



Into the Light

All things are possible with God
September—October 2017

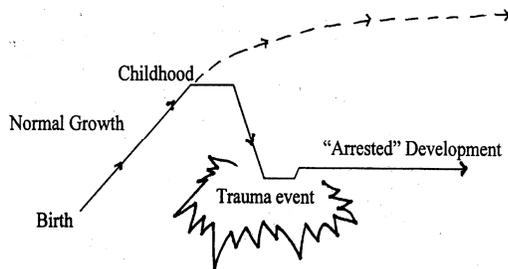
I Will Be Found

By Bob Van Domelen

¹³ *You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. ¹⁴ I will be found by you,* declares the LORD, *and will bring you back from captivity.*
(Jeremiah 29.13-14)

When I was a boy, I had lots of dreams for my future because that's what boys think about. Believe it or not, I didn't ever dream of being a fireman or a policeman. What I wanted was to be a priest. That dream, however, was set aside for a number of reasons and as things turned out, a good thing even if it didn't seem like it to me at the time. But the last thing I would ever have considered for my life would be that I would one day be arrested and sent to prison.

I rather doubt that any of you reading this from a prison cell decided at some point in your childhood "Yeah, I think I might want to end up in prison" or "I think I'd like to sexually assault someone." I didn't think that. Did you? Most likely not because those are not choices healthy people make.



Some years back I tried to come up with a diagram that described these thoughts and this is what it ended up being. The 'trauma event' could have happened at any point growing up and could also have been completely unrelated to behaviors that brought about my own arrest, but with time the path my life grew further away from what I had hoped it would be.

Many who write express the questions "Where was God in all this? Why didn't He protect me better?" I can't answer for them but I truly believe God was *always* present – I just had a hard time finding Him. And as I got older the gap between my journey of 'arrested development' and 'normal growth' never seemed to cross no matter how much I wanted to be on the right path. I could see it. I just couldn't get there.

when you seek me with all your heart

As I shared above, God was *always* with me, even in the darkest of times when my choices became wedges in my desire to be His. "How could God ever love someone as sinful as me?" "Why doesn't God just tie that millstone around my neck and be done with me? I certainly deserve that."

Mine was a heart divided, though. The addictions I developed and craved kept it so. I used to think I was like the man Jesus invited to the banquet who responded "I will, Lord, but I have just purchased some oxen and I need to try them out. I'll get back to you later." The invitations the Lord offered me were right in front of me but I found ways to side step them in favor of something I thought might be better.

Other times, the addictions simply made seeking God with *all* my heart impossible. In my sane, temptation-free moments, I told God "It's you I want above everything else." But it was a pledge of words, words without staying power because in some perverse way, I still liked my sin. If that sounds strange, let me ask you this. If we hate our favorite sins, why do we continue to commit them? God might still be in our thoughts but our thoughts are divided and in that mindset we cannot seek with *all our heart*.

I will be found by you

After all of that, seeking God might seem like 'Mission Impossible' but I do believe '*All things are possible with God.*' I am not suggesting that God waves a hand and all the issues that cloud our lives are wiped away but that God makes it possible for us to see Him *despite* the cloudy conditions.

I remember the first time I was ever in a plane, every time I looked out the window I could see the highway below and that made me wonder about the skill level of our pilot. But had we been above the clouds, the pilot would have been following instrument readings. He would have been trusting in what he could not see because he believed the instruments would tell him where he was. They would continue to point him in the right direction.

There are times when God seems absent because I want the 'feeling' that God is there. In those moments of anxiety, God's word, the Bible, serves as my instrument readings. That is a truth I found while in prison and in finding that truth, I also found God in a more lasting and real relationship than I had ever had before.

back from captivity

Over the years more than a few have told me that God promised to bring them out of captivity. They told me of scheduled parole hearings that would result in their freedom and release from prison. When I think about it, I don't recall any writing back to announce a parole board decision in their favor. If that did happen, they didn't write to tell me. But then again, I didn't hear from those whose request for a release was rejected either.

I do hear occasionally from those who write to say God *had* broken the chains of their captivity – He had blessed

them with a vision of who they were in Him, not covered by the stain of their sins but as heirs to His kingdom, born of God's image and likeness, passed through the darkness of sin and separation, and redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb for all eternity.

Prison is a consequence for stepping over acceptable boundaries of behavior, for bringing harm to someone who did not deserve to be harmed, and for protecting society from the behavior of someone unable to control behavior choices. Prison is not about forgiveness or reconciliation. Prison is, on paper at least, an environment created to contain those who qualify.

God is about forgiveness, reconciliation, and redemption. God wants the whole of who we are so that what needs healing, can be healed; what gets in the way of our relationship with Him can be broken down; and what has been in darkness will no longer keep us there.

"I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart." (Jeremiah 24.7)

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.

I know God can have a plan for my life but being a sex offender almost makes it impossible to achieve.

It's your heart for God that guides your steps and leaves a path of wisdom for all to follow.

To release anyone [from prison] to be homeless is a horrible thing to do to anyone in the US today. Our government criticizes other countries about human rights. The US government has no place to say "Do as I say, not as I do" because the US is not human rights violation free.

I want to see me and God beyond the cross and the empty tomb; I want to see God as my Father and call Him Abba; and I want to know for sure that He knows and loves me personally.

The state started a discipleship program where three or four guys go to another prison and start what they call a faith pod. It just started and it's doing wonders. The guys spend six months there and then another set will take over and the previous ones can then move to another prison. (Alaska)

I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for believing in humanity and believing in forgiveness and mercy. That we can change; that we will change; and that we have changed. All thanks to the power of Jesus Christ and not on our own.

