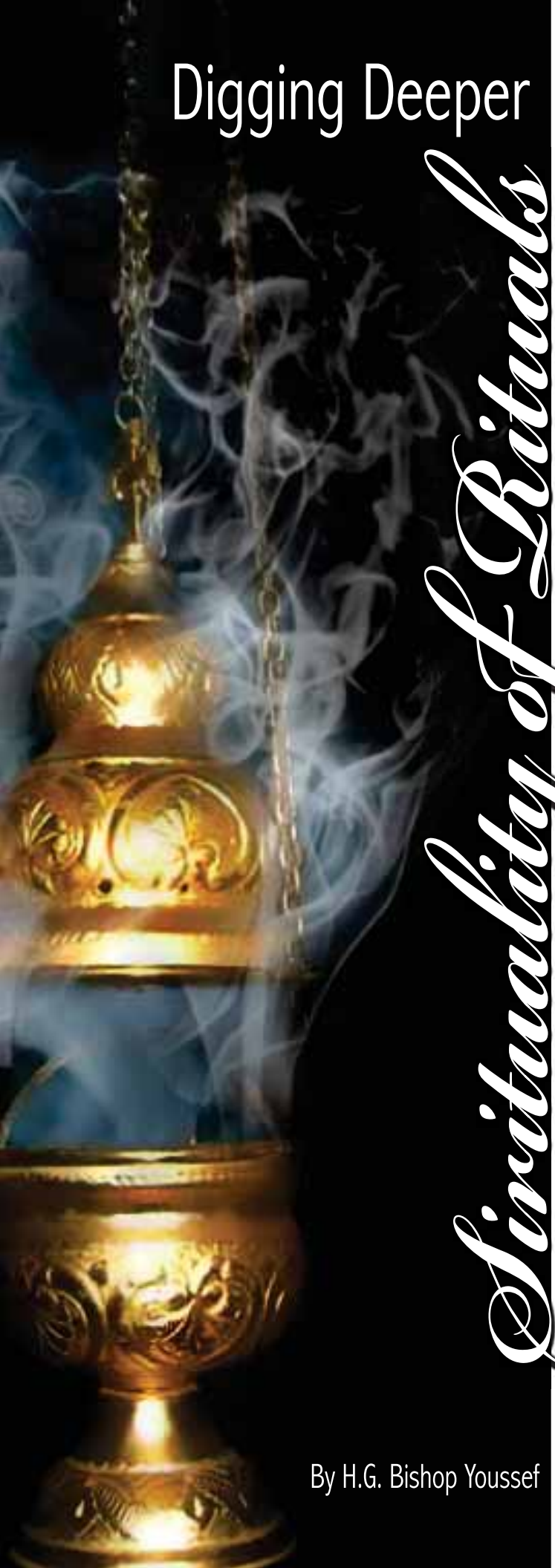
Nicodemus must have seen in Jesus something he hadn't found during his entire spiritual journey. We are told that he was a Pharisee. At the time of Christ there were several religious groups or sects. The two most prominent groups were the Sadducees and the Pharisees. This is in a way similar to what we might see today as liberal and conservative wings in Christianity. The Sadducees did not believe in angels or in eternal life. The Pharisees, on the contrary, believed in both. They were conservative in their beliefs. They adhered to the Word of God (even to excess), which they studied faithfully and knew well. They were also very strict with their lives (consequently many became judgmental). In many ways we can see that Christ ascribed doctrinally to the Pharisaic faith. He rebuked them not for their beliefs but for feeling justified through their deeds and becoming self-righteous, rather than seeking God's mercy (Luke 18:9-14). St. Paul was also a Pharisee. He believed in the resurrection and in angels and worked hard to abide by the strictest ways of life according to the traditions of his fathers. It is interesting that Nicodemus, an elder Pharisee, recognized Jesus as the teacher who had answers to his many spiritual questions.

The passage tells us that Nicodemus saw in Jesus "a teacher come from God" (John 3:2). Nicodemus understood that no one could perform the miraculous signs Jesus was doing if God were not with him. By that time Jesus must have performed many miracles, which clearly could not be recorded in the gospels (John 20:30, 21:25). For Nicodemus these were a proof of the godliness of Jesus. It is interesting that when we read the gospels we see that our Lord not only avoided but also resented performing miracles simply to prove his power or to make people believe in Him (Matthew 12:39 and 16:4, and Luke 11:29). The vast majority of Christ's miracles were done out of sheer compassion for humanity. This may have caught Nicodemus' attention more than the miracles themselves. He may have come to Him as he saw in Him a compassionate, loving and wise teacher whose "word was with authority" (Luke 4:32).

Seeing Nicodemus' zeal to find the Lord at night, we expect that he had a flood of questions to ask.

*Article continued on p. 21*






### *True Worship*

*"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."* (John 4: 23, 24) There are two elements for true worship: spirit and truth. To worship in spirit means to worship as guided by the Holy Spirit with passion and from your heart not just with mouth and tongue (Matthew 15:8). To worship in truth means to follow God's guidelines for worship. God wants us to worship Him in a certain way and we should follow this way in order to worship in truth.

### *The Goal of Rituals*

The goal of the Church's rituals is to organize the way with which we worship the Lord, so that we may worship Him in truth according to His will. We will receive the most benefit from our worship when we follow the Divine order.

### *God and Rituals*

It is God who established the rituals and instructed us to worship in a certain order *"For God is not the author of confusion."* (1 Corinthians 14:33) This is clearly manifested in the Pentateuch where God gave Moses a very detailed description of the Tabernacle of Meeting and the order of worship. Also, the Lord Jesus Christ kept the Jewish rituals: He was circumcised on the eighth day, presented to the temple on the fortieth day, celebrated the Jewish Feasts in the Temple, asked the leprous man to fulfill the ritual of purification (Luke 5:14), and established the ritual of the Divine Liturgy on Covenant Thursday.

### *The Apostles and Rituals*

St. Paul has delivered to us what he has received

from the Lord Himself (1 Corinthians 11: 23) and he charged Timothy, the Bishop of Ephesus, *"And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."* (2 Timothy 2:2) When St. Paul found that the church in Corinth was not worshipping in an orderly manner, he instructed them *"Let all things be done decently and in order."* (1 Corinthians 14:40) Also with Titus, the Bishop of Crete, he advised him to *"set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city"* (Titus 1:5).

### *Rituals and Heaven*

Isaiah the prophet observed that heavenly worship occurred in a certain ritualistic order. *"In the year King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up. The house was full of His glory. Around Him stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory. The lintel was lifted up by the voice of those who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke."* (Isaiah 6:1-4 LXX)

**"Those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth"**

Also the Holy Book of Revelation affirms that worship in heaven follows certain rituals and order *"Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads."* (Revelation 4:4) While the twenty-four priests were offering incense (Revelation 5: 8), they chanted to the Lord with many people who were wearing white robes and carrying Palm branches in their hands (Revelation 7: 9).

### *Spirituality and Rituals*

Rituals enrich the spirituality of the worshipper through many ways. They explain to us the mysteries of God. For example, we understand the mystery of the cross after we study the Old Testament rituals of sacrifices. Studying the Tabernacle of Meeting helps us understand the Church. In his letter to the Hebrews, St. Paul used the rituals of the Old Testament to explain the Mystery of Redemption.

