



Into the Light

All things are possible with God!
January-February 2024

What Do You Ask of God?

By Bob Van Domelen

Some days were good days for the blind man as he sat among the beggars just outside of Jericho. Other days were not. This day, however, his life would be changed, for Jesus of Nazareth was coming down the road.

The blind man called out "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Those near him told him to be quiet, but he called out all the louder, "JESUS, SON OF DAVID, HAVE MERCY ON ME!" Jesus stopped and said, "Call him."

So, they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! Get on your feet! He's calling you." The man threw aside his cloak, jumped to his feet, and came to Jesus.

"What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him.

The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see."

"Go, your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road. (Based on Mark 10:46-52)

We aren't told whether the man had been born blind, but in the days of Christ, most of those who were blind earned their living by begging. No one offered them a cure, a return of their sight, just a place to sit in designated areas where those who felt so inclined might show pity and toss a few coins. I can just about hear the words even now, "You were *born* blind--probably a sin of your parents."

"There is no known 'cure' for sexual deviancy at this time." So reads the first of a list of concepts that form the foundation of one state's treatment program for sexual offenders. How would that statement balance with "There is no known 'cure' for blindness at this time." I would pray that in the first sentence, the words *at this time* might hold the desire for a time when maybe there *would* be.

The blind man would have remained blind had he not persisted, had he not demanded to be heard. Jesus called to him, and he threw aside his cloak, perhaps fearing that he might trip because of it. His faith drove him forward, the desire of his heart--to be able to see as others saw--acting like a magnet.

Jesus didn't immediately say the healing words the man expected to hear, but instead asked what the blind man wanted him to do. The blind man simply said, "I want

to see."

Maybe I am looking at this the wrong way. Maybe the statement "There is no known 'cure' for sexual deviancy at this time" is really the state acknowledging the sin and not the sinner. Somehow, I doubt that. Sin and sinner become interchangeable in most prison settings.

Before some of you get the idea that I am advocating the elimination of state-run treatment programs altogether, I will assure you that I am not. In my own group treatment, I came face to face with parts of myself that I had never faced with honesty before. I saw my selfishness, my misguided lust, and my ignorance exposed.

But because of the faith-based balance offered in Bible studies and chapel activities, I also saw that not all was evil within me, and I came to believe with all my heart that Jesus was asking me, "What do you want me to do for you?" "Make this all go away." Instead of answering the way I wanted, Jesus touched my heart and brought reality to the words "And look, I am with you always; yes, to the end of time (Matthew 28.20)."

After the blind man received his sight, those who knew him didn't refer to him as Bartimaeus, the blind man. More likely, they referred to him as Bartimaeus, the man who was once blind but now could see. And it is highly probable that Bartimaeus himself would never forget that he had been a blind beggar. Scripture does tell us, however, that he followed Jesus along the road.

Being able to see was not the end for the man, but the beginning. Perhaps some of the man's attitudes in the past had been excused by others because of his blindness. Having received his sight, those attitudes would have to change. Where before his workday consisted of sitting among the beggars, now he would need to find some other means of supporting himself. We aren't told how he would

do these things because the focus of the story was on the mercy and love of Jesus. But the fact remains, the blind man met Jesus and was blind no more.

At some point in my own treatment, I finally accepted the truth that I had molested and had done great harm. Scraping away the layers of denial is never an easy or painless thing to do, and when that truth hit me in the face, I was devastated. I felt the millstone around my neck and



the weight of despair pulling me down. But that's not where God wanted me to remain. God wanted me to experience the redemption won on my behalf through the death of Jesus on the cross.

What a miracle! What incredible joy I felt in knowing and believing that my sins had been forgiven! I was still in prison. I still had group meetings, wore prison clothing, and felt the forced physical isolation from those I loved. Yet it was different.

God did not strip away the difficulties of prison life. He didn't make my return home free of tension, nor did He place everything I wanted in my lap as time passed. He simply reminded me that He was with me in ALL things.

If a system of treatment proclaims, "Once a sex offender, always a sex offender," it falls far short of what it could do for those desiring a new life. Such a system will find itself unable to reach beyond its own human limitations. So, what, then, is the answer?

