

ife

Lines

February 2008

ABIDING LIFE MINISTRIES INT'L

There is nothing the nearness of Christ cannot overcome

Daily Miracles

WE want to experience the supernatural, and yet we are experiencing it daily. If we awoke and were able to smell for the first time, hear for the first time, and touch for the first time, would we not say that we had experienced a miracle? Had we never seen fire, what would we think the first time we saw it? If we had never walked, what would we think upon taking the first step? We are living the miraculous! This is why Jesus said that it is a wicked generation that seeks for a sign, a wicked people that cannot see the miracle of life every day of their lives. If we cannot recognize God, we add to the miraculous and want something more. For those who do not recognize God, there will never be enough. It would be a miracle to see the lame walk, the blind see, a leper healed. Yet we walk, see, and are being healed every day, so why would people say we never experience miracles? I have walked on water . . . when it had become ice. Why am I not walking and leaping and praising God like the healed lame man? I have been healed, and yet like the carnal, blind and unseeing, I do not recognize God and His glory, considering it to be mundane.

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Recognizing God is a Gift from God

Psalms 139:23, “Search me, O God, and know my heart.”

To recognize God in your situation is a gift from God and proof that He is working in the situation. We would agree that all revelation from and recognition of God must come directly from Him. “When they had come into Samaria, Elisha said, ‘O Lord, open the eyes of these men, that they may see.’ So the Lord opened their eyes and they saw!” (2 Kings 6:20) If you are in a bad relationship, with rebellious children, untamed flesh patterns, unemployment, or health issues that have dragged on and on and on; the only thing that will bring a lift in your spirit, an expectation for the future, or hope is when the Lord opens your eyes and you see Jesus in it all.

A man had suffered in oppression and darkness for three years. What broke the darkness is when the Lord opened his eyes and he could see that the whole situation was God. He proclaimed, “I do not care about my situation any longer, because I see that He cares, and there is no need for two of us to care! All that has happened is for my good.” The next day, he got a job and declared, “I am not happy about the job! I do not care, because Jesus cares for me. He knew it was good for me not to have a job, and now it must be good for me to have the job. He does what is best always, so I do not have to be concerned. He carries me, and I can live like a sparrow!”

One day I drew a diagram of a pit, within which I drew a picture of the couple to whom I was talking. I said, “I must be honest; you are in a pit. Your life is in the sewer. You deal with sickness, teenagers, both of you working two jobs, the marriage, family relationships, and many emotional disturbances. I cannot tell you that none





of this is true and you should be of good cheer, for you know the pit is real. However, Joseph's pit, too, was real, but his eyes were opened by God for a revelation that changed everything. He could see that God meant it for good. My advice is that every time you think of the pit for the next thirty days, invite Jesus into it with you. What you give to Him, He takes responsibility for. Ask Him to open your eyes so you can see."

I counsel two people in wheelchairs, both Christians, but one is angry and the other is glowing. The difference? One sees God in his circumstances and the other does not. It is said of Charles Wesley that he preached with blackened eyes given to him by his wife. How? Though outer eyes were beaten closed, the inner eyes had seen God in it. I often ask people in terrible marriages, "Do you believe that God is in this situation, that He is teaching you something, that you are learning something that you will take to heaven with you?" If the answer is yes, I know their eyes are opened and they are to stay. Upon the death of Rockefeller, his accountant was asked, "How much did he leave?" The accountant stoically replied, "He left it all!" We are going to leave it all, except for the things of God, which we will take with us.

“ A man had suffered in oppression and darkness for three years. What broke the darkness is when the Lord opened his eyes and he could see that the whole situation was God. ”



Resurrected Truth

John 11:14, “So Jesus then said to them plainly, ‘Lazarus is dead.’”

John 11:44, “The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus *said to them, ‘Unbind him, and let him go.’”

A friend recently called to tell me that something I had written changed his life. He then said, “Why is it that God tells you things and not me? Why do I have to read it before I understand it?” I asked him to imagine a picture of a heart in which were thousands of tombs. Within each tomb was a truth, bound and dead. In the fullness of time Jesus comes, giving life to the truth and raising it from the dead. The day we believed in Jesus, all truths were put in our heart, but in a dormant, dead state. In the fullness of time for a truth in the life of a believer, when He plans to raise it from the dead and quicken it, He sends a witness. You see, teaching does not put truth into a believer; in the fullness of time, in the power of the Holy Spirit, it can be used as an instrument to raise a truth from the dead. Besides teaching, there are many Holy-Spirit-inspired witnesses that can come at the perfect time to precipitate the raising of a truth; witnesses such as the Bible, a person saying or doing something, nature, experience, pressure, worry, need, vocation, circumstance, and more.

