



Foundation of Faith

Refueling

**Time to Refuel
The Power of Solitude
The Path to Peace
Alone with Jesus**

AUGUST 2024

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Editorial

Dear Reader,

We know that we need to regularly fill the gas tank and charge the battery in our cars; we know that we need to eat every day for our bodies to stay healthy and strong; and when the sun goes down and we get tired, we know that we need to sleep so that we can face the next day with renewed strength.

However, not only our body needs to be recharged; our soul, our inner being, needs regular nourishment as well. There is only one true source of this spiritual nourishment, and that is God. King David proclaims, “For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light” (Psalm 36:9).

Unfortunately, many do not know or use this fountain. Instead, they dig their own wells, attempting to draw on various other sources. The problem is that these wells are unsound and may even be contaminated with sin, which destroys body and soul.

The Bible tells us about a noteworthy episode in David’s life. King Saul was on his trail and the Amalekites had raided Ziklag to kidnap the wives, sons, and daughters of his men. David was in great danger, as his own people wanted to stone him out of despair and bitterness over the loss of their families.

In this time of need, David found refuge in his God. We read, “David strengthened himself in the LORD his God” (1 Samuel 30:6). Prayer and deep faith in God gave him the courage and strength not to despair. Through God’s grace and power, he was able to motivate his people to chase down the enemy, and with God’s help, they were able to rescue their families, take great spoils, and return home victoriously.

We, too, can turn to God and draw strength from the Lord. Whatever our need, and whatever the time, He is our source of comfort, strength, and power!

H. D. Nimz

Peace for the Troubled Heart

In a fashionable and affluent home, a woman lay on her deathbed. She was the mother of an only child, a little girl of four years. Because of her mother's illness, she was taken to stay with friends. A month later, the father, now a widower, brought the little girl back home.

When the child entered the house, she immediately ran from room to room, up the stairs, down the stairs, and up and down again. When asked why she was doing this, she cried, "I am looking for my mama, my mama!"

Our thoughts are filled with pity for this poor child. She was searching in vain for her mother who she would never find again!

Are we then prompted to think of the many people who are chasing after a thousand distractions or tasks,

driven by a secret longing? They simply cannot find peace, neither inwardly or outwardly. Yes, a person without God is like a child without a mother. The soul simply cannot find peace!

Dear Reader, are you driven by inner restlessness, seeking satisfaction and at least a spark of joy here and there? You can only find peace for your soul in God. The child searching for her mother could never find her again. But you can find God. He is waiting for you to come to Him. He says: "You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you," says the LORD" (Jeremiah 29: 13-14).

.John Wesley



Hasten to Save Your Soul!

A revival meeting was held in a place where mainly miners lived. One evening, a miner came to seek the Lord. It was not easy for him to enter “through the narrow gate.” The preacher stayed behind with the man seeking salvation. Time passed; it was getting late, and still the man had not received what he was seeking. The preacher then suggested that it would be better to go home and advised the seeker to stop praying and come back the following evening to continue his search. The repentant man, however, was determined not to let up, and he replied: “I will make amends tonight.” They prayed together until after midnight, and the man found his Savior and received the blessed assurance of forgiveness for his sins. He praised and thanked God for the grace he had received and was happy in the Lord.

The following morning, he said goodbye to his family as usual and went to work in the mine. Between 4-5 pm, an accident occurred. The ceiling collapsed, and the miner was buried. His body was buried under the mass of stones that had rolled down. Only his head was free. While his coworkers gathered around him and tried to remove the mass of stones resting on him, they saw a smile on his face and heard him whisper: “I’m so glad I sorted things out last night.” With these words, he passed away.

A different preacher was holding a revival meeting. One evening, a young man stood in the doorway and wept when the invitation was given to seek the Lord. While the preacher and others talked to him and urged him to stop hesitating and seek the Lord, he trembled all over but said, “I know I ought to be converted tonight. I am a railroad worker, and my duty calls me away soon. But I promise you that I will come tomorrow evening and seek the Lord.” He was warned not to

postpone obtaining salvation. But he said: “Tomorrow evening, I will seek the Lord.” With these words, he said goodbye.