Another benefit of rituals is that they preserve the doctrines of faith. For example, making the sign of the cross preserves the doctrines of Trinity, Incarnation, and Redemption. The enactment of resurrection preserves the doctrines of opening the paradise after the crucifixion.
Rituals also keep the unity of the Church throughout the world. Whenever you visit a Coptic church, in any part of the world, you will pray the same liturgy, sing the same hymns, hear the same readings. Additionally, these rituals connect us with previous generations and we feel one with those who preceded us throughout the centuries; so we experience the oneness of the Church in spite of time and place.

Rituals take us on a journey beyond time and place to relive the events in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. It also transcends us to be in fellowship with the heavenly as we say in the litanies of the third hour of the Agpeya, *"Whenever we stand in your holy Sanctuary, we are considered standing in Heaven."* Truly our Coptic Orthodox Church is so awesome and beautiful in her rituals.



# NOT TO BO

This is the first in a series of articles addressing common "irritating challenges" we face throughout our adult life, particularly during our young adult years. The articles will address boredom, low self-esteem, loneliness, and stagnation, to name but a few; and they will explore how to get a handle on these issues, debunk their perceived myths, and demonstrate how the Christian life is not subject to their irritation. Indeed most, if not all, of these challenges do not have power on their own. Whenever we fall under the influence of one, it is not its power that conquers us, but rather our weakness that makes us succumb to it.

Let us start today with the usual feeling of boredom that we encounter once in awhile. To be specific, "usual" is used here to differentiate from boredom resulting from clinical depression, which requires professional medical treatment. The few available definitions of boredom make it clear that boredom arises not from a lack of things to do, which seems to be a common misconception, but rather from the inability to latch onto any specific activity. Therefore, it is not simply what to do, but specifically what to do with sustainable interest. Delving more into the subject, we find that boredom may be categorized into three general types: 1. When we are prevented from engaging in something (e.g. studying, starting a new project); 2. When we are forced to engage in some unwanted activity (e.g. aimlessly flipping TV channels, compulsive eating or shopping); or 3. When we are simply unable, for no apparent reason, to maintain engagement in any activity or spectacle. The conclusion is that without stimulus, focus, or purpose the individual is confronted with nothingness. Consider the famous quote from William Shakespeare's Macbeth: "Out, out, brief candle! Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player That struts and frets his hour upon the stage And then is heard no more. It is a tale Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, Signifying nothing." Being confronted with nothingness is a sure prescription for everlasting boredom in a sea of darkness. In contrast, the light emanating from the purpose driven Christian life naturally dissolves the darkness of boredom.

So, what's the purpose of the Christian life? It is simply to glorify His name. There are many passages in the Bible pointing to this fact. David said: *"Let my soul live, and it shall praise You"* (Psalms 119:175) and also *"Praise the Lord from the heavens; Praise Him in the heights!"* (Psalms 148:1). Jesus prayed: *"I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do."* (John 17:4) Paul followed with: *"For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."* (1 Corinthians 6:20) and also: *"Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."* (1 Corinthians 10:31) For further discussion of this topic, refer to "Decision Time" published in Mighty Arrows, December 2007, Volume 8, number 2 - www.suscopts.org/mightyarrows/publications.

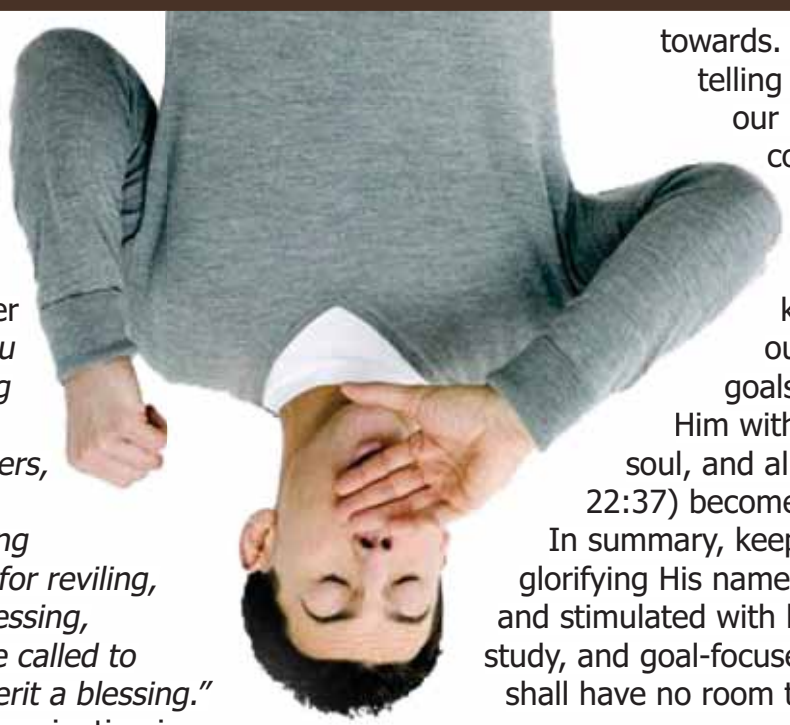
On the surface, and before personally experiencing being alive for the glory of His name, this statement may tempt the audacious novice to wonder: If God only cares about the glorification of His name, doesn't this imply that God is somewhat self-centered? Interestingly, this question is nonsensical. Here is the logic behind it. If God were self-centered, then it follows that there is something else besides or outside of God that He doesn't acknowledge. At this point, two mutually exclusive thoughts are possible: Something else is either true or untrue. Let us consider the first possibility; namely that the something else is true. If that something is true, then it is of God, since He is the truth. "*Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'"* (John 14:6) Note that Jesus doesn't say He is "part" of the truth, but rather He is the truth. Since that something else is of God, then it negates the self-centeredness issue. That is to say, God's self is infinite and there is nothing outside of Him. The second possibility is more straightforward: If that something else is untrue, why bother in the first place? Why waste our time, energy, and resources pursuing that which is untrue? Therefore, it is illogical to describe God as self-centered. Here is the icing on the cake of truth: By His grace you and I have been born from Him, through His Son and by the Holy Spirit to become Christians. That is to say: He is in you and you are in Him. *"And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me."* (John 17:22-23) Such unity, of Him and you, takes away any sense of loneliness.

Therefore, glorifying His name is the mission

# ORE YOU...

by Reid Fanous

of our life. Once we are clear on the mission, we should look for a strategy and goals to fulfill our mission. The Bible provides the strategy, for example when Peter says: *"Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing."* (1 Peter 3:8-9) Self-examination is part of our strategy and a goal to work towards. Be it self-control, telling the truth, maintaining our resources in optimal condition, turning each encounter into a loving communication, asking, seeking, knocking, etc… they ought all to be SMART goals. Therefore, loving Him with all our heart, all our soul, and all our mind (Matthew 22:37) becomes our stimulus.



In summary, keeping the mission of glorifying His name constantly in sight and stimulated with love, Bible reading and study, and goal-focused activities, boredom shall have no room to stay.