People wanted Jesus to come earlier, for, they reasoned, if He had, Lazarus would not have died. Yet Jesus wanted him dead for the glory of God to be revealed. In the same way, we might want a truth—such as casting our anxiety upon the Lord—to be alive in us immediately. Yet He waits! He knows the perfect moment that will maximize our joy; the moment that will bear the most fruit in our lives; the moment when God will get all of the glory. In that perfect moment, He raises the truth that was dead and bound, and we rejoice. He simply says,





“Unbind him, and let him go.” The friends and family of Lazarus had given up; they did not have the power to raise him from the dead. Much of what we read in the Bible we cannot do, because though the truth is in us, it is still in its dead state. Often we give up on a truth’s ever coming alive in us, but He will come when we need it. The crowd around Lazarus wept over their inability and rejoiced at Christ’s ability. We will do the very same thing. As believers we all have the fullness of Christ already within, and as we walk in Him, truths upon truths will come alive in us, but only He knows how and when to bring vitality to them.

Peace and Power (Victory)

All of creation looks for stability, peace. The body can be in climates with temperatures from 31 to 220 (dry heat), and the blood remains the same. Spiritually, we want that kind of stability, not to be controlled by the things outside of us. As spiritual creatures, we tend to be either warm-blooded or cold-blooded. The cold-blooded need a meeting outside of them that will whip them up to get them moving again. The spiritual man is warm-blooded, more than a conqueror when it comes to the things outside of him.

The body has an order. It will protect the heart and brain and sacrifice all else. We should have a spiritual order, delineating the divine and moral things that we refuse to sacrifice. Look at things that people today get passionate about protecting, such as the right to abortion and the right to same-sex marriages. People like this are protecting the lesser and are dying.



Holy Spirit

Man is made in the image of God. The model of this is often shown using three concentric circles (Body, Soul, and Spirit). As regards God the Father, the inner circle, Spirit, could represent the Source of the Source. The Soul is the expression of the Source, or thought. Hence, Jesus would view the Father as the greater, because there must be a source to thought, and yet thought would be equal to the source. Jesus is the Word and the Father is the Source to the Word. The Word and Source are one. The activity of the Source and Word would be the Holy Spirit, for the Holy Spirit (Activity) is birthed from Source (Father) and Thought (Son). The intimacy between the Father (Source) and the Son (Expression of the Source) gives birth to an atmosphere (the Holy Spirit). This is why Jesus said that man could slander the Father or the Son, but it was blasphemy to speak ill of their child (the Spirit). The Holy Spirit is the best that can be produced from the intimacy between the Father and Son. We think of a spirit in terms of angels and demons, yet in the language of the Bible, spirits are also atmospheres. When visiting a house that has a spirit of conflict, it makes sense to enter into conflict. When visiting a house with a spirit of joy, it makes sense to be happy. The Holy Spirit is not found in heaven, sitting on a throne to be worshipped. Rather, the Spirit that encompasses the Father and Son is a Holy Spirit, an atmosphere whose presence and power is so great that for those in its influence, being Holy makes sense and becomes possible. The Holy Spirit, when it comes, invades the world, pushes the world away, and brings a heavenly contrast. When the Holy Spirit comes and encompasses a person, that one's life is immediately contrasted with the atmosphere that emanates from the intimacy of the Father and the Son.


A woman had had five husbands and was having an affair. She also had moved her son's homosexual boyfriend into her home and encouraged their relationship. One day when driving home, she stopped



