
Pilgrims Journal

“They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city.” (Heb 11:13–16)

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DARE TO BE A DANIEL

While in his nineties, towards the end of his life, Daniel was tested severely in the den of lions: but the character traits which were responsible for his deliverance had been developed over a lifetime. Daniel chapter six relates the story of this last recorded trial.

Daniel's journey to the lions' den began, interestingly enough, with his being promoted to a high position in the government of the Medes and Persians. He was elevated because of his excellent spirit, characterized by faithfulness to his God, and to the king. He had already served faithfully in the Babylonian kingdom, especially during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar—and while the Babylonian kingdom fell, his testimony yet continued as a faithful man. “A faithful man who can find?” (Pro 20:6). As he was faithful to his God, God was able to prosper him, promote him (Psa 75:6-7), and in general, bless all the works of his hands. Darius would have been made aware of this virtuous civil servant, and what better way to help keep civil order than to put in place an experienced and **faithful** man?

Darius might have wondered why Belshazzar had not made use of this excellent leader during his reign.

Many times when a king took over in place of his father (or grandfather) he would not exercise the wisdom of his predecessor. This was true of Rehoboam when he succeeded his father Solomon (see 1Kgs 12:1-24 & Ecc 2:18-19). When Daniel was finally sought out by Belshazzar, he fearlessly interpreted the message of God which spelled the kingdom's doom: his character didn't allow him to dilute the warning to seek the king's favor.

His Pathway, His Presence

Daniel's decisions to be uncompromisingly faithful had been cultivated at an early age, and had been preserved when he had been brought as a slave from his homeland in his mid-teens. And because he had decided to pay the price for his commitment, the Lord was with him. Joseph's story is similar: after having been sold by his brethren into Egypt, and then later in Pharaoh's prison, “...the Lord was with Joseph” (Gen 39:2,21). It is often in the trying times we see that the Lord is with us; and He is always there for us. **“For He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee”** (Heb 13:5). It is in these most difficult seasons of life that we feel His presence in a deep and special way. In Joseph's case, he was not to be let out of his trial until “...the word of the Lord tried him” (Psa 105:19). His promotion came only after

13 years of rejection, first by his brothers who envied him, then by his master who falsely accused him, and finally by the chief butler who had forgotten him. Child of God, our pathway to the throne will traverse the same pathway of being misunderstood by those who are near and dear, and being scorned by those whose only vision is for this world.

As our narrative in Daniel chapter six brings out, Daniel was the chiefest of the three presidents chosen by Darius. His colleagues were jealous of his rank, as well as the princes who were under him. You may see these kinds of things today in your place of employment. Everyone wants to be on the top, have the corner office, the name and fame that could go with any particular job, etc. Perhaps you or someone you know has been removed from a position by the “politics of the office.” Many times the temptation may come to litigate (bring to court) the issue, but as we put on the character of Christ, we should act as He acted: “Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously” (1Pet 2:22-23). Daniel’s enemies understood the only way to really get at Daniel was to make him

transgress in something concerning his relationship to his God. So they tricked Darius into making a decree that “...whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions” (Dan 6:8).

A Life Spent In Prayer

We then see Daniel opening his windows towards Jerusalem and praying “...as he did aforetime” (Dan 6:10). Daniel was not trying to be in the face of his king or colleagues, but was simply maintaining a habit he had all his life—a life spent in prayer. “He kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God as he had done aforetime.” Knowing full well that the decree had been made and signed by his king (as well as knowing what the penalty would be for breaking that decree), his lifestyle did not change one iota. The devil will do anything to distract us from our personal walk with God, including some things that may have an appearance of spirituality. Pastor Don Spiers related many times that while on the mission field in Argentina he had an appointment in the morning with the highest ranking general of that country’s military. He arrived at that appointment about a half an hour early, and came to the assistant of that general to tell him he

was there. The assistant told him he could not interrupt his superior, as that time was his time of prayer, a time he never interrupted for anyone, including the president himself. May God grant us such leadership in this country, where all those who are surrounding our president would have such commitment to their important posts of leadership as to prayerfully approach their awesome responsibilities.

A Life Spent In Thanksgiving

Notice here another thing: he thanked God. The giving of thanks is not something we do only before meals. **It should be a part of our daily routine, in small matters as well as in the larger things He accomplishes for us, through us, and in us.** Many times we prefer to save the “big” testimonies for the public services, but how often do we praise God for the little things of life? “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *Him* not as God, ***neither were thankful***; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (Rom 1:21-22). It is important to learn even from a very early age to be thankful for whatever God sends our way. We referred earlier in this article to Joseph. He had an excellent understanding. His brethren wanted to see

an end to his dreams. “Behold, this dreamer cometh... and we will see what will become of his dreams” (Gen 37:19-20). They meant everything for evil to him, but **God Himself** was behind everything going on in the life of Joseph (see Psa 105:17; Gen 50:14-21). Joseph’s whole manner of dealing with everyone brought about light and encouragement—and so it was with Daniel. When an eight ounce glass has four ounces of water in it, is it half empty or half full? The heart that is always praising God will answer “half full.” It’s almost there, we need only four more ounces to fill the glass! Remember, everything we see in creation started with nothing—because our God spoke it into existence. The minimum we can do is just praise Him for His creating power.