# Hey Mike!

I will be graduating from high school in May and will have to decide on a major as well as a career very soon, I have no idea what I want to do, or even what I like to do. However, I do know the careers which I am not interested in and those would be the careers which my parents would like me to pursue: Medicine, Pharmacy, Engineering. They're looking at what would give their son a good life, money, success... but what I would like to know is how do I know what God wants me to do? It seems as though the only people who hear God in their lives are priests and monks, so my question to you is how can I hear God in my life so that I can do his will?
– Major: Undecided

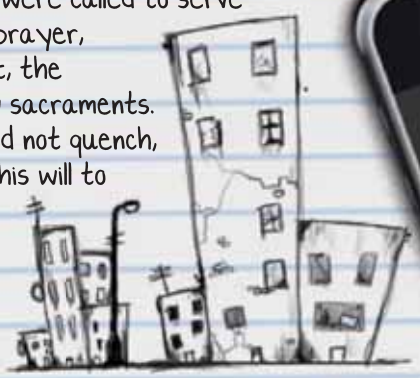
Dear Undecided,

While I was contemplating how to answer your question, I heard His Grace Bishop Youssef speaking on a related topic. During this speech he stated, that an important concept in Christianity is that, God doesn't do the things that we are capable of doing, but rather the things that we are unable to do. His Grace gave several great examples during this speech which illustrate our role and Gods role:

God asks us to take away the stone and he will raise the dead
We cast out the net and God fills it with fish
We distribute the food and God collects the left over fragments and feeds the multitude with five loaves and two fish

In other words, you do your part and God does his.
In determining which career to pursue, you need to evaluate your strengths and weaknesses as well as your goals. If you excel in science, you should consider pursuing a career in medicine or pharmacy, if you do well in math, you should contemplate a career in engineering. Keep in mind that career success and money should not be goals in themselves, but rather a means to glorify God and to help others.
In regards to priests and monks hearing the Lord, remember that the majority left a successful career and abandoned the world when they were called to serve God. You can find Gods will for you by talking to him in prayer, reading His words, being a member of the Body of Christ, the Church, and by participating in the liturgy and the Holy sacraments. You must also lead a humble, repentant and holy life and not quench, sadden or resist the Holy Spirit, so that God will reveal his will to you. May God be with you and guide you throughout your life.

Your brother in Christ,
Mike



Ask Me.
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# What does Jesus say to a good man?

*Continued from p. 15*

***We wonder however: What really was Nicodemus' initial question and why did he come to see Jesus at night?***

We can only guess what his initial question was since our Lord interrupted him after his brief introduction and responded to his greeting with a totally unrelated statement that came out of the blue. But did it really? We know that the Pharisees believed in eternal life, and it seems that Nicodemus was truly seeking eternal life like many who later asked Jesus the same question (Luke 10:25 and 18:18). He was, however, serious in his quest. He chose not to question Jesus in public but came by night since he did not want to show off nor test and embarrass Him. It is also quite possible he did not want to embarrass himself, as elder and leader of the council, by being seen seeking advice from this young controversial figure. It is as if Christ read his mind and wanted to spare him the pain of trying to find words to ask this difficult question.

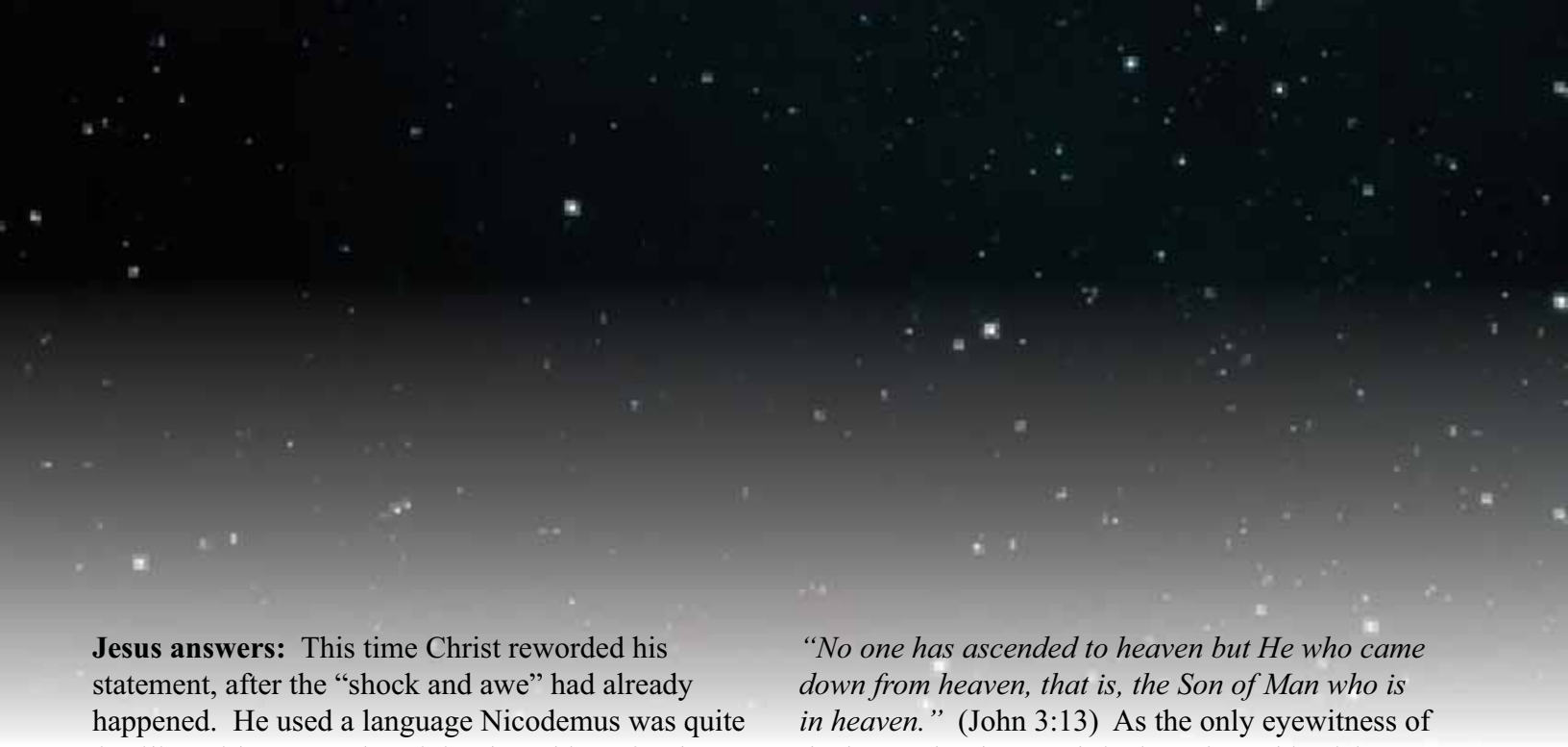
***What did Jesus have to say to Nicodemus?***

Christ knew that Nicodemus had spent his life earnestly seeking to please God in order to inherit eternal life. Nicodemus, who knew the scriptures well, was no stranger to the concept of the Kingdom of God. In fact, like many godly Jews, he was awaiting the coming of the Kingdom of God. The real nature of this kingdom was totally obscure to them, however. Many were awaiting the Messiah, the son of David, who would deliver them from the oppression of the Romans and establish himself as monarch of the kingdom of God on the glorious throne of his father David.

Jesus knew that Nicodemus, a godly man, yearned, to see the Kingdom of God in his lifetime and to witness the rule of justice and righteousness among his people. The way to see this kingdom, as Jesus described it, was quite incomprehensible to Nicodemus. Today we know that Jesus was speaking about baptism. However, Nicodemus was surprised at Christ's words and may have thought, *"Boy, this is the weirdest thing I heard in my life!"* or *"Whoa! What is this man talking about?!"* It seems that he could not hide his astonishment and maybe even his disapproval of what he heard. Could he have thought, *"What kind of teacher is this?"* or *"Why did I come all this way to talk to this strange man?"* We don't really know, and although it is unlikely he thought that way, it is possible. This would not have bothered Jesus, as he was probably trying to shock Nicodemus with a very strange concept, and it seems that He got what He wanted. Do you think Christ talks to us the same way today? Do you think He may sound weird or strange? Do you seek to go see Him at night and ask him your deepest questions?

