



Into the Light

All things are possible with God
September—October 2020

What Must I Do?

By Bob Van Domelen

¹⁶ And behold, a man came up to him, saying, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?” ²¹ “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” ²² When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth. (Matthew 19:16, 21-22)

What if the question the young man asked was “How can I be free of my addiction to pornography?” or “How can I stop thinking about doing things I know I shouldn’t do?” And what if Jesus responded, “Let nothing separate *your* heart from *my* heart?” Would the young man have walked away saddened by what Jesus was really asking or would he have found himself filled with joy? Or would he have felt frustrated because what Jesus shared was always his desire despite continued failures.

Those who have never had to deal with the temptations the young man had might acknowledge the answer Jesus gave to the young man with a “See, that’s all there is to it” look. They might also be quick to point out that the failures, struggles, and doubts the young man experienced would have been the result of *his* lack of faith and *his* lack of commitment. Some might even vote to expel him from their churches simply because of the *kind* of struggles he admitted to having.

Would the response given the young man been easier had Jesus said, “Sell your computer and spend more time with me?” A non-computer person would nod vigorously in agreement but not so for the person in love with the idea of all that computers can do.

The point is not that Jesus wants us to reject all ‘things’ in our lives. Rather, we are not to make ‘things’ more important than Jesus. The point is not that Jesus promises an absence of temptation. Rather, He promises to be with us through *all* temptation – even the kind that shames us the most. And the point is not that God’s gift of technology isn’t a gift. Rather, it can become the idol we create and use that makes our failures more likely to happen. This is certainly not God’s design.

Sometimes I see myself as the young man asking the question and expecting a list of things I can do to deal with what I consider my ‘problem’ once and for all. What I hear from God, however, is not a list of steps I need to take so much as having a sense of His desire for an even deeper relationship with me, and that appeals to me very much. I ride this crest of connection until my humanness and memories of my past failures rise up, reminders of the choices I made which were not of God. And I feel

separated. Then I start to think “I must be doing something wrong. This feeling of aloneness is all my fault.”

The walls of darkness are not as high as they once were, however, and I hear the voice of my Heavenly Father reminding me of our relationship more quickly than before. It is still a cycle but not the cycle of despair such as it had been years ago.

I will confess to you that I really like my computer and I don’t want to have to give it up. Maybe I have convinced myself that life would be almost impossible without it so perhaps my computer is more of an idol than I would care to admit.

What if Jesus were to ask me to surrender *this* object of my affection? What would it cost me? What would I gain? Each of us needs only to look deep within to see that despite what we might tell others and ourselves, God is not first in *all* things.

Unfortunately, our idols often feel so right and they answer so many needs that we might believe they must be of God. Well, they *are* God’s gifts to us. The issue is how we use those gifts. Do we give God praise and honor as we use that gift or do we find ourselves hiding and acting in secret?

A friend wrote to tell me that in writing his testimony, he found his entire life in God’s word. I can believe that. When reading the Psalms, I’m sure most of us can identify with David’s anger, his hopes, as well as his love of God. Yet who hasn’t felt a little like Job when something doesn’t work as it should; when the Parole Board announces another setback with no recognition of positive efforts to change; when reentry seems more impossible than possible; and when hope seems more just a word than a reality?

Who hasn’t felt the battle of doing the very things we know we shouldn’t do? Who hasn’t held back from God the first fruits and offered instead the leftovers? Questions, questions, and more questions. Though they are important questions and are often proof that the Holy Spirit is nudging us to better choices, they are not meant to be issues God expects us to fix *before* we can be in relationship with Him. By the way, the older I get, the more I find myself loving God all the more *because* I have so many things to deal with.

I pray that I never turn from God, sad at heart because I am being encouraged to be better than I am. But if I should ever find myself in that state of mind, I also pray that God sends someone to be an encourager. Maybe that will be you. Or maybe I will be the one God sends to encourage you.

The journey is not easy. Asking “What Must I Do” is a thought-provoking pastime, an intellectual pursuit, and even the groundwork of a worthy decision, but surrender to the heart of God is actually the first step, the second step, and each step beyond that. □



The 2020 Summit

An Experience to Remember

As some of you know, I was invited to do a workshop at this event. The title of my workshop, *Successful Reentry for Men and Women with Sex Offenses*, was a concern because it is hard to define what success looks like for anyone both on a state registry and in reentry, but I spent several weeks putting together an outline of ideas and suggestions.

Speaking to groups of people is something I enjoy but part of that enjoyment comes from seeing those who are listening to me. Because of Covid-19, the CMCA Summit was done entirely via the internet using a group meeting program called Zoom. By participating in training sessions, I learned proper lighting, what to wear, and how to handle functions in the program itself. In the end, I learned enough to do the workshop.

The final week of preparation seemed to include one disaster after another – computer programs crashing or not doing what I wanted them to do, printer issues, and even a notification that the ministry’s credit card was rejected because of possible fraudulent use. As things turned out, there was a simple explanation but emotionally I felt as though I carried a heavy weight on my shoulders that didn’t want to go away. Prayer, surrender, and more prayer!

