



# Into the Light

*All things are possible with God*

September—October 2009

## Finding Balance

By Bob Van Domelen

<sup>17</sup> The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep." <sup>18</sup> I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." (John 21:17-18)

Some of the most profound letters I receive are from men and women who write to share what they have learned about themselves. There are no denials or minimizing of what they did to victims in these letters, no pointing the finger at others for the choices they made.

They seek God on a daily basis. Some have finally come to believe that God has forgiven them for a sin that Jesus pronounced as worthy of having a millstone tied around their necks and being tossed into the sea. God's word has come alive for them and it is a daily decision to unite their hearts to His will through obedience and surrender.

If healing and change is nothing more than acknowledging the crime of molestation, treatment that focuses solely on victim empathy and relapse prevention would be enough. But it isn't. As I have written on many occasions, there is brokenness inside every offender that must eventually be addressed.

One recent letter in particular touched on many of the issues I am trying to raise, so I will use parts of it as a foundation for this article.

I believe that finding balance in his life, in my life, and in the lives of many of you who read this will happen when we reach that point that can see both sides of what is happening. In shining a light into our dark places, we need to see without shame. What is in the past simply is. We can't change that but we can recognize it.

There is, however, also the future that we cannot see. It is, for most of us, a God-centered life that is certainly better than what our lives were before. This life acknowledges faith and hope. This life readily accepts God's grace and mercy. We may not find such acceptance and love from other people, but it is healing to know that God desires us to have it.

### Do you love me?

When Jesus asked Peter "Do you love me?" for a third time, there was no hint that Peter was being told he would eventually forget his denial in the courtyard. Jesus was trying to bring Peter completely into the here and now in

their relationship. It was as though He was saying, "Hey, Peter, I know what you did. I know how you denied even knowing me. But can you hear that I *still* love you? Do you understand that I am *still* calling you to help me out?"

Then he told Peter that his future would not be his to choose. He even told Peter that others would literally control his movements. And yes, the call to "Feed my sheep" was still offered *despite* any doubts Peter may have had.

### Memories that Keep Coming

The letter writer shared "It has been over 15 months since I have found victory in my life regarding masturbation, but since then I have found depths and levels of confusion and desires I never realized I had. Memories spark memories and leave me helpless. One good thing is that I am beginning to see more clearly the rage and anger I had buried as a child over what had happened [to me]."

The normal reaction most of us would have would focus on finding a way to eliminate the memories. But his words "Memories spark other memories" are right on target. There are more layers to deal with than we can imagine and eliminating every negative memory just would not be possible.

Balance in this situation might feel impossible but there is a way to deal with it. Rather than seeking an end to the memories, bring them to God in prayer. Ask for the grace to see the moment with God present, to see with God's heart rather than with our own.

### Recognizing the Past

"Most boys, as I have heard over my life, explored normal desires and thoughts." This kind of observation can be a blessing and a curse. It's a blessing because the ability to recognize some attractions as being unlike what "normal" boys experienced is a step toward rejecting them in the future. Despite claims of independence, most of us really want to feel normal.

At the same time, it is easy to come to this understanding and find the wedge between self and others growing so large that the gap might never be eliminated. To say "I can never be normal (whatever that is)" leans toward a surrender that we cannot afford to accept.

One friend recently shared that a side effect of the changes he has been experiencing has been being with other men, exposed to faults and weaknesses he had not noticed in them before. The concept that normal meant perfect literally disintegrated for him—not in arrogance but in the humility that comes with knowing everyone struggles with something.

I will admit the obvious in that not all people struggle with age-inappropriate attraction or worse act on those

attractions. Dr. Dobson made that point to me some years ago when I met with him in a pre-program interview. He wasn't denying that all people struggle with something, so much as he was making sure that I didn't minimize the harm done in any child molestation.

