



Into the Light

November-December 2007

Matthew 19.26

Who Said It Would Be Easy?

By Bob Van Domelen

This year marks the 20th anniversary of Broken Yoke Ministries and the 10th anniversary of "Into the Light." This article was written for the November 1998 edition of this newsletter and I hope it blesses you.

- 1998 -

One Saturday morning not long ago, I turned on a TV while getting dressed. Because I had no intention of sitting through an entire program, I didn't bother to switch channels despite the fact that I was watching an infomercial.

People with smiling faces eagerly spoke of making thousands of dollars the very first month they were in business. Others, more seasoned in the trade, shared annual incomes fitting the rich and famous. And it was all so easy. Just follow the guidelines written by the man making a fortune selling his guidelines and success was guaranteed.

Some people try to package and promote Christianity in the same manner. Most sentences start with "All you have to do is. . ." and close with "And that's all there is to it."

I believe with all my heart that the words "Jesus, I want to accept you completely into my heart" are all the invitation necessary, but they're a *beginning* and not an *end*. Were I to invite you to come visit me and you accepted, I would be happy for the time we could spend together. Were I to leave you sitting alone, however, while I went to do some shopping, it's reasonable to guess that you would not come over again too soon.

The world is full of self-help books, and many of them are excellent in terms of the information they offer. But they are little more than an invitation to the change desired unless the reader is willing to become an active participant in the process.

There was a time when you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Well, then, live as children of light. (Eph.5.8) The verse reads "you were darkness" and not "you were *in* darkness. Matthew Henry wrote in his commentary "The state of sin is a state of darkness" and adds that sinners don't know where they are going or what they are doing. Those in the light, however, have an obligation to "seek diligently" the way of the Lord.

That doesn't sound to me like an easy thing to do or something I can achieve without active mental participation. I must will myself beyond the choices I made "in darkness."

There are many who would suggest that one behavior is "the lesser of two evils" or at least "legal" by society's code of behavior. I am no lawyer, but it seems to me that whether or not a behavior is legal might simply reflect

current attitudes toward the behavior. In other words, something legal today might be illegal tomorrow.

God's laws are not transitory or shifting despite the efforts of some to make them conform to changing times or political opinions. *Let no one deceive you with worthless arguments.* (v.6) A sin is no less a sin if done in secret or between consenting adults, for all sin will eventually be exposed to the light.

With each passing sentence I write, the process of change seems more difficult, no, almost impossible. But God knows my heart—He knows your heart—and when I silence my anxiety I can feel His presence and His love. My heart is stilled and humbled in the shadow of the cross and my spirit is naked before the love of Jesus.

A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew in me. My sacrifice, O God, is a contrite spirit; a heart contrite and humbled, O God, you will not spurn. (Ps.51.12,19) No matter how hard I try to think otherwise, these verses are beginnings and not ends. I petition God to be the man I am supposed to be in His will, asking for the strength to move from day to day. At the end of each day, however, I am brought face to face with the reality of having failed. I sleep with the belief that another day is coming—not that I will have a *perfect* day but that the One who is beyond perfection is with me.

An inmate recently criticized the testimony I wrote for Love In Action (and later reproduced in the *Exodus Update*), pointing out how some words were in fact a minimizing of what I had done. Regardless of how I had perceived the initial intent of the words when they were written, I could not disagree with his observations.

It was pride that motivated feelings of self-righteousness and indignation, a voice from the darkness encouraging me to respond in denial. If I speak the words "Create in me a clean heart, O God" with the voice of surrender, it is not unreasonable for God use such a letter to help bring reality to that prayer.

- 2007-

Have things changed? Have they become easier for me over the past nine years? In some ways, yes to both questions but life for the individual who is on the sex offender registry once out of prison will face restrictions and very negative attitudes that are fueled by beliefs many hold.

Many of these people firmly believe that all who have molested will molest again and again. From where I sit, though, nothing I have ever said or written has altered the negative opinion some have of me. I'd like to believe that 19 years of being consistent in sustaining my boundaries and of surrendering the dark parts of my thinking has made

some difference to them, but my objective is not to have people trust me or even forgive me. My objective is to be faithful in my walk with God.

