



# Into the Light

*All things are possible with God*

July-August 2009

## A Point of View--Literally

By Bob Van Domelen

*<sup>11</sup>When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. <sup>12</sup>Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. (1 Corinthians 13.11-12)*

Last evening while waiting for sleep to come, I kept thinking of a singular image—a small child about two years old, standing in a crowd of knees. Conversations were taking place all around and the child had to look up in order to connect voices to kneecaps. Though some of the sounds were familiar (Grandpa Bob, Uncle Mike, Aunt Mary), there was nothing to connect the sounds to the child. The conversations were big people conversations.

Not all conversations are filled with laughter. Some resound with raised voices of anger; others with tones of deep concern; still others with softly spoken truths meant to convey understanding.

Few children make it through those growing up years without conflict, yet conflicts are training grounds for the world of adulthood and that makes them legitimate. On the other hand, many children face more than their share of conflict, especially the kind that should not ever happen.

Many children have alcohol- or drug-dependent parents, live in homes where violence in one shape or another is an everyday experience, or face verbal, physical, or sexual abuse at the hands of those who are supposed to protect them.

### **When I was a child . . .**

As children, we all did childish things, made childish decisions, and responded to the world around us with a child's perceptions. After all, we *were* children and in the world of children no one is more at the center of attention than we presume ourselves to be.

In the more or less average world, children slowly mature, learn to make better decisions, and learn that others have equal rights. Growing up is a series of trial and error experiences with the hope for as little damage as possible—to self or to others. And for most people, there is success although rarely without some trauma.

### **When I became a man . . .**

The experiences of a child don't really fit well in the adult world nor are the limited resources of that child serviceable in a complex business venture. Most of us learned enough in our growing social structure and through the educational system to fit in as contributors. We do, for the most part at least, put away the things of childhood.

If the mail I get is any indication, there are a lot of adults still looking at kneecaps, still processing as part adult, part

child. Unresolved conflict, scarred memories, and distorted notions of what is appropriate and what is inappropriate all bear equal attention. It is important to emphasize that none of this is an excuse for those of us who have molested children. As I have said before, it is not enough to consider relapse prevention *only* as it applies to victims. Relapse prevention must focus at least some attention on dealing with the issues and concerns I have just shared.

### **A poor reflection as in a mirror. . .**

For those who believe in God, this portion of the verse is a reminder that we will not know God clearly until we are one with Him for eternity. We see God but not clearly—certainly not as clearly as God sees and knows us. But we don't actually see God in the mirror as much as we see what is supposed to be the reflection of God in our own faces.

Quite honestly, when I was growing up all I ever saw in the mirror was a vain, self-centered kid who craved attention and was willing to do whatever it took to get it. I didn't, of course, think that way then. I was, I thought, just a guy who wanted to fit in and feeling frustrated at my inability to do so. So in this respect, the reflection was a poor one.

As the years passed, the image became that of a secretive, sexually addicted male who was unable to stop himself from sinking deeper into the mire of evil. Ironically, the image I portrayed to others was just the opposite. The only ones who really knew me shared some of the same failings.

One day a label was attached that read sex offender. I wanted to tear it off and make it disappear but my actions had justified the label. In some ways, though, the label was a wakeup call to just how far I had sunk, to just how many people I had harmed along the way. I somehow knew that I had to accept the label in order to finally work on its removal.

In a world where adults are not supposed to do what I did, I found myself looking at kneecaps again—my position in society made face to face eye contact something I had not earned. At least not at first.

My spiritual healing began the moment I surrendered myself to God, the moment I willingly acknowledged myself as out of control and needing help.

I think what a lot of sex offenders struggle with is the notion that God forgives them and grants them restoration while society does not. I wish that spiritual and societal healing would run concurrent, but they don't.

A pastor once said "A person who kneels in sincere repentance, rises a saint." Not a perfect being but an honest, God-seeking one. Our fellow beings are far less forgiving and despite my desire that it be otherwise, I can

accept (though not agree with) the rigid attitude that would define me as a leper among healthy people. We are *all* broken in some way or another; we *all* look in that mirror and see a poor reflection.

