



Into the Light

All things are possible with God
November—December 2020

For What Do You Hunger?

Revisited from 2001

By Bob Van Domelen

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. (Matthew 5.6)

For the first twenty years of my adult life, a war waged within me. It was a battle where I could see one defeat after another with only occasional victories. When the victories came, there were no celebration parades, no public announcements trumpeting times I had rejected temptation. But then how often did I trust anyone enough to even share the fact that I had overcome temptation?

Defeat meant bouts of depression, the anxiety of possible public disclosure, and more shame than I ever thought possible. In those days when I was still living a double life, reaching out for help was just too scary a place to consider, yet I sure wish I had done so. I wish I could have shouted, "Help me," but I remained silent.

Perhaps the most dismal thing about this war waging inside was the belief that it would never get any better. Yet God is a faithful God, and when I finally stopped running from myself, He was there with His incredible love and healing presence. No, everything didn't get better all at once, but I could tell things *were* getting better.

In many respects, my choices of behavior were motivated by legitimate needs, or at least I thought so at the time I considered them. I've also learned that most all of my needs *are* legitimate, but I can respond to those needs in legitimate *or* illegitimate ways. I went to prison because my choices were not only wrong, they were devastating to everyone involved.

When push came to shove, as the saying goes, I finally came to recognize that I chose sin because something in me overrode the reality that I was sinning against a child, my family, friends, a host of others and, most importantly, against God. The best way I can describe it for you is to say that I hungered for what I sought. . . *despite* the consequences.

It all seems so irrational now. I ask myself, "How could I ever have expected a child to meet needs I could barely define myself?" Yet I was an adult living in an adult world, trying to appear adult, and finding little connection with adults except in occasional moments. I am not saying I was completely dysfunctional as a man, a teacher, or a husband and father. I am saying that I cheated those I cared most about because of the hunger that drove me.

I wish I could simplify and define my hunger for you, but it is hard to find the right words that make sense to me – much less make sense to you. There are bits and pieces

of me in almost every letter I receive from men around the world, yet no one is a complete copy of me, so I will trust that you will understand my hesitation to be too descriptive or clear on this issue.

At one point after my arrest, however, I recognized that I had to surrender my idea of how to satisfy my needs and submit to others. Anyone who has been in prison will know what I mean. I learned I could complain and struggle, or I could trust God to help me make sense out of what was happening around me. I could resist and try to force my will on others, or I could try to seek peace within myself by obedience when obedience seemed so difficult. I was changing.

They were hungry and thirsty and their lives ebbed away. Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men, for he satisfies the hungry with good things. He brought them out of darkness and the deepest gloom and broke away their chains. (Psalm 107.5-6, 8-9,14)

I gradually came to understand these words, especially the part about being brought out of darkness and deep gloom. With time, God was breaking the chains that bound me. The hunger I had for so long was not there – at least not in the constant way it had been. In its place, a new hunger surfaced, a hunger for the things of God.

If one seeks only the things of this world, then the things of God are less easily found. My identity in this world was very confusing to me and everyone else, and to continue to forge new layers onto such brokenness would have eventually produced disaster upon disaster.

My identity in the Lord, however, is something from all time as He knew me in my mother's womb and declared me 'fearfully and wonderfully made.' (Psalm 139) Even as I think of that at this moment, all I can say is what an incredible God I serve!

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

My sins were, I believe, an attempt to fill a void within me that I could not define at a conscious level. Like many of those who write me, I struggled to find the 'whys' behind my behavior. Trying to find a single cause and effect relationship, however, made the task all the more difficult because *there was no single cause*. Instead, I began to feel freedom as God had me face first one and then other

issues in my life, most of those issues seemingly unrelated to my molesting.

Over time, the walls that I had built to hide my secret identity started to crumble. The demolition took place in group meetings, one-on-one counseling sessions, job interviews, meetings with parole agents, and in the chapel (whether in prison, in a church, or in my prayer time) when I knew I was being called to surrender old beliefs for new ones.

