



Into the Light

All things are possible with God
July—August 2015

What's in a Word?

By Bob Van Domelen

⁹ *How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word.* ¹⁰ *I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands.* (Psalm 119.9-10)

Quite often those new to the Bible are told about the Psalms of David and invariably they hear “And Psalm 119 is the longest of the Psalms with its 176 verses.” There is bound to be a groan at that news because we like short, easy to remember things—like “Psalm 119 is the longest of the Psalms.”

At a recent Bible study where we were discussing fear and anxiety, I asked what they prayed for the most. A quiet voice offered “Protection.” Hoping to show everyone I understood the difficulties of jail and prison life, I added that it was normal to worry about one’s safety while incarcerated. However, the man said “No, not for that. . . for protection for my purity.”

There were no snickering or derisive comments from the others and it seemed to me that he had said what many had felt but would never have admitted to a group of other men.

Purity. That’s a word that doesn’t surface too often these days. I remember growing up to warnings of impure thoughts and impure actions and for the longest time, I worked hard to be able to say I was not guilty of those sins. But without much warning, I reached an age where everything I thought or did had sexual overtones and I lost more battles than I won.

There are still books written on the subject of purity; pastors still encourage congregations to follow its path; and parents still speak of purity—especially before a first date. But I think the word itself flies in the face of a society bent on stretching the limits to what is acceptable. It’s not sin, they might suggest. Only harmless naughtiness. And besides, adult humor is for adults so that makes it all okay. Tell that “adult” line to a 10-year exploring the internet in the privacy of his bedroom. Chances are, he is well into adult stuff at the ripe old age of ten.

How can a young person stay on the path of purity?

Most of you might suggest that it has been a long time since you were young, but I would offer a thought you might not have considered—especially if you are serving a sentence in prison for sex-related offenses.

¹⁷ *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!* (2 Cor. 5.17) For many of us, being arrested brought us face to face with the

darkness we had created for ourselves, the sinful choices made at the expense of innocent children, and the eventual betrayal of trust on many levels affecting many people, especially those we thought we loved.

It was clear to me that my choice was either to continue as I had been in digging holes of moral decay or to grab hold of the word of God, the atonement offered by the death of Jesus, and the active presence of the Holy Spirit. That was *my* choice and having committed my life to that choice, I was *a new creation!* So as a new creation, I can now read the verse as “*How can a young person (Bob, the new creation) stay on the path of purity?*”

By living according to your word

Some preachers might lift the bible in the air when saying “*By living according to your word*” as a means of emphasis. After all, *it is* the answer. The words, however, might end up being one of those short, easy to remember things that the congregation carries with them as they leave church. The answer *is* easy—the commitment not quite so easy.

The bible is more than words, verses, and parables meant to tell us how things were in the Old and New Testaments. The bible is an opportunity to immerse our entire being within its truths much in the same way, I suppose, as jumping into deep waters might be for a swimmer. Body and water become one.

And when we immerse our personal purity in God’s word, our thoughts and actions become God-centered. Our thoughts and actions become Christ-like.

There are studies that prove we can change our way of thinking and therefore the choices we make when we act. One study offers the notion that a brain wave needs 21 days to become an established way of thinking. And, these specialists add, after 63 days the new thinking becomes a habit replacing an old, unwanted habit. The key to change, however, is the manner in which we view both ourselves and the goals we set.

Impure thoughts cannot lose their place of authority until we make up our minds to replace them. The kind of thinking that makes possible any form of deviancy cannot coexist with the thoughts we hold as God’s new creation. Even though our bodies might wish to retain memories of our dark sexual behaviors (the body *does* like what gives it pleasure), each day becomes a new commitment to the changes we seek.

I seek you with all my heart

I had to think long and hard to determine what exactly I seek with all my heart because telling you that we need to

seek God with all our hearts is another one of those easier said than done things. I only say this because I can recognize in myself spaces of my being where I know I tend to put other things first. So I say "I seek you, Lord, with all my heart" as often as I can to remind myself that God *does* come first.

Do not let me stray from your commands

At the end of the day as I prepare for sleep, I do a little moral inventory of the day just completed and I find that I have yet to have a "perfect" day, a day when I didn't sin in some way, offend someone intentionally or not, or failed to live the very word of God in my thoughts and actions.

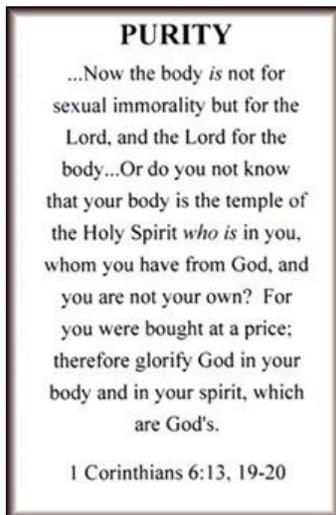
The verse doesn't say "*Lord, make me perfect.*" It says "*Do not let me stray from your commands.*" Even in the darkest times, I knew what God wanted of me. I chose, however, my will over God's will. Despite my choices, His commands were always before me, always nudging and encouraging change.

