



Into the Light

All things are possible with God!
September-October 2026

The Lord Sees Your Heart

By Bob Van Domelen

The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7b NIV)

Let me start by sharing that I have met individuals in prison who will never be allowed to rejoin society. The “life without parole” sentence they received guarantees that. But some of them offered me the opportunity to see the peace they had, a peace only possible because they had experienced God’s love in ways they never thought possible.

I have also known hundreds who found that same peace, yet their time had been served. The prison door was opening. But for many, there was a strong feeling of uneasiness, maybe even fear. They asked, “What’s going to happen to me?”

The same question went through my mind in the time following my arrest. What I had done was reported on social media. Friends and neighbors knew. In my thinking, everyone knew. “What’s going to happen to me?”

Jesus happened. I was blessed with friends who reminded me over and over, “Whatever happens, trust Jesus.” And to the extent I was able, I did.

Knowing Jesus didn’t mean everyone greeted me with a smile or an open handshake. Some turned and went in the opposite direction. In prison, there were open threats against my life. Saying “I love you, Lord” didn’t erase my fear, but I did believe I was never alone. He was there.

The Lord does not look at the things people look at

God knows the things I have done, some of them terrible and harmful, yet other things that reflected a goodness worth celebrating. I don’t believe God would describe me to anyone as “that child molester,” but if asked, He would say, “Yes, I know about that, but I look for the man of faith, the man I designed him to be.”

The opening verse comes from the story of Samuel being called to anoint the man who would be king. One after another Samuel met the sons of Jesse, and with each he believed he had met the man, the one God had chosen. God reminded Samuel, however, that what he saw was not what God sought – until Samuel met David.

How does that in any way connect with issues faced by those arrested, in prison, in reentry, or lifers? I think that if I

looked at someone based on things I knew he had done, I might reject or at the very least ignore him. To me such a man was an evil person because his crime was considered evil. He was someone like me – at least that’s what I believed

You felt secure in your wickedness; you said, “No one sees me.” (Isaiah 47:10)

I didn’t always see myself as evil or even capable of doing evil things. Yet at some point, I did evil things, things done in secret. But as Isaiah pointed out to the Babylonians, my pride blinded me, not because I was not able to see the evil, but because telling myself no one would know made it possible for me to live with myself.

I loved God, yet my conversations with Him were defensive. “I can stop, Lord, but it’s not easy. Forgive the weak man in me. Tomorrow will be better, I promise.” Some were better, many were not.

But evil shall come upon you, which you will not know how to charm away (Isaiah 47:11)

No one grows up with a plan to spend years in prison. Who thinks that way?

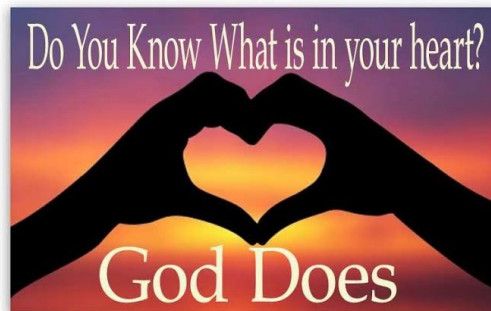
But with my arrest, prison became reality, and as much as I hated confinement and separation, I left prison knowing that I was a different man. Not perfect. Different.

For one thing, and perhaps the most important thing, my conversations with God stopped being defensive. Words I learned as a boy became truth. *Jesus died for my sins*, and I finally took those words deep into my heart. “Why would He have done that?” Because despite all I had done and would do, Jesus LOVED me! He saw me as a boy, as a young man, and now, as a man of some years.

. People look at the outward appearance

I suppose one could say, “Well, what do you expect?” I think it would be a fair guess to say that even with those we know well, they don’t know *everything* about us. But this isn’t the issue here, is it. Being in prison with a sex-related charge is. Being in reentry with all the issues that make the process so difficult because of our charges is.

A basic truth: Being arrested and sentenced to prison for a sexual offense is a matter of record. There are individuals falsely accused, but that doesn’t change the basic truth. And if someone asks me, “Were you ever arrested for child molestation?” my answer would have to



be "Yes." No excuse or denial of any type can change that. It is, as I said, a matter of public record.

Shortly after my release, I was in a drugstore with my wife when I noticed someone from our church. I turned to tell my wife, but when I turned back, he was gone. Well, not really. I could see him walking crouched over as he made his way to the exit in one of those security mirrors.

It wouldn't surprise you to know that the minute I shared being on the state's registry or including that information on a job application form with a prospective employer, the air often changed, some words like "I don't think you'd be suited for the job," followed by, "Thanks for applying." I wasn't asked if I completed treatment programs because it seemed no one cared about that. I was seen as others saw me based on what I had done.

