



# Into the Light

All things are possible with God  
January–February 2023

## Who Said It Would Be Easy?

By Bob Van Domelen

One Saturday morning not long ago, I turned on a TV while getting dressed. Because I had no intention of sitting through an entire program, I did not bother to switch channels even though I was watching an infomercial.

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

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

I believe with all my heart that the words "Jesus, I want to accept you completely into my heart" are all the invitation necessary, but the words are a *beginning* and not an *end*. If I were to invite you to come visit me and you accepted, I would be happy for the time we could spend together. But if I left you sitting alone for hours while I went to do some shopping, it's reasonable to guess that you would not accept future invitations.

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

***For at one time, you were darkness,  
but now you are light in the Lord.***

***Walk as children of light***

(Ephesians 5:8 ESV)

The verse reads "you were darkness" and not "you were in darkness." Matthew Henry wrote in his commentary, "The state of sin is a state of darkness" and adds that "sinners don't know where they are going or what they are doing. Those in the light, however, have an obligation to 'seek diligently' the way of the Lord."

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

There are many who would suggest that a behavior is the lesser of two evils or at least legal by society's code of behavior. I am no lawyer, but it seems to me that whether a behavior is legal might simply reflect current attitudes toward that behavior. In other words, something legal today might be illegal tomorrow.

God's laws are not transitory or shifting despite the efforts of some to make them conform to changing times or political opinions. *Let no one deceive you with empty words* (Ephesians 5:6). A sin is no less a sin if done in secret or between consenting adults, for all sin will eventually be exposed to the light.

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

***Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a  
steadfast spirit within me.***

***My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.***

(Psalm 51:10,17 NIV)

No matter how hard I try to think otherwise, these verses are beginnings and not ends. I petition God to be the man I am supposed to be in His will, asking for the strength to move from day to day. At the end of each day, however, I am brought face to face with the reality of having failed in some way. I sleep with the belief that another day is coming - not that I will have a *perfect* day but that the One who is beyond perfection is with me.

An inmate recently criticized the testimony I wrote for a California-based ministry, pointing out how some of the words I used were in fact a minimizing of what I had done. Regardless of how I had intended the initial intent of the words when they were written, I could not disagree with his observations.

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

The man who wrote did not intend that his comments end up in this article, but nonetheless, here they are. I share the essence of his letter because it was an example of realistic encouragement - calling me out as a sign of concern. We are all flawed before the eyes of God, yet God continues to call us into His presence. And, I think, sometimes God calls us all out because He is our heavenly coach and wants only our best.

There is not one of us who could stand transparent before the world without feeling some embarrassment for

things we have done, said, or thought. We all try desperately to 'protect' the secrets created in our darkness from the eyes of those who consider us beyond such secrets. Occasionally, we wrap ourselves in our past identities, putting on soiled garments, unable to see ourselves as anything but the despised of the world. God does not call us to dress that way. He wants us to put on what He has laid out for us.

Make no mistake, there is nothing easy about choosing the path toward God. The easy path is not easy at all because easy paths lead to more darkness, more suffering, and more offending. The call to repentance and change is one day at a time with our hearts focused on God. Be blessed by knowing that others around you are on the same journey. It's one step at a time, one choice at a time, and ultimately, one destination where we will be welcomed with open arms.

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<sup>28</sup> *Do you not know or have you not heard?*

*The Lord is the eternal God,  
creator of the ends of the earth.  
He does not faint nor grow weary,  
and his knowledge is beyond scrutiny.*

<sup>31</sup> *They that hope in the Lord  
will renew their strength,  
they will soar as with eagles' wings;  
They will run and not grow weary,  
walk and not grow faint.  
(Isaiah 40.28, 31)*

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## Call on God - He Will Answer

A Testimony - 1999

At the age of two or three, my siblings and I were taught to be sexual with each other by an adult cousin who was babysitting. At the age of four, my oldest brother began to abuse me, and the sexual encounters lasted until shortly before his marriage.

Since I have spent my entire life being sexually active, my mind and body separated from God. Many times, I called out for God's help and sometimes had brief periods of His saving grace. In the end, however, I would choose the things of the world I craved (including molesting children) and turn my back on God. I would choose the things that gave me control and, because of my choices, became estranged from God and people, making a cocoon for myself from the lies of lust.

I wanted out but could not pull away. Parks, bookstores, gay bars, drugs and alcohol were each followed by times when I attended church, AA meetings, and retreats. I would fall on my knees pleading for God to help me, but when I got up, I would do the same things all over again.