to ponder the mountains, and the Holy Spirit, Holy Atmosphere, fell on her. At that moment she could see the evil in her life and attempted to drive her car over a cliff. The Holy Spirit brings contrast. We can see why David said, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me." When the Holy Atmosphere, exuding from the presence of the Father and Son, encompassed him, he found power to live in holiness, power to seek wisdom for God's people, and assurance that his kingdom must be God's kingdom. Jesus said to the disciples in John 14 that this same Holy Spirit had walked with them, but it would come into them. The atmosphere created in the intimacy of God, the best of His love, would now dwell in them. Now, it is not ludicrous for us to believe that Thought, Word, could become, a person, flesh. Why would it surprise us that an atmosphere could become a person called the Comforter? The people came to see the Word, and the Word was dressed in linen clothing. The people were not consumed with the clothes but with the Word that became flesh. This Holy Spirit, an Atmosphere that brings the presence of God to men and gives men power, came clothed in tongues. The clothes are not to be worshipped, but the awe-inspiring fact is that coming from the intimacy of the Father and Son, a Spirit has come that makes the life of the Father and Son possible and sensible. We can see why they were praying "in the Spirit." We see why so much can be done "in the Spirit." The proof of the Spirit cannot be condensed to miracles, gifts, or fruit, all of which can be duplicated by the enemy. The proof that the Spirit has come is that Jesus will be lifted up and men will be drawn to Him. The lifting up of Jesus is something that the enemy never copies. We are to be filled with the Spirit, filled with the atmosphere that comes from the Father and Son. We see why the terms Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of the Father, and Holy Spirit can be used interchangeably.




The Heart



I have lately been thinking a lot about the heart. Often we draw three concentric circles (Body, Soul, and Spirit) as a feeble attempt to describe man's makeup. I am thinking that we need a fourth circle representing the innermost part, the source of man's being, his heart. The heart must be converted before the spirit, soul, or body experience a conversion. David longed for God to create in him a clean heart. The heart is deceitful above all things. Why? How? The heart has us believing that choice rests in mind, will, or emotions. I am meeting more and more believers who have lost hope in the mind's ability to choose. They have analyzed their problem to death and yet have no freedom. Too, there are those who have lost all hope in emotions to choose freedom; the emotional "high" and what it promises just does not last or change their condition. Some are sick and tired of feeling guilty, for all of the guilt in the world has not stopped their behavior. Finally, people are sick of whipping up the will in an attempt to choose. The basis of choice rests in the heart, and the day the heart chooses Jesus, God must give Jesus, the desire of the heart. The day God does not give the desire of the heart, man is no longer made in God's image.

Why do people continue to struggle with the past, drugs, self-hatred, eating disorders, and more? It is because their hearts desire such things. It is a big pill to swallow, but as far as our personal habits and inclinations are concerned, we all have the desire of our hearts. There really is no other option. I said to a fellow, "Be honest. You would rather take drugs and go into self-hatred than not take the drugs." In the end, he admitted that what I said had to be true. Everyone gets the desire of his or her heart. I do not question that the desire of the man's mind, will, and emotions is a refusal to take drugs or be in bondage to them, but this struggle does not represent the desire of the heart. Also, choosing with the heart is not something begun in the spirit and fulfilled in the flesh.



That is, we do not choose with the heart and then make the desire of the heart happen through will, intellect, or emotion. Rather, the day we choose with the heart, He must give the desire of the heart. Again, the heart is deceptive in that it is telling us that choice rests outside of itself, and in so doing, the heart (the source of our being) is choosing something outside of it to be its source. When the heart chooses Christ as the source, there is abiding.

How do we change the heart? I do not know. I do not think David knew, or he would not have said to God, "Create in me a clean heart." There is something we can do that God cannot do for us. We must admit where we are and in honesty say, "I would rather sin and struggle than not sin and not struggle. I would rather hate my mate and beat myself up over it than love my mate. I would rather be depressed than change the things that could be making me depressed." He will not confess for us; we must do the confessing. Then God will do what only God can do, which is to create a clean heart and give us that heart's desire. Think about how many of the behaviors that we did not like in ourselves as believers merely dropped off. We never worked our way out of them. If God gets all the glory, then He must do all the work. Things just fell off as our heart turned to Him.

Let me give an example. A brother came to me that was undone by his homosexual "lifestyle." There was no need to make an appeal to his mind, for intellect had told him that homosexuality was not the way. There was no need to make him feel guilty, since he had enough guilt for a thousand men. There was no need to tell him that tomorrow could be different and he could will it to be so. There had been enough tomorrows to have dashed every hope. There was no need to talk about spiritual issues; he knew the spirit warred against the flesh. The brother was out of hope. The source of his being, his heart, had found a source that, contrary to all logic, was homosexuality. Weeks later he returned, but all he



The Heart cont.

talked about was the love of God; homosexuality was no longer the issue. I asked what had happened. He narrated his journey. He had been pulling homosexuality toward him with one hand (the heart) and pushing it away with the other hand (mind, will, and emotion, or soul power). Then one day his heart turned against it (homosexuality), and God gave him the desire of his heart. He was free because freedom was something that he desired in his heart. He was completely amazed at the transformation. God had given him the desire of his heart, and that desire was freedom. God will not give me what I think about, what I feel about, or what I will, but God will give the desire of my heart.