A little later, as the preacher was on his way home from the meeting, he saw a number of people running together near the station in great commotion, as if something had happened. He hurried to reach the spot. Here he saw a young man lying on the ground with both legs cut off. He had slipped under the wheels of a goods wagon. The blood was flowing freely, and it was clear that he didn’t have long to live.

When the preacher looked into the pale face of the dying man, he realized to his horror that it was the

young man who had stood trembling in the doorway of the meeting house a short time before and said that he wanted to come back the next evening and convert. Now the cold sweat of death was on his forehead. The vic-

“Oh, if only I had repented tonight and sought the Lord!”

tim knew that death was near. Kneeling beside him, the preacher heard him say in a weak voice: “Oh, if only I had repented tonight and sought the Lord!” With these words he gave up his spirit.

Now it was forever too late! Oh, how sad! He had let the opportunity pass, and it had been his last. He had felt the Holy Spirit working on his heart and said: “Go on this time!” The Spirit of God withdrew, and the young man died in despair.

Dear reader, what about your soul? If you are not sure that God has accepted you, do not hesitate any longer. Humble yourself before God and repent before it is too late. Death is certain for all of us. No one can escape it, and we do not know how soon it will overtake us. There is no hope beyond the grave for those who have died without having attained salvation in Christ. ■

Time to Recharge

Every driver is probably familiar with this situation: You're on the road, and at some point, you start doing the math: How far will my tank of gas last? How many kilometers can I still manage with my batteries? Is it time to fill up, or can I still go further? Gas stations, we would probably like to do without them, but at the same time we are glad that they exist. Gas stations demand a sacrifice from us—not only in terms of time, but above all, financially. At the same time, we know that without this “sacrifice,” we can't go on. If we ignore gas stations consistently and permanently, it will only lead to problems in the end.

This simple, everyday occurrence is also reflected in a similar way in our lives. We need times when we can recharge our batteries. We sometimes do this quite unconsciously. We go to bed every night and ideally get up in the morning feeling refreshed. Have you ever thought about how wonderfully our Creator made us? We regenerate in our sleep!

If you work a typical job, then you might know the blessing of vacation days. God Himself said He rested from His work after the sixth day of creation. We still benefit today: We are to work six

days and do no work on the seventh, for it is the Lord's Day (Exodus 20:9–11)! The Bible shows us that these times of rest are not only important for our bodies but also for our souls.

Before you continue, I ask you to read the Bible passage in Mark 6:30–47. Here we get an insight into a day that Jesus experienced on Earth. The account concludes with Jesus urging the disciples to get into the boat late in the evening and travel to the other shore. But He wanted to stay behind alone (also see Matthew 14:22–23). It is striking that both Mat-

thew and Mark emphasize that Jesus “sent the multitudes away.” Why? Jesus was on His feet all day; He preached, healed the sick, performed

the miracle of the feeding of the 5000

. . . . This sapped

His strength,

and after this

full day, Jesus

wanted time

alone. In any

case, the day

seems to have

turned out differ-

ently than initially

planned. Jesus in-

vented His disciples,

who had returned from

a missions assignment,

to take a little time out.