Fear of being judged for thoughts they have causes individuals to hide their struggle and brings them a sense of aloneness that smothers a man wanting/trying to deal with temptations. Bringing age inappropriate attractions to the

floor for discussion brings those thoughts out into the light where they can be dealt with appropriately.

It is not a location or place that gives us peace and safety. Only Jesus can give that to us.

I accept full responsibility for my past actions, for the pain and hurt I inflicted upon another because of my all-consuming self-centeredness. Understanding what I did to another person, understanding the harm I perpetuated drives me to my knees in humble repentance.

I am positive in my assessment that there are innumerable lives which have been altered and renewed due in part to the dedicated service and support of Broken Yoke Ministries.

It seems to me that there is purpose in remembering my failures. I am not suggesting that 'living there' or rehearsing them is beneficial, but rather that not forgetting my failures and the pain they caused my victim, her family, the members of my church, and me, allows me to see my sin from God's perspective. This is a hard thing to consider, but necessary, as a deterrent to ever romancing the idea of repeating such an abomination. Everything I have suffered and will suffer is deserved, allowed by my Father, and serves to change my heart causing me to detest the perversion.

I don't know what the future holds for me but I know God has looked out for me throughout my incarceration and He will not let me down once I'm released. He will provide. He will make a way.

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.

Milwaukee Reentry Summit

November 7-8, 2017

Although I include the request for support in every newsletter, this ministry *does* rely on outside support in order to continue. Every now and then, however, there are gatherings held to share what is new and hopefully effective in reentry ministry though there are costs to attend these events.

The location of this summit will allow me to drive (no air fare) and the registration fee and housing fees will nominal. If you can help with a donation, it would be gratefully received and acknowledged. God bless you.

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 remember to seek God each and every day, thankful for the manner in which He blesses us and sustains us.
- For those who struggle with 'tomorrow,' that they find the peace available to them in each moment of every day and reject the wasted energy Satan would suggest through anxiety.
- For those unable to believe, that they are introduced to God's love by the witness of those around them who do believe.
- For those in reentry, that they remember Romans 8:28.
- For all with loved ones on the outside who are seriously ill, dealing with the issues of age, or in the final stages of their journey here on earth, that they will feel the prayers incarcerated loved ones offer.
- For those struggling with all things prison, that they remember God is with them and, like Paul in his time of confinement, they are able to call upon the Lord in all situations.
- For family and friends, that they never lose sight of the importance of their prayers for a loved one in prison.
- For chaplains and chapel staff, that they be blessed and appreciated by all for efforts that DO make a difference.
- For victims, that they might regain power over their lives and walk in freedom.
- For treatment personnel, that they might always seek to offer hope and change by looking at the needs of individuals as well as for all in group treatment.
- 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.

Broken Yoke Ministries
www.brokenyoke.org
Newsletters, links, information

All things are possible with God!

Where Have All the Fathers Gone?

By Ed

Not that I fully believe in the accuracy of statistics, but it has been said that over 90% of men who are incarcerated have had serious issues with their fathers. My dad did his best and I have come to forgive him, especially for dying at age 43 (seven weeks before I was born) because of his addiction to cigarettes.

Life was not easy for him as he had lost two of his brothers – one to tuberculosis and the other, 16 at the time, to typhoid fever. But my dad used the tools he was given though some were missing. He might have been considered a deadbeat dad by some, but labels never tell the whole story. I am convinced that he was much more than that.

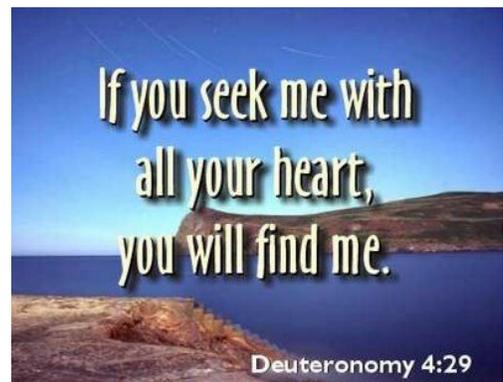
He wrote articles for our local newspaper about prison conditions and other social issues of his day, spending many hours typing as he listened to music as my mom has told me.

I believe I have inherited a love of writing from him. Part of him still lives in me and is very much alive. At the end of the day, I know he has left me a gift that I am still unwrapping. Thanks, Dad.

The above is taken from an article Ed wrote on fathers. I included this section because there is both the feeling of disconnect as well as connection, of the absence and yet of the presence of a father. And I know from many years in this ministry that broken or absent father-son relationships define the lives of many who write me. It's worth thinking about. It's worth praying about.

A Resource

A Broken Promise by Mickeal and co-authored by McKrae Game looks at the issue of same-sex attraction while offering help for those seeking freedom from this and other sexual issues. Using the real experiences of six inmates, Mickeal explores their recovery stories as examples to be used. A parent's section is included in the latest edition of this book. Contact *Hope for Wholeness*, McKrae Game, PO Box 5781, Spartanburg, SC, 29304. Cost: \$5 General public / Free for Inmates



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A Little Humor . . .



Two judges were stumbling home from their local pub, arms around each other, loudly singing Kenny Rodgers. "Hey," said one, "I think we're drunk." "You are right, and according to the law I will have to charge you with being drunk and disorderly," said his mate. "And you will have to appear before me at 10AM tomorrow," said the first. Next morning in court, the first pleaded guilty to the charge and was fined \$10. They then switched places. "Drunk and disorderly, eh? That will be \$20." "Hey," protested the first, "I only fined you \$10!" "Yes," said the second judge, "But the offence is becoming all too common these days. You are the second drunk to appear before the court this morning."