



# Into the Light

March-April 2006

Matthew 19.26

## Loving and Being Loved

By Bob Van Domelen

<sup>36</sup>Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" <sup>37</sup>Jesus replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. <sup>38</sup>This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup>And the second is like it. Love your neighbor as yourself. <sup>40</sup>All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matthew 22.36-40)

### Love your God with all your heart

Twenty-five years ago, I often asked myself, "How can I stop what I am doing when I have absolutely no control? Each morning I say today will be different, but by the end of the day I know I have fallen in some serious way -- again."

Years ago, every promise I made to be better or to do the right thing fell short. And in the end, it took an arrest to stop me—something I could not do for myself.

The morning after my arrest when bail had been posted, the rubber hit the road in my spiritual life. God never felt more distant than He did that day, never more deaf to my cries for help. And in my shell of brokenness I believed God had abandoned me.

The light bulb of understanding that I was completely at fault had not gone on inside my head. In my selfish state, all I knew was that my life had crashed. God could have intervened and prevented that from happening but He had not.

Some of you will identify with what I have just written. You may not like the words but they do have a familiar ring to them. Some of you are merely nodding your heads in agreement because you still feel God should have done more than He did. God is, after all, God.

Loving God with all your heart should be an obvious thing; it should be our number one priority. But things get in the way of that—especially for sex offenders. In the space that follows, I will list a few of those barriers and maybe a suggestion or two.

### Barriers

#### **My sin is too great**

<sup>6</sup>But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. (Matthew 18.6)

I am not alone in feeling the weight of this verse in light of what I have done, and it would be altogether too easy to despair. But in the same chapter of Matthew, there is the parable of the lost sheep. The final verse should bring hope to all of us because it reads, "In the same way, your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost." (verse 14) Guess what, we are counted among those little ones *regardless* of what we have done! And the angels in heaven rejoice with every lost sheep that is found and returned to the fold.

### **I know God . . . sort of**

It is altogether too easy to see God as being "up there somewhere" and detached from our lives. It is also too easy to reserve our conversations with God for Sunday services—if we make it to Sunday services. It is even easier to serve on church committees and feel that we *know* God because of our service.

<sup>22</sup>"Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name cast out demons, and in your name perform many miracles?' <sup>23</sup>"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you.'" (Matthew 7.22-23) When Jesus wanted to be one with his Father, he stopped doing things and went off by himself to pray. It was his seeking the Father in the quiet of his heart that was important.

<sup>33</sup>"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Matthew 6.33 emphasis mine) The word "seek" is not passive; it's an active and personal involvement in searching. If we looked for God with the same intensity as we do for a missing wallet or set of car keys, think of what we would find!

In simple words, I don't believe we can love God with all our heart, soul, and mind without getting to know God. We do this by studying His word, communicating with Him on a regular basis, and looking for Him in the lives of others.

### **Too many Pharisees**

"They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger." (Matthew 23.4) I add this verse because there are people who feel justified and even righteous in creating restrictions for offenders without thought to helping them.

There is a song with these words: *Christ has no body now but yours; no hands, no feet on earth but yours.* We and they are all to be witnesses of healing love—anyone can condemn someone else. Not seeing a tangible example of the love of God does make it harder to want God, especially if those who say they know God are doing more condemning than healing.

### **Love your neighbor as yourself**

This second commandment is more difficult in some ways than the first. I know people who will profess love for everyone but "that dirty so and so." And I also know many people who would be the first to admit that they did not love themselves. So how does one love God when so many obstacles exist within oneself and exist toward neighbors?

Just as there are barriers to loving God, there are also barriers to loving our neighbor. It is by faith that we relate to God because we cannot see Him. Neighbors and self are another story.

## Barriers

### **Who wants to associate with a sex offender?**

<sup>9</sup>"You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) (John 4.9)

I cannot tell you whether or not the Jewish people hated Samaritans as much as the world hates a child molester, but it is pretty clear that the Samaritans were avoided as being unclean, and that's a concept I think all sex offenders can understand.