In The Pit

This attitude of praise and positive thinking must have rubbed off on the king. After laboring hard to deliver Daniel from the foolish decree he had made, the time came for Daniel to be placed in the lions den. “*Now* the king spake and said unto Daniel, “Thy God Whom thou servest continually, He will deliver thee”” (Dan 6:16). In modern day terms, that is like the governor of the state telling the death row inmate, before they administer the lethal injection, that his God would deliver him. Those

lions were kept starving for the purpose of making sure that the condemned individual not only died, but that there would be no remains to bury. The king was very sorry for the big mistake he had made in making the decree in the first place. Perhaps he had heard of what happened to Daniel's companions in chapter three. Perhaps he was hoping for God to undo the unrighteous decree he had made, knowing that the living God was able to "change the king's word" (Dan 3:28). The same God who delivered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the real fire could, if He wanted to, deliver His servant Daniel from the mouths of the lions.

Pure Conscience

So the king spent the night in fasting, neither were any musicians brought in to entertain him that night. His sleep left him, as he tossed to and fro in his bed, worrying about the man who had done so much good to him and his kingdom. This was one king who was going to be accountable for his actions to God. We can be sure his prayer of repentance asked for divine intervention to undo the unrighteous thing he had done. Very early in the morning we see him going **personally** to the scene of his crime—the lion's den. It was not enough to send one of his young men to find out what happened to Daniel.

With a "lamentable voice" he asked "O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, Whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" Daniel's answer? "O king, live for ever!" I would like you to have the same life I have with God. He didn't answer "You ingrate! What did I ever do to you to get in this predicament? Why couldn't you have stood against my enemies?" The key to Daniel's deliverance? "For as much as before Him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt" (Dan 6:22). He, like the Apostle Paul, strove to have a conscience void of offense before God as well as before man. Because he had a pure conscience before God, God sent His angel and shut the mouths of the lions. As the old song goes:

*"He is able to deliver thee,
He is able to deliver thee
Though by sin oppressed
Come to Him for rest!
Our God is able to deliver thee."*

The Righteous Judge

Too bad for Daniel's detractors that the angel allowed the mouths of the lions to be opened. Now the lions would be able to break their fast, and feast on Daniel's enemies and their families. Why were their wives and children

subject to such wrath with them? We see on several occasions in the Word of God that family members were also included in the judgment for the sin of their fathers. Two cases can be mentioned. In Joshua chapter seven we see Achan's sons and daughters receiving the same punishment as he received for taking the spoils of an accursed city—they knew about it, but did nothing to bring it out into the open. Another example concerns what happened to Haman and his sons. Haman was hanged on the same gallows he had built for Mordecai, and less than nine months later his sons were slain by the Jews who were given a decree to defend themselves. Although the sins of the fathers were not to bring punishment upon the children (Deut 24:16), the sins of the fathers were to be visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation (Exo 34:6). It has been suggested that perhaps this form of punishment was new and thought out by Daniel's enemies. *Nec lex est justior ulla quàm necis artifices arte perire suâ* — No law can be more just than that which adjudges the devisers of barbarity to perish by it. "He hath made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate" (Psa 7:15-16). As the king could

hear the bones of Daniel's enemies being crushed by the jaws of the lions (they must have been very hungry), it was as if God was clearing innocent Daniel and judging his enemies. The Lord is known by the judgment which he executes (Psa 9:16). The righteous are delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead. The conclusion of this matter is that we should commit ourselves to the Lord, He is the righteous Judge, and will be our justification in the end.

Daniel's Death Defying Character

Many other things could be said about Daniel and this great deliverance that was given him by his God, but let us review the steps that brought Daniel his deliverance.

1. **He was faithful and without fault.** He stayed that way, no matter what the consequences were. He was faithful to his time of prayer **and** praise, and that life of grace affected all around him.

2. **He understood that the Lord was with him.** If the first step was adhered to, this second one was the immediate result. "If God *be* for us, who can be *against* us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that *justifieth*" (Rom 8:31-33).

3. **He committed himself to Him Who judged righteously.** There were many carnal arguments that Daniel could have given his superior. He could have pointed his finger at his enemies' bad work or character, but he let the Lord take care of it. We should never be a people who want to exact vengeance on anyone for any evil deed done against us. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord'" (Rom 12:19).

4. **He had a blameless testimony** because innocency was found in him by his God, and he had done nothing to hurt or damage his king. "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward man" (Acts 24:16).

In these days, let us be sensitive to the voice of the Spirit, that we don't grieve or quench His working in our lives; and let us also have sensitivity to the needs of those around us, that we don't stumble them in something the Lord allows in our lives.

As we study how Daniel's faith was able to stop the mouths of lions, let us also be very observant in our lives to live according to that same consecration Daniel had: the daily walk in prayer, praise, and meditation of God's Word. This will bring us to the

great deliverance prescribed by our heavenly king: He will place us on the throne as His Bride. □

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“So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur, and they went out three days in the wilderness, and found no water. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, what shall we drink? And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet” (Exo 15:22-25).

All In God’s Time

After the days of Joseph, the children of Israel had spent more than 400 years in bondage to the Egyptians. A place that had once been a refuge from famine and suffering had now become a terrible prison for them. Those who had once been their loving friends and neighbors had turned to be their enemies and cruel task masters. Finally, after many long years, they could take it no longer. “And the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning” (Exo 2:23-25).

It was at this point that God began to activate His long-awaited plan. He spoke to Moses and said, “Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth My people the children of Israel out of Egypt” (Exo 3:9-10).

Although the wheels of God’s plan were set in motion, it did not appear so to the children of Israel. As He began to use Moses as an instrument in His hand to loosen the grip of Pharaoh upon the children of Israel, they were expecting something very different that would bring an immediate deliverance. God, however, has His own way of doing things, which is completely different from our way. “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa 55:8-9). Instead of an immediate deliverance as they expected, it seemed that the bondage only grew worse day by day.