I went to the main sessions and the worship meetings as well as two other workshops where I was encouraged by others serving God as God was leading them to serve, just as I serve in the manner I do. Despite all the positive ideas raised, it was clear to me that ministry to registrants is still outside of new programs and services because of the restrictions we face. I am not saying that there aren’t some wonderful and supportive people in ministry, just that there seems to be only so much they can do.

My workshop focused on helping people use better words (registrant vs sex offender, for example), how to recognize issues they had to face in themselves in order to be effective ministers, and reentry basics but with the registrant twist (housing, employment, faith communities, and the DOC). Most importantly, I spoke of the element of human connection as being a critical need for all registrants and how that could be made possible for those in reentry.

The questions I was asked at the end were difficult and almost impossible for me to answer because they dealt with personal situations – how to get off the registry, restrictions on living at home when children are present, and resources for parents. Not that I couldn’t make suggestions, just that there are so many answers possible – not all of them positive.

Within two minutes of the hour I had been assigned, the ‘room’ was closed, the participants were on to the next workshop, and I sat staring out the window. Despite not having instant feedback on how things went, I decided (as I shared with a friend) that I have placed my trust in God that

something I said needed to be heard by someone listening. And that’s the best I can do – the best any of us can do.

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.

A positive attitude will carry one much farther than a negative one. So many are defeated before they start no matter what they are trying to do because they either feel they can’t or they have a negative or defeatist attitude.

I do my best just to be me in prison. I try to not let my charges make me. I want officers and other inmates to see the person standing in front of them – not the person on the DOC web site.

Surrendering to God in mind and heart is easy, but when confronted with a harder-than-most situation, it’s hard to surrender. Just when I think I am doing pretty good at surrendering, I fail and crash and burn.

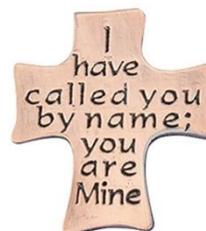
Perhaps it is one thing to be able to hold myself accountable for my crime yet quite another experience and feeling when someone else holds me accountable for it. Should I feel shame when someone else holds me accountable or ought I be able to remove that shame yet still be held accountable?

A couple of times, when I felt particularly threatened or intimidated, I believed my reliance on prayer put an umbrella of protection over me.

I will continue to put my faith in God, who will decide what happens to my son in the future. As for now, he is helping many others, both spiritually and physically, and God has chosen this for him.

When you write in your newsletters of people getting out and making it, that helps me to have hope. It seems what I’m learning is to have faith that God has my ‘all’ taken care of in this very present time.

We fail God and have failed Him for years because we are cowards. We have let God be taken out of our schools, our government, and our country because we don’t want to stand for Christ.



There is hope . . .

I received the following just after sending the last edition of this newsletter to the printer. Though he shared other things in his letter to me, I decided to include the parts that I know some of you think about in terms of your own reentry. Not everything is as John would like it to be but he is trusting God to bring about all that he needs.

I have a rented room for now and some really good friends to help me and guide me in this (to me) new world of high-tech phones and computers. It has been a challenge to assimilate all the changes and new things after 28 years.

I have a church and a Bible Study each week that helps to keep me focused and my ministry is coming together much better than I had hoped. The Lord has blessed me and guided me through the many problems that go along with reentry into society.

The parole agents and the ministries that I have come in contact with seem really interested in helping someone to succeed, and the public I have been in contact with are very accepting of a parolee. I have been using my prison ID for identification for everything and no one has copped an attitude.

Thank God for His love and presence in John's life!

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 overwhelmed by the things they have done, that they recognize the manner in which God brings healing and change into their lives.
- For those who feel failure and despair, that they will be able to see those God has placed around them to be encouragers.
- For those having a hard time with the isolation of quarantine, that they place their safety and the safety of others ahead of those feelings.
- For those who feel the absence of chapel, bible studies, and outside ministry support, that they seek holiness in their solitude, that they listen for God's voice.
- For churches, that they consider ways in which they can offer support to those in confinement during this pandemic.
- For families, that they increase whatever forms of communication are available to isolated loved ones.
- For all of us, that we remember the importance of a kind word, a touch, or a 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.
- 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. they will do whatever it takes to stop the cycle of abuse and harm caused to their victims.

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

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.**

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A Prayer in Difficult Times

God of heaven and earth,
in these times of isolation,
apart from loved ones
distant from friends
away from neighbors
thank you that there is nothing
in all of creation,
not even coronavirus,
that is able to separate us from your love.

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A Little Humor . . .

1. Larry was an old piece of lasso who stepped into a bar one day for a drink. The bartender looked at him suspiciously and said, "Hey, Pal, we don't serve ropes here." Larry stepped outside, tied himself into a clove hitch and unraveled one of his ends into a feathery mess. He went back inside and in a low voice says, "Beer, please." After staring at him for a bit, the bartender asked, "Hey. aren't you that rope who was just in here?" Larry replied, "No, I'm a frayed knot."



2. A set of jumper cables walked into the same bar, and said, "I see you don't serve ropes here. Am I okay?" The bartender replied, "Sure, just don't start anything."