There is a lot of anger experienced by offenders. In most cases, we have been abandoned by family and friends, church and community. We read about this or that law being written so as to protect children; we hear about boundaries being set that restrict where we can live. How can love enter in to such a negative equation? And yet it must.

<sup>32</sup>"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. <sup>33</sup>And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that." (Luke 6.32.-33)

Maybe it helps some to maintain anger toward those who reject us—even if the rejection is somewhat justifiable. But that's not what God's word tells us to do. We are to love those who do not love us. That's hard to do.

### **I just can't forgive myself**

Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven." (Matthew 18.22)

This response was in answer to Peter asking him how many times he should forgive his neighbor, but I think each of us must hear this response of Jesus to our own question, "Lord, how many times must I forgive myself? Seven times?" In today's way of phrasing things, I think Jesus would say, "As many times as it takes."

None of us can ever atone for what we have done. None of us can ever make things "as they used to be" before we committed our crimes. That's why Jesus took our sins upon himself. That's why he suffered and died for us.

### **I just can't forgive my neighbor**

Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

Sound familiar? It should. You might say, "But I sinned against them, not them against me" and there would be an element of truth in that. But we also have to forgive those who have failed us, have abused us, or have failed in being Christ's body, his hands, or his feet to us.

Forgiving someone does not mean that the event needing forgiveness is forgotten, just forgiven. What we want others to do for us must be something we ourselves are willing to do for them.

### **The End Result**

We are talking about a lifetime, my friends, but the end result is a living of the greatest commandment—at least to the extent we are able.

We are called to surrender to God and to seek God with all our heart, soul, and mind. We are called to love God, our neighbor, and ourselves as best as we are able. We will have good days, my friends, and we will also have days that are less successful.

I cannot speak for you, but my heart sings these words daily: "Only this I ask, but to serve the Lord." The bottom line, my friends, is that God loves us!

*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 at the beginning of incarceration, that they trust in God to be their protector; that He will bring order to their lives where now there only seems to be chaos and fear.
- For those in the mid-range of their incarceration, that they might look back and see God's love through the most difficult of situations; that they might serve as encouragement to those beginning their time in prison.
- For those nearing the end of their incarceration, that they ask God to free them from all forms of anxiety as they look to starting their lives over.
- For children of offenders, that God blesses them with an abundance of love and affection, affirmation and protection.
- For those in media, that their reports are given with accuracy and balance, avoiding the kind of sensationalism that only deepens wounds.
- For support ministries dealing with sex offenders, that the message they offer is one of hope and encouragement in the name of Jesus.
- For prison ministries across the country, that those they serve will take the time to thank them and pray for them.
- For Bob, that he continues to listen for the voice of the Lord in all things; that his life be filled with healthy balance and accountability; and that he has the time needed to do everything.
- (As always) For those who are still abusing, that they will come to understand the devastation they bring on their victims and that they seek help for themselves—whatever the cost.

**Broken Yoke Ministries is a not for profit 501 (c)(3) corporation and operates solely on the contributions of people such as you. All donations to this ministry are tax deductible and will be recognized. If you cannot support us financially, pray for us. Unused stamps are also very welcomed and a good way for those in confinement to be in partnership with this ministry. If you are in a position to make a financial contribution so that more might receive this newsletter, please consider doing that. The bottom line is that I ask you to pray about becoming a partner serving with this ministry.**

**NOTE: Thanks to Warren & Ann for their donation to cover the cost for this edition. Blessings on them!**  
**NOTE: We hope that the font change for the newsletter will make it easier to read. Let us know what you think.**

## Who I Am

By W

I'm a child of the living God, the King of Kings, the everlasting Father. I have been washed thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleansed from all unrighteousness. For I have acknowledged my transgressions before God and he has been faithful and just to forgive me. He has cast my sin as far as the East is from the West and remembers it no more. I have no righteousness of my own, except by Christ through faith in God.