***How can a man be born when he is old?***

This is certainly a very logical question to a most strange statement. It is certainly impossible. Without realizing, Nicodemus expressed the inability of mankind to bring about its own renewal. He was using the logic of a learned man and, in his wisdom, expressed our inability to bring about the one thing that would allow us to 'see the Kingdom of God'. This comes only from God: *"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."* (John 1:12-13)



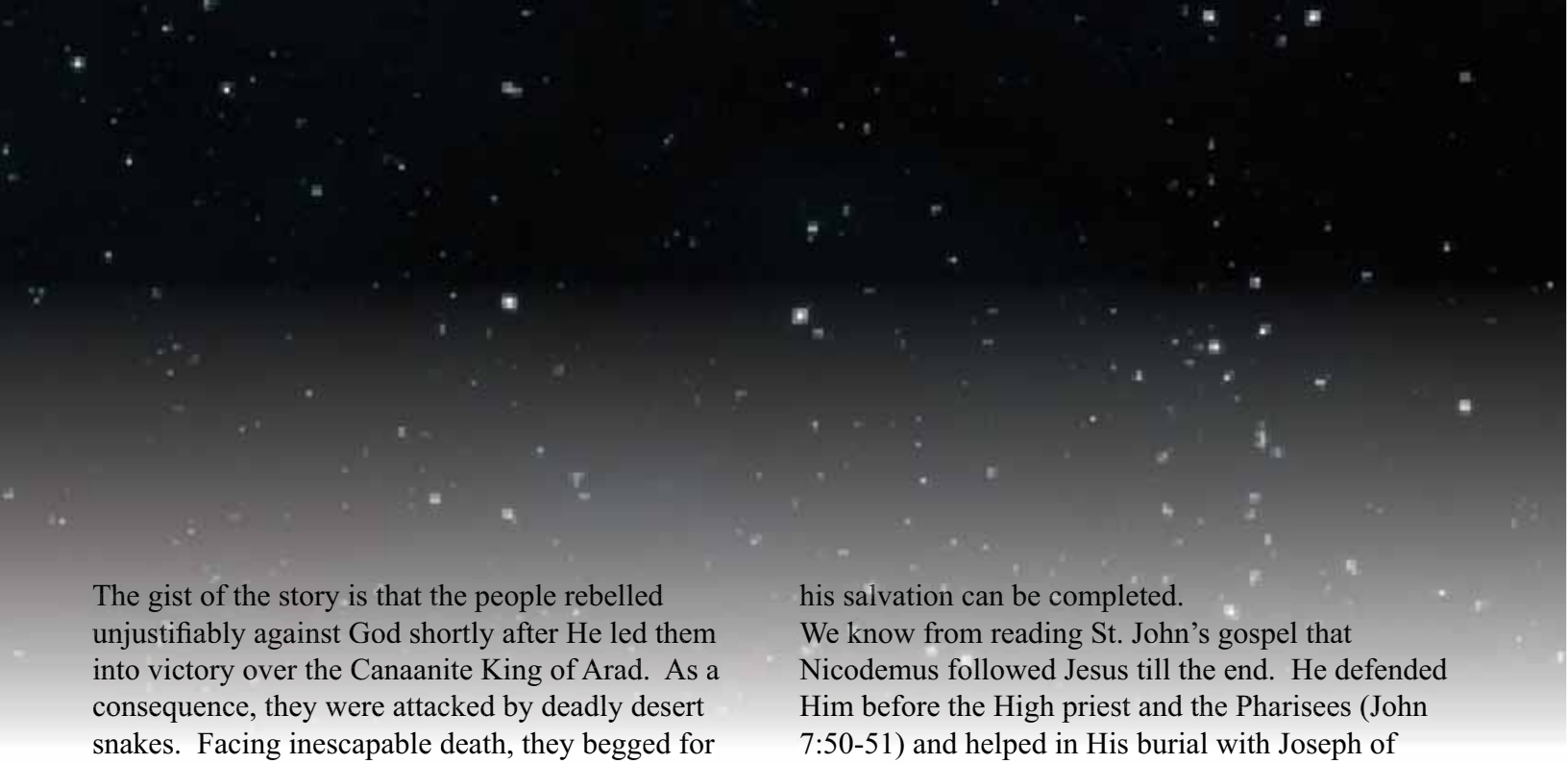
**Jesus answers:** This time Christ reworded his statement, after the "shock and awe" had already happened. He used a language Nicodemus was quite familiar with. He spoke of ritual washings for the sake of purification and baptism, which was practiced as a mark of repentance and a "new beginning with God". He had probably seen many people going to be baptized in the Jordan by John the Baptist. Who knows, he may have even wanted to go himself. Nicodemus could understand that Christ was talking about a new beginning with God, but he had never heard of rebirth through water and the Spirit. This really brought a new dimension to the conversation. *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."* (John 3:6) This was a totally new concept for Nicodemus. Jesus here says that people born by natural procreation are not capable of entering the Kingdom of God, only "spiritual beings" can. Just as in natural birth a baby emerges from its mother's body, in spiritual birth we are born, a new creation, from above. We cannot understand exactly how this happens, but we surely see the fruit of it in the lives of the believers. In the same manner that we cannot see the wind but we certainly recognize its presence.

## *How can this be?*

Still baffled and maybe confused, Nicodemus asks for more clarification. It is comforting to witness such a conversation and to see an honest man's eagerness to understand the truth.

**An unbelievable declaration:** Jesus' answer to Nicodemus' quest for the truth was an unveiling of His real identity as the incarnate Son of God. *"No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven."* (John 3:13) As the only eyewitness of the heavenly places, Christ introduces his visitor to God's inconceivable love for mankind and the cost He incurred to make this new birth possible for all who seek to enter the kingdom of heaven.

**Moses' bronze snake:** *"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."* (John 3:14-15) In order to prepare Nicodemus to hear the good news of God's wonderful plan for him, our Lord reminded him of a story from the scripture he knew all too well: *"Then they journeyed from Mount Hor by the Way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the soul of the people became very discouraged on the way. And the people spoke against God and against Moses: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread." So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD that He take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live." So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived."* (Numbers 21:4-9)



The gist of the story is that the people rebelled unjustifiably against God shortly after He led them into victory over the Canaanite King of Arad. As a consequence, they were attacked by deadly desert snakes. Facing inescapable death, they begged for mercy. Their salvation came from God in the form of a bronze representation of the same deadly snake. All the dying person needed in order to live was to go and look at the bronze snake, in other words, they needed to trust in the healing power of the Lord.
Although Nicodemus knew the story well, like many Jews until this day, he must have simply taken it as a simple manifestation of God's mercy on his rebellious but beloved chosen people. Not in his wildest dreams would he have viewed it as foretelling the real story of God's love for him and for all mankind. Saint Paul, another Pharisee, made this wonderful discovery after it had been revealed to him: *"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."* (2 Corinthians 5:21)

**For God so loved the world:** Now Jesus reminds Nicodemus that the story of the bronze serpent was a deep expression of God's love and compassion. The real love of God, however will be fully manifested in the sacrificial death of God's only Son on the cross so that whoever believes in Him shall be saved from the inevitable fate of fallen humanity and have eternal life, the same eternal life which Nicodemus has been seeking all along. He learned though that this will not come through his self-righteous endeavors, since, like the people who were dying in the desert, he has no power to save himself. It is only through humbling himself before God and receiving His precious, yet free gift of love, that he can be given a new lease on life. His deeds will therefore be the fruits of his new birth from up high and will testify to his faith. Hence his salvation can be completed.
We know from reading St. John's gospel that Nicodemus followed Jesus till the end. He defended Him before the High priest and the Pharisees (John 7:50-51) and helped in His burial with Joseph of Arimathea after He died on the Cross (John 19:38-40). There is no doubt that he had a flashback of this unforgettable encounter with the Savior while he was hurrying to put a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes on His body before wrapping Him and putting Him in the tomb. It is quite possible that, in the midst of all this, he shared the story, which he had kept to himself for fear of loosing his prestigious place in the synagogue, with John, the only disciple who followed Jesus to the cross.