Following God's commands, seeking Him with all our being is a journey we make each and every day. *Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.* (Psalm 119:105) God's word isn't hidden. It is as obvious as the posted speed limit on any highway, yet we still have to choose God just as we have to choose obeying the speed limit.

What's in a word?

Purity is only one aspect of who we are but when linked to our sexual choices, it is the core of what we are called to be. For those who feel it is impossible to overcome those fantasies that seem overwhelming at times, trust that God knows the struggle and He knows your desire.

Perhaps, like the man who asked for protection for his purity, we can ask for the same thing. It is humility that allows us to recognize where we are weakest. As Paul wrote, "But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor. 12:9)



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 refuse to tell anything but the truth or I (opt to) decline to answer. I will keep a confidence but I will not lie to anyone regardless of what might happen to me.

I believe that God is right here with me. God has to be real to me. If I don't have God (Jesus, Holy Spirit) I have nothing and no hope for any type of future.

There is no price on kindness as Jesus pointed out to the prostitute. His simple words "Go and sin no more" spoke volumes. He was the only one who could have judged her but He showed mercy and compassion instead.

I have completed the 12-step study Celebrate Recovery Program finally after almost two years. I do not believe that any other recovery 12-step program can match this one as it is truly a Christ-centered recovery program.

I firmly believe that reading scripture keeps my mind fresh and revitalizes my soul. My big fault is that I want to read everything in a hurry. However, when I want to meditate on those chapters, I make it a point to start with a brief prayer. Then, with a dictionary nearby to help me find the meaning of words, I delve more deeply into the scripture.

My prayer is that God's spirit will dwell in me and guide my actions as I live each day obedient to what I hear as I reflect on God's word.

I know that wondering if my dad still loved me ("Dad" – May/June) went through my mind after being arrested, though it didn't take long for me to learn that both my dad and mom still love me. In that I am fortunate (I was adopted) and it would have been quite easy for the folks to decide that I "came from bad blood" and disowned me. Instead, they have been my most stalwart supporters.

I receive a copy of your publication by way of a pastor and the church he serves. The newsletters have been a real blessing to me as anything that helps shed the light and, more importantly, the love of Jesus on those society would quickly throw away is a big win for the kingdom any day.

I don't know what God has in store for me but I hope and pray that He will permit me the integrity to do what He wants me to do.

Grace never goes up, it always comes down. Grace by definition means that God gives us what we don't deserve and could never earn. Within my many journals I came across a little something I had written down. "Upon a life I did not live, upon a death I did not die, I risk my whole eternity on Jesus."

Every saint has a past. But because of the resurrection of Jesus, we can have a grace-full future.

I read or heard this somewhere: "You will not be released from your addictive behavior until there is in your being a genuine desire to be released from the vice grip that is squeezing life from your bones."

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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.

If you have family or friends, tell them about the website for Broken Yoke Ministries:
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Newsletters, links, information

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 come to recognize the temple we call our bodies and minds and do everything in our power to maintain its cleanliness and the purity that is God.
- For those who feel overwhelmed by temptation, that they remember the time Jesus spent in the desert, the temptations, and His response.
- For those struggling with anxiety over an uncertain future, that they continue to follow God's road signs.
- For those who feel God is not only distant but that He has also rejected them, He hasn't.
- For those who seek to serve, that they simply make themselves available—God will find a use for them.
- For pastors, that they ask for God's balance in dealing with those who have been wounded and those who have wounded. All were brought to the cross.
- 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.

Prayer

My Lord God, I have no idea
where I am going.
I do not see the road ahead of me.
Nor do I really know myself.
And the fact that I think
I am following your will
Does not mean that
I am actually doing so.

But I believe that the desire
to please you
Does in fact please you.

And I hope that I will never do
anything apart from that desire.
And I know that if I do this,
You will lead me by the right road
Though I may know nothing about it.

Therefore I will trust you always
Though I may seem to be lost
and in the shadow of death
I will not fear
for you are ever with me.
And you will never leave me
to face my struggles alone.

Thomas Merton

Just some closing thoughts

The recent jail and ministry conference I attended showed me that while there is God-centered concern for those with sex-related offenses in reentry, the tools available to bring about successful reentry are limited. Most often, public attitudes/fears about public safety fuel an unwillingness to even think beyond the restrictive laws currently in place.

I don't believe the situation is hopeless but neither is it an easy fix. There *are* supportive people; there *are* churches open to being part of the solution; and there *are* legislators open to better laws. Pray for them.

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A Little Humor . . .

After trick-or-treating, a teen took a shortcut home through the cemetery. Halfway across, he was startled by a tapping noise coming from the misty shadows.



Trembling with fear, he spotted an old man with a hammer and chisel, chipping away at a headstone.

"I thought you were a ghost," the relieved teen said. "What are you doing working so late?"

"Oh, those idiots," grumbled the old man. "They misspelled my name!"