Eventually, doors opened to share my story with others. I can tell you, by the way, that it's a scary feeling to stand in front of an audience, exposed and vulnerable to how they might feel about my testimony. At the same time, I can also share with you that such opportunities always produce positive moments – for them *and* for me.

I have been out of prison for thirteen years (32 years now) and have not reoffended. That piece of information is shared with you not to show arrogance but to show hope and encouragement. I no longer have the hunger for children I once had, but I know that I must be watchful for anything in my life that might lead me down that road again.

I have written on numerous occasions the verse *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.* (Matthew 6.33) Seeking God must be my first hunger, placed before all things that confront me each and every day. Do I succeed? Not always. Tension in a specific situation has a way of consuming my line of vision.

The unknowns we all face can be overwhelming, and we humans have a built-in desire to make everything work out as we want things to work out. It's called control but could just as easily be seen as our particular hunger.

If you are thinking that what I offer is the suggestion of obedience without active participation – God will do it for me – nothing could be further from the truth. Obedience is making the right choice when hunger demands gratification without concern. That's difficult.

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord is not blind praise from blind people, nor is it ignoring responsibilities we all have here on earth. It's the recognition that we are God's children despite the manner in which we have sinned.

The world offers satisfaction – moral and immoral – to those who hunger, but it blurs the line between good and evil with political pronouncements. It condones the very darkness of sin in the name of "Adults Only". And it speaks in outrage against those who would decry evil as evil.

O Lord, by your hand save me from such men, from men of this world whose reward is in this life. You still the hunger of those you cherish; their sons have plenty and they store up wealth for their children. And I, in righteousness, I will see your face; when I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing your likeness. (Psalm 17.14)

Just to know that the Lord loves us despite our failings and that it is His desire that we spend eternity with Him should bring all of us great joy. It does me!

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.

We watch on the news all that is happening and say we can't do much about it. But we can. We can make a difference right where we are by showing love and care for those around us. We can always help. All we have to do is look around.

The mystery of sin and the mystery of God are deeply interwoven. Sin is certainly outside the will of God but the work of God is indeed involved with sin and with those who commit sin because of the redemption brought by His grace. God in Christ Jesus did not redeem us from afar.

I have been enlightened to just how short my patience has become through this covid nightmare. Being surrounded by people 24x7 because nothing is going on coupled with not being able to do any of the normal programming. Worst, no visits. It is all catching up with not just me but everyone.

When I pray at night, I look at the positive things and aspects of being in a place of constant disturbances. I acknowledge even more how blessed I am and that's an encouraging feeling that tells me "You're a lucky man even though you are being managed by the State of California." You can't beat that!

My biggest fear about the restrictions from covid is that they *can* become a more permanent feature in our world's culture by keeping people socially inactive on any kind of physical level. Sure, we have the internet but that is nowhere near the level of face-to-face. Just a simple handshake beats *any* internet. And what about a soothing hug?

Since my arrest, I have had over eleven years to think about the subject of my inappropriate behavior— especially through books and stories of survivors of child molestation as well as some brave women who came to our prison to tell their story in person. When I think about the never-ending negative and harmful affects my actions caused my victims, it now makes me physically ill.

For the first time in my life I have been totally honest with God, myself, and my loved ones. To look so closely at what I have done and how my actions are affecting the lives of so many has been the most painful and liberating experience I have known. My journey of healing and change is now a spiritual one with the Lord's grace and mercy to guide me. In return, I give Him my trust.

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

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Our Prayer Corner

Prayer is an incredible gift we can give one another, for there is no better thing than to lift our lives, hopes, and dreams to the altar of the Lord.

Let us pray . . .