Perhaps the critical part of what I am sharing is that regardless of how others view me, their attitudes and judgments do not in any way diminish the changes I have experienced or will experience. How I live each day cannot depend on pleasing those around me nor should it be so. How I live each day is a testament to the relationship I have with God as well as restoring the identity given me at birth.

I am incredibly blessed to be able to share letters with men and women who are on the same journey. Some letters are filled with frustration about injustices but just as often are filled with hope and encouragement. The common bond we share is no more victims.

There must be consequences for actions but consequences should not increase with intensity with the passing of time. The practice of doing so is retroactive punishment and it does nothing to protect anyone.

My daily focus cannot change regardless of things I consider counterproductive to that process. The world is simply too large for me to handle in any kind of personal crusade, so I trust God will bring things together as they are meant to be. And in case you are wondering, I really don't see kneecaps any more but I remember them. □

## IMPORTANT

New regulations are in effect that require us to be able to verify the exact address for every name on our mailing list. Any and all mail returned to us as undeliverable now comes back with an invoice. The cost is 44 cents for each piece that is returned. For the past few weeks, few days have passed where I was not making a payment for returned newsletters.

We realize that people move and inmates are transferred or released. A change from one unit to another is enough for some prison mail rooms to reject the newsletter as incorrectly addressed.

Donations to the ministry have decreased as well, so it made sense to ask you, our readers, if you still want to receive *Into the Light*. We don't, however, have the funds to supply you with postage paid cards or envelopes to make it easier for you to reply.

If you wish to remain on the mailing list, send your name and complete address to

**Broken Yoke Ministries  
PO Box 5824  
De Pere, WI 54115-5824**

Please understand that a reply to your note is not likely.



Only individuals coded as responding by **August 17** will receive the September edition.

Thank you for understanding!

## Bits & Pieces

*The following are all from letters I have received in recent months. As always, I hope something you read will bring you encouragement and hope.*

In the program they taught us coping skills, thought stopping and thought switching. What better way to stop a bad thought than to think of Jesus. What better way to switch a bad thought than to pray. They also taught us meditation. What better way to meditate than on the Word of God. Jesus said that in every temptation he will provide a way out. Our job is that when we are tempted we need to ask God to show us the way out. We must ask. So you see, the program works hand in hand with my belief in Christ crucified.

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One of the characteristics that I believe identifies a real man is that he rejects passivity. This is a physical thing or action but it also has a spiritual quality. Passive faith knows and believes the truth of God. Active faith acts like it.

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We are not animals defined by our desires. We are creations of God and we are what the Creator says we are.

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I am part of a 12-step program (on the outside) whose members love me regardless of my past. They share wonderful words of encouragement via greeting cards and letters. They do not procrastinate in sharing. They put into action what they can do today—while it is today.

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I sensed that changes and growth would not come until, with God's help, I looked at everything that was hidden. And in each step of the way I have had to let go of every attempt to take charge. I had to empty out the self. Christ was able to move into that space.

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I still have flashbacks of memory that tempt me to turn to inappropriate fantasies. I know how to move past those situations, but they always remind me of the potential and the work that must continue with God's direction. I turn to Him when I face those temptations. He hears a lot from me on this subject. And that is what He wants to hear—the real me, my real thoughts, real feelings, real concerns.

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Our faith must be first in God and God alone—not in a specific church. This doesn't mean that we have to leave our church. It just means that our faith and hope is not in the church but in God! We love God first and seek God first. Then we can deal with others (the church) from that center.

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So many of our Christian prison ministries have the feel of detached entities and have hardly any real discipleship (aka mentorship). Someone once said, "Prison is the great anti-church, bringing a man deeper into himself, yes, deeper than what God intended him to be."

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I cannot forget my susceptibility concerning not only one area but all areas of sin as I try my best to live a Godly life—a testimony that is an affront to my past lifestyle.

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At times I cry when thinking of some of the things I have done. I believe crying is God's way of washing away the pain. It is important to grieve over past sins, yet the devil tries to use that to put me down, but I know he is a liar. I am a new man in Christ!

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I have been blessed by a Christian room mate and that makes my time a lot easier to do. At night we pray (which I think is really neat) and twice a week we have our own Bible study.