Questioning God

Although God had forewarned Moses that Pharaoh would not let the Israelites go so easily (Exo 3:19), Moses also seemed to wonder what God was doing, as each plague only

seemed to tighten Pharaoh's grip upon them. "And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? Why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all" (Exo 5:22-23).

Although it seemed as if Moses was questioning God in this passage, it is here that we see a beautiful quality revealed in the life of Moses: even when he could not understand what God was doing, instead of murmuring and complaining, he looked to God for the answer to his questions. In return, the Lord gave him an answer of peace. "I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for He will speak peace unto His people and to His saints" (Psa 85:8). The promise of God's word is that "they that seek the Lord understand all things" (Pro 28:5).

The God Who Could Be Trusted

As Moses looked to God, the reply came. "Then the Lord said unto Moses, 'Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land'" (Exo 6:1). "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay My hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and My people the chil-

dren of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them" (Exo 7:3-5). From these verses we can see that the very plagues which the Israelites deemed as proof that Moses was a fake and that God could not be trusted, were actually God's way of showing His mighty outstretched arm of deliverance for His people. He was showing Himself as the great and mighty God who **could** be trusted, and who would fight on behalf of His own people.

Because Moses had sought the Lord, and God had revealed His mind to him, Moses was not troubled when the plagues continued in full force. The children of Israel, on the other hand, were not able to understand what God was doing. That's why they murmured and complained when they were faced with such frightening occurrences. In fact, all throughout their wilderness journey they were known to be experts in murmuring. If they had only learned to seek God in the midst of their troubles, in the same way that the Lord answered Moses, God would have also helped them to understand His ways so that they could rejoice in His great faithfulness. Let us learn from their mistakes so that we will not fall into the same trap in our own lives.

True To His Word

As each plague came, the days drew nearer to the appointed time of God's deliverance. Finally, with the very last and most grievous plague of the death of all the firstborn of Egypt, he literally thrust out the Israelites, fearing that if he kept them any longer, his own life and the lives of all the remaining Egyptians would be in danger (Exo 12:30-33).

God's people were free at last! We can hardly imagine the emotion of that moment, as they gathered their families with all their belongings and hurriedly gobbled down their last bits of roasted lamb and bitter herbs. Quickly bundling up the precious jewels and raiment that they had borrowed from their neighbors, with great excitement they prepared to follow Moses to the Promised Land, the land flowing with milk and honey, the land they had longed for all their lives. True enough, God's word had come to pass.

As they went on their way rejoicing, having been freed from all their problems in Egypt, they may not have expected more problems so soon. However, before they got very far in their journey, another huge obstacle loomed before them as a great barrier to their escape—the Red Sea! And to make matters worse, there was no alternate route, no detour to take. With mountains on either side, and the sudden approach of the angry Egyptian army behind them,

the Israelites seemed to be nearing certain death! The Bible tells us that they were afraid, and cried to the Lord. But they also complained against Moses. "Hey, Moses! You brought us out here to die because there were no graves in Egypt, right? Didn't we tell you to leave us alone? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die out here!" But Moses once again looked to God and boldly proclaimed the word of the Lord to them: "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever" (Exo 14:13). And just as he spoke, so it was. What a magnificent show of God's power once again, as they all passed over on dry ground, and the pursuing Egyptian armies were drowned in the depths of the Red Sea!

Bitter To Sweet

Well, as we all know, this life is full of problems. And so after a time of great rejoicing in the presence of God for His mighty deliverance, the children of Israel were soon confronted with another problem. Having left the shores of the Red Sea, they found themselves in the middle of nowhere: the wilderness of Shur. And to top it off, there was no water to drink. Finally, after journeying for three days, they sighted water. What a relief! As the thirsty pilgrims

rushed to satisfy their parched throats, it was only to find that the water was not at all drinkable—bitter waters! And that’s when the murmuring began...again. They began to do what they always did. And Moses did what he had learned to do in such situations: he cried unto the Lord. And the Lord did what He was accustomed to doing in such situations: **He answered.** “And the Lord shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet” (Exo 15:25). Suddenly, this water that had been completely undrinkable became sweet, and they were able to quench their thirst. Even in the midst of their most bitter situation, God had an answer that would change everything, yes, that would even turn that horrible bitterness into wonderful sweetness. Thank God for Moses! If it had not been for him, they would have completely missed seeing God’s wonderful hand, and may well have died of thirst.

His Ways Are Not Our Ways

Beloved, how many times we miss what God wants to do in our own lives when we choose to murmur and complain instead of crying out to Him. He actually allows difficult paths for us so that we might know the greatness of His mighty power. He says, “Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not” (Jer 33:3). All throughout our lives we will go

through both good times and bad, mountain tops and deep, dark valleys, bitter trials and sweet experiences. Yes, we will go through times where we don’t understand what God is doing; but let us remember that in it all, God has a beautiful work to do in our lives. His promise to us is that He will make “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose” (Rom 8:28). In other words, even the bad will be turned into something good in the lives of God’s people. The most bitter trials that we have to endure will end up producing something very sweet in our lives. The worst will be turned into the best, the saddest will be changed to the happiest, all when we learn to cry out to our God, and allow Him to show His mighty hand in our lives. In these last days, we are going to see His hand move on our behalf such as never before. Therefore, let us look to Him, listen to His voice, and believe. We will certainly see His glory. □

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Since the inception of the Missions Education Fund (MEF) in May of 2007, many children have been blessed with the gift of education. In the 2008/2009 school year alone, 369 children, who ordinarily would not have had the opportunity, were sent to school. The MEF originally started as a way to help a few very needy children in the Waterloo area of Sierra Leone get basic, primary education. It now has expanded to 11 countries and helps a few hundred children. The current sponsored countries are: Congo, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Malawi, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone and Togo.