**Reader take note, this is the verdict:** *"And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."* (John 3:19-21)
The message of Christ comes with a stern warning. Throughout history people have frequently turned away from the Truth because they did not want God to change their lives. It is not uncommon that people may see the Light and turn their face away for fear of being exposed. Christ tells us today that, unless we allow His light to expose us to Him, we will remain in darkness. We need to trust that His light will cleanse us and enlighten us so we can see His face. He is the only one who has *" come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."* (John 10:10)

# SPIRITUAL WARFARE 101: KNOWING YOUR ENEMY

**By J. M. Stephanos**

There is a story about a contest that took place one day between two men. The prize for the winner would be gold and honor and the punishment for the loser, unfortunately, would be death. One contestant was much older and had never lost a match; the other was younger, in fact he was just a boy, and it happened to be his first go at the game. He wasn't told the rules of the game because the older contestant determined them. One advantage the boy did have was that he understood his opponent and took him very seriously. Needless to say, the older man laughed at his challenger, thinking that it was ridiculous to be pitted against a boy. So, the older man walked into the contest like a drunkard, belching and wagging his head, while the boy entered with a razor-sharp focus on his opponent. The boy made his first move, and Goliath came crashing down to the earth.

In general, whenever you enter a fight, a basketball game, or a chess match, you must understand your opponent. This means you must watch his moves, analyze his style, and make note of his tactics; in short, you must take him seriously. If you underestimate your foe, you've already lost the contest. In 2004, the USA basketball tteam strutted into the Olympics imagining they would be kings of the court. Instead they were defeated by Puerto Rico and Lithuania. *"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." (1 Corinthians 10:12)*.

The flesh, the world, and the Devil have been the three main sources of trouble traditionally noted by the Christian Church. It has been said—not as a strict theological rule but simply as a general observation—that every problem we have and every sin we slip into can be traced back to one of these three sources. They are placed in order of influence, with the flesh (a part of ourselves) as the first source of trouble.

So what is this "flesh" that we keep hearing about? Is it simply the skin that covers the body? Is it an uncontrolled eye or tongue or is it something more deeply seated in the brain? Is it a matter of puberty and hormones or a state of fallen human nature? In short, is the "lust of the flesh" a fundamental flaw of the body or of the mind?

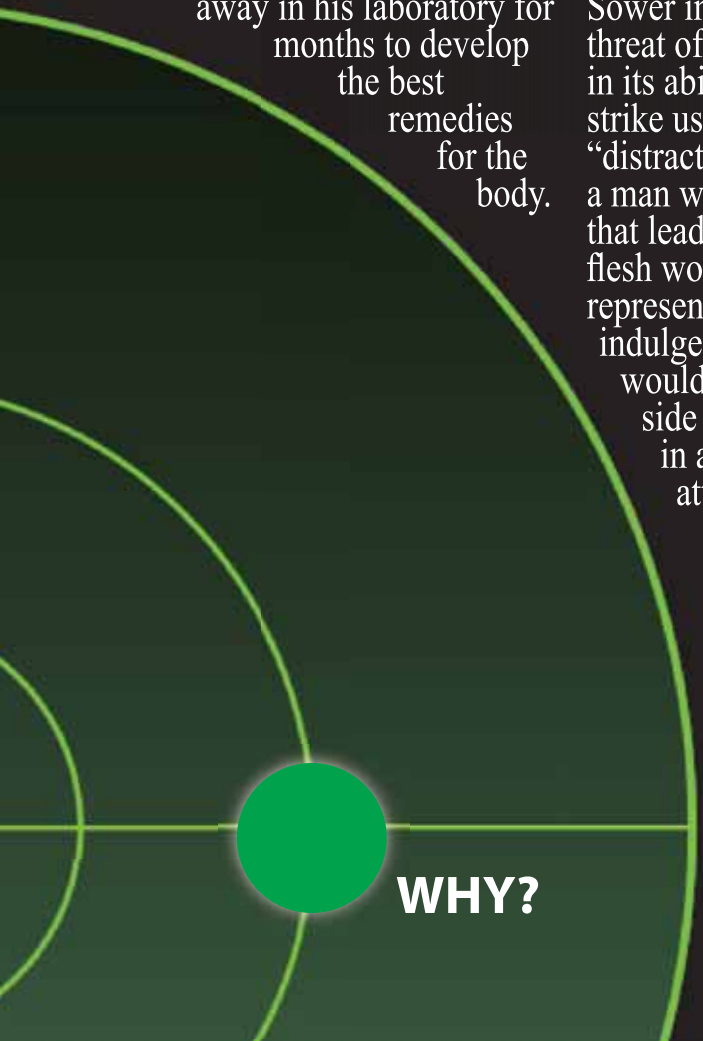
St. Paul said, *"I am carnal, sold under sin." (Romans 7:14)* He was certainly not a slave of sin in the sense we mean; but he had a definite sense of a "sinful" nature within him that was spoiled, like a fruit.

And despite the



immense spiritual force within him that propelled him like a rocket to do good, the sinful nature—or "flesh"—was always there to pull him down, slow him down, and turn the firm ground on which he ran into mud. But he stubbornly refused to ever give up; he struggled with colossal energy against the enemy within. And at those times he felt near the breaking point, he knew Christ would carry him.

But why would God allow in us this enemy? Why must the spiritual life be so arduous, so tedious, so tiring? The desert fathers have always been the grandmasters of wrestling against the flesh. You might say that they hide themselves away in a monastery to develop the best remedies for the soul—much as a medical researcher would hide himself away in his laboratory for months to develop the best remedies for the body.




The excellent book *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* explains the significance of this war with the flesh: "Abba John the Dwarf once prayed to God to take the passions of the flesh away from him, so that he might be free of anxiety. He went and told an old man this: 'I now find myself in peace, without an enemy.' The old man said to him, 'Go, beseech God to stir up warfare so that you may regain the affliction and humility that you used to have, for *it is by warfare that the soul makes progress*.' So he besought God and when warfare came, he no longer prayed that it might be taken away, but said, 'Lord, give me strength for the fight.'"

The "world" is the second enemy category we must face. It is the third type of "seed" described in the Parable of the Sower in Mark 4. The great threat of this enemy is not really in its ability to reach out and strike us, but in its role as a "distracter." If we can imagine a man walking along a road that leads to his homeland, the flesh would be his body weight, representing how much he indulges in food; and the world would be like a circus on the side of the road, performing in a frenzy to capture the attention of passersby.

We live in an eminently "distracted" age. Who has not had a warm discussion with a close friend disrupted by a phone call, text message, billboard, or television airing? Whereas our ancestors could sit and focus for a long time on a particular chore or thought, we have our attention divided among ten different productions of technology. Once the world used to be an ugly adversary living outside our homes only to be dealt with when we exited. Now the world has become a comfortable member of every household in America.