Some might argue that being on the sex offender registry forever labels us as lepers. They might point to people who would prefer that we spend our remaining days in confinement. I know from experience that though their anger is real, I cannot live in such a dark, dying place. So balance, then, is to recognize that we will never satisfy all people—nor should we try. Balance is to know that such hate exists without claiming it as our own. Balance is saying “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you!”

#### **Take every thought captive**

“I feel a need to somehow not just ‘take every thought captive,’ but to somehow replace these feelings and thoughts with what is Godly, normal, and the original purpose and plan for me as God’s child.” Wow!

This is *the* point, my friends. Why is it that when faced with negative memories, desires, or situations we become content with merely admitting that where we are at that moment is not the best place? There is *always* another and even better choice, so never let someone tell you that you have no options. Balance is recognizing that you do have a choice and then seeking ways to make that choice real.

#### **And the next step is . . .**

Don't ever let anyone (including me) suggest that everything I am sharing with you is easy—because it is definitely not. But not being easy is not the same as saying impossible.

There are times when I actually do see myself sitting with Jesus at that charcoal fire. He knows what I have done. He knows how my actions have wounded. But He keeps asking me if I love Him. I do. I just feel so inadequate at times because where I am is not where I want to be.

Then Jesus reminds me that there will come a time when others will take me where I don't want to go. It isn't hard to see legislation against sex offenders might be among those places, but regardless of what the world says and does (rightly or wrongly), I am still His. Where I am is where He also resides, and the same is true in your lives if you are willing for that to be so. □

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### **UPDATE**

In the last edition of *Into the Light* I asked readers to let me know if they still wanted to be on the mailing list. Thank you for responding. If anyone asks why you received the newsletter and they didn't, simply suggest that they write me a note. I will be happy to reinstate them.

Sadly, although not totally unanticipated, a significant number of newsletters came back because of the new bulk mail rules. I will, however, rest in the knowledge that we are being good shepherds of the donations we receive—gifts that make this newsletter possible.

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*All things are possible with God!*

### **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.*

If our contentment comes from our relationship with Christ, there is absolutely nothing that can take that away.

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The third of next month marks ten years for me here. God has truly blessed me and grown me through so much! He has given me His powerful peace and abundant care, guidance, and protection.

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The question is simple. Is my goal in life to search for meaning or will I search for God who gives meaning?

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The devil often uses cruel psychological warfare to eat away at my defenses so as to get me to lose hope. It is important for me to keep a healthy balance in all aspects of my life.

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Your taking the time to respond to some stranger means a lot—and it's not even something you have to do. I guess it's all part of joining God's family. You get to have a family worth having.

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We all need lifting up but those who seem lost and confused need our prayers even more. The brothers here are very supportive and will pray for you anywhere you ask. They just don't wait until you are in chapel or at a Bible study.

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I poured my heart out to the Lord and wondered if He would ever show me His favor again. But as the Psalmist wrote, I was reminded of the faithfulness God has shown to me in the past and will show to me again. All I know is that everything will work out for good no matter how I might feel right at this moment.

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It's a sad thing to look back and realize I've accomplished absolutely nothing. I donated sperm to help create two daughters but there is nothing I can point to and say “I did that.” A lot of wasted years. I'm sure happy God is in charge of the future because I don't have a clue. Don't misunderstand, I am not feeling sorry for myself, I just wish I hadn't wasted so many years. I'm hoping God will allow me a very long life so I can at least do some good in His kingdom.

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As far as my walk with God is going, while I am doing much better in the area of surrendering lustful thoughts, I seem to be gaining no ground at all with my problem of being terribly intolerant with the faults of others. This issue is a thousand times harder to overcome than lust ever was. Every once in a while I have a breakthrough but five minutes later everything is back to normal. Prayers would be greatly appreciated.

