



Into the Light

All things are possible with God

July—August 2020

Come to Me

By Bob Van Domelen

²⁸ “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

Several years ago, I was invited to offer a workshop at what was then called the Central Illinois Sunday School and Church Mission Conference in Peoria, IL.

Having arrived early, I decided to take a little walk so as to deal with the anxiety I was beginning to feel. I didn't get too far, though. Across the street from the Peoria Civic Center was a church - that's where I headed.

After sitting quietly in one of the back pews, I left by a side door and found myself facing a life-sized statue of Jesus and feeling a wave of peace flow over me. A plaque at the base of the statue contained Matthew 11:28-30. I knew things would be fine.

Back at the Civic Center, I located the room I was assigned and confirmed the time listed as matching what I already knew, so I headed to see the exhibits. While walking around, I heard an announcement made that there were changes to the schedule, so I and others approached the information tables to get more information.

It was a surprise to learn that not only had my workshop time had been changed from 3:00 to 7:00 PM, but there was a room change as well. *That* change took me by surprise because my workshop was not even in the Civic Center. I was scheduled to speak on the fourth floor of the City Hall Building located next to the Center, and on entering that building, I could see that the only ways to the assigned room were by using a small elevator or climbing the stairs.

Panic was beginning. How could anyone find this room? How would such a small elevator meet the needs of the number I hoped would be attending? Yet in some spot deep within, I remembered the plaque - Matthew 11:28-30 - and decided to trust God.

Despite the change of time and location, the workshop was a success and the room, the City Council Chamber, was filled that evening. I did remember, by the way, to share all of this with those who showed up - because we are called to share how God blesses us.

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened

I was a teenager the first time I felt drawn to these words because I was weary and I certainly was burdened. Maybe at the time I believed that the issues I struggled with would disappear, maybe they were just a phase I was going through. But the more I prayed, the more aware I became of the grip those issues actually had on me.

My memories are filled with hours spent in church, singing in the choir, and listening to God's word preached - sometimes with passion, sometimes not, but God's word all the same. And in those occasions, I did feel that my darkness was less controlling and my spirit had found a measure of peace. But it wasn't a lasting peace.

and I will give you rest

I wanted those words to be real. I wanted that rest. But I wanted that rest to be a freedom from the growing panic my behaviors brought on. “I believe, Lord! Just say the words! *Say the words!*” I didn't hear them - but eventually I would.

I know that I am not alone - many of you have written of the times you called to God for deliverance only to feel that God wasn't listening. But our faith tells us He was. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed “Yet not as I will but as you will” (Matthew 26:39). Should our prayer be any less? Should our surrender be any less complete?

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls (v29)

Jesus called the laws placed on the Jewish people by the Pharisees a yoke laid on the shoulders of others by those unwilling to help carry them. The yoke Jesus asks us to take on is the yoke of turning from our sinful choices and of asking for the faith that includes a heartfelt desire to follow Him. There are no guarantees of a tension-free life, no promises that we will not have struggles. Jesus knows this and still offers us an invitation to follow him - *take my yoke*.

Take and learn are what some call action verbs, words that demand a mental response as well as a sense of active participation. Someone can hold out a gift to us and we can appreciate the gesture, but unless we actually reach out and make a physical connection, that gift is not ours.

Jesus is saying to each of us, “I know what you have done, the harm you have caused, and the lives that have been changed by your actions, but I still love you. Let me touch those parts of you that need healing. Let me show you how to be sorry. I can bring you back to life in me. Just tell me that you are willing to let me walk with you!”

All change is a process and lasting change in behavior and thinking can be a lengthy process. I think we have all felt moments of freedom from those yokes of destruction we carry. And I am pretty sure that when temptation of *any* kind begins to torment us, we wonder where the sense of freedom went. “Maybe,” we tell ourselves, “change isn't possible. Maybe this is how I will always be.” But the words in Matthew 11:28-30 are not merely a suggestion. They are a promise. We *will* find rest. Because Jesus said we would.

For my yoke is easy and my burden is light

For many, the decision to surrender to God and to acknowledge Jesus as our Lord and Savior is seen as the beginning of a long, hard journey. Maybe that's because we all have a tendency to focus too much on the "Thou shalt not" parts instead of looking to what this relationship will mean to our wellbeing and happiness.

When we walk in the law of the Lord, we become more aware of the presence of the Holy Spirit, and our focus increasingly leans toward the positive and not the negative. In Paul's letter to the Galatians (5:22-23), he points out what we have to look forward to when he says, ²² *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,* ²³ *gentleness and self-control.* While we can all appreciate the first eight, the gift of self-control is something I think we understand and desire.

Treatment programs focus on "What we have done and what steps we need to take to avoid making the same choices." In itself, that is certainly an important goal and a goal society hopes we have achieved before reentry. But if I see a weakness in such a program, it would be that focusing on the past alone will not make for change until we have a positive image of the new person we hope to be. We must see ourselves as God sees us.

That will take time and commitment but it will also require that we trust God to be with us. As I have shared repeatedly over the years, if we define ourselves by the nature of our sins, we will always live from the center of that sin identity. If, however, we are willing to take His yoke and to learn from him, we *will* find rest. We will also find the identity in God that we were always meant to have.

Come to me all you who are weary and burdened. Is that you? Is that me? Some days I am pretty sure we all feel that way. The invitation is there. How about it?