The "Devil"—our age-old adversary! The Devil is like a tyrannous dictator who has official control of a country's laws and social life, but whom the citizens barely ever see. He once had more might than the mightiest archangel, but he was demoted to the level of the lizard at the Cross.

Thankfully, in our spiritual warfare, we never perform hand-to-hand combat with this enemy. He may fight us through the Flesh and the World, but the Bible has strictly forbidden us from ever looking him in the face. In fact, we are not even allowed to argue with him (John 8:44). The *Imitation of Christ* counsels us: "We must be especially careful when temptation begins. For it is easier to overcome the enemy if he is forbidden entry into the mind. Reject him, therefore, at the threshold where he knocks." In modern language, we would say, "Slam the door shut in his face. It is easier to keep him out if he is never allowed in to begin with."

*"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." (Ephesians 6: 10-11)*

# PRAYER WARRIOR

***"....but in everything by prayer, and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:6-7)**

Each one of us has a concern, need or request; something to worry about regarding career, finance, health, children, marriage, or even one's spiritual life. History records incidents of important people who had similar needs and requests. Some examples from the Old Testament are Hannah, Samuel's mother and Jacob, son of Isaac. Elizabeth, John the Baptist's Mother from the New Testament, and Ephomea, St. Mina's Mother who was barren and wanted desperately to have a child. What did those people do with regard to their problems? Those people knew exactly what to do. They turned their eyes to heaven where the Almighty resides and put forth their requests before Him. As Christians, what should we do in similar situations? In three main points, St. Paul in Philippians 4:6-7 prescribes exactly what should be done:

*"Be anxious for nothing"*

We should not be anxious for, nor worry about our concerns or needs. Worry by default is lack of faith; and is therefore a sin. A true faithful believer should not worry about anything that goes on in his life. Our Lord rebuked His disciples several times saying, *"Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?"* (Matthew 8:26). If we strongly believe that we are God's children and trust that He can provide for all our needs and answer our requests, then there will be no room in our hearts for worry. In the parable about the sewer, some of the seeds fell on ground full of thorns. Our Lord Jesus Christ explained to His disciples that the thorns stood for worries of the world, love for riches, and pleasures of this earthly life (Luke 8:14). Just as thorns choke seeds preventing them from bringing forth life, so will worry choke faith that is originally meant to dwell and flourish in our hearts thus hindering the work of God and His Holy Word in us. Good examples of pillars of faith that did not worry in the midst of immense trouble but exhibited tremendously strong faith are Daniel in the den of lions, the three brave young men in the furnace of fire, St. Paul and Silas in the jail in Philippi, St. Peter in the jail in Jerusalem, to name a few examples.

*"but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving"*

Rather, let these requests be made known to God in a certain specific manner: through prayers, supplications, and thanksgiving. The promise of fulfillment is clear in our Lord's word: *"Ask and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you"* (Matthew 7:7). However, under the wrong assumption that since God is omnipotent, omniscient who sees and knows everything, some think that there is no need to pray. Such wrong thinking renders redundant God's command to pray. Although it is true that God knows all our needs, He still wants us to ask for them in prayers *"For everyone who asks receives..."* (Matthew 7:8). He would not grant us our needs unless we ask. The story recorded about St. Anthony and his struggle with demons clearly illustrates this point. After the demons had beaten St. Anthony up leaving him almost dead, he cried to the Lord asking Him why He had deserted him and given him over to the demons. The Lord reminded St. Anthony that he had not called upon Him during the tribulation. St. Anthony learned the lesson that even during the most difficult moments he was not to expect God to interfere with His mercy and help without asking. God wants to teach us the art of praying.

Under the wrong assumption that since God is omnipotent, omniscient who sees and knows everything, some think that there is no need to pray.

In his verse to the Philippians, St. Paul mentions three conditions for granting requests:

***Prayer:***

Praying is a means of communication by which we transmit our requests to God letting Him know what we need. Perfect prayers depend on five requirements:

***1. Place:*** It is important to have a place dedicated to praying. Our Lord Jesus Christ says, *"But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door..."* (Matthew 6:6). A lot of people interpret this verse symbolically only. However, Our Lord meant it literally as well. Praying needs a quiet place where we can communicate with God and concentrate on our relationship with Him away from distraction and worldly engagements. Our Lord Jesus Christ knew very well the importance of a prayer-dedicated place. That is why whenever He wanted to pray he went out to the wilderness or to a deserted place in order to keep away from distraction and give the Father His undivided

*"But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door..."* (Matthew 6:6)

attention. Sad to say, nowadays, this prayer-dedicated place has been replaced with any place; and people get satisfied with praying in the car, at work, while carrying out chores. It is good to pray while doing all these things. However, that should not be all we pray nor all where we pray.

***2.Time:*** Time is such a precious commodity against the amount of which the value of everything is measured. If that is the case, then it behooves us to give our Creator, the One in whom *"we live and move and have our being"* (Acts 17:28) the best and the most valued of our time. Praying when we are tired, exhausted, and ready to close our eyes to sleep cannot be called giving God quality time. No one knew the importance and hence the fruit of giving quality time to prayer like the Psalmist David; *"O God, You are my God; early will I seek You"* (Psalm 63:1) and "*Seven times a day I praise You, Because of Your righteous judgments"* (Psalm 119:164) and so he increased in his time giving until He could boldly say *"But I give myself to prayer"* (Psalm 109:4). He ended up becoming one with praying which is praying all the time, night and day.

***3. Words:*** There are no better words to pray with than the Word of God *"My eyes are awake through the night watches, that I may meditate on Your word"* (Psalm 119:148). Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Psalmist David knew that the words he was composing were God's Words, meant to be used for praying. That is why all the Traditional Churches have a prayer Book called "the Book of Hours" or "Agpeya". It is exactly the Holy Book of Psalms distributed over the hours of the day and is the Prayer Manual. This way we will be praying according to God's will. St. James explains the state of the art in his verse, *"You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss"* (James 4:3). Therefore we need to learn the words of prayer. Unfortunately people started to neglect using this book relying on their own understanding, not knowing that gradually they are bound to lose the art and essence of praying.

***4. Teacher:*** The person of the Holy Trinity to Whom is assigned the task of teaching is the Holy Spirit. Among the things that the Holy Spirit teaches to the body of Christ is how to pray; *"Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groupings which cannot be uttered"* (Romans 8:26). So, before we pray we have to ask the Holy Spirit to guide us, intercede on our behalf and teach us the words of prayer for we do not know how to pray as we should. In the Midnight Prayer we ask God to teach us how to stand before him and how to offer Him the appropriate doxology. Thus, before we pray, we pray to the Holy Spirit to teach us and train us in His school of praying.

***5. Willingness:*** We may feel the desire to pray. However, there is a big difference between desiring and willing to pray. The first, if not followed with the latter, can end where it started without being fulfilled. Satan uses all means and ways to keep the desire to pray unfulfilled by prompting laziness, preoccupation with material things or even with our weaknesses and sins. If we keep on listening to his suggestions and yield to his enticements, day after day, we will discover that we have not only lost the willingness but also the desire to pray. Whenever you feel moved by the Holy Spirit to pray, respond to that calling willingly and promptly. When you do that you will reap the fruit of praying and encourage the Holy Spirit to work more within you.