However, their plans

were thwarted by the

crowd. It is remarkable

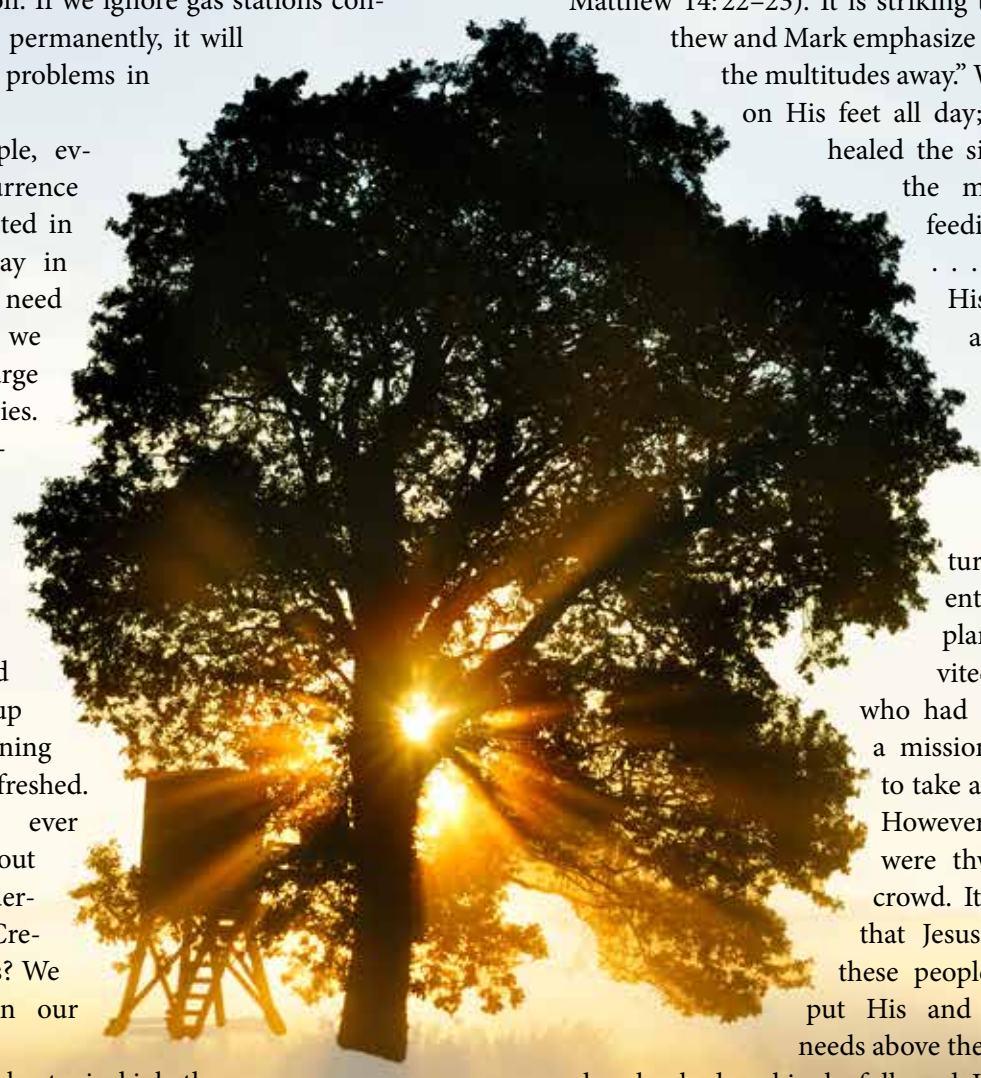
that Jesus took care of

these people. He did not

put His and the disciples'

needs above the needs of these

people who had seekingly followed Him. However, once Jesus had ministered to them, He did not neglect fellowship with the Father, but rather gave this need the highest priority.



If we look a little closer, we understand all the better why Jesus longed so much for fellowship with Him. Many events converged at this point in time. The account took place in the third year of His public ministry. It was the year of resistance and therefore the most challenging. His message was not accepted in some towns in Galilee (Chorazin, Capernaum), and there were always disputes with the Pharisees, who blasphemed Him. Despite everything, Jesus faithfully fulfilled His ministry; He preached, He healed, He helped where He could. His message was not accepted in Nazareth. He was not believed and could only do a few deeds there. And then there was the news of John the Baptist, who had been executed. Jesus was in deep mourning for him and saw his personal suffering and death clearly set before His eyes. As if all this were not enough, He also had to endure temptations, for some of the people wanted to make Him king after the miracle of the feeding (John 6:14–15)—a crown without a cross; was this not precisely the devil's temptation in the desert?

