



Into the Light

All things are possible with God
January—February 2019

Are You Worth It?

By Bob Van Domelen

²⁸ Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, ²⁹ "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?"

³⁰ They came out of the town and made their way toward him. (John 4.28-30)

This morning, our pastor taught that when Jesus left the 99 to find the one sheep that was lost, he was showing the importance of the lost one. He looked at us and said "We are *all* like the lost sheep. We are *all* sinners needing the love of the shepherd."

Going on, he shifted to the story of the woman at the well and asked "Did you know that Jesus walked 25 miles just to meet that woman at the well?" Later, I couldn't find anything in my bible programs that used that number but I did learn that Jews bypassed Samaria because no self-respecting Jew would take that shortcut. I also learned that going through Samaria cut off two days of walking and I wanted to say "Who wouldn't take the shortcut?" But I then remembered that no self-respecting Jew would have.

Our pastor continued his sermon but my mind focused on the simple (and possible) truth that Jesus did indeed go specifically to meet that woman. He wanted to spend time with her! Upon arrival at the well, he sent the disciples away to get food and then waited for her to show up. She would have chosen the hot time of the day so as to not have to deal the other women of the village. Why? She was, in fact, on the immorality registry of that village, someone considered to have low morals. Today we would say she slept around a *lot*. Certainly not someone decent people would want as a neighbor.

Coming out of my mental wandering, I heard the pastor say "We all have a black sheep in our family tree and too often we are more than willing to write him or her off as not worth our time – certainly not worth our prayers. It would be logical that my family considered me a black sheep. Who else had gone to prison? Who else had done what I had done? Who else walks through life in today's world with restrictions meant to 'protect' the public?"

The woman at the well was not a bad woman. Despite all she had done, she still sought God, still tried to obey the laws of her faith. And Jesus knew that.

When Jesus offered her the water of eternal life, she didn't doubt his words but she was as confused as you or I would have been. Surprisingly, she didn't turn her back on him nor did she walk away. Then Jesus said something

simple. "Go, call your husband, and come back." *In one sentence, he had stepped into the center of her life.*

I think many of us would have said "Okay" and quickly walked away from this man. After all, he didn't need to know the truth. And isn't the reason she came to the well at this time of day to draw water an effort to avoid just this kind of thing? After what was probably a deep breath, she met his challenge head on but with a little play on words – "I have no husband."

If this was being discussed in group therapy today, someone would accuse her of minimizing or evading the truth of her lifestyle. She would have been challenged and maybe even told she'd be kicked out of group unless she acknowledged facts.

What Jesus shares next, however, is a truth that goes beyond the right or wrong of her choices. He told her ²³ "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. ²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

She countered his words by saying the Messiah would come and explain everything. Imagine what she felt when Jesus said "I, the one speaking to you—I am he." No one else around. Just the woman and the Messiah.

We are told she left her jar and returned to the city, telling everyone she met that a man had laid bare her life. Could he be the Messiah? Even though Jesus already told her that he was, she knew that in this village, she was still the woman on *their* registry, still not someone to be taken seriously or to be trusted.

Everyone knew her reputation but that didn't stop them from going to the well where they listened for themselves. At some point they told her "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world." In short, they had come to the well and met the Messiah.

Everything I ever did

I have shared in earlier editions of this newsletter that one of the most difficult parts of being arrested was to have my sins displayed for everyone to see and talk about. There was no sense of guilt in those moments, only a deep sense of shame. That shame was a tool Satan used as a way to make me feel that God was no longer interested in me. Some days, I admit, I certainly felt if not believed that notion. But God hadn't turned on me. If anything, he drew



closer and more intimate despite my fear of whatever was to come.

When Jesus said “Go, call your husband, and come back” to the woman at the well, he had all but said “I know who you are and I know what you have done.” She had not met Jesus before and she certainly had no reason to think he knew anything at all about her – she, the one on the registry of immorality in her village. But unlike the feeling of being at held at arm’s length, she felt the welcome and love behind his words. And I think she was excited by all this.

Jesus didn’t tell her to spread the word of his offer of living water with the village, but that’s exactly what she did. We might wonder if she didn’t bear some ill will toward those people. After all, they tolerated her and that’s about all. Why not keep what Jesus had shared a secret? I think at the heart of things, she liked these people and wanted the best for them even if they didn’t feel the same toward her.

Applying that to my life, I think that when I fail to seek the best for others, something in me is diminished – I am less of the man I should be. Given 30 years of reentry, there are certainly times when I have to remind myself of this truth because there are still many people who would rather see my back than have to deal with my past.

For those still in confinement, you are living in a difficult world and your social status is not improved by your charges, but where you are is still an opportunity to be like the woman at the well. When circumstances arise that call for it, share the joy of God with those who don’t have it.

So, are you worth it? God thinks so. Jesus certainly thought so. He died for you! And the Holy Spirit wants more than anything to dwell in *your* daily existence. Grace, love, mercy, forgiveness, and a whole lot more await any heart that is open to receive. It’s really worth it, my friends, and your life changes because God calls it to change. All it really takes is for you to say “Here I am, Lord. Change me.” And then, let him. □

Bits & Pieces

The following are taken from letters I have received since the last issue of this newsletter. Some are meant to offer hope and encouragement while others call out for us to be in prayer.

I have learned so much in the Spirit this year, that even in the most severe conditions, God still loves me and man’s devices can’t stop that.