My life was in turmoil. Getting married and still living a double life. Fathering children but not knowing how to be a father. Finally, molesting another child and being found out. What I felt was the shame, the burden, the fear, and the unending stream of tears as I cried to God for help.

I told lies so that I wouldn't really have to talk about my sins. The institution gave me medication on a daily basis, and I attended church and AA meetings again. My wife had decided to stay with me during this time. My children loved me despite my crimes, but when it was time for me to go home, the state said I couldn't because the children would be there. Once more I cried to God for help, and He placed me in a Christian halfway house close to home. My heart sang out that God was real. . .my heart told me that I must seek Him.

One day, an accusation was made that I molested another child. Family members were divided. After all, why should they have believed me? Yet again I called on God for help and because of His grace made it through that period.

One year from my out date, permission was granted for me to go home to my family, but there was no home to go to. My mother-in-law had asked my wife and three children to leave her house. God directed us to a Christian church campground where we lived in a tent for months. As a response to our ongoing prayers, God provided a house for us. I had no job at the time and was a sex offender. Only God could have brought this about.

To buy the house, however, I needed a better job—one with benefits. Every evening our family held hands and prayed, trusting the Lord to provide for our needs. And He did. I now have a job.

One afternoon while grocery shopping with my wife, I found myself face to face with my last victim. I left my wife there and went to the car, but the young man followed. Once outside, he released the rage he felt toward me by shouting to everyone who would listen that I was a molester and that I had molested him.

The man I had become was not a molester, but the man I had been was. I knew that God had been changing my life and encouraging new choices, but I still felt torn by the hate voiced in my direction. I got in the car and drove off, returning later to pick up my wife. I called my agent and reported the incident as best I could and was told I had done the right thing.

A change *has* taken place. God has done for me what I could not do for myself. He has picked me up and set me on the path to Him and let me know that He will *always* be there for me. I still fail him, but I know that I don't want to. I only wish to honor God for He sent His Son to love me and atone for my sins. His love is felt with every breath I take.

*All things are possible with God!*

*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.*

## 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 foremost, for our and all victims, that each day for them is a new day, a day without fear, and a day of healing.
- For those who see themselves as unlovable, that they come to know God's boundless love.
- For those who feel despair, that they might see and experience God's promises of new life.
- For those who feel their future impossibly bleak, that they trust in the Divine architect's plan for their lives.
- For chaplains, that give their burdened lives and schedules to the One who will provide balance.
- For those we have harmed, that they experience a freedom from the chains of abuse we have laid on them.
- 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.
- (As Always) For those who are still abusing, that they will come to understand the devastation they bring on their victims and that they seek help for themselves

## Bits & Pieces

*The following are taken from letters I have received. Some are meant to offer hope and encouragement to you while others call out for us to be in prayer.*

The first night I was in jail, someone gave me a Bible. I found and read Psalm 142 and Nahum 1:7. That night I cried, knelt, and asked God for help. The next day a pastor from a church I used to attend showed up, even though I had stolen from that church. He had come, he said, because 'something made him drive the 20 miles to the jail.

*One thing many Christians in prison are concerned with is whether they can find a felon-friendly church, especially for those with a sex offense. While all true Christian churches should be accepting in Christ's spirit, the fact is some are more accepting than others.*

No country, no army has ever had a weapon as powerful as a man completely surrendered to God.

*I am serving three life sentences plus seven years, thanks completely to the mercy of God. His exposure of my sin came with the very real threat of death, so yes, life in prison is mercy. Life is certainly better than death, even life in prison. And because of God's mercy, I found the help, healing, and restoration I needed.*

Coming to prison, God has allowed me to find myself, to know who I am, and the purpose and plans Our Lord has for my life. I am a child of God. He saved me and taught me how to live, love, forgive, and to give back what He has freely given me.

*'Abide in me and you will bear much fruit.' Some become so focused on the fruit that they lose their grip on the vine. And which is more important?*

Yesterday, I got a letter from my mom who I thought I wouldn't get a letter from again. I thank the Lord for having my mother miss me enough to write.

*I believe that God will restore me. I believe that God will provide the resources I need to do that. But I will have to want it and cling to it. I must take the first step. For me, that involves asking forgiveness for sins I recently committed. God finally got that through my thick skull.*

Therapists have been teaching me that so much I've experienced that I looked at as 'just life,' truly was trauma that created my shyness, which others viewed as politeness, being easy going. It took me to the age of 50 to learn I am not inferior or second class, and I am allowed to have autonomy even when others want to control what I think, say, or do. I *do* matter.