Can we understand why Jesus longed for fellowship with the Father? Certainly, none of us experience what Jesus experienced. But don't we also have situations in our lives? Are there times when you don't see success? People turn away from you? You can't see the end because of all the tasks? Worries about the future weigh you down? The devil approaches you with temptations? Times when you feel exhausted? Of course, we all experience times like these! The question is: How do we deal with them?

Let us learn from Jesus. Jesus did not seek His rest in idleness, for while such may in certain respects be a rest for the body, it is not for the soul and spirit. On the contrary: It is not said for nothing that idleness is the beginning of all vice. Relaxation for the soul and mind through YouTube, TikTok, Netflix . . . ? Not at all, because they demand our mental attention. Jesus went alone to a mountain to pray, and here He spoke about all the things that moved Him. His Father no doubt answered Him, and it is obvious that this strengthened Him, because just a few hours later, He performed more miracles.

Jesus invites us to do the same in Matthew 6:5–6. But it will also cost us something—think of the illustration of the gas station. However, God does not expect money from us—we can earn *nothing*, rather, live by His grace. Just as Jesus went to the mountain alone, we too should seek silence with God. While often difficult in everyday life, there are times when we cannot put off spiritual care—refueling—any longer. We sometimes must make sacrifices for it, leave other things undone, or put some on the back burner. We must let go of things that we are currently doing because we need time of communion with God. Matthew 6:33 also applies here. Just like Jesus, you can and should look for a suitable place where you can be undisturbed. Sometimes you need to be creative, don't you? Yet God will help you to develop this resourcefulness because He also longs for this fellowship with you. He visited Adam and Eve every day in paradise! Every single day. Why? To have fellowship with them.

This time is extremely important for us, and we benefit from it first and foremost. It is a source of new strength for our everyday lives. It strengthens our defenses against the temptations in our lives and keeps us from giving up. This time also prepares us for our personal ministry. In the end, we can only pass on as much as we have received ourselves. After this time in prayer and fellowship, Jesus' ministry continued undiminished with renewed strength. And a third thing is remarkable. This time of refueling opens our eyes to ourselves and to our neighbor. By refueling with *Him*, we admit that we can do nothing without *Him*. And it really is so. At the same time, we are undoubtedly moved when we read that Jesus, during the time of His fellowship with the Father, saw in the Spirit that His disciples were in need in the boat (Mark 6:48). Could God not also open our eyes to the need of our fellow human beings at such a time?

It is time to refuel. Again and again. Perhaps vacation time is a good opportunity to start and develop new habits. This is my desire for myself and for all of us.

Niko Ernst
Herford, Germany



The Power of Stillness

“Be still, and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46: 10)

Few things in the world can touch and move our hearts as deeply as the power of solitude.

One of the greatest blessings that Christ gives us is peace in our hearts. There, when the soul relinquishes its own works, is “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding” (Philippians 4:7). There we find a rest and stillness that is the source of all strength. It is a peace that nothing can disturb, a deep calm that the world can neither give nor take away. Within the soul, there is a chamber of peace where God dwells. When we enter it and silence every other voice, we can hear God’s still and gentle voice.

The absolute center of a wheel, no matter how fast it is spinning, remains immobile and static. Similarly, even in the busiest life, there can be a place where we dwell alone with God in enduring solitude.

Years ago, a friend gave me a small book that marked a turning point in my life. Its title was “True Peace.” It contained this one thought: God is waiting in the depth of our being to commune with us, if we only become still enough to hear His voice.

