



# Into the Light

*All things are possible with God*  
November—December 2016

## The Narrow Road

By Bob Van Domelen

*"But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it." (Matthew 7:14 NIV)*

In order for both victim and offender to find healing and positive change, I believe that we each need to be praying for healing without becoming buried in the dark memories of the abuse. I am not suggesting that we adopt a "Well, just forget it happened" attitude because horrific things *did* happen. Healing isn't ignoring pain. Healing is moving through it.

Psalm 23.4 says "*Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.*" We don't get to walk *around* the darkest valley. We walk *through* it.

If a victim is not encouraged to see beyond the offense, or if an offender is living each day centered on the memory of abuse, I am not sure much change occurs.

Many victims continue to walk on the edge of repeated pain because nothing is different. Many offenders wonder if change is even possible because of the frequent reminders that the sign they carry says "Sex Offender - Unclean." At the same time, many victims see their identity only as victims while offenders are repeatedly told they are nothing more than another abuse waiting to happen.

I had to share all of that because it is too easy for victims to believe healing is the perpetual confinement of their offenders. And for some offenders, there is a temptation to set victims aside in a way that suggests nothing ever happened. Both attitudes are barriers to the wholeness God wants them to experience.

*Into the Light* is written as a source of discussion and consideration for those of us who have offended. Let me share, however, that healing and change are only possible when both victim and offender pray for each other. I won't presume to say that I have answers but I do share points that I hope you will prayerfully consider.

### Consequences

Back in the days when I wore a tie to work, I remember one specific tie that I considered a favorite both in color and design. I could not wear that tie, however, without seeing the evidence of a grease stain I caused while eating. It wasn't large, nor was it really obvious to anyone unless I told them to look for it, but I *always* knew it was there. Despite the stain, though, I still wore that tie.

I am not suggesting that my crimes are of so little concern that I should ignore them. As a matter of fact, every letter I answer reminds me of the day I was arrested, the shame my family experienced, and most importantly, the

lives I had negatively altered by my choices. I am suggesting, however, that I can move forward by accepting responsibility for what happened and by understanding that part of my victim's healing is for them to believe that I am working to change me and, when possible, to atone for those actions.

The bottom line is that no one can drop a stone in a clear pond without creating ripples. No one can abuse a child without facing penalties society deems appropriate. What can make consequences difficult is the fact that healing and consequences are rarely if ever on the same time table.

If a man spends 20 years in prison and has sought God's grace each day of those 20 years in order to make change in his life, he might struggle with a court sentence of 25 years or even to life in prison. At some point, an inner voice will call out "Don't you see the changes I have made? Can't you see that I am worth a second chance, a parole?" Instead, the parole board says "Not enough time served."

The sentence of the court and the progress an individual makes are not connected, nor do I think they ever will be. Making everything even more complicated, reentry means a whole new set of challenges no other convicted person faces. These are consequences – fair or not – but consequences.

### The Small Gate – the Narrow Road That lead to Life

In one respect, all who seek God must come to the realization that the way of the world is a wide road that many travel. It's a road where any choice is a good choice provided the decision doesn't 'hurt' someone else.

Were I to ask a room filled with men in prison on sex-related charges what they considered their greatest sin, most would immediately point to the behaviors that brought them to prison. Those sins would be like large boulders, easily seen and obviously an issue in their daily lives.

Were I then to ask what would happen if those boulders could be smashed or evaporated, I think many would suggest that if that happened they would finally be free to follow the path to God. *The* sin would no longer be an issue. But would that really be the case? I doubt it.

The moment the big sin is destroyed we are faced with evidence of many other sins that stand in the way of our being in complete surrender to God's will. And in this respect, how different are we from the rest of society, from the rest of the Christian community? Don't they have their own sin issues?

You might argue that *they* don't have to spend time in prison; *they* don't face restrictions on where they live or work or even what church they attend; and *they* don't have to wear a label that crushes both the mind and the spirit, a label that has destroyed family connections. You'd be right and perhaps being right is small consolation for a reality that we *do* have to face.

If I am being honest, I believe that my sins have made it possible for me to be even more reliant on God's grace and mercy than others whose sins are not exposed in the way mine have.

Sometimes I think that each day gets defined for me by small gates and narrow roads. The smallness restricts me but it also keeps me focused. My choices are often under the microscope of public scrutiny, a scrutiny not often experienced by others, so I can either choke because of my resistance or I can breathe by living within what I cannot change.

### **That leads to life - and only a few find it**

Whether in prison, in civil commitment, or in reentry, we get to choose how we deal with life, with what is in our power to control and what is not.

Without regard to where we are, at the end of each day we face the question "Have I walked with the Lord?" We get to ask ourselves "How have I been blessed and how have I blessed others?" God is in *this* very moment and *each* moment is a movement closer to eternity as an heir to the Kingdom.

*I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt (out of your bondage) so that you would no longer be slaves to the Egyptians (your sins); I broke the bars of your yoke and enabled you to walk with heads held high. (Leviticus 26.13*

Jesus died for our sins so that we might recognize the narrow road. By that atonement, we are given the grace to choose to walk that narrow road so *that we might find life.* □

## *Bits & Pieces*

*The following are taken from letters I have received since the last issue of this newsletter. Some are meant to offer hope and encouragement while others call out for us to be in prayer.*

God not only asks us to live a godly life, He also provides us with the power to do it. He works in us giving us the desire to change from the inside out. In Colossians 1:21-22, God through Christ's death on the cross reaches out to make us His friends. When we turn our life and our will over to Him, He brings us into the very presence of God and makes us blameless before God.