***Supplication:*** Supplication is the spirit or mood of humbleness with which we pray. There is no better example of someone praying in a spirit of supplication than our Lord Jesus Christ Himself in Gethsemane, the night before His crucifixion, where he knelt and prayed fervently and humbly. In the litanies of the church, while offering the incense, we offer a lot of supplications to God praying: *"again, let us ask God the Father, the Pantocrator, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We ask and entreat your goodness..."* All of this asking and entreating is done in a spirit of humbleness. That is why in Vespers and Matins the priest does not stand in the middle, but at the side of the alter, taking the position of a beggar possessing no courage nor boldness, but with supplication and humbleness he entreats God to receive his requests and listen to his prayers. Prostration is another form of humbling ourselves before God. Supplication also implies persistence and continuity in praying. The parable given by our Lord Jesus Christ of the widow and the unfair judge (Luke18:1-8) best illustrates the importance as well as effectiveness of supplication in prayer. Although he was an unjust man, yet because of her repeated asking, the heard hearted judge got her what she wanted. So much so would our merciful, loving Father in heaven grant us our supplications when we repeatedly present them to Him.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Psalmist David knew that the words he was composing were God's Words, meant to be used for praying.

***Thanksgiving:*** Giving thanks to God for granting us our requests is as important as praying for the request itself. Our Lord confirms the importance of thanksgiving. Of the ten people sick with leprosy whom our Lord had cured (Luke 17:12-19), only one came back to thank God in the temple. Our Lord Jesus Christ made a note of that and the Holy Spirit recorded it in the gospel by St. Luke for all generations to read and understand the importance of thanksgiving.
The will of God for us is summarized in the coming three interrelated, interdependent points:

- Praying without ceasing
- Rejoicing always
- Giving thanks (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

That is about all we need in our spiritual life; because

Our God is: Loving, righteous and just who did not spare His only begotten Son to redeem the world from the power of Satan.

If the peace of God surpasses understanding, then it is indescribable

when we have a request, we will pray about it. When God answers our prayers, we will rejoice. Therefore prayer leads to answers, answers give birth to joy, joy gets translated into thanksgiving and thanksgiving is offered in the form of prayers. There is nothing more destructive than a spirit of grumbling and complaining. Joy and thanksgiving will never find their home in the heart of someone full of grudge, complaint and lack of forgiveness.- *"let your requests be made known unto God"*

If we know exactly who our God is, then we will understand fully well why St. Paul tells us not to be anxious about anything, but put our full trust in Him. Our God is: Loving, righteous and just who did not spare His only begotten Son to redeem the world from the power of Satan (Romans 8:32). Sovereign, always fair to everyone, knows no compromise and wishes to save the unbeliever and bless the believer. Eternal, with no beginning and no end.. Omniscient, knowing all the repercussions of every event in our lives, future as well as past. Omnipotent, with infinite power keeping all His promises. Omnipresent, being present everywhere at all times. Immutable, being the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Veracious, telling the truth all the time being Himself the Truth.

When we remember all these attributes that belong to our God, we will not find it difficult to expel fear and anxiety from our hearts, putting our confidence in Him and so reap the fruit of that confidence. What then will the result be? St Paul gives the answer:

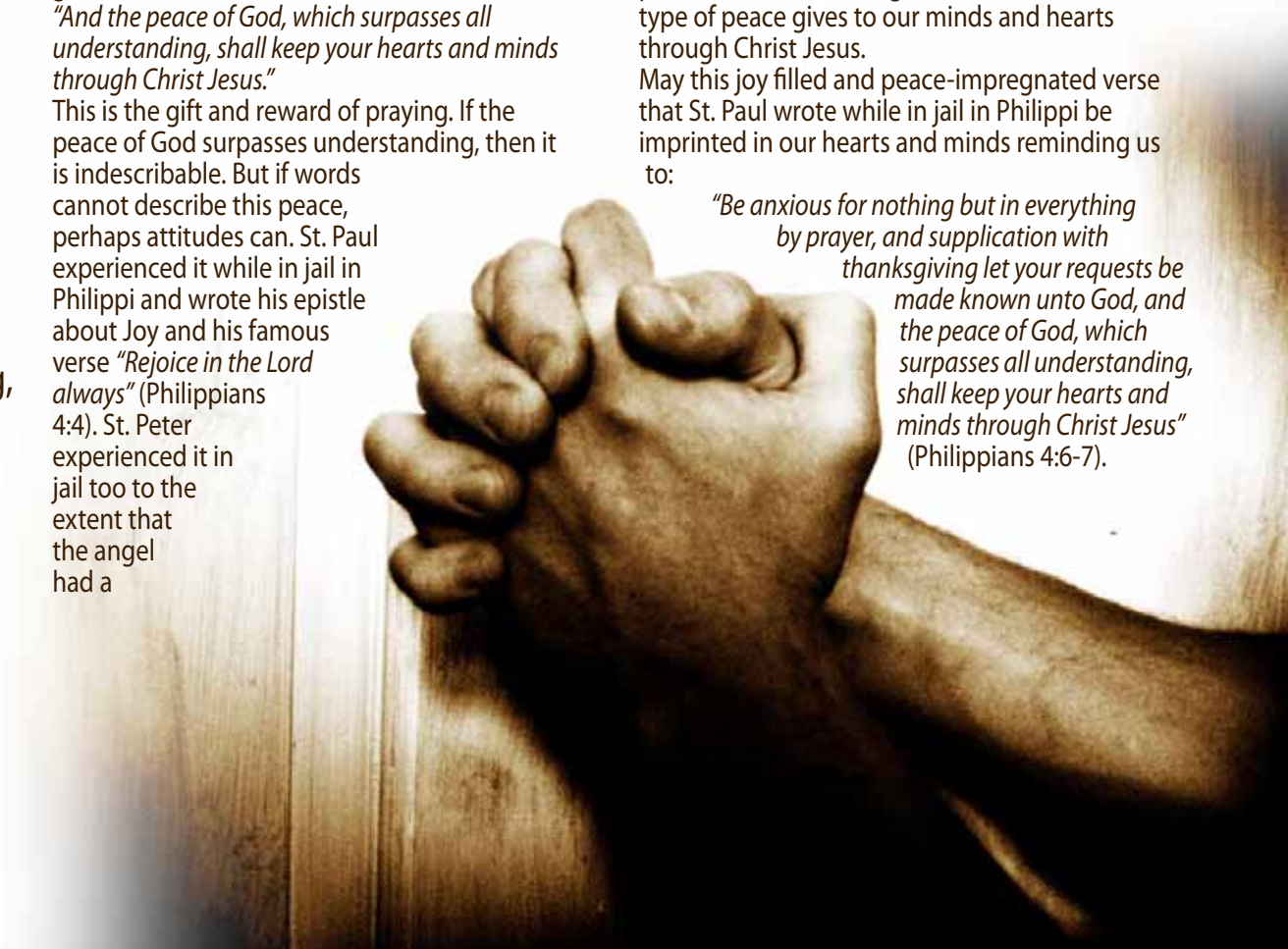
*"And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."*

This is the gift and reward of praying. If the peace of God surpasses understanding, then it is indescribable. But if words cannot describe this peace, perhaps attitudes can. St. Paul experienced it while in jail in Philippi and wrote his epistle about Joy and his famous verse *"Rejoice in the Lord always"* (Philippians 4:4). St. Peter experienced it in jail too to the extent that the angel had a hard time waking him up to deliver him out of jail before Herod could kill him. St. Steven, the first martyr, experienced it and could boldly ask forgiveness for his persecutors while welcoming death with a shining face. St. Mena's face was radiating with this peace that surpasses understanding. Who can grant this type of peace but God through prayer.