I am scheduled to be released in 2019 and I’ll be homeless. I am trusting in God’s word that he will see me through.

I have always found it amazing how when some people face adversity they come out with a stronger faith in God no matter the end result.

There is life after release – it’s just going to be a little rough.

Sometimes, the friendships I have here help a little but I am still really down some days and wonder if the struggle is really worth it.

What is the point of doing everything I am asked to do and still be told it is not enough? But I have been blessed with good friends even in a place like this. They keep me going.

We have been discussing confession and the importance of admitting all of our addictions. It’s very important for us to have someone we can trust but this isn’t the place where you can trust anyone.

My life could be a lot worse but it’s hard to be thankful when you’re incarcerated, especially around others who continue to think only of themselves, often playing the ‘victim.’ It gets old hearing this stuff.

God I ask your forgiveness and the grace to forgive others.

I want to thank you for the Into the Light newsletter and want you to know that every time I read it, the impact on me is the same as the first reading.

Once again, a special thanks to my friend, Bob, whose generous gift of stamps made the mailing of this edition of *Into the Light* possible. Please keep him in your prayers of thanksgiving just as I do. He is a blessing to this ministry and you!

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 who have come to believe that they are not worth it, that they make space in their heart for the One who wants to tell them how wrong they are.
- For those who believe there is no hope and no life for them, that each day is a new awakening to the gifts God wants to bestow on them, the miracles he wants for them.
- For those charged with the security of those incarcerated, that they look for the best way in which to live their jobs, not merely seeking ways to display power and dominance. [In other words, pray for those who persecute you]
- For those locked into the lies they have carried for too long, that they will find that “the truth will set you free.”
- For churches everywhere, that their mission to be Christ’s hands, feet, eyes, ears, and voice in this world will include the confined – whatever the charge.

- For the families and friends of victims, that this new year will see doors opening for them to bring total healing into difficult situations.
- For family and friends of offenders, that this new year will see doors opening for them to bring total healing into difficult situations.
- For Bob's health and continued recovery, that the ministry God has for him will continue to be an encouragement and hope for others.
- For this ministry, that Broken Yoke Ministries continues to be blessed with the financial support needed to meet basic expenses like this newsletter.
- Finally, for those who are still abusing and are reading this newsletter because God made that possible, that they will do whatever it takes to stop the cycle of abuse and harm caused to their victims.

Your Support Matters

Please consider financially supporting this ministry. *Into the Light*, a newsletter unlike any other, is made possible solely by your donations. Send contributions to

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

All donations are tax deductible and will be acknowledged. If you are unable to support this effort financially, please support it with your prayers.

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To change from what we were to what we hope to be requires us to recognize the 'what' in us that needs to be changed

Random Thoughts

By Bob

Some years ago, I included a column with this same title in *Into the Light* and as we start a new year, I thought I would revive it for this January-February edition. There's no rhyme, reason, or order to what I will share – that's why it's called 'Random Thoughts.'

- September onward proved to be a time of trusting God for my physical health. Twelve days in the hospital (seven in ICU) for an inflamed pancreas and then an operation to remove my gall bladder taught me that I am not as in charge of my body as I thought I was. Lots of discomfort but also lots of prayer time. As I shared with one friend, God's grace is pulling me through.
- A bit related, I found that there are people who care about me, ask how I am doing, and who pray for me on a regular basis. I guess I am a little programmed to believe I am not worth all of that, but that's the

enemy speaking. I think the prison system likes to push the 'you're a pervert' identity, but God certainly never calls me (or you) that.

- I have been writing this newsletter for 21 years now and have been incredibly blessed to hear from readers who share how they were blessed or encouraged one way or another by the contents. I will tell you that when I start an article, I rarely know how it will end – I just start writing and at some point it feels right to stop.
- The world in which we live seems content to believe that confinement and/or commitment are the only ways to ensure safety for their children. However, I can't remember the last time I read of efforts to help parents become better and more connected parents with their children. If they were, molestation would be far less likely to occur when legitimate love is demonstrated. For many parents, that kind of love was absent in their own families, so sharing a kind of love that didn't exist can be difficult.
- Sometimes we believe that our environment or circumstances make it impossible to feel the blessings we see others receive. Maybe there are even times when our heart asks "Why don't you love me, God, like you do everyone else?" Those are feelings some of us were born into, sometimes cemented in place by those around us – even by those who say they love us. Yet every day we are bombarded by God's love – we just fail to see it or even to look for it.
- I still have to remind myself that though I did terrible things, I do not have to live each day from the center of that darkness. I understand the fear others have that I (and you) might reoffend but I hope the day will come when society sees solutions for supporting change by encouraging those in reentry, not condemning them to the underpasses many call home.
- Ministry can best be defined by saying yes to opportunities God provides. We *are* called to make a difference in the lives of others but we do that best by seeking to be who we are called to be by the Divine Creator. May we all be ministers.



***I pray that 2019 is filled with love and blessings in your life. You are worth it!* (Bob)**

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A Little Humor. . .

A German Shepherd, a Doberman, and a cat have died.

All three are faced with God who wants to know what they believe in.

The German shepherd says: "I believe in discipline, training, and loyalty to my master."

"Good," says God. "Then sit down on my right side. Doberman, what do you believe in?"

The Doberman answers: "I believe in the love, care, and protection of my master."

Ah," said God. "You may sit to my left."

Then he looks at the cat and asks, "And what do you believe in?"

The cat answers: "I believe you're sitting in my seat."