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Budget concerns have finally hit <this state> and their first hit is sex offender treatment. I spent over a decade dreading the move here and getting started in SOTP, but over the past year it's slowly but surely managed to become the highpoint of my week. For some of us, the program is court-ordered. Will we be stuck in no man's land or more readily released to treatment in the real world?

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If I back off from obedience for the sake of safety, I deprive God of the opportunity to demonstrate His awesome power in me. Small choices may seem insignificant, but they lead toward a lifetime of walking with God.

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Only since my incarceration have I been able to accept how God views me in Christ; surrender myself to the deep, penetrating internal change that only Christ can bring; submit to God's will and viewpoint rather than my own; and choose to believe no matter what that God is loving, forgiving to the repentant, faithful, trustworthy, and that He never gives up on me or gets tired of me even when I doubt, am unfaithful, have to confess the same sin once again, or when I feel unlovable.

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I have many things to pray on and do my best not to become discouraged. God uses adversity to grow and strengthen our faith and trust in Him.

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I've noticed that a number of sex offenders are involved in chapel work and attend services here. It seems that church or Bible study is a safe zone. People love you regardless of your past. For me that was an inspiration to stay strong in the faith.

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I've learned that there is no explanation to the irrationality of fear and hatred. Fear is fear and hate is hate; plainly stated that's all there is to it and they cannot be explained nor reasoned out. The only answer is to return fear and hatred with kindness and love! Because in Christ we trust and believe with all our hearts that love is more powerful than hate; mercy always triumphs over judgment. We have to believe that in the cross and resurrection of Jesus!

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## *All things are possible with God!*



## *Our Prayer Corner*

**Prayer is an incredible gift we can give one another, for there is no better thing than to lift our lives, hopes, and dreams to the altar of the Lord.**

### *Let us pray . . .*

- First and always foremost, for our victims, that each day for them is a new day, a day without fear, and a day of healing.
- For those in prison ministry, that they remain encouraged that what they do brings God great joy as lost sheep are found, salvation gained.
- For the work of groups who daily seek to find ways to reach out to sex offenders in the face of incredible adversity, that they not tire of the effort.
- For those who continue to challenge illogical thinking in local legislation, that their voices will eventually be heard and understood.
- For the Support Group (Wisconsin), that they be blessed for their long-term commitment to serve loved ones in difficult if not impossible situations.
- For those who feel a sense of hopelessness, that they live daily by the words "With God all things are possible."
- For those concerned about housing and employment following their release, that they trust God to meet their needs and that their patience does not wane in the face of the odds against them.
- For all with age-inappropriate attractions but have not acted on those attractions, that they seek help so that the secret can be destroyed.
- For those who feel caught up in the despair prison often brings, that they come to know that their lives *do* make a difference--especially to their cellmate or to others on their unit.
- For the families and friends of victims, that they will continue in their love and support.
- For inmates experiencing the loss of a loved one, that they recognize that their love cannot be restricted by prison walls.
- For churches, that the word of God and the example of Jesus opens the door for more and not less ministry to those considered modern day lepers.
- For all those on the streets, that their daily lives give witness to change and healing to those who desperately need to see that witness.
- For Bob and Cathie, that they continue to live each day with the same trust and faith in God that they've had from the start.
- For this ministry, that Broken Yoke Ministries continues to be blessed with the financial support needed to meet basic expenses like this newsletter.
- Finally, for those who are still abusing and are reading this newsletter because God made that possible, that they will do whatever it takes to stop the cycle of abuse and harm caused to their victims.

**This newsletter is made possible by the donations of its readers and would cease to exist without that support. Please consider a tax-exempt donation to Broken Yoke Ministries, PO Box 5824, De Pere, WI 54115-5824. And if you cannot contribute, please pray!**

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**De Pere, WI 54115-5824**

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### ***A Little Humor***

Johnny's mother looked out the window and noticed him "playing church" with the family cat. Johnny had the cat sitting quietly and he was preaching to it. She smiled and went about her work.



A while later she heard loud meowing and hissing. Running back to the window, she saw Johnny baptizing the cat in a tub of water. She called out, "Johnny, stop that! The cat is afraid of water!"

Johnny looked up at her and said, "He should have thought about that before he joined my church."