Father's Day Thoughts

I know that my dad went well beyond what most dads did for their children but for some reason I was not able to connect with him in the ways my siblings did. At least that was *my* perception. It could just as well have been he was waiting for me to approach and connect with him. A typical teen, I made like things were fine when they weren't.

It should not surprise you, though, that I blew it with my own sons because I didn't spend as much time teaching them things like how to throw a ball, fish, or do basic repairs (which I didn't do well myself). They tell me, however, that they still have cherished memories - just of things I would not have expected.

Perfect fathers are few and far between. Quite often the fathers we have disappoint us in ways that others kids would be more than happy to live with but again, it is how we see things - not always how they actually are.

From time to time, I do wonder whether or not my dad would be proud of me, proud of the man I have become. I am glad that he died when I was still 15 because I doubt if I could have managed his disappointment over my being arrested, much less the reason I was arrested. Yet somehow, I think he sees and understands. Above all, I know he always loved me and despite everything, I know he would still call me his son.

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.

What would Jesus do? Too many times it is said after the fact and should be stated, thought, and acted on at the first level of negative thought and/or temptation.

In this time of absolute chaos, I can either be afraid or courageous. I choose to be courageous. It is Jesus who will get me through this time of difficulty.

Please pray for my soul and for protection. Please pray for the constant arms and peace of Jesus to hold me. I am a non-believer and need constant daily prayer.

This COVID-19 social distancing is causing most people to struggle with self-isolation. Turning self-isolation into a prayerful spiritual solitude with the Lord is a great solution.

Have you ever thought about the fact that sin is left out of things that can't separate us from the love of God?

After a life-long struggle, the Lord saw fit to set me free from the inside out.

Our Prayer Corner

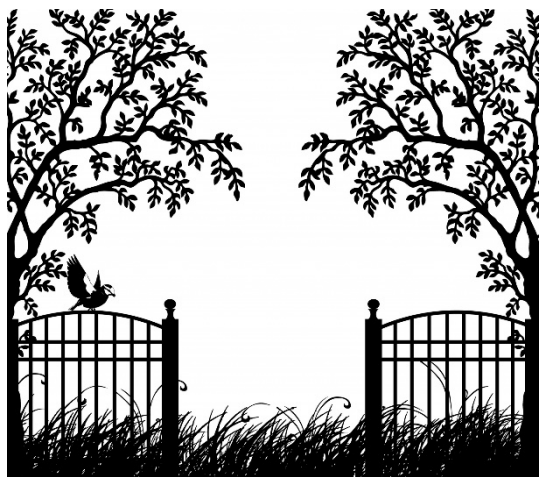
Prayer is an incredible gift we can give one another, for there is no better thing than to lift our lives, hopes, and dreams to the altar of the Lord.

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 those who feel unloved, that will hear the heart of God beating within, a call to be His and to be loved.
- For those dealing with father issues, that they find peace and security in the arms of their Heavenly Father.
- For those having a hard time with the quarantine, that they feel the peace of God's presence and pray for those more affected than they.
- For those feeling alone and unwanted, that they find God working in their lives by making them whole.
- For churches, that they seek God in their response to those wanting fellowship with their faith communities.
- For the families, that they come to see that family is always family – never easy under difficult times.
- For all of us, that we remember the importance of a kind word, a touch, or a connection.

- For Bob's health, that the ministry God has for him will continue to be an encouragement and hope for others.
- 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. they will do whatever it takes to stop the cycle of abuse and harm caused to their victims.



The Garden for Our Hearts

Henri Nouwen
The Dance of Life

Solitude is the garden for our hearts which yearn for love. It is the place where our aloneness can bear fruit. It is the home for our restless bodies and anxious minds.

Solitude, whether it is connected with a physical space or not, is essential for our spiritual lives. It is not an easy place to be, since we are so insecure and fearful that we are easily distracted by whatever promises immediate satisfaction. Solitude is not immediately satisfying, because in solitude we meet our demons, our addictions, our feelings of lust and anger, and our immense need for recognition and approval. But if we do not run away, we will meet there also the One who says: "Do not be afraid. I am with you, and I will guide you through the valley of darkness." Let's keep returning to our solitude.

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

Your Support Matters

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

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CMCA Summit Date Change

As announced in the last edition, the Correctional Ministries and Chaplains Association Summit 2020 date had been changed to August 14-15 in Wheaton, IL. Given the COVID-19 situation, everything will be done online using a program called Zoom. Please pray for the success of this gathering.

5 Steps to Growing Through Difficult Times

1. Acceptance – This is by far, the hardest part of it all . . .
2. Breathe – You're not alone . . .
3. Make a list – List your goals... the small ones, the big ones, the scary ones or all the above . . .
4. Surround yourself with positive people – Energy is transmittable . . .
5. Exercise: Many of us despise the thought of exercising.

*All things are possible
with God!*

Broken Yoke Ministries, Inc.

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A Little Humor. . .

A computer engineer, a systems analyst, and a programmer were driving down a mountain when the brakes gave out. They screamed down the mountain, gaining speed, and finally managed to grind to a halt, more by luck than anything else, just inches from a thousand-foot drop to jagged rocks.



They all got out of the car.

The computer engineer said, "I think I can fix it."

The systems analyst said, "No, I think we should take it into town and have a specialist look at it."

The programmer said, "I think we should push it back up the hill and see if it does it again."