Most of the children come from the very lowest end of the socio-economic spectrum. Education is not deemed to be a realistic ambition to pursue, since getting food on the table is the more immediate and pressing concern.

Edwin M'boma is one of our students attending our fellowship in Sierra Leone. He currently lives in a refugee camp located in Grafton and at the young age of 8 he has experienced much more than any child his age should. Born during the time of the rebel war, he was only a month old

when his home village was invaded. His parents were able to flee to safety, but beyond that they have been unable to pick up the pieces of their lives and establish themselves. Sending Edwin to school was really not an option. Both Lahai and Massa (his parents) lack long-term, permanent employment and are forced to carry out petty trading to sustain their family, which also includes an adopted child (whose parents went missing during the war). If not for God's provisions through the MEF, Edwin would not be currently thriving in school.

There are a few sponsored children who, along with straddling the poverty line, are also considered to be special needs. Some of them, like Haydee Marquez (who was born with a physical disability) from our fellowship in El Salvador never got a chance to even attend a class, because her family simply could not afford the additional burden of a special needs school. Haydee finally got a chance to go to school this year at the age of 12. Her family wrote of their gratitude: "We may not know you personally, but we know that our family in Christ is large...We are very grateful."

Through believers' generosity, God has opened a way for truly deserving children like Edwin and Haydee to be blessed with the gift of education. There are many more children who have stories similar to theirs. While God has provided for the 2008/2009 school year, these kids remain

waiting by faith for Him to provide for the upcoming 2009/2010 year.

If you would like further information please do not hesitate to contact us at *ntc.educationsponsorship@gmail.com* or in the United States:

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Encounters WITH Jesus

Part 4 — On the Isle of Patmos

We find the Apostle John alone on the Isle of Patmos. He had been banished to this barren, desolate island as punishment for spreading the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. The Roman emperor who had sent him there no doubt hoped and expected John to die in that place. But there in that difficult situation, we find a new ministry beginning for the elderly apostle.

When it appeared that his life and ministry were coming to an end, it was actually the start of a ministry that has since profoundly affected all nations throughout the world. Here we find God gave him the revelation which we call the *Book of Revelation*. The words and visions of this book have influenced the world and have found their way into the everyday language of our culture. Words such as “Armageddon” and “apocalyptic” are in common use today.

To introduce the things John was given to write, we see that first of all **he saw the glorified, risen Lord**

Jesus Christ. The sight was so powerful that John fell at the feet of the Lord as a dead man. But then a wonderful thing happened: the Lord laid His right hand upon him, told him not to fear, raised him up, and told him to write all the things he had seen, and the things he would be shown. Thus, a new direction and grace were given to John for his ministry.

Important to note is the fact that John was in the Spirit when he was given these glorious visions of Christ, heaven, the state of the churches, events that would take place in the last days upon earth, and eternity. It is good for us to be continually filled with the Spirit. That means to **pray** in the Spirit, to **be led** by the Spirit, to **walk** in the Spirit, and to **live** in the Spirit. It means to deny the lusts and works of the flesh.

While he was in the Spirit, John heard behind him a great voice like a trumpet. Thank God that **the Lord speaks to us clearly like a trumpet**. There is no uncertainty or indecision in His voice. His sheep hear His voice and follow Him. They won't follow the voice of a stranger. As children of God, we should dedicate our ears and minds to hear and obey the voice of our Great Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ. When John heard the voice, he turned to see Who was speaking to him. Do we really **turn to God with all our heart in order to see Him and to get to know Him** as John did? Are we too

occupied with our own things to turn and have fellowship with the Lord?

Who was speaking to John? It was the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet and Omega, the last. Jesus Christ is from eternity to eternity. He is the everlasting God.

When John turned to see the voice that was speaking to him, he saw seven golden candlesticks and in the midst of the seven candlesticks, one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot. Where is the Lord today? **He is in the midst of the church.** He has told us that where two or three are gathered together in His name, there He is in our midst. Even the Old Testament prophet Zephaniah had received a revelation of God's presence in the church. "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing" (Zep 3:17). We are truly blessed to have God's presence with us in the church and in our personal lives. Because He is mighty, we have no need to fear. He can do all things and nothing is too hard for Him, no matter how big our need may appear to be. He will save! He has saved us from sin and all the enemies of our souls. He heals us and He keeps our spirit, soul and body. He will save us to the uttermost. He will perfect the work He started in us and catch us up at His soon appearing. He

rejoices over us with joy. When He baptized us with the Holy Ghost, we were filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory. The fullness of joy which is found in His presence has been given to us. Hallelujah! God is resting in His love. He is resting in those who love Him. We love Him because He first loved us. We become His resting place. His enemies become His footstool. We were enemies of God, alienated from God in our minds by all the wicked works we had done. Now we have been reconciled to God through the blood of Christ. We have peace with God through the blood of His cross. Now we have become His resting place. God is truly rejoicing over His people with singing. Let us join His heavenly song and sing praises to Him with all our heart. God's redeemed people will go to their heavenly home with singing. "Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away." (Isa 52:11) Singing praises to God lifts up the soul and spirit of a child of God into the presence of God. Let's praise Him with a song.

John saw Jesus clothed with a garment down to the foot. This garment reminds us of the white linen garment the high priest had to wear when he entered the most holy place in the tabernacle once a year to make atonement for the children of Israel. This garment speaks of **perfect**

holiness, which is required of God's church to be caught up at the coming of the Lord in order to inherit New Jerusalem in eternity. We are called to be holy as He is holy. We are called to perfect holiness in the fear of God. "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2Cor 7:1). In Hebrews 12:14 we are told that **without holiness, no man shall see the Lord**. The beauty of the Lord is His holiness. We can worship Him in the beauty of holiness. The bride of Christ is sanctified, and made perfectly holy in spirit, soul, and body, and preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord. The Apostle Paul prayed, "and the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it" (1Thes 5:23-24). He is able to make us holy, as He is holy. The bride of Christ must stand out from all other people. That shining quality is her holiness. The eternal abode of the church is the holy city, the New Jerusalem.