Sometimes my blood boils a bit when I read newspaper headlines announcing more restrictions on my freedom and, unfortunately, on my wife as well—though she did nothing wrong other than decide to stay married to me. “How can these people think this way,” I angrily ask no one in particular, “and how can good Christian people fail to act toward offenders as Jesus would have acted?”

One thing I have to confess, though, is that I am looking at all these situations as one whose name is on a state sex offender registry. So I have to ask myself, “Would I really be different if my background were different? Would I be loving and available?” Though I would love to say I would, I can’t answer those questions. Maybe in some small way, that should help me better understand those who feel as they do.

Toward the end of the Coalition of Prison Evangelists conference I attended recently, I commented to someone that I felt a bit out of place. I felt that people looked through me or avoided me. He stopped me later in the day and said “I feel led to ask you this. How much of the separation you are feeling is coming from you and how much from others here?” It was a good question.

Don’t get me wrong. I am doing okay—a little shaky sometimes but most times much better than merely okay. What really helps are the letters I get and answer from men and women in prison because they remind me that this is a journey into eternity and not a “These issues will cease to exist in two years, three months, and twelve days” kind of thing. One thing I know is that this is *my* journey. It’s *my* race to be won and it’ll be *my* crown to wear when I am finally called home to be with the Lord.

As I’ve written before, God never did call me Sex Offender. He called me Bob. Bring on the next 20 years! □

- For those who in civil commitment, that they know God is with them in all things and wants them to have the peace of His presence.
- For churches, that they consider themselves as places of healing and reconciliation for ALL who seek communion with them.
- For those affected by residency restrictions, that they trust God to provide for their needs.
- 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.

**A Report from the
2007 International Conference
Coalition of Prison
Evangelists
September 26-29
Dallas (Plano), TX**



I think every person who has ever written me has shared meeting one of God’s blessings in the form of a prison chaplain or a prison volunteer. These are the people who extend their hands to drug addicts, murderers, and even sex offenders. Magnify that experience times about 200 and you’ll get a sense of the company I got to keep at this conference.

These were men and women not merely putting in time at institutions all over the world but people wanting to make a difference in the kingdom of God in our prison systems.

I heard testimonies throughout the week that had my head shaking in amazement, my heart jumping for joy over the miracles I heard, and my soul awakened to extended love with a capital L. It was a brotherhood and sisterhood of folks you definitely want to call friends.

I have shared with some of you that I created a CD with three of my booklets and a copy of the talk that I was to give at the conference as part of a workshop team consisting of Jack Ruth and Larry Skrant (representing Pure Life Ministries) and me. Both of these men will, I hope, stay in contact with me for a long time to come.

It was a good thing the talk was on the CD because I never got to give it. God does that—takes all my color-coded notes and tells me to let go. What comes out of my mouth is rarely anything I remember saying which is why I always buy a copy of the recorded workshop when they are available.

Worship was wonderful; workshops were filled with ideas for prison ministry; but some of the best times were happened when people connected with one another over a cup of coffee, prayed together, and definitely encouraged each other.

This was no single denomination coming together in one place but it definitely was an example of God’s church!

All things are possible with God!

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 361, Waukesha, WI 53187-0361. And if you cannot contribute, please pray!



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 10 years of *Into the Light*, that it will continue to serve as an outreach of hope and encouragement.
- For those having to deal with death of a loved one, that they will feel God’s presence as they grieve.

Bits & Pieces

From a letter: "There is no easy way out. The only answer is to see who we are the way He sees us. I saw that [my molesting] would never stop so long as it was kept a secret. The day I told my wife what I'd done and in turn told the police marked the point in my life when I began to learn what love really is. Finally, it no longer mattered what happened in my life. I saw, too, how God had never abandoned me. God wants more for us than for us to merely be reconciled to Himself; He wants for us to be reconciled to each other and the rest of creation. God's work is the restoration of everything."