In my humble opinion, nothing speaks truth louder than the truth of consistency, the truth of living in the way one is meant to live, day after day, year after year. The state does not have to prove itself. . . I must prove myself. So do you. The question now remains, "What is it that you ask of God?"

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 victims and for all victims, that each day for them is a new day, a day without fear, and a day of healing.
- For those who struggle with their faith in God, that they come to know God is always with them, always listening to their heart.
- For those who feel God doesn't listen to their prayers, that they find encouragement in knowing that God answers all prayer, but in His way.
- For those in group settings, that they find the strength to share the desire of their hearts for their future as they also deal with their pasts.
- For chaplains, that they encourage those they serve to seek God in ALL things.
- For victims, their families, and friends, that the sin committed by one who has offended doesn't block

the power of God's love and forgiveness.

- For families and friends, that when they encourage their loved one to grow in faith, they include the same request of themselves.
- For Bob, that as he gets older and experiences issues all seniors face, he will rely on God's love in all things, that he will continue to seek ways to serve.
- For this ministry, that Broken Yoke Ministries continues to be blessed with the financial support needed to meet basic expenses like this newsletter as well as being a resource for those so in need of that information.
- (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.

Just a short note (my last from prison) to give you my new address. I will be getting out after 32+ years and am so excited. Looking forward to getting mail at 'home', without a DOC number, and not copied.

I really enjoyed "Is It Okay to be Angry?" in the last Into the Light. It really struck home. Expressing anger has never been a strong point for me, and I usually end up in tears because so much emotion is bottlenecked trying to get out that I get totally frustrated. As a child, I wasn't allowed to show anger, but it was okay for my parents to do so. Instead, my anger exited my system through lies and deception, theft, manipulation, self-harm and abuse, and through addiction.

At the end of our sentences, so many of us are shipped out the door with the deck so stacked against us that it almost seems all we can do is expect to come back. But for those of us with faith, there is hope as God specializes in the impossible. We must be diligent to work out our salvation with much fear and trembling, looking for the author and finisher of our faith and future. 'I don't know what the future holds, but I know who holds the future.'

A friend of mine let me read his copy of Into the Light. I would like to thank you for bringing God's word to inmates and for showing the world that not all SOs are monsters, that we are still human beings. I have been locked up for just over 12 years now and have not seen anything like Broken Yoke Ministries.

They say God has a plan for us all, and I do believe that. I just wish I knew what His plan is for my life. I know that what I did that put me in prison was not His plan or even a part of it. That was my fault and not God's.

I know that my own experiences have taught me that when there seems to be no way out or there is no light shining, God is always near. I have been in many situations here in prison when I thought that I was not able to take another step, and God sent me someone to help me, to console me, and to lift me up. In my 26 years in prison, God never left me. Never. Every prison (seven of them), every yard, every building – He’s there – and God put someone in my life in each to be a cornerstone in my life. It was always someone I could trust, someone who helped me in my time of need.

Over the years, I’ve come to realize that I am the impediment to hearing God, for it is He who wants me to see the way through life with His grace rather than giving me a shove. Since He is the author of my salvation, I try not to get too impatient with myself. I like the word we use in Church, to ‘cooperate’ with grace.

Your book is well-worn now. I’ve let so many people use it and read it – it’s been a blessing!



Can I Tell You Something?

By
Bob Van Domelen

I realize that I keep advertising my book and sometimes I struggle with that. But the readers of this newsletter as well as those who love and support them were my primary audience, the reason I wrote the book in the first place.

Copies are not ‘flying off the bookshelves’ as they say, but every now and then I get a letter from someone who shares how the book has touched him. Just so you know, royalties received are used to purchase copies that I give to those wanting a copy but don’t have the funds to do so. As I shared in the last edition of *Into the Light*, please consider sharing this with others. Talk it up.

The book is available for purchase on the internet at Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and several other retail websites. **Please help get the word out.**

I have just finished reading my roommate’s copy of “Can I Tell You Something.” It is hard to express in a letter just how much the words and the passages from God’s Word have inspired me to climb out of my pit, take hold of His hand, and walk the true path that the Lord has always prepared for me. I am about to order a copy of the book for myself and will share it with others.



Write Bob at:

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Speaking of mail, there is a gradual movement among state prison systems to adopt mail policies that change how ministries like Broken Yoke Ministries reach out.