John saw that the head and hairs of the Lord were white like wool, as white as snow. He is the Ancient of days. He is full of wisdom and knows the end from the beginning. **He has plans for us according to His eternal purpose** which were given to us in Christ Jesus before the

world began. God spoke through the prophet Jeremiah, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end" (Jer 29:11). All of God's thoughts toward us are precious. The psalm writer was amazed with that fact and wrote, "How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake I am still with thee" (Psa 139:17-18).

White as snow speaks of purity and holiness as we read in Isaiah 1:18: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." All of **God's thoughts are pure and holy**. That is how He wants our thoughts to be. The Apostle Paul has given us some sound advice which we read in Philippians: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (4:6-8).

The **eyes of the glorified Lord were as a flame of fire**. He sees everything. He discerns the thoughts and intents of our hearts. We should pray with the psalmist, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psa 139:23-24).

His voice was as the sound of many waters. While Jesus was upon the earth He was filled with the Holy Ghost and power. He has offered and provided the same experience for us today. He cried out, “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (Jn 7:37-38). The voice of those who stand with Him on Mount Zion is heard as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder (Rev 14:2). Those who enjoy a Spirit-filled life will have a voice like many waters in heaven.

Jesus had seven stars in His right hand. His servants are **upheld in His right hand**. We read in Psalm 63:8, “My soul followeth hard after Thee: Thy right hand upholdeth me.” Again we read in Isaiah 41:10, “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.”

His countenance was as the sun that shines in its strength. **May God cause His face to shine upon us**.

May we look continually into His face so that He may change us from glory to glory into His own image. □

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The workmanship of His hands

HUMAN LUNGS

One of the best known verses in the Bible is Genesis 2:7: “And the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.” This verse sets a pattern for the rest of the Bible where breath is often equated with life itself. In fact, references to breath or breathing are frequent in the Bible, with many allusions to God as the giver of breath (and life) to man as well as animals.

The respiratory system has many distinctive design features which show forth the providence of God. Breathing also illustrates our human vulnerability and complete dependence upon God. One easy way to demonstrate this is to try and hold one’s breath. For most of us, the need for air becomes desperately apparent within a minute; and in just a few more minutes we would certainly die. In short, our breathing apparatus is one of our most vital systems—absolutely necessary to sustain us from moment to moment. But how does it work?

The human lungs are the organs of respiration in humans. Humans have two lungs and each lung is not much longer than an outstretched hand, yet the lungs contain approximately 1500 miles (2,400 km) of airways and 300 to 500 million air sacs called alveoli. The entire inner and outer surface area of the lungs are approximately 40 to 60 square miles! Furthermore, if all of the capillaries that surround the alveoli were unwound and laid end to end, they would extend for about 620 miles!

Respiration in humans begins with the nose. Our nasal passages are a high-tech air conditioning and purification system. They filter out the larger dust particles and microbial spores by focusing incoming air onto the mucous membrane lining of the nasal cavity. The cells of this lining secrete sticky mucus where impurities are trapped and disposed of. The nasal passages also provide air warming and humidification through a rich blood supply just beneath the mucous membrane. The blood supply also acts as a chemical cleanser of the air and gives the nose design features in common with modern air-cleaning, anti-pollution devices.

After being warmed up and cleansed, air passes through the main windpipe. From there it goes into two large branches, the main bronchi where further cleaning (by the removal of finer particles) takes place. These progressively

branch into increasingly smaller bronchi. The mucous membrane lining of the bronchi also has cells with cilia, tiny whip-like hairs which can beat directionally. These waving hairs move a layer of mucus ever upwards toward the throat where the layer and its entrapped particles can be swallowed. This air-cleaning system is called the “mucociliary escalator.”

Just before each bronchiolus ends in a tiny air sac called an alveolus, the cells lining it change. Instead of making mucus, they have enzymes to dissolve it, and thus the smallest are kept from being plugged by the protective mucus. Each alveolus is wrapped in a fine mesh of capillaries covering about 70% of its area. These are shaped like a tiny room with thin surrounding walls and a doorway coming from a bronchiolus. Within the walls are tiny blood vessels called capillaries. The walls are ultra-thin and tightly packed with these capillaries so that gas exchange by simple diffusion can take place. “Used” blood coming into the lungs from the body’s veins via the heart, have with it a surplus of carbon dioxide, which is exchanged for oxygen through the alveoli. The oxygenated blood is then returned to the heart for circulation to the rest of the body. The renewed oxygen, in turn, drives the metabolic reactions which give our cells energy (and life). It only takes about 1½ seconds for


your heart to spread blood over a lung area of half a standard tennis court and then shunt it back into circulation. This happens about 100,000 times every day totally automatically. The work of breathing, though one of our most important tasks, only takes some 3–5% of the body’s energy consumption and yet the lungs use about 90 gallons of pure oxygen every day. You breathe approximately 9 million times a year, pumping air at the rate of two gallons a minute when at rest and 26 gallons per minute when exercising.

Why is there such a great emphasis on air-cleaning in our respiratory system? The warm, wet climate of the alveoli makes them an ideal place for microbes to grow and the air is full of microbes and their spores. We would all die of pneumonia in a few days without our built-in air-cleaning systems. Furthermore, if this cleaning system was not in place, the lungs would soon fill up with inhaled dust. Because of all this, human lungs can generally withstand disease for a long time. Studies have shown that people, on average, must lose nearly ¾ of their lung tissue before serious respiratory difficulty develops.