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Before I was arrested, I always felt the age of consent should be lowered to 13 or 14. But now being sensitive to God's word I no longer feel that way. God set a standard for two people to have sexual relationships. He didn't set the standard to be mean or harsh but for His perfect

purpose. According to His word, it would be no more okay to legally have a sexual relationship with a 14-year old boy than with a 21-year old woman outside of marriage.

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I thank God I will not die the way I lived my life, controlled by the shadows of my past—both as a child and as an adult.

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I would like to express the blessing your newsletter has been to me. “A Point of View—Literally” [July-August] has caused me to take a closer look at myself from God’s side of the heavens (1 Cor.13.11-12). What is in that poor reflection in the mirror? One thing you said really hit hard and that was about the sex offender label. I somehow knew that I had to accept the label in order to finally work on its removal.

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*Into the Light* has helped me to overcome so much of my thoughts and now when Satan calls on me to remind me of my past, I tell him I’ve lived my past. But Satan still has to live his future and he knows what it is.

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I have always wanted to be in pulpit ministry, but what I want more than that is simply to live faithfully to God each and every day by living a life free from homosexual sin and other deviant behaviors. Matter of fact, I would be happy to scrub toilets or cut grass for Christ so long as I am in the center of His will.

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How do you ever get over wanting to hold part of your life back from God because you feel you can run it better?

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Just as Jesus used Scripture to defeat Satan while being tempted, I too reach for key passages in God’s word for strength during my own times of temptation. One that immediately comes to mind is Matthew 6.22: “The eye is the lamp for your body. A pure eye lets sunshine into your soul.” (NLT) The way I use this verse when I see something on television or in a magazine or newspaper that takes my mind somewhere it ought not to be, I know I must let the light in. So I turn the channel or the page and refocus.

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Why do those of us who hate the abuse done to us turn and abuse innocents and then leave them in our wake? One answer I offer myself is that if I could find a way to justify the behaviors done by me, it would help me make sense of what was done to me. I didn’t say it was a good answer.

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I think that I have to live with the reality that I have lost my family, my church, and my friends. They are the ones I thought would support my efforts to change but it doesn’t look like that will happen.

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## *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 whose lives feel out of control, that they find the balance and peace God wants them to have.
- For those who fear their release from prison, that they come to trust God will meet their needs.
- For those involved in prison ministry, that they can see Christ in all inmates regardless of the specific offense of those inmates.
- For the Support Group (Wisconsin), that they find support to continue bringing an informed presence into the issue of civil commitment.
- For those with sick or dying family members on the outside, that they understand the power of prayer during this difficult time of forced separation.
- For those awaiting court hearings on civil commitment, that they will find the peace of the Serenity Prayer through all that happens.
- For all with age-inappropriate attractions who have not acted on those attractions, that they are able to find the support and encouragement needed to deal with those attractions.
- For those struggling with abuse in their own time of childhood, that they can see the need for healing in their hearts as well as in the hearts of those were victimized by them. One abuse is never an excuse for another abuse.
- For the families and friends of victims, that they will continue to show support in love or come to understand how important their support is.
- For inmates wondering how God could even be present in the chaos of prison, that He becomes real for them despite that chaos.
- 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 those communities with residency restrictions, that they constantly question the effectiveness of the laws they support.
- 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!**

**Broken Yoke Ministries, Inc.**  
**PO Box 5824**  
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### *A Little Humor . . .*

Three strings want to go to the bar on the corner but the bartender there doesn't allow strings inside. Still, they decide to go for it. The first string goes in, sits down and orders a soda. The bartender asks "Are you a string?" and he says "Yes, I'm sorry" and leaves. The 2nd string decided to be sneakier. He goes in, sits at the end of the bar in the smoke and shadows, but the bartender sees him and throws him out too. The 3rd string has a plan. He ties himself in a knot, messes up his hair and goes in. Sitting down right in the middle of the bar, he looks the bartender in the eye and orders a soda. The bartender says "No way. Aren't you a string?" The 3rd string says "Nope. I'm a frayed knot."