It is not necessarily the case that when we pray God will immediately answer our prayers, nor is God under any obligation to grant us all our requests; nor is His gift of peace contingent upon that. God has his own reasons and explanations for granting or withholding our requests. St. Paul had a thorn in his flesh about which he prayed three times to have it removed. However, God's response to that request was *"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness"* (2 Corinthians 12:9) and St. Paul never got rid of it but still enjoyed the peace that surpasses understanding, *"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong"* (2 Corinthians 12:10). God's glory finds its presence in our weaknesses and infirmities because then and only then His greatness and our weakness will become distinct, His support will become obvious, and hence His name will be duly glorified. For that reason when St. Paul said, *"Let your request be made known to God,"* he did not guarantee nor confirm fulfillment of our requests. What he did guarantee was the peace and the protection that this magnificent, indescribable type of peace gives to our minds and hearts through Christ Jesus.

May this joy filled and peace-impregnated verse that St. Paul wrote while in jail in Philippi be imprinted in our hearts and minds reminding us to:

*"Be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer, and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:6-7).



# Faith Questions

I have done what St. Paul refers to as "being a Jew to the Jews, a Gentile to the Gentiles." However, I have done so not to get others to Christ, as Paul said to the Corinthians, but rather to fit in. Basically I am a big HYPOCRITE. This realization didn't hit me until I created a Facebook profile, and all of a sudden, I didn't know who to be to whom and even worse, I didn't know exactly who I was. Jesus was extremely critical of hypocrites, and now I don't know how to become my true self. How can I begin to live a life without hypocrisy? - Facebook personalities

First of all, I would like to tell you that it takes an act of bravery and honest self examination to define the root of the problem as you did. Hypocrisy, or in this case the urge to become a man-pleaser, is a prison that holds us captive as slaves doing whatever it takes in order to gain the approval of others. The sacrifice of personal integrity for the sake of public reputation is a danger we all constantly face and to which we all in some measure succumb.

St. John Cassian says: man-pleasing is likened to an onion with many layers: you peel off the top layer (wanting to impress people); and there is another under it (wanting to be admired); and still another under that (craving self-importance), and on and on. Eventually, you find yourself living multiple lives and your true self is no longer found.

This vice makes us want to pile up glory for ourselves instead of giving glory to God. Even if we are in Church singing Glory to God secretly down inside we are really shouting, Glory to me . This is when it is a good time to start praying and say Lord Jesus Christ, deliver me from self glorification and from wanting to be admired.

St. Mark the ascetic says: how imperceptible is the passion of pleasing men! It possesses even the wise. For the effects of other passions are easily seen, but the effort to please men clothes itself in the words and appearances of piety, so that men whom it beguiles find it hard to detect its various aspects.

Below I shall outline some practical directives that are aimed to help you overcome the urge to conform and fit in and ultimately lose your true identity.

Pray that the Lord Jesus Christ may deliver you from vain glory and ask Him to fill your heart with His mighty presence. In every man, there is a void that can only be satisfied with He Who created him.

Remember how silly a creature man is and that his favor can be no better than himself. The thoughts or words of a mortal man are matters of no considerable value to us.

Remember that it is the judgment of God alone, that your life or death depends upon. He is one that is constant and unchangeable; and is not pleased with one thing today, and another tomorrow.

Remember what a slavery you choose when you make yourself the servant of every man, whose rebuke you fear, and for whose approval you are ambitious.

Remember that men-pleasers cannot serve God. For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ. (Gal 1:10)

Remember what a pitiful reward you seek, that is the reward of mortal men (Mat 6:2) as opposed to the reward of Lord of lords.

Remember what a life of misery you choose, if you place your peace or happiness in the words of man.

Remember that the shadow goes away from you if you follow it, and follows you as fast as you go from it. When you pursue earthly honor and glory, it vanishes away from your sight, likewise, when you seek the heavenly glory and denounce that which is earthly; you end up receiving them both.

May the Lord reveal Himself to you and help you to live in His presence. This will ultimately lead you to discover your true identity in Christ.

*If you have a question about our faith, send it*

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Subject: Q&A FAITH

# VOICE OF A SAINT



# MARY OF EGYPT

***"At one time, you were alienated from me, separated because of your sin. But Jesus made peace between us by shedding His Blood on the Cross. Because of His death, you have been reconciled to me. You are holy in my sight, without blemish. No one can accuse you. There is no condemnation. You have been pardoned.* (Colossians 1:20-22)"**

Sometimes in our lives, we come to a point where we believe there is no reason for controlling our corrupt nature, and make foolish excuses to continue living in the sinful way so that our physical and earthly desires may be fulfilled. St Mary of Egypt lived in the fifth century. She was immoral in every way imaginable. Yet St Mary became a Christian through one very simple incident which changed her way of thinking and livelihood until the day of her death.

St Mary was a harlot who repented and serves as a hope and inspiration to so many people who are lost but desire to change for the better. At the young age of twelve, St Mary began her long years of public prostitution in Alexandria. When St Mary was seventeen, there was a mass pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

St Mary went along with the pilgrimage in the hope that life onboard ship to Palestine would provide her new and plentiful occasions of satisfying an unquenchable lust within her.

After arriving in Jerusalem she persisted in her shameless life, and on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, joined the mass towards the Church, hoping to meet some new victims whom she might draw into sin. When St Mary reached the door of the Church, she suddenly felt herself repelled by some mysterious force, and having vainly attempted three or four times to enter, she retired to a corner of the Churchyard, and was struck with remorse for her sinful life. Her wicked life she recognized, was the cause of exclusion from the Church.

Bursting into bitter tears and beating her chest, she began to regret all of her sins.

At that very moment, St Mary's eyes fell upon the Blessed Virgin Mary's image.



# FROM INEQUITY TO SANCTITY

Instantly St Mary begged for help and guidance in her life so that she might alter her life of iniquity. After this confrontation, St Mary entered the Church without the smallest amount of difficulty. As she prayed in the Church, she heard a voice which told her that if she crossed the Jordan River she would find peace.

That very night, St Mary reached the Jordan and received Holy Communion from a priest-monk, St Zosimas. From that day forward St Mary lived the rest of her life in the desert living off herbs. She fasted and prayed for 40 years and then passed away and was buried by St Zosimas with the help of a lion.

Many would have thought that there was no hope in St Mary's life and never even offered to help her in her time of need. We must remember when we feel all alone and when we are at the lowest point in our lives, we should call out to the Lord our God for the help and strength that we yearn for.

"I will restore you and make you strong, firm, and steadfast. (I Peter 5:10)"

God will never reject anyone who calls out to His name, and will always immerse us in His Holy Compassion and Love.

"I, even I, am He who comforts you. (Isaiah 51:12)"

St. Mary of Egypt

"In you, Mother, the image was perfectly preserved. For taking up the Cross, you followed Christ, and taught by deeds: to disdain the body, since it passes away, but to look to the soul, a thing immortal. This is why your spirit, venerable Mary, rejoices with the angels."

- Marianne Ebrahim

# MIGHTY ARROWS MAGAZINE

## Writers Wanted

**Did you ever want to write something that would be published?**

Guys, do you want advice only a guy can give?

Have you heard of a saint's story that really touched your heart?

Girls, do you have a question only a girl can understand?

Did you ever want to share a personal experience?

Do you want to tell the magazine staff a suggestion?

Did you ever read a Bible passage that really moved you?

Have you ever written a prayer that you can share with us?

Do you want to share what is happening at your local church?

Did you ever read a book that changed your life?

Here is your chance,
We Want to here From you!

**Please Submit Writings to mightyarrowsmagazine@suscopts.org**

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First issue will take 4-6 weeks to arrive
mightyarrowsmagazine@suscopts.org

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