From a letter: "Every time I received your newsletter (ITL), I asked the Lord to bring me someone to share it with and He never failed. I began to carry a couple with me in my Bible and also one or two in my pocket. God just kept showing me where to share them and with whom to share them. It seems as if [my actions] started a chain reaction. God is good!" (Has since been released from prison)

From a letter: "I just finished your September/October *Into the Light*. I always find a quiet time to read it cover to cover and always feel the peace of Christ coming through it. Congratulations on 20 years! God is good—all the time!"

From a letter: "My being forgiven by God, my sins cast into the sea, does not stop the after-effects I placed in the lives of my victims. I am free from my past, never with the desire to abuse/molest another child. But the effect from my one-ton stone dropped in their river of life continues to cause far-reaching ripples. This pains me tremendously." (Currently serving over 400 years in prison)

From *Prison Inmate News* (Sept07): "The Florida Civil Commitment Center (FCCC) is still a facility with little direction other than it is a confinement center to warehouse sex offenders who have completed their sentences. As of May 2005, only 35% of the residents were even enrolled in sex offender therapy programs. While the U.S. Supreme Court upheld post-incarceration civil commitment in *Kansas v. Hendricks* (1997), it did so with the understanding that civilly committed ex-offenders would receive treatment in non-punitive conditions similar to those at mental health facilities. To date, few if any states provide such treatment."

From *Prison Inmate News* (Sept07): "Since July 2006 at least 15 sex offenders in Georgia have been charged with registration violations due to homelessness. The policy is being challenged by the Southern Center for Human Rights and the ACLU." [The whole issue of residency restrictions is a legal time bomb waiting to explode. Some communities are now extending their laws to include significant fines for sex offenders even entering a restricted area—which in some cases would include entire towns. Sooner or later someone will loudly demand a method for identifying individuals as sex offenders who might be entering zones that are restricted.]

Nearly Seven Years Later

By Harry

[I am reproducing a segment of Harry's testimony here with the hope that you will be blessed by it and by what God has done in his life.]

Now, nearly seven years later, I seek to be ever increasingly intimate with God, to give and receive love, to put Him at the center of my life and keep Him there, and somehow balance the scales of my life. I know that no one could possibly be more self-centered than one who is willing to place his own perverted sexual drives above an innocent child's right to be safe from such harm. I know that I have left a lot of damage in my wake and I seek some way to return something to somehow heal that hurt.

One of the best classes I have taken in the Transitional Living Unit is "At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry" by Steve Gallagher. I am now facilitating this class for thirty of my brothers as we seek to bring ourselves in line with God's will for us to be pure in this area.

I know I have changed by God's grace because I know better than anyone where I've come from and how far I've come. I know that these are not changes that were possible or even desirable in my own strength.

I know my motive to avoid sin is the fact that sin dishonors the God who loved me and looked down through time and chose me, yes, even me, to be a part of His family. God wants to be associated with me! He wants to have intimate fellowship with ME!

I know the necessity of being in God's word, of fellowshiping with Him in prayer, and of worshipping with His people as ways of sustaining and nurturing my faith. I know the necessity of being accountable to a mature elder brother in the Lord in a mentoring relationship, and I will always seek to be supported in this way as well as offering what support I can to others who seek it. □



COPE Conference workshop presenters Bob Van Domelen (Broken Yoke Ministries), Jack Ruth (Pure Life Ministries), and Larry Skrant (volunteer for Pure Life Ministries) pose for the camera before the start of their workshop "Ministering to Sex Offenders."

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All things are possible with God

Dated Material

A Little Humor

A man and his wife were having some problems at home and were giving each other the silent treatment.

Suddenly, the man realized that the next day, he would need his wife to wake him at 5:00 AM for an early morning business flight.

Not wanting to be the first to break the silence (and LOSE), he wrote on a piece of paper, "Please wake me at 5:00 AM." He left it where he knew she would find it.

The next morning, the man woke up, only to discover it was 9:00 AM and he had missed his flight.

Furious, he was about to go and see why his wife hadn't wakened him, when he noticed a piece of paper by the bed. The paper said, "It is 5:00 AM, Wake up."