- First and always foremost, for our victims, that each day for them is a new day, a day without fear, and a day of healing.
- For those who feel that their temptations are a sign that nothing has changed, that they see God in each moment and know that the decisions they make are not the same as the ones they'd have made before their arrest. And *that* is change!
- For those who struggle with the hungers of the past, that they trust God to provide new desires, the kind that define a man/woman in God's design.
- For those feeling overwhelmed by the sameness of daily living due to quarantines, that they watch for ways to look forward to each new day.
- For those who struggle to hear God's voice, that they see first God around them and then help them hear God anew.
- For churches, that they include prayers for all in confinement – both because of prison and because of quarantine or lock down.
- For families, that they find new ways to reach out to their loved ones.
- For all of us, that we remember the importance of a kind word as a means of connection.
- For Bob's health, 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.

Have You Changed?

Twenty years ago, I asked readers of *Into the Light* to send me a short paragraph describing how they felt they had changed since the time of their arrest. There were enough responses to encourage a dedication to that topic in the following edition of the newsletter. In some ways, the whole newsletter looked like one large *Bits & Pieces* column but according to many of you, that is one of the best parts of *Into the Light* because what you read comes from someone just like you.

The paragraph above is about the maximum size I can use but as with everything that gets added to this newsletter, God will help me decide how much to include.

Sometimes I make a small change in the *B&P* column but only when necessary. I will do the same for this effort.

Please consider sending something in because what you share might be just what someone else needs to read. Pray about it and thank you!

Mail to
Broken Yoke Ministries,
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Empowered People Inspiring Change A Virtual Conference (October 10-11, 2020)



The Alliance for Constitutional Sex Offense Laws (ACSOL) is dedicated to protecting the Constitution by restoring the civil rights of registrants and their families.

This was the first time I attended an event specifically for those on a state registry. We were all given the option of creating an alias for our little window of space in this Zoom environment, but I decided my name is who I am, so I used it and others could see it.

Major issues discussed at this event included Federal changes to SORNA (Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act – aka the Adam Walsh Act), restorative justice for registrants, international and domestic travel for registrants, the anger that drives registrant legislation, and one that was especially meaningful, families coping with a loved one on the registry.

Midway through the first day of meetings, it became obvious to me that there is a difficult road ahead to bring about change. The easiest step would be the elimination of state registries but that will not happen anytime soon. Yet focused organizations like ACSOL are building a case against laws considered unconstitutional that will eventually result in significant change.

It would make sense to believe that those connected with the legal battles have a connection in some way to registrants, but most serve because they believe that the heart of restorative justice is true – *honoring the humanity of every person*.

At the heart of the conference, however, was the human connection I felt listening to wives/mothers of registrants sharing how their lives were forever changed because of the arrest of a spouse.

As one mother put it, "You wake in the morning with Homeland Security searching your home but you still have to pick up the kids that afternoon after soccer practice." That comment reminded me of the many ways my wife dealt with situations I dumped on her because of my selfish choices. And that and other comments connected me with how my children's lives were altered by those same choices.

I am sharing this with you because you need to know that there *are* people working to bring about change. I am sharing this with you because you have a part in their efforts, a part that requires you and me to continue our healing journeys, of making healthy and God-centered choices, and of committing ourselves to the absolute goal of *no more victims*.

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A Little Humor. . .

A cowboy walked into a bar in Wyoming, ordered three mugs of Bud and sat in the back room, drinking a sip out of each one in turn. When he finished them, he ordered three more. The bartender told him, "You know, a mug starts to go flat right after I draw it. The beer would taste better if you bought one at a time."

The cowboy replied, "Well, you see, I have two brothers. One is in Australia, the other is in Dublin, and I'm here in Wyoming. When we left home, we promised that we'd drink this way to remember the days we drank together. So I drink one for each of my brothers and one for myself." The bartender admitted that it was a nice custom and left it at that.

One day he came in and ordered two mugs. All the other regulars took notice and fell silent. When he ordered a second round, the bartender said "I don't want to intrude on your grief, but I wanted to offer my condolences on your loss." The cowboy looked quite puzzled for a moment before a light dawned on his face. Laughing, he explained. "Oh no, everybody's fine. It's just that my wife and I joined a new conservative church and I had to quit drinking."