I don't want you to think that I faced rejection everywhere I looked, because I didn't. Some people genuinely wanted to know how I was doing. Others offered signals of a cautious acceptance of my return, but only time will restore the sense of trust I felt people had in me that was there before my arrest.

The simple question is really this: *How will you respond when challenged by a negative person?* I refuse to be someone's door mat by cowering when my past is an issue for someone. I cannot deny the cause of others feeling as they do, however, because my actions gave birth to those feelings.

Nor can I say to someone, "God has completely changed me!" even though He has. Remember, I shared earlier that I am not perfect, but I am different and different in my case is a far cry better than the man I was before my arrest.

My job is not to change the minds of others opposed to my presence. My job is to be the best man I can be with God's help. With time and consistent effort, some will be more accepting of me. Some, not all. Never all. But that's okay. God loves them, too.

The Lord looks at the heart

Do any of us really know what that means? Does God use a clipboard where He tracks my good and not-so-good choices? Years ago, a friend described God as looking into our hearts and gently massaging the walls of our hearts with His finger." That action was meant to bring comfort, not pain.

[Just for the sake of it, stop reading for a moment. Still yourself. And imagine God's intimate touch, a reminder of how much He loves you.]

If nothing happens, that's okay. Try again later because God is real, and He wants you. We all need to remind ourselves of that every now and then. Start simple. Say "Hi, God! Just wanted to say, 'I love you.'"

All things are possible with God!



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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 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 still hiding in personal darkness, that they surrender their secrets and find healing.
- For those who fear disclosure, that they come to understand that nothing can separate them from the love of God. He sees their heart.
- For those who fear reentry, that they trust in God's presence through everything.
- For the church, that they find a way to develop faith communities able to support those who need it.
- For families, that they ask God for the strength to maintain their family connections and identity.
- For chaplains, that they speak the truth and transparency that draws inmates closer to God by reminding them "The truth will set you free!"
- 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 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.

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.

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.

There are many ways to worship God but only one God to worship.

The walls that I built to keep people out and the darkness in were my biggest downfalls. Having people around me who can relate to my addictions and help keep me accountable are what God wants for me.

In prison now, I've found myself closer to God and my family. I'm thankful God got my attention through this time of incarceration.

I read a book on how a woman's past abuse affected her adult life and how it also affected her husband and their marriage. It was sobering to read all of the details. The woman was eventually able to put her trust in the Savior and to find health and recovery, but her husband had to allow her to do it on her terms and not his.

Finding God's love is the big issue, especially toward myself. I need a break-through and soon. I can feel my depression trying to cripple me again.

It's good to know that I am not alone on this journey. Hopefully, I will be able to get a copy of your latest book.

Doing an interesting study with a group of men, "At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry." Great insight from a biblical standpoint on pornography addiction and sexual sin – getting beyond the behavior and looking at the heart has been helpful. Hard to look at my pride and selfishness in the viewing of pornography along with all other sin in my life.

Even though I may never regain my freedom or reentry into society, I want to believe that there is a purpose for my existence.

Do not be affected by your surroundings but affect your surroundings.

Going through your book the first time, I felt you surely didn't come up in California. You just have too many positives or luck . . . or God surely watched over you. (Yes)

Sorry to disappoint. . .

I have been getting many requests to be on inmate email lists and have to say, "I can't do that." I apologize knowing it is less costly for you, but beyond what I can cope with.

There is Life after Prison

"The Right Direction"

by Don

Back in the day, I remember having to have a passenger in the car with me to manage the impossible – holding the map while attempting to tell me the right direction to go. Without those directions, I would have gotten lost on the way. Without my passenger, though, I didn't have that luxury, and I'd have to stop and ask for directions. If that wasn't convenient, I'd have to pull off the road and try to figure it out myself. And these were what we called "The Good 'Ol Days."

Back then there were no cell phones or GPS for guidance. Getting lost could be very easy not knowing what the right direction was. Left only to a good guess and maybe some good old wisdom, yep, as we all have found out, getting lost or going in the wrong direction was very easy. Too easy.

That's what it was like when I got out of prison - living in the past and trying to navigate in a whole new world with no up-to-date map.

When I went in, flip phones were new and dial up on the internet was it. GPS was for the military only and not even mentioned in public. So, when you get out, be ready for some shock and awe no matter how much time you've done. Everything seems to change almost daily now mainly due to Artificial Intelligence (AI). With AI in vogue, it seems to have all the answers and knowledge that anyone needs - the right direction included.