I know that there are several disagreements to this line of thinking. One disagreement is the issue with the heart's being a separate entity within man. The fact that the mind has intellect does not, in my understanding, nullify the fact that the heart has intellect. A mental IQ of 80 does not equate to a heart's IQ of 80. Also, there is the objection to the heart's converting before the spirit. The battle of spirit against flesh, or the Romans 7 conflict of doing that which I do not want to do, does not change the issue of the heart's desire. The soul does war against the spirit, even in an unbeliever, but I am talking about heart desire. In the end, I am thinking that we all get the desire of our hearts, that "great battles" are glorified to keep the flesh alive, and if we simply turn to the Lord in our heart, there is a great conversion. There is much more to this life on earth, in the flesh, in the midst of failure, than I ever imagined. Our souls and bodies covertly want to give us their own desires. This is proven when God begins to give the desire of the heart, and the body and soul rebel. There will be confusion in the mind, a rollercoaster of emotions, and the rising up of the will. The soul has been playing a deceitful game, working to give our desires in order to remain in control. The soul does not mind working for good or bad desires, for the goal of the soul is simply to stay alive and in control.

When the heart chooses,
the soul does not carry out





the choice and make it happen. Can you begin in the spirit and be perfected in the flesh? Many think that we choose and willpower makes it happen. No, we choose in our heart and God makes it happen. Neither choice nor willpower make something happen. We choose in the heart what God will make happen. God created the vanilla bean and the cocoa bean; we are free to choose one or the other, but we do not choose in order to create one or the other. Many are fearful to choose in the heart, for they think they must then set about creating what they have chosen. Willpower attempts to create what was chosen. The desires of the heart are things that we choose and God gives. Choice is picking something we want but cannot create. We may choose to fly, but we cannot fly. Willpower is picking something that we want and creating it by using something that He has created. So, in a very real sense, willpower can only enable us to put together the pieces that He has created in a way that we would like to see them. God gives the desire of the heart; He does not give the focus of choice or will. Many choose victory; others try to create it through will and then wonder why God has not kept His promise to give the desire of the heart. It is quite simple. He does not give what we choose or will to make happen. He gives the desire of the heart. I am attempting to make the point that choice and will are different from desire. An animal has choice and will, but an animal does not have the desire of the heart. We can choose things that exist. Christ exists. Choice is the acknowledgement of something that exists. To will is to make something visible that up to this point did not exist. We cannot will Christ, for that would give us the ability to create Christ. A person can say, "I will build the house" (make it visible from things God has created), or one can say, "I will choose a house." We can choose to ask God to create within us a clean heart and to give the desire of our heart. We cannot will to choose or have the desire of our heart. Now, faith is the blending of will and choice, and as such, we can choose the assurance of things hoped for and have a conviction of things not yet seen.



Boundaries: We All Want Them

Psalms 40:13, “Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me; Make haste, O LORD, to help me.”

Man was made for boundaries and the security they give. I have often noticed that children who are allowed to do whatever they like soon hate themselves and whatever they do. They grow increasingly dissatisfied with life and begin to make everyone around them as miserable as possible. The weak-willed parent just keeps pleading with the child, “You can’t have that. You can’t have that. You can’t have that! OK, you can only have one. Now just take one. No, don’t throw that!” You get the picture. The child is craving and crying out for a boundary even as he spirals into a deepening misery. As soon as the parent is firm about the boundary, says “no” once, and enforces it, the child will cry initially but soon will be happy. The parent, through a boundary, has delivered the child from a self-centered spiral out of which the child cannot climb alone. A boundary does for man what man cannot do for himself. Everyone desires an authority that can deliver him from self-centeredness when he cannot deliver himself. Often I have talked to someone who is caught up in an affair and knows it is wrong, but cannot get free from it. I have, on occasion, picked up the phone, called the person with whom he or she was involved, and said, “It is over. You are never to see him/her again.” The one who felt trapped now senses freedom. I have also noticed that adults who were never disciplined nor given boundaries while being raised will, when married, try their mates with out-of-control behavior, secretly wishing that the mates will get frustrated enough to set a boundary. The self-centered one cannot deliver himself from his situation and is craving intervention. Instead, the weak-willed, good-hearted, or people-pleasing mate just keeps pleading, as did the parents of the past: “Oh, it will be all right. I know you will calm down. I am so sorry I said something to upset you. Let’s both try harder.” What the Selfer wants to hear is, “That’s enough! Stop it! You are not talking like that! Go to the Lord!