I thought this would be a very easy thing to do. So, I began to practice stillness. But as soon as I tried, a whole jumble of voices rushed in. A thousand clamor-

ous voices from within and without made themselves heard until I could hear nothing but their noise and unrest. Some of these were my own voices, some my own questions, some my own worries; others were my own prayers, still others the whispers of the tempter and the voice of the restless world. Never before, it seemed, did so much need to be dealt with, said, and thought as now. From all sides, I was attacked, pushed, pulled, and greeted with noisy voices and unspeakable restlessness. It seemed necessary to listen to some of them and respond to some. But God said, “Be still, and know that I *am* God” (Psalm 46: 10).

Then came the battle of thoughts about tomorrow and its duties and worries; but God said, “Be still!” And as I heeded that and slowly learned to obey and close my ears to each of these voices, I found after a while that there was a still, gentle voice in the depth of my heart, speaking to me with unspeakable tenderness, strength, and comfort. As I listened, it became the voice

of prayer, the voice of wisdom, the voice of duty, and then it was not difficult for me to pray and trust. This still, gentle voice of the Holy Spirit in my heart was God’s answer to all my questions. It was God’s strength for my soul and body. It became the content of all my knowledge, all my prayers, and all my blessings, for it was the living God Himself.

Being still before God is our greatest need. In this way, we recognize God and gain spiritual refreshment and nourishment for our soul. Our heart is nourished with the Living Bread. Our body is refreshed, and our spirit drinks the water of life. We are like the flower that absorbs the cool and crystalline dew drops at night. Just as the dew never falls on a stormy night, so the dew drops of His grace do not fall on a restless soul.

We need the quiet hours of prayer in our lives, the hidden places of the Most High, the times of waiting

on the Lord. There, we can renew our strength and learn to rise up with wings like eagles, then return to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint (Isaiah 40: 31).

The best part of this stillness is that it gives God an opportunity to work on us. “For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God *did* from His” (Hebrews 4: 10). When we cease doing our own works, God works in us, and when we cease our own thoughts, God’s thoughts come into us. When we become still from our restless activity, God works in us to want and act according to His good purpose.

Therefore, let us embrace God’s stillness! Let us dwell under the shadow of the Almighty and in the

hidden place of the Most High (Psalm 91: 1). Let us silence the other voices! Then we can hear the still, gentle voice of God.

There is also another kind of solitude. The silence that allows God to work for us

while we remain still—the stillness that ceases from its own plans, its own wisdom, self-defense, and self-justification, and lets God care and rule. How often do we lose God’s intervention by taking up our own cause and defending ourselves!

There is no scene in the entire Bible as glorious as the silent Savior when He gave no answer to the men accusing Him. He could have struck them down with a glance of His divine power or with a word. But He let them say and do their worst, standing there in the power of silence—as God’s holy, silent Lamb!

May God give us this silent power, this mighty self-surrender, this Spirit that makes us conquerors through Him who loved us! Let our voice and our life speak like the gentle whisper. May our life be a testimony to this wonderful power of God so that we leave a legacy to the glory of God. ■

*The best part of
this stillness is that
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opportunity to work
on us.*

A Martha or a Mary?

Have you ever had unexpected company come when you were totally unprepared for it? A situation like that can turn out to be quite awkward. In Luke 10, we read about Jesus visiting the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. He had often been there before. Although the visit on this occasion was unexpected, He was nevertheless a welcome guest because they loved Him.

Soon after the customary greetings, Martha excused herself. She knew that the Master must be hungry. So she kindled a fire, and soon one could hear noises that indicated that she was busy in the kitchen. As she worked, she waited for Mary to come and help her, but Mary did not show up. She left Martha to do the work alone.

After waiting in vain for quite a while for Mary to come and help, Martha became impatient. She came into the room where the others were and saw Mary seated at the feet of Jesus, where she eagerly listened to the words that Jesus spoke. She seemed to have completely forgotten that there was work to do in order to receive and make an honored guest like the Lord as comfortable as possible. Yes, Mary had forgotten everything else around her and was listening to the words of Jesus.