As an effort to control drugs concealed in personal mail, I now must send newsletters and personal mail to a central location where it is scanned and then forwarded electronically to tablets or kiosks. For those of you in a prison where this is the policy, you will notice that *Into the Light* is printed on two separate pages with back-to-back text. The old single-page version will not scan into a readable version.

If you are transferred to a new location, even to a new cell where that information is required as part of the main address, please let me know so that our database can be updated. For those of you about to be released, I am happy to continue sending the newsletter to your new address. There is no charge – only a request for your prayers.

Some thoughts I want to share with you

Looking over the past 38 years, God has taught me a measure of discipline. I can’t say that I have mastered everything He gives, but I can share some simple things with you. Think about them, pray about them, and then let God help you focus on what is needed now.

God loves you

Words you hear all the time but give yourself permission to really believe them and to accept His love.

God loves other people, too

It may be difficult to think of God loving the one person you really dislike or even hate, but He does. And why shouldn’t God love that way? We are all wounded in one way or another, all seeking God’s healing. . .even if we don’t know it.

Relationship with God isn’t a popularity contest

We are so conditioned to think that the one who comes in first in a race is the most loved, the most blessed. I shudder when I think of my envy over those who seemed to have their spiritual lives all together when mine seemed so chaotic. Being holy as the Lord is holy is not being better than someone, it’s just being holy.

Be still and listen

Another one of those suggestions we often hear at church or read in Max Lucado books but is forgotten in the rapid paced lives we live. Simply put, God is. More importantly, God wants us to know He is.

Ask God and then give Him room

Why do people pray for things and then lay out the way God should answer the prayer? The hardest thing I have ever done is to surrender my desires to God without assurance that I will even recognize His answer.

Don't fear honesty

The healing process often involves coming to that point in your life where you can see how far you have gone astray. It's so easy to make excuses for the way in which we sin and often so difficult to say yes when confronted with the things we have done.

Break mirrors

Maybe you are different, but I spent many years trying to see myself in other people or attempting to shape them into extensions of myself. For anyone broken like this, meeting others is like looking into a mirror, a mirror which must be broken to see others as they really are. Yet we are gifted by others just as we gift them, but it calls for us to step outside of ourselves to both give and receive.

Pain is real

"Oh, it's nothing" is not a good thing to say when in pain. No one wishes to take on for themselves the pain you or I may feel, but healing means allowing others to be in your life, praying for you, loving you just as you can be all that for them.

Tears speak volumes

I can't always explain why I cry but I always feel released having done so. Tears are not meant to be a form of manipulation nor a sign of weakness, but rather a means to express what we cannot express. Jesus wept.

And all will be well

Some memories hurt too much for me to dwell on them for too long. In those moments I wonder about this thing called healing. For many, giving up is the solution. After all, why should they be so unhappy? But surrender isn't an answer, it's a choice in itself.

No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.
(Hebrews 12:11)

One cannot seek the face of God without undergoing a process of purification. With each unwanted layer stripped away, we will find our hearts more and more able to experience the joy and love of our Creator. May it be so for you. . .and me.

Lord,
Help me today.
No matter what I face,
I won't let go of your hand.
Amen

A Prayer for Hope in the New Year

*As the new year begins, I look to You
for our hope, joy, and peace.
Give me the courage to do
all that You ask of me.
Please also make me brave
not to do what isn't from You.
Show me how to walk in grace
and embrace Your love for me
even more.*

A Little Humor . . .

Just a few quick ones



- You know why you never see elephants hiding in trees?
Because they are really good at it.
- What's red and smells like blue paint?
Red paint.
- Where does a general keep his armies?
In his sleeves.
- What do you call bears with no ears?
B.
- What's brown and sticky?
A stick.
- What's a foot long and slippery?
A slipper.
- A man is walking in the desert with his dog and horse when the dog says, "I can't do this. I need water!" The man says, "I didn't know dogs could talk." The horse says, "Me neither!"
- What is the resemblance between a green apple and a red apple?
They're both red except for the green one.
- How did the man die ice fishing?
He was hit by the Zamboni.
- What did the green grape say to the purple grape?
OMG!!!! BREATHE!!!! BREATHEEEEE!!!!

God bless you in 2024!