Grow up!” He would react to begin with and maybe shout a little louder, but later a sense of security would come over him. A boundary is set that he is really loathe to cross over, having become sick of his own behavior, as well. One of the proofs of the operation of the Holy Spirit in our lives is that we experience boundaries. We can only go so far in the flesh before He will pull us back. We want a strong God, as did David, one that will deliver us, set a boundary, and pull us back if we cross over it. Christianity is not a type of mushy living. It is built in the strength of a love that steps in to set a boundary and deliver. Pity the society that has no boundaries or strong men that pull people back from error.

You Are Pushing My Buttons . . . Please Change YOUR Behavior

We have said before that to see God in a situation brings a move in Him; to see only ourselves yields a move in self. This is not to say that I am endorsing an offensive or ignorant person’s behavior. However, if someone pushes our buttons, there are four issues each of us can address, in order. (1) What button is the behavior pushing and why am I allowing it to be pushed? (2) Why am I choosing to become a distortion in my response? “I really want to be a joyful person around you, but I am changing to a punishing, withdrawing, obsessive person.” (3) I must manipulate the crowd through people-pleasing or cut them off by isolating myself to make sure they do not do anything that would push my button. At this point, I am a slave. (4) Having addressed the above, I can legitimately address others’ behavior. (5) A person must be dysfunctional to ever become functional in Christ. In looking for fleshly equilibrium, we swing from self-justification to self-hatred. Spiritual equilibrium comes from seeing that in my weakness, there is strength from Christ. (6) I must have inferiority and worthlessness to invite Him to be my worth.



Spiritual Attack or Spiritual Oppression

In earlier years of being a believer, there seemed to be a certain appeal to someone's saying he was under spiritual attack; it was generally described in terms that appeal to the flesh. "God wants to use me and my ministry, and therefore the enemy wants to stop me!" Basically, the whole concept of spiritual attack held the possibility that a person could possess an extra measure of grace and power, and would therefore be feared by the enemy. Spiritual attack could be used to insinuate that a ministry's effectiveness was about to explode, and the enemy was trying everything to stop this great expression, as if the kingdom of God were dependent on a man or a ministry! Well, we are growing up. Jesus said this: "I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me." When we look at the temptations of Christ, we can see that they follow a pattern described by John as, "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life." Satan was looking for a toehold of lust and pride in Jesus from which to launch his attack, yet he found nothing. When Satan launches an attack on any of us, he is looking for a foothold, a place from which to base his offensive. "Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8). For what kind of "someone" is he looking? He hunts anyone who has the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the boastful pride of life. In short, the enemy cannot start an invasion without having a foothold in the flesh. I used to believe that a great struggle with the enemy revealed a great heart for God, when actually, a great struggle with the enemy reveals a wrong heart. It reveals flesh. It reveals a stronghold. Christ's struggle with Satan did not last for days or even hours, since there was nothing there that found the temptations appealing. It is very difficult for an enemy to mount an attack against a person who is not moved or intimidated by the threats. For example, someone can say a person is actually a woman parading as a man, but with no truth to the statement, the attack falls dead and the attacker looks like an idiot. However, someone can say, "You are a liar," and to the degree that a person is a liar,





the attack will haunt him. God is using the attacks and not fighting them, but we must be honest and ask ourselves what the attacks reveal. Man has a thousand ways of hiding the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the boastful pride of life. These complicated schemes to feed the flesh and yet appear to be spiritual are revealed in the rich young ruler. "The young man said to Him, 'All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?' Jesus said to him, 'If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.' But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property" (Matthew 19:20-22). The young man "appeared" to be quite spiritual; however, behind the mask of spirituality hid a secret, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the boastful pride of life. Behind the spiritual front was his heart's desire. To drive the point deeper, we need only look at our response to the enemy when he has found something in us. If we go into despair, fear, anxiety, worry, and insecurity, it is further proof that there is something in us that we hate to have revealed; something in us that we have been fueling, and, by so doing, we have permitted, in a measure, the attack. The first step is always to admit where we are so we can leave where we are. Take whatever desire of the flesh we have, lay it on the table, admit it, and stop making provision for it. "All things" have been given to Him, and He has set us free from "all things." The problem is that we do not want to be free from our little precious that feeds the flesh and, hence, gives the enemy the right to attack and oppress. An attack is different from a temptation. Temptations come and go and will reveal that there is nothing like that in us. An attack comes and reveals there is something amiss in us, and oppression proves it. We do not need a counselor to reveal to us that onto which we are holding. We know the ways we have made provision for the flesh. When we give it to Him, at the same moment we have invited Him to participate in our freedom from it. We need not bemoan attacks; they are only the fruit and not the root. The root is whatever we have allowed to remain within.