Martha approached Jesus and said: “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.” She expected Jesus to reprimand Mary and tell her to help with the work that needed doing. Surely what Martha was doing was good, and she expected help.

But Jesus answered: “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:41–42). Martha had good intentions. She wanted to prepare a good meal for the Master, and she expected Jesus to

tell her sister to help her. Instead, it was Martha who was reprimanded. That must have been very painful for her. Did Jesus reprimand Martha for being so diligent and wishing to prepare a good meal for him? No, certainly not. It was because she was totally consumed with her work so that she had no time to sit at His feet and learn from Him and listen to what He was teaching.

Jesus was in her home, yet she was much too busy with other things to have time to listen to what He was talking about. The other things Martha was worried about robbed her of her joy and peace, and caused her to judge her sister who made different choices. Not only was Martha anxious and troubled, but she was also not a good example for others and may have troubled them. It is true that all of us have duties and obligations that we must fulfill. But what Jesus would criticize today is that we become so engrossed with our work that we start to become impatient with others.

How can we help people who are like Martha? Let us take Mary as our example. Like her sister, Martha, she had work to do. She knew what the Master needed. Yet, she chose first to sit at the feet of Jesus and to listen to His words. Jesus said that the blessing she received there would not be taken away from her.

The blessing she received stayed with her even after she later went back to her work. The duties of everyday life could not rob her of the blessing she received in fellowship with the Lord. As long as we live on earth, we will have obligations and work to do. We need food to live. Yet, let us choose the “good part” like Mary did by putting all else we need to do in second place. Let us always put what is most important in first place, namely the care and nurture of our spiritual life. Let our primary concern be to look after the well-being of our soul.

J. F. Shaw



The Path to Peace

All people seek peace and happiness in the depths of their hearts. The sin-stained soul knows that it cannot stand before a righteous God. Therefore, it longs to find peace. When people are plagued by remorse, the question, “How can I find peace?” is of the utmost importance to them.

People have tried in many different ways to find peace for their troubled souls. However, all human wisdom has not yet succeeded in devising a plan that will ensure lasting peace.

Peace cannot be obtained by trying to banish serious thoughts about death, judgment, and eternity, or by distracting ourselves with temporal and earthly things. Many hope to obtain peace by indulging in worldly pleasures. They may succeed in suppressing the voice of their conscience for a brief time and find temporary peace. However, the pain will return and will then be even more unbearable.

Some soothe their conscience with religious views which say that sin is not as terrible as it is made out to be. They say there is no need to fear future damnation, because God is good and merciful and cannot cast anyone into hell. They think that even after death, there would still be an opportunity to attain salvation. However, such views have no biblical foundation and cannot permanently satisfy the heart and mind of man.

But thank the Lord, there is a way that leads to complete peace. Jesus Himself prepared this way. Peace can be found through the gospel of Jesus Christ. What no human plan can achieve, the divine plan of salvation accomplishes.

We can only receive complete peace if we sincerely confess our sins before God, against whom we have sinned. Everyone knows what a feeling of relief comes upon us when we make an open confession after doing something wrong. Most people probably know from experience how depressing and unsettling it is to try

to hide wrongdoing. This is why even children cannot rest until they have confessed it. The Gospel clearly reveals the fact that perfect peace can only be achieved through open confession. For this reason, we find many statements in the Bible in this regard, such as: “He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes *them* will have mercy” (Proverbs 28:13). “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8–9).

Only when we are certain of the forgiveness of our sins can we have real and lasting peace. A superficial confession does not bring peace or true satisfaction to the soul. Perfect and lasting peace only comes through the certainty of forgiveness.

Jesus was invited to a Pharisee’s house for a meal. A woman who had spent her life in sin came in and wet His feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. In doing so, she showed her repentance and love for her Lord and Savior. Jesus therefore said to her: “Your sins are forgiven. . . . Your faith has saved you. Go in peace” (Luke 7:48, 50). As soon as she heard these blessed words, the peace she had been seeking entered her heart, and she left with a light heart, for she was pardoned and had obtained the peace that the world cannot give.