Breathing is also part of a much larger design: the entire balance of life on Earth. People and animals must consume oxygen to live, giving off carbon dioxide as a waste gas. But plants do the exact opposite. They take in carbon dioxide

and give off oxygen. This provides a constantly renewed balance in the atmosphere, so that the oxygen we need is never used up. It also provides us with a dependable and pleasing environment of greenery, flowers and food.

Could there be an even more important reason why God created our bodies so that we must breathe? Breath is used in the Bible as a powerful symbol of the life-giving presence of God. Like God Himself, the air we breathe is invisible, odorless and tasteless—it cannot be perceived at all unless it moves. It is usually peaceful and still, but it is a reservoir of enormous power. The air is a massive ocean—invisible, yet completely necessary for our life, for we are quickly dead without it. It seems reasonable to suggest that one reason why God created the air, and respiration, was to show us graphically how great and immediate is our need for Him.

We should recognize that the breath of life is a great gift from God and a powerful biblical metaphor used to speak of His very presence. Even as we study it scientifically, the knowledge we gain should generate continual thanksgiving, so that we might join the psalmist in praising God along with “everything that has breath” (Psa 150:6). 

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Questions & Answers

I am seeking for truth, and have a lot of questions in my mind which forbid me from accepting Christ completely. My current question is: Why are children born with disabilities and handicaps? We who are older commit so many sins throughout our lives: but children are innocent. Why should they suffer so much? If He is a righteous God, why does He make children like that?

To answer the question, we'll ask more general questions, and attempt to answer them, because the general answers would apply to your specific question.

Often people ask this question: **Where did evil come from?** If God is benevolent (all-good), omniscient (all-knowing), omnipresent (everywhere all the time), and omnipotent (all-powerful), then where did evil come from? *If God is all good, then how could He create evil? If He didn't create it, then who did? Shouldn't God have known about its creation, since He knows everything? And shouldn't He have stopped it, since He has all power, and can be everywhere all the time?*

Evil: wars, sickness, murders, kidnapping, children born with AIDS and handicaps—*where did it all come from, and why didn't God stop it before, and why does He allow it now?*

The strange short answer: **Love.** That may seem contradictory, yet hear the explanation. First, a simple answer on the origin of evil. If God is all good, as the Bible says He is—if God is all light, and there is no darkness in Him—then what would happen if someone were to turn his back on God? If all the light in the universe is in front of me, and I turn myself away from it, then what will I be facing? Darkness—the absence of light. Where did evil come from? First, in heaven, angels turned their back on the plan of God. When they turned away from the only Source of goodness, they were left with the absence of good—*evil.*

Evil is the absence of good, the absence of God. Because God is all good, whenever one turns his or her back on Him, evil is present. This is not a “physical” absence, for God is present everywhere. This absence is when one exercises his free will to leave God out of his choices and out of his thoughts. God is made to be absent by our choice to leave Him out: and the result of that choice is, by definition, evil.

Angels turned their backs on God and became devils. Adam and Eve turned their backs on God in the garden and became fallen creatures.

However, sin doesn't only afflict the sinner: others are affected by sin. (And this is where your question comes to the forefront.) When Adam sinned, an innocent animal was killed to cover the guilty couple. Adam and Eve gave birth to children with inherent fallen natures through no sin of their own. Cain sinned in his anger, did not contain it, and ended up murdering his little brother: Cain's sin affected Abel, though Abel was innocent.

And so the vicious cycle continues, and with it, the questions.

*Alright, even if we say that evil comes from turning one's back on God, **why does God just let it happen?** "Sin has consequences": we are all suffering the effects of one man's sin in a garden—how is *that* fair? Why should innocent babies be born handicapped because of someone else's sins? *If God has all this power and knowledge and goodness, how can He even bear to look down on the chaos brought about by man's rejection of God?**

Now, God has not been a passive observer. He has intervened in different ways: speaking directly to people, giving express commands, sending judgments and raising up prophets to warn. There have been many ways in which God has sought to stem the tide of evil.

Yet, these all seem to be feeble efforts for a God Who with the snap of His fingers can change the course of humanity. *Why isn't God more active in the fight against*

evil? Even if He didn't cause it, why should He allow it to continue to such extremes? The seemingly inexplicable answer for all of this? Love. What love is this, that needs suffering to be seen?!

God *could*, in one swift blow, with one short command, do away with all evil, everywhere. But in so doing, none of us would remain, for there is none righteous. **And God loves us, and wants to see us saved, not destroyed.**

So then, why didn't God hard-wire us, so that we only would know how to do good, and not evil? Why didn't God make us so that we would only choose Him? From the very beginning, God put the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the garden where He placed man, and then told man not to eat it. *Why would He place that temptation before man? Why would He put something there, yet tell him not to eat it?*

Why did God make man with this power to choose, which finally hurt him? Why did God make something to choose, and then tell man, "Don't choose it"?