I Hate Divorce

Malachi 2:16, “For I hate divorce,” says the Lord, the God of Israel, ‘and him who covers his garment with wrong,’ says the Lord of hosts. So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously.”

I remember quite a journey, a mountain that I climbed. Walking through a stream, I twisted my ankle. A 100-foot-tall rock wall had to be scaled in sleet; I slipped and slid all the way. I do not think I have ever fallen so much in my life. Bruises and scratches abounded, and having a twig poke me in the eye was the final straw. I reached the top and proclaimed, “I hate mountains!” You can see why I said it. Those two words, “I hate,” had definition for me because of what had preceded the statement. I did not just walk to the base of the mountain and for no reason say, “I hate mountains!” Had there been no hindrances to my ascent, I would never have made the comment that “I hate mountains.”


When God says that He hates divorce, He is not merely saying that He hates the act of getting a divorce; He hates the signature on the dotted line. There were many things that led up to that statement, and if those obstacles had been resolved, He would not have made the statement. Many Christians have a very narrow view of His statement. I have observed Christians that have struggled in their marriage for years. Problems included alcohol, drugs, adulteries, control, lies, deceit, nagging, lack of respect, backbiting, dissension, strife, abuse of every kind, and basically all of the deeds of the flesh in Galatians 5, and the children were dragged into all of the conflict. Of the couples I have talked to that were encumbered with the aforementioned behavior, 99% were never directly confronted by their church concerning the bad behavior. However, once the couples said they were divorcing, they were brought before the church for discipline and warned that if they were to get a divorce, they would be excommunicated! Immediately to the forefront was presented





every passage concerning divorce that could be used to cause guilt and fear in the couple, so that they would come back together. The signing of the divorce papers was presented as tantamount to the unpardonable sin. Because of this, many simply separate, never to return to one another, but at least they have not committed the “unpardonable sin” of divorce. I find this approach mind-boggling. I also find it unconscionable when a person has lived years displaying every one of the Galatians-listed deeds of the flesh, and when his or her abused mate decides that he/she cannot go on, the Selfer becomes all consumed with the innocent one’s need to keep the command not to divorce, and constantly questions the innocent’s commitment to Christ. Now, it is easy to discount my point by assuming that I am for divorce and therefore against the Scriptures, but that type of detractor would be wrong on both counts. However, I am making a point that God did not hate the signing of the divorce papers. Rather, what He really hated was all of the activity that led up to the signing; when He says that He hates divorce, it is error not to include the “garment with wrong,” not taking “heed to your spirit,” and dealing “treacherously.”

When discussing life choices with a struggling couple, many pastors or counselors say the easy thing: “Get divorced.” Or they may say something even easier, which is, “Divorce is wrong, and you must stay together.” Both camps have chosen the lazy way and are not really interested in the life of the couple. After many years of investing my life in believers’ marriages, I can say that working through the root (behaviors, attitudes, ignorance in communication, and normal flesh issues) that brings about the fruit (divorce) is very difficult and will often give me more sleepless nights than it does the couple. When God says that He hates divorce, He is saying that He hates those root things that brought the marriage to this point. Jesus moved



I Hate Divorce cont.

to the root of divorce when He said it was allowed because of the hardness of heart, for a hard heart makes room for every deed of the flesh. If there had been no hard heart, there would have been no divorce. I see couples where one has not walked in the flesh and the other has and intends on continuing. The Selfer wants the divorce or legalistically wants to prevent the divorce, but in reality, the couple has already accomplished everything at a root level that in a practical way makes for the divorce. To press the innocent to live in sin, covertly condone sin, and make more sin possible under the guilt/fear of God's hating him or her, again, is mind-boggling. Paul makes the same point: If the unbeliever does not want to live with the believer, the believer is not bound. An unbeliever is someone who does not recognize Jesus. There are many of what we call unbelieving believers in that category. My heart's desire is that no one divorce, but that word "divorce" has definition for me. With that as my heart, then I must work with people on the root issues that bring them to that place of desiring divorce, and I must witness to His being at work amid the root issues. Often I have said to a young fellow, "What you are doing now will be soul killing to your wife later," in hopes that the root will be dealt with before the fruit of divorce develops.