But wait a minute! Let's look at what we call our "good old days." Look at where we all landed up - in prison. No matter what we had available, we still got lost and now can look at the younger ones coming into lock-up. Through them we see that it's still very easy to head in the wrong direction. It's still very easy to get lost. These young ones chose the wrong direction, and no matter what knowledge is available today, we can all still get lost.

I think we can all agree that no matter how much tech, how much knowledge, or even how much we listen to (or not), none of that matters much. It still comes down to us looking for the right direction and then making the right decisions. But how? Pull over and look.

Look at where you've been the past few years. Look how you survived or notice where you didn't do so well. Look around you. Who are you hanging with? What choices are they making to go in the right direction? Then, look at what you are doing.

Yep, it all depends on you, doesn't it? Do you find yourself in therapy or classes for your problem? Are you lying on your bunk waiting for the next one looking for another cup of coffee and telling you which direction is right? Are you great at dominoes and can't be beat at cards or chess, waiting for your next move?

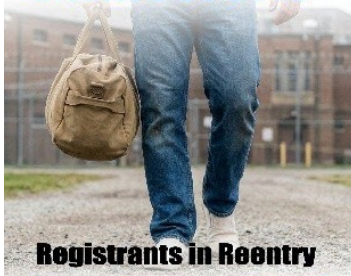
Do you see yourself leading the pack in the right direction or just as a follower headed in the wrong direction? Still wondering what the right direction is? Just look, just think, just use some of that street knowledge.

The answer is there, even if you can see the OPPOSITE of what got you into prison because of going in the wrong direction. The change is there. It's your choice! Fake it till you make it.

If you are still having a hard time, there is one who can help. One that only knows the right direction. Look to God! Read your Bible. It's full of failures who made it in the long run by just doing that very thing. They looked to God!

The right direction is possible even if it's not there right away. God doesn't give up trying to show you the right direction. He's already shown you or is even now showing you, like he showed all of those in the past. And he has definitely shown me just like I am now trying to show you. THE RIGHT DIRECTION.

NEW LIFE - NEW DIRECTIONS



BOB VAN DOMELEN

Just an update

I never thought the book would be a best seller because some will see the word 'registrant' and move on, but I would encourage you to tell family and friends to get a copy. Paperback Book \$13.95 +S/H. Kindle \$4.99 available immediately on Amazon.com

A Little Humor . . .

Don't blame me – I didn't write them – I just copied them out for you.



- Where does the pirate buy his hook? At the secondhand store.
- Why are elevator jokes so good? Because they work on so many levels.
- What lights up a soccer stadium? A soccer match.
- Why did the tomato turn red? It saw the salad dressing.
- Why shouldn't you write with a broken pencil? Because it's pointless.

When Things Seem Overwhelming

The following is a shortened account of God at work, proving to me without a doubt that God does watch over all of us. The full version can be found in "New Life, New Directions."

The Program Review Committee (PRC) decided that I should attend a technical college in Milwaukee as I had no career to fall back on. That meant being sent to a halfway house there.

Checking in with desk sergeant on my arrival, I was told I would be assigned to work at a local pallet company. With some fear, I argued with him and pointed to the paperwork given me by the PRC.

His face showed he wasn't happy, but I would be allowed to leave the halfway house the next morning at 9:00 AM to walk to the college (about 1.5 miles away). If I was unable to register for classes, I would be working at the pallet company or returning to prison. What I didn't know was that classes for the fall semester would be starting the day following. On top of everything, I was told I had to be back at the halfway house by noon.

I was truly lost standing in the main hall of a place where people were passing by on both sides of me. I felt panic. Looking around, I noticed an older man coming toward me. He asked if he could help, so I told him I had just been transferred to the halfway house and had to register or be sent back to prison. "Let's see what we can do" he said.

My first choice for courses - computers and/or data entry - had no openings. The man asked if I liked numbers and when I said yes, he mentioned accounting as a possibility. Within 10 minutes, I had a complete list of courses available. [God]

I was then placed in a long line where students were paying for registration based on the credits they were taking. When my turn came, I looked up and said "I have no wallet and no money. I don't even have ID with me, but I need to be in these classes." She picked up the phone and a few minutes later another woman came and escorted me to her office where I went through the whole story again.

When I had finished, she asked if someone would be able to make payment toward the fees I owed. I did. Then she gave me a voucher slip that I was to take to the college bookstore. All my book costs were included in that voucher.

Finally, she said "I know you. My children attended the high school where you taught, and I am aware of what you did. I am hoping that you will succeed and I also want you to know that I have been praying for you." I cried. [God again]

At 11:45 I walked through the doors of the halfway house only to hear the sergeant say "The van for the pallet company leaves tomorrow morning at seven. Be ready." I lifted my bag of books and showed him my course schedule. No money, no ID, but what was supposed to happen happened. [Yet again, God]