There is probably no greater joy or happiness in the entire world than when a guilty man is told that he has been pardoned and his guilt forgiven. When this happens, the soul, which previously resembled a restless and stormy sea, becomes calm and quiet.

Troubled and anguished soul, if you seek rest and peace, if your conscience accuses you, then bow before your Savior with a penitent heart, confess your guilt to Him, and He will forgive you. He will say to your soul: “Your sins are forgiven. . . . Go in peace.” ■

Quiet Time

At the end of a sermon, a preacher once encouraged the congregants to go straight home and spend at least 15 minutes in silence, thinking about what they had heard and simply being in God's presence. One brother followed this advice and experienced wonderful fellowship with Jesus. Quiet time with the Lord is one of the most precious resources available to us on Earth, and words cannot express the joy and satisfaction it brings.

Nonetheless, there are many Christians who do not spend quiet time with God. Why is that? Is it because they have yet to recognize its value, or do they perhaps not know where to start? All children of God should have the desire to spend a certain amount of time alone with their Heavenly Father.

One day, a father was sitting in his office at home and working at his desk when a knock on the door broke the silence. His young son entered, and the father asked, "Well, son, what do you need?"

"Nothing, Father. I just wanted to be with you," he answered, crossing the floor and sitting down next to him to quietly play while the father worked.

Do we have this kind of relationship with our Heavenly Father? Is our desire to just be near Him? For His part, God certainly wants His children near.

When Jesus was still on Earth, He chose twelve disciples to be with Him. They were always near Him and learned from Him; they were allowed to be with

Him when He prayed; and they were with Him when all others went away.

What do we spend our time on when we are near God? One good option is to read a passage from His Word and then take time to think about it. Paul's instruction, in Philippians 4:8, is, "Meditate on these things." And a psalmist writes, "I will meditate on Your precepts" (Psalm 119:15). In addition to developing our understanding of a passage's historical context, this meditation helps us apply its message to our lives. This way, when we claim the Word for ourselves, our lives truly benefit!

A group touring a power plant entered a big room in which many machines were working in perfect silence. Even the turbines from outside could not be heard. One man in the tour group blurted, "Not much happening here!"

To his surprise, the guide corrected him, saying, "Actually, this room is the core of the whole facility. Everything out there relies on what is done in this quiet room."

Our victories, our usefulness in God's service, and the problems in our lives all largely rely on how much time we take to think and pray about the Word of God. Knowing what to pray about is therefore crucial. Fortunately, we can figure this out by taking time to reflect on our lives and assess our needs as we read the Word. That will help us and guide our prayers. ■

Alone with Jesus

What do we need more in life than a trustworthy leader and guiding star? Our journey through life becomes desolate without this significant guide. But oh, how fortunate we are if He, the faithful Savior, has become our Guide and we may walk hand in hand with Him through life! It then becomes a wonderful journey. Yes! It is so good to walk hand in hand with Jesus, for He leads so well!

Even a loyal friend cannot always meet our expectations, but the Savior is and remains the same at all times, in all circumstances. He wants to bless us and always stand by us. However, He expects our unconditional faith and obedience. If we follow Him as obedient children, He leads us on glorious paths. Our soul can be refreshed, and when we are filled with the love of Jesus and His grace, we can then pass it on to others.

Oh how often Jesus desired to be alone with His disciples! In Mark 6: 31, He said, “Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.” The disciples could see results of their work because they were often alone with Jesus. They were able to learn so much from Him. He led them into solitude so they could gain new strength for their inner lives.