“There are three things that will make for a good marriage: communication, intimacy, and common goals.

Many have none of the three, and addressing this root issue will allow for the avoidance of divorce. However, this takes time, enlightenment, and the ability to see God in the struggles of daily life.”

Christian Counseling Turns Secular

Dear ALMI Lifelines Readers: The following is an EXCERPT of an article written by **Dr. Alex Mathew, India**. If you like what he has to say about Christian counseling and would like to read more, please contact Kay, abidinglife@aol.com, and request an e-mailed copy of the article in its entirety. Unfortunately, this is not a chapter in his forthcoming book, which will be sent to all current ALMI Support Team members when we receive copies.

Around us live people who are in pain and in suffering. Every person has a private pain or other at most times. Pain and suffering are widespread indeed. Not many people seem to know what goes on and waste their lives asking the un-answerable questions, "Why? Why me? What is happening? How is this coming about? What can be done about it? When should I start handling the situation right? Who can help me?" We keep harping at the whys of life and fail to get any answer. Then we begin to blame everyone around, including God. We have no right answer. Only pain and suffering stare back, mocking our helplessness. We seem to ignore the obvious fact that the why is God's prerogative. Then we are in real deep trouble. Confusion and conflict prevail.

People in confusion and torn in conflict garnish the offertory plate meant for Satan filled to brim with the dead in sin. Yet we assume self-righteous pretensions, judging and blaming everyone else.

Life goes on and the people sinking in sin make some feeble efforts to climb up and out of it looking for something on which to hold. They want to do something about their hopelessness, which they think is imposed on them by others around them. "I am OK, but others cause me problems, and I need a way out," is the usual line of protest. However, most people promptly create problems for themselves and others by their normal (read self-centered) reactions to life and life-situations.

In the midst of these sufferings most people care for each other and at times even become ready to shed a tear or two for others. We live on this earth where there is opportunity to bless another person at every turn. The human mind is capable of doing immense good when it decides to do so. No society would survive if such acts of goodness cease. We should help each other lest we perish. We should comfort and console; we should support and encourage; we should build up and maintain relationships.

(continued)



How to Begin Your Day

After a few nights of interruptions, getting out of bed in the morning can feel more like rolling on to the floor. Certainly it was a delight to see the moon shine glimmer through the window at 3:23 am, and yes, it is a profound privilege to soothe a little one from midnight dreams, which spark a call for "Dad to the rescue!" Those who have journeyed much farther along the path of parenting are quick to remind you, "It is only for a season; just a phase; enjoy it while you can; it will soon be gone." Well, amen... and amen!

I do agree; I know it's true. But where do you find strength for your day, when you feel you've nearly used it all up, just to creak and groan your way to the shower?

Where does one find all that they need to face the day? When you are faced with demands at work, challenges in relationships, pressure with finances, unsettledness in your marriage, and a nagging longing within your heart, how do you enter into the day with anticipated joy? How do you greet the day expecting, not simply to enter the daily grind, which grinds you up and spits you out at the end of it, but actually enter into a day that is full of Life and meaning?

How do you greet the day expecting.....I believe it at least begins with a greeting.

A Greeting

Good-morning, Life – and all
Things glad and beautiful.

My pockets nothing hold,

But he that owns the gold,

The Sun, is my great friend –

His spending has no end.

Reflect for a moment on the above words of 20th century poet, W.H. Davies. I begin the day by greeting Life (notice, capital L), who is also the Way and the Truth. As well as greeting all the good He has created. And though I am empty (and gladly admit it), my pockets, my strength, my own personal resources, I affirm this one truth: He who owns all things, even the Sun, which causes the day to come, "is my great friend."



CANADA NEWS

Can you affirm this one truth today: I have a God? What does that mean for you? What does it mean for all that you face today? I have a God – I don't want to live like I don't have one; I have a God. Can you affirm that truth today? Can you affirm it as you begin your day tomorrow?

In doing so you affirm that you are deeply loved and have a profound purpose. You affirm that He has given you "everything you need for Life" (2 Peter 1:3)

Dean Davey

Executive Director

Abiding Life Ministries Canada

Abiding Life Ministries Canada is pleased to announce the publication of an exciting new book:

"Jesus Saves!" Saves from what? Did God intend to rescue us from a distant, ethereal hell, only to leave us wallowing miserably in the mud and muck of our earthly existence? As good evangelicals, we sing, "This world is not my home, I'm just a passin' through," anxiously awaiting the Lord's return when He will liberate us from this vale of tears we call life. And we find ourselves wondering: is there something more? What is this abundant life the Bible speaks of? What are we missing?