I've reckoned myself dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Christ Jesus my Lord. It is no longer I that lives, but Christ that lives in me. For I am a new creature in Christ, old things are passed away; behold, all things have become new. In him I live and move and have my being. His strength is made perfect in my weakness. No weapon formed against me shall prosper, for God has chosen the weak things of this world to confound the mighty, and I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Because I know that his thoughts toward me are thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give me a future and a hope. Hope makes me not ashamed, for the love of God is shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Spirit. By faith I have overcome the world and by faith I will endure until the end, giving thanks and praying always, offering myself a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is my reasonable service. Therefore I will not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto them that believe in the only begotten of the Father.

This is my daily affirmation. It's God's Word being etched into my heart. As I study his word and meditate upon it, I learned to observe all that is therein, and I received with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save my soul. For the Word of God is quick and powerful. It is sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even the dividing of soul and spirit.

The Word of God is a discoverer of the thoughts and intents of the heart, and through it he shows me the path of life, a life more abundant which Jesus gives. To walk in this life is to walk in love, and that comes by walking in obedience to his commandments. As a trust in the Lord with all my heart without leaning on my own understanding, he will direct my path.

God has delivered me out of sexual bondage, perverseness, sexual impurity, defiling young girls and myself, and homosexuality. He brought me from that into his marvelous light. I was a double-minded man, unstable in all my ways. I could not serve two masters for I can only love one and serve one at a time. I cannot please both God and man.

Trials, tribulations, persecutions, all have helped me to mature in Christ. If God didn't chasten me, it would mean he doesn't love me, but since he does, I know I am a son of God, for God disciplines his sons whom he loves. In my daily walk, I'm learning to love God and others, and I pray for those who persecute me. As a result, God blesses me, feeds me in the presence of my enemies, and even makes my enemies to be at peace with me.

I choose to set my affections on things above, not on the earth. As I hide God's Word in my heart, follow his commandments, walking after the Spirit, God gives me strength and replaces my sinful desires for godly desires. I choose to live life, speak life, be an instrument of life, and not of death. Praise God for the strength he gives me daily to do this.

---

*When I first read W's testimony, I immediately went to my Bible because much of it had a scriptural flow and I wondered if he was offering direct quotes. What I think I found instead was that W has absorbed God's Word in such a way as to make the words personal yet not unlike the Bible version he uses to study. [Bob]*

---

## Bits & Pieces

From *The Podium*: "Grace Rogers, administrator of the state Adult and Diagnostic Center in Avenel, N.J., said high relapse rates are a fallacy. 'I think that's what people want to believe,' Rogers said. 'The sexual re-offense rate is extremely low compared to other inmate re-offenses—like those involving drugs or burglaries.' Rogers said the number of offenders who return to her facility is very low. She said convicted sex offenders are arrested for more offenses, not sex offenses, because of their constant monitoring."

\*\*\*\*\*

*From an inmate letter: "I received Help for Adults Attracted to Children and it helped open my eyes. For a long time I felt I was alone in this struggle. Now I'm glad to know that I am not."*

[Note: This booklet is available free to inmates with institutional clearance to receive it from Regeneration Books PO Box 9830, Baltimore, MD 21284]

\*\*\*\*\*

From an inmate letter: "I received a Broken Yoke newsletter today and felt the need to write and say thank you. I really want to tell you that through the grace of God I have finally come to terms with those who have molested me and those like them. I have been growing emotionally now for the past 12 years and am now a true adult mentally, physically, and more important, emotionally.

"I am coming to the end of my minimum sentence and will be seeing the parole board this year. Nineteen and a half years is a long time but I made it. No more depression, hatred, anger, and very little feelings of inadequacies, insecurities, and emotional upheavals.

"Therapy works for those who literally leave everything on the table and take off the masks, break down the walls, and learn to forgive, accept, and acknowledge their past. We never forget—only God can do that—but we shouldn't either, especially the lack of empathy we had for our victims."

[Note: His forgiveness was a means of facing and dealing with his own past and that is, my friends, critical to the whole process of change.]

\*\*\*\*\*

*From a donor: "This donation is given on behalf of your readers who are incarcerated and unable to offer financial support. Please encourage them to pray for your ministry. Prayer is free but not cheap!*

[Note: Consider yourselves encouraged to pray!]