Without choice, there is no love. God is love, and He made us in His own image. If I am given no choice, if I am preprogrammed to do everything right, it is nice, it is neat, it is orderly—but it is not love. **Love must face choices, and choose to still love.** God has prepared eternity as what the Bible calls "a Kingdom for those who love Him." And we could not know if we loved Him if we were

given no choice. Our choices show where our love is. This is why Jesus taught while on earth that the greatest commandments are to love God with all that we have, and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

It may be convenient to have children preprogrammed to do everything right: the house would be orderly, the rooms would be neat, the kitchen would be clean. But would you call that a family, where you never know if the hug a child gives comes from the heart? Where it's never clear if he's doing something because he's programmed to, or if he actually has love in his heart? **God could not call heaven heaven if love did not dwell there: and to bring us to heaven, we must develop this nature called love, the very nature of God Himself.**

What then—is all this madness, this evil run amok, needed to show that we love God? Though we may be affected by it in varying degrees, we all live in the same sin-sick world. And in this hazardous environment, some will eventually choose to love God, and others will not. For the one who chooses to love God, what are the benefits? The Bible teaches that all things—all the chaos resulting from everyone's sins, including our own—all things work together for good to those who love God. This is *not* saying that all things are good—there are plenty of bad, awful, tragic happenings all around—but that all those things, bad and good, collaborate for good to those who love God.

This is where the omnipotence, the omniscience, the benevolence, and the omnipresence of God are seen in full glory and strength: not initially to rid the universe of evil, but to masterfully engineer a pathway through it all, a pathway with good as its expected end. At that end, we will enjoy the Kingdom of His Love, that place where evil is finally and forever banished. There the only choice will be God—but all who have reached there would have proven that He was their choice already, that they did love Him, by the choices they made while here on earth, in the middle of all the madness.

So...God's wisdom couldn't find a better way than to let chaos reign, and then to say, "Love Me in the middle of all this"? Doesn't God look down on all this, and feel bad about what's going on? He feels it much more than we know—because He came down to be born in the middle of all this. Talk about chaos! All He did was good—and the reward was mockery, scoffing, false accusations, and a public execution in the most cruel, shameful way possible. If anyone deserved a better life, it was He—Jesus Christ. The anarchy that ruled to extinguish His life became the vehicle to bring salvation to us. God used the madness to be the cause for crucifying His own Son unjustly, and worked it for our good.

Is it fair that we all suffer for one man's sin? Before you rush to answer that question, **is it fair that we all benefit**

from one Man's righteousness? But we do. Because Jesus lived justly, purely, innocently—His substitutionary sacrifice has the power to take away our sins, that we might be made righteous—made righteous because of *His choice, in the middle of the madness.*

The first man Adam, in a picture-perfect paradise, chose foolishly, and plunged us all into darkness. The second Man, Jesus, came as a Light into that darkness, and in the midst of a climaxing chaos, made a choice that brought the hope of heaven to us once again. The Father's choice to send Him was His expression of His love for us: "For God so loved that He gave..."

In short, God doesn't delight in anyone's suffering, just as He didn't delight to see His own Son suffering at our expense. But as He proved His love in the midst of the madness, we also have the opportunity to demonstrate ours, and to be granted, in the end, entry to that Kingdom of His love.

One day the disciples came across a man that was born blind and they asked Jesus why he was in that state. Jesus said that the man was like that so that the work of God would be manifested in him and Jesus went on to restore his sight (Jn 9:1-7). The purposes and plans of the Lord we might not understand but we must trust that a loving God is working on our behalf behind all these things. It is through our love for Him that we can patiently endure

the trials and temptations of life and come out victoriously trusting our Savior!

Jesus was tragically killed, brutally murdered, at age 33. Yet His resurrection three days later reminds us: no matter how great the suffering, how difficult the time that we pass through here on earth, *those difficulties will end.* And the reward which God has prepared for us, where there is no suffering or evil, will be filled with joy and peace beyond measure—and that is eternal! □

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"I have posted watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the Lord, give yourselves no rest, and give Him no rest till He establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth" (Isa 62:6-7). This was the life, testimony, ministry and calling of John Hyde. He was known by many as the "man who never sleeps," "the Apostle of Prayer," and "Praying Hyde." John Hyde cultivated a beautiful life of prayer that still remains as an example of how to reach out and touch the heart of God!

John Hyde was born in 1865 in Carthage, Illinois to a godly Christian family. His father was a Presbyterian minister who instilled the importance of prayer to John at an early age. His older brother, Edmund, had aspirations of being a missionary but died very young. This caused John to examine his own life and seek the will and plan of God in prayer. After much soul searching, John surrendered his life to be a missionary like his brother. He then applied himself to diligent study of the scriptures and seeking the Lord in prayer.

Hyde felt a strong calling upon his life to go to India as a missionary. He spent many hours learning the language

in preparation for wherever the will of God might lead him. In 1892, he boarded a ship that would take him to India with the gospel. While on the ship, Hyde read a letter from a close family friend stating that he would not stop praying for Hyde until he received the Holy Spirit. John Hyde was furious at this and threw the letter away thinking the person was so bold to infer that he did not have the Holy Spirit after all that he had done for the Lord already. Yet the word of God continued to pierce Hyde's heart and he felt the need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. While on the ship he spent much time seeking the Lord and as he surrendered completely to the Lord, the Lord graciously filled him with the Holy Spirit.

As he arrived in India, Hyde found himself with a few missionaries and about one million non-Christians that needed Jesus. In a few years time a small revival broke out. The new Christians, however, were being persecuted for their conversion by being beaten and disowned. This caused Hyde to seek the Lord more in intercession for these new souls. Yet in 1896, there were no new conversions and this greatly troubled Hyde, so he took it to the Lord in prayer. The Lord showed him that the standard of the church was very low and that he must pray!

The year 1898 marked a great turning point in Hyde's life. He was attacked with Typhoid fever and was sick for seven months. Yet this was a beautiful time to seek the Lord, and during this affliction Hyde prayed the same prayer that Jabez

of old prayed: *“Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested”* (1Chr 4:10). From this time onwards John Hyde would never be the same.