In Salvation Life, Dean Davey gives a fresh perspective on the classic evangelical view of salvation. Employing Biblical exegesis as well as experiential reasoning, Pastor Davey challenges us to enter in to "Life with a Capital L", the full and meaningful life for which we were created. Written in an engaging and entertaining style, this book is a valuable tool for both the new Christian and the seasoned Bible student.

Dean Davey is Lead Pastor at Friendship Baptist Church in Coquitlam, BC and is Executive Director of Abiding Life Ministries Canada.



ALMI NEWS

TRAVEL SCHEDULE 2008

Feb. 12-17	China
Feb. 28, 29	Atlanta, First Baptist Church Atlanta Counseling Center
Mar. 2-3	Magnolia, TX, Silversprings Baptist Church
Mar. 7-9	Norman, OK, Wildwood Community Church
Mar. 23-28	Buenos Aires, Argentina, Seminar
Mar. 31-Apr. 4	Montevideo, Uruguay
Apr. 7-10	Buenos Aires, Argentina, Training
Apr. 22-25	Paris, France
May 1-4	Calabria, Italy, Congress
May 5-9	Calabria, Italy, Pastors' Conference
May 13-18	Lisbon, Portugal
Sept. 20-25	Fiji
Sept. 26-30	Borneo
Oct. 3-5	Perth, Australia
Oct. 6-11	Victoria & Sydney area
Oct. 12-17	Mt. Alford, Boonah, Australia; teach ALMI School of Discipleship
Oct. 19-28	New Zealand
Nov. 6-9	Family Wedding
Nov. 11-26	Latvia

Welcome to the new year at ALMI! We have completed one year in our new administrative office, which is working out great with Kay at the helm. We give all of you a special thank you, along with the assertion of the knowledge that GOD blesses you for supporting HIS work at ALMI. Your support this year will allow for everything from teaching children in a remote area of Africa, to training indigenous pastors for the remote peoples in the Amazon regions, to providing books and materials and training for believers on six continents! ALMI is an extension of your hearts for Christ in you, the hope of glory.

- A new book in Portuguese, *My Weakness for His Strength*, is being readied for publication. Sorry! We still have not had time to make that book in English.
- Betty is hoping to feverishly work this year editing *Untold Stories, Unknown Saints*, which we would like to have in the hands of the supporters by year's end.



ALMI NEWS

- It appears to be the fullness of time for ALMI in South America (trip report to come later to the Support Team). This spring, Tim Lester and Mike will begin in the southernmost point in the world and work their way to Mexico, where Steve Reinhard will do seminars. There has been a great amount of fruit appearing from the years of your supporting the work in South America.
- Mike has been working for years on the Tibetan border, but this year he will get to enter Tibet. Pray for contacts to be made there.
- Work continues on Mike's writing a new book, *Recognizing God*. He has a unique opportunity to train pastors in Italy in the spring. He will also do a conference in Paris, a first for him to work in France, and work for nearly a full week in Portugal, doing conferences and a workshop at a Bible School. It is great to have the materials available to share in Portuguese.
- Thank you to the hosts who have allowed Mike to speak in the U.S. in February and March: in Atlanta at the First Baptist Church Counseling Center; in Magnolia, Texas, at Silversprings Baptist Church; and in Norman, Oklahoma, at Wildwood Community Church.
- For those of you who know Alex Mathew, Mike is spending a week with him the end of January, so we will have fresh news of how his growing ministry is going. Alex's e-mail address has been wrong on our web site for some time, but he remains eager to help anyone seeking counseling. The updated e-mail address is almsindia@asianetindia.com
- As always, we are so appreciative of your prayers. As Mike always says, you do the praying for ALMI, God blesses as we work, and the reward is yours!
- A new CD set of Michael Wells' teaching has been released and is now available for purchase at the office or on our web site. The title is "Recognizing God." This latest CD series, by Michael Wells, looks at a variety of topics where recognizing God is crucial. Included in the series: Recognizing God in Suffering, Recognizing God in Our Daily Lives, Recognizing the Holy Spirit, and Recognizing God in the Lord's Supper. New CD Series: Recognizing God \$25.00 (5 CDs)





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