*Being arrested for a sex crime and coming to prison has helped me realize the harm I've done and the damage my choices caused my victims. I think that it (prison) has helped me identify the spiritual sickness that I suffered from and revealed to me that I am not alone.*

It really pulls at my own heart strings when I talk to many in here who have basically given up. But the good thing I've learned is that it's possible, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to spark that hope again. It comes down to showing them

the love of the Father and showing them that they are not alone.

*Sin isn't something that got stuck on the bottom of our shoes. It's the broken part of us that only God can fix. It is, I think, a longing for something good that somehow had gotten twisted out of recognition. To fight off (or stuff back inside) that inner devil that has come out of hiding is like trying to heal the wounds of life in a boxing ring.*

Events (past, present, or future) have me concerned that we Christians are so caught up in how this country is turning away from God that we may be failing to reach out to the lost soul sitting next to us in church. We are all called to help bring souls to Christ so they'll be with us in the next life.

*Some expect God to be their "genie in a bottle." They feel like they can rub the bottle and poof, God is there to do their bidding. We know from scripture that God doesn't work this way. Sometimes we go through sickness, disease, and tribulations so that we are strengthened for things to come or as a way to build our faith in God.*

Whenever I find myself jogging on the track and a beautiful butterfly 'seems' to fly along with me for a moment, I know God sent it. So I say "Thank you!" Often when I am dragging while trying to complete the final laps, I feel a cool breeze and I know God provided it. I suspect I miss a million other times I could and should say thank you to God but I hope He knows my heart when I fail to do so.

*Even here in civil commitment, I'll do what God is leading me to do. I pray for a humble heart, for knowledge, wisdom and understanding to know his will. And I pray for the courage to act on how God leads. [Charles]*

I feel I will be angry over the sentence I received for the rest of my life. But the longer I let that anger burn in me, the longer it will take to have true peace.

*I don't know quite how to word it, but perhaps an honest 'bit' for Bits & Pieces is that many groups that help with reentry will not help those with sex crimes. If you write them and they do not reply within 30 days or do not offer any of the help you requested, they're NOT going to help. Accept the fact that help may not come but it is important to remember that God doesn't give up and neither should we.*

This time here (at a new institution) without a job has given me time to rest and reflect. Many times when I seem overwhelmed and don't seem to have enough time to get things done, God tells me "You give me time and I will give you time.

*Keep it real!*

In my studies I have been focusing on keeping a pure heart, that all of our desires come from the heart. As God requires us to have a pure heart, then I would expect Him to *help* me have a clean heart. So I seek Him for that and expect that as my heart is purified, I will become what God wants me to be – the image of Christ.

## Your Support Matters

Please consider financially supporting this ministry. *Into the Light*, a newsletter unlike any other, is made possible solely by your donations. Send contributions to

**Broken Yoke Ministries**  
**PO Box 5824**  
**De Pere, WI, 54115-5824.**

All donations are tax deductible and will be acknowledged. If you are unable to support this effort financially, please support it with your prayers.

## Our Prayer Corner

Prayer is an incredible gift we can give one another, for there is no better thing than to lift our lives, hopes, and dreams to the altar of the Lord.

*Let us pray . . .*

- First and always foremost, for our victims, that each day for them is a new day, a day without fear, and a day of healing.
- For each of us, that we recognize the treasure that we hold within us and that each day becomes another opportunity to thank God.
- For those who struggle with their emotions, that they come to understand that God knows how they feel and wants them to have peace.
- For those who feel lost, that God's word and the witness of His love through others will give them direction.
- For those in treatment, that their faith gives them the strength to deal with all that must be done.
- For our country during this time of political confusion, that whoever is elected serves not as controller but as servant of all.
- For families finding it difficult to love a family member in prison, that they come to see their support as life-changing – for everyone involved.
- For all in recovery, that they accept the small gate and narrow road as the path to life.
- For victims, that they might regain power over their lives and walk in freedom.
- For treatment personnel, that they offer group members a foundation of positive change.
- For this ministry, that Broken Yoke Ministries continues to be blessed with the financial support needed to meet basic expenses like this newsletter.
- Finally, for those who are still abusing and are reading this newsletter because God made that possible, that they will do whatever it takes to stop the cycle of abuse and harm caused to their victims.

I have submitted a workshop proposal for the 5<sup>th</sup> CMCA Conference (May 5-6) in Philadelphia based on the church response to those with sex-related offenses.

I used this theme a number of years ago when information was scarce – even on the internet. That has changed but not all for the better. Many of the letters I receive from individuals preparing for reentry share a level of rejection and alienation that holds them at arm's length from any spiritual support and encouragement.

I have asked Maggie Witherow, co-founder of Matthew 25 Ministries and *City of Refuge*, to be a co-presenter. She brings a God-centered heart to the discussion based on the experiences of that ministry.

You are needed to be in prayer for the acceptance of this workshop proposal as well as for funds to meet the expenses connected with the conference. God answered your prayers last year in meeting every need and I count on your prayers again this year.

**Broken Yoke Ministries**  
**[www.brokenyoke.org](http://www.brokenyoke.org)**  
**Newsletters, links, information**

## *All things are possible with God*

**Those who leave everything in God's hands will eventually see God's hands in everything.**



**Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.**

(Proverbs 3:5-6)

**Broken Yoke Ministries, Inc.**

PO Box 5824

De Pere, WI 54115-5824



*All things are possible with God*

*A Little Humor . . . possibly a repeat.*



So two Irishmen are traveling to Australia. Before they leave home, one of their dads gives them both a bit of advice: "You watch them Aussie cab drivers. They'll rob you blind. Don't you go paying them what they ask. You haggle."

At the Sydney airport, the Irishmen catch a cab to their hotel. When they reach their destination, the cabbie says, "That'll be twenty dollars, lads." "Oh no you don't! My dad warned me about you. You'll only be getting fifteen dollars from me," says one of the men. "And you'll only be getting fifteen from me too," adds the other.