*Never but once in my 24 years of prison has a ministry (Matthew 25) come into prison here bringing a sexual type message of hope. I give God all the thanks and glory He has provided me in my life's journey and doubly pray that my victim has also experienced His majestic love.*

God knows our needs and is mindful of them even when we forget to ask.

*I thank you for Into the Light. It has helped me to know that I am not alone when it comes to my offenses. I get good advice not only on how to deal with certain aspects of my journey as an offender but also as a new creature in Christ Jesus, my Savior.*

My PO is a real blessing from God. I've heard so many horror stories, but I've not experienced any such things here. Started out with visits every two weeks. Now, it's down to once a month and less within the coming year. [Note: I can attest to the simple truth that if agents see a client following the rules and observing boundaries, those are the kind of success stories they want to experience.]

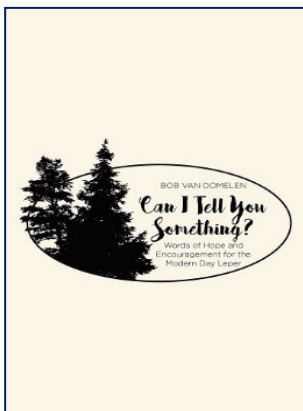
An identity shift from victim to beloved is the key to freedom because you will design the life you believe you deserve." ("You are Worth the Work" by Juni Felix)

"You ask me, 'What's the greatest act of faith? To me it is to look in the mirror of God's word and see all my faults, all my sin, all my shortcomings and to believe that God loves me exactly as He says He does.'" Paul Washer

**Broken Yoke Ministries is a not for profit 501 (c)(3) corporation and operates solely on the contributions of people such as you.**

**All donations to this ministry are tax deductible and will be recognized. If you cannot support us financially, pray for us.**

**The bottom line is that we need YOU to help make these newsletters possible. So, pray about becoming a partner with this ministry.**



## Can I Tell You Something?

Available for purchase on the internet at Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and several other retail websites.

### Some Reviews

My 82-year-old eyes have logged hundreds of offender tomes – this was one of the best. There comes a point where faith is seeing light in your heart when all your eyes see is darkness.

Wow! I really enjoyed *Can I Tell You Something*. I believe I can write a letter on every chapter – and I might do just that.

I've read about half of the book so far and love it! From what I have read, I give the book a thumbs up. I keep thinking of how much others here would enjoy it as well. When I get out, I want to buy more copies for my family to read.

At first, I was wary of reading this book. I ain't this guy! That's not me! He's a toucher – I'm just a looker. I set the book down and left it alone. The Lord said that looking with lustful eyes is the same as committing adultery. And I thought "Just because I didn't do it, didn't mean I wouldn't." So, I am glad that I picked the book back up and started reading it. I now see myself in you.



"May the God of HOPE fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." - Romans 15:13

### CMCA Correctional Ministries Summit May 18-20, 2023 Wheaton, IL

Most reading this newsletter would not be able to attend this summit, but I hope that you might know someone who could because they would find the experience educational, motivational, encouraging, and possibly the difference of a lifetime.

Longtime readers of *Into the Light* will know that I have been blessed to be able to offer workshops at this event in prior years. This year I submitted a workshop idea that has been accepted, and I want to share some information about that with you now.

### The Church and Registrants Workshop Description

Reentry for those on any state Sex Offender Registry is a task that is almost overwhelming, especially when anticipated support from churches disappears and rejection is more common than help. The church body today struggles to find a balance between protection and ministry for those in prison or reentry. This workshop will look at offer examples of policy and practice from five years ago and the present with an attempt better define how the church be part of the healing process.

Registration opens January 2, 2023, and specifics for the summit can be found at [cmcainternational.org/events](http://cmcainternational.org/events).

### A Little Humor . . .

- Before they invented drawing boards, what did they go back to?
- Can you set your laser printer on stun?
- Is it truly possible to have a civil war?
- And if a mute swears, does his mother wash his hands with soap?
- If all the world is a stage, where does the audience sit?
- Most car accidents occur within five miles of home. Why doesn't everyone move ten miles away?
- If one synchronized swimmer drowns, must the rest of them drown, too?
- If the #2 pencil is the most popular, why is it still #2?
- If work is so terrific, how come they have to pay you to do it?
- If you try to fail and succeed, what have you done?