In 1899, Hyde began to increasingly feel the burden to pray all night for others and the state of the church. He wrote to a friend: *“I have felt led to pray for others this winter as never before. I never before knew what it was to work all day and then pray all night before God for another... In college or at parties at home, I used to keep such hours for myself, or pleasure, and can I not do as much for God and souls?”*

He began to spend more time in prayer and less time with his fellow missionaries. This caused some misunderstanding among them as they accused Hyde of being a fanatic and an extremist. Yet he continued to pray as God continued to burden his heart. In the years that followed, John would write home and describe a “new century” that would come, of Pentecostal power and a double portion of the anointing being poured out upon the church.

Hyde continued to grow in his life of prayer. He often spent thirty days and nights in prayer and many times he continued in intercessory prayer for 36 hours at a time! Truly this was a man who reached, touched, and moved the heart of God. He once said, *“When we keep near to Jesus it is He who draws souls to Himself through us, but He must be lifted up in our lives;*

that is, we must be crucified with Him. It is self in some shape that comes between us and Him, so self must be dealt with as He was dealt with. Self must be crucified. Then indeed Christ is lifted up in our lives, and He cannot fail to attract souls to Himself. All this is the result of a close union and communion, that is fellowship with Him in His sufferings.”

In 1904, Hyde formed the “Prayer Group Union” which gathered together each day for 30 minutes to pray for revival, unity, souls, etc. They also had their first annual convention that year. For thirty days before the convention, the Prayer Group Union had all night fasting and prayer to cry out for the blessings of the convention. They made this their practice each year and each year the Lord poured out His Spirit upon the convention as many felt an increasing urgency for evangelism and intercession. Hyde was the prayer leader and many were inspired by his deep spiritual insight and burden for the lost souls in India.

In the 1908 convention, Hyde made a prayer request that many thought would be impossible. He prayed for one soul to be saved each day in the upcoming year. Before the next convention, more than 400 new souls were converted and baptized. The following year he doubled his goal to two souls for every day and sure enough, in one year there were more than 800 new souls. He had such a deep hunger and passion for the gospel and souls. He often prayed, *“Give me souls, O God, or I die!”* In the following convention, Hyde doubled his numbers

again and said he was asking the Lord for four new souls each day. During that year he traveled all over India and became known as “Praying Hyde.” He was sought after by many large cities in India such as Calcutta and Bombay. If there was one day where four souls were not saved, Hyde said that he would have a great burden on his heart that he could not eat or sleep until he **“*prayed through to victory!*”** The number of new converts continued to grow each day.

For health reasons, Praying Hyde had to leave India in 1911 but not before seeing revival sweep through the Punjab area and across India. He returned to the States and within a year the Lord whom he faithfully fellowshipped with each day called him home. He was only 47 years old. His last words were **“Shout the victory of Jesus Christ!”** His life of prayer is an inspiration to all to boldly enter the most holy place and fellowship with the living God who is longing for us to draw near to His heart. □

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All He Had To Offer

The story is told of a young boy who lived in a poor community. A church there had a bus ministry that came knocking on his door one Saturday afternoon. The child came to answer the door and greeted the bus pastor. The bus pastor asked if his parents were home and the small boy told him that his parents take off every weekend and leave him at home to take care of his little brother. The bus pastor could not believe what the child said and asked him to repeat it.

The youngster gave the same answer and the bus pastor asked to come in and talk with him. They went into the living room and sat down on an old couch with the foam and springs exposed. The bus pastor asked the child, "Where do you go to church?"

The young boy surprised the visitor by replying, "I've never been to church in my whole life." The bus pastor thought to himself about the fact that his church was less than three miles from the child's house. "Are you sure you have never been to church?" he asked again. "I'm sure I haven't," came his answer.

Then the bus pastor said, "Well, son, more important than going to church, have you ever heard the greatest love story ever told?" The bus pastor then proceeded to share the Gospel with this boy. The young lad's heart tenderized, and at the end of the bus pastor's story, the bus pastor asked if the boy wanted to receive this free gift from God.

The youngster exclaimed, "OF COURSE!" The child and the bus pastor got on their knees and the lad invited Jesus into his heart and received the free gift of salvation. They both stood up and the bus pastor asked if he could pick the child up for church the next morning. "Sure," the boy replied.

The bus pastor got to the house early the next morning and helped the boys get ready. They got on the bus and ate a doughnut for breakfast on their way to church.

Keep in mind that this boy had never been to church before. The church was a real big one. The boy just sat there, clueless of what was going on. A few minutes into the service, these tall unhappy guys walked down to the front and picked up some

wooden plates. One of the men prayed and the child, with utter fascination, watched them walk up and down the aisles. He still did not know what was going on. Suddenly, like a bolt of lightning, it hit the child what was taking place.

These people must be giving money to Jesus. He then reflected on the free gift of life he had received just twenty-four hours earlier. He immediately searched his pockets, front and back, and could not find a thing to give Jesus. By this time the offering plate was being passed down his aisle and, with a broken heart, he just grabbed the plate and held on to it. He finally let go and watched it pass on down the aisle. He turned around to see it passed down the aisle behind him. And then his eyes remained glued on the plate as it was passed back and forth, back and forth all the way to the rear of the sanctuary.

Then he had an idea. This little boy, in front of God and the congregation, got up out of his seat. He walked about eight rows back, grabbed the usher by the coat, and asked to hold the plate one more time. Then he did the most astounding thing. He took the

plate, placed it on the carpeted church floor, and stepped into the center of it. As he stood there, he lifted his little head up and said, “Jesus, I don’t have anything to give You today, but just me. **I give You me!**”

Jesus said, “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Mat 18:3). May the Lord help us all to humble ourselves as little children, surrender completely, and enter His kingdom. □

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