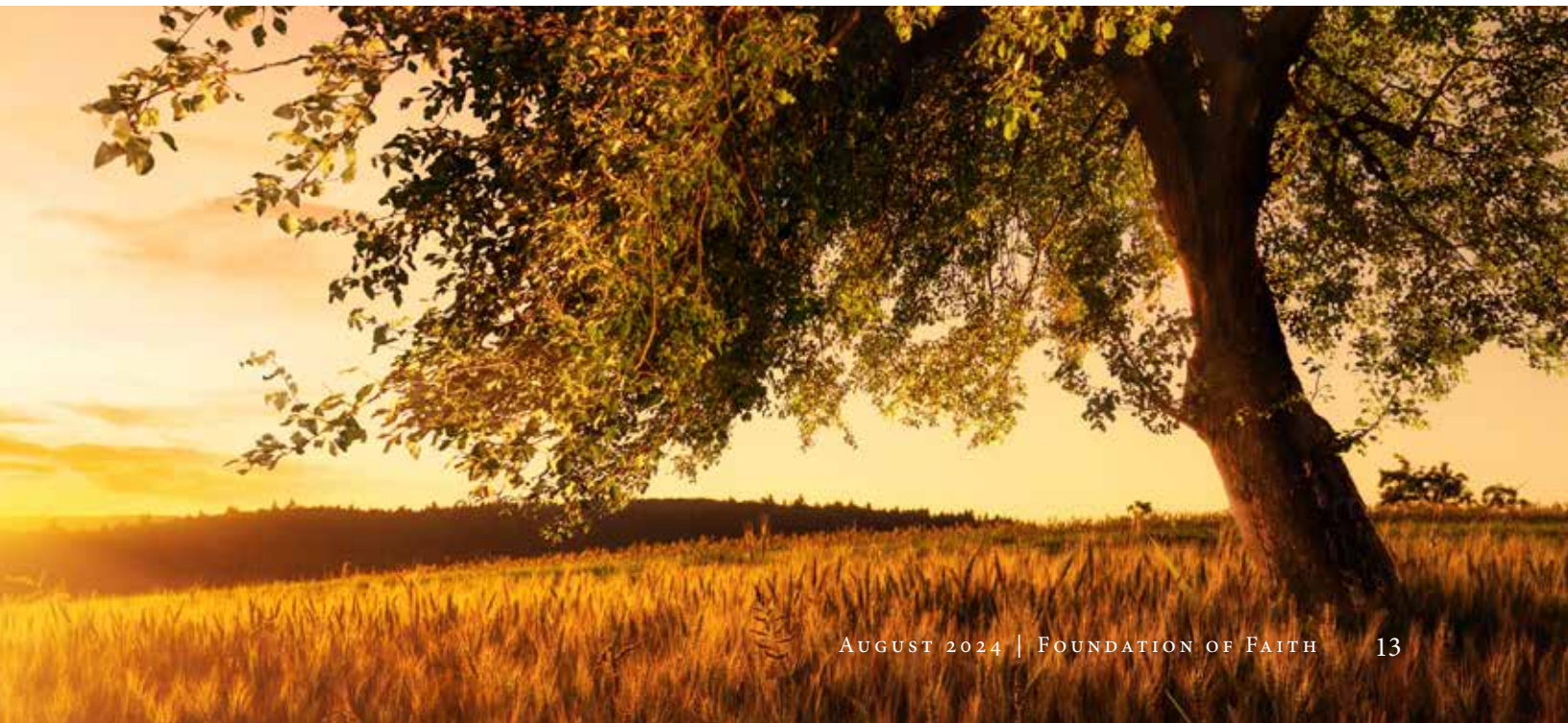
This remains a necessity for God’s children today. The essence of a fruitful life stems from intimate communion with the Master. We may repeatedly draw

from this source of strength with joy. Jesus alone knows how much we need His help and strength. He is always the same, whether we are on mountain heights or on the battlefield. He wants to be near us at all times.

If we draw near to Him in quietness and cultivate intimate fellowship with Him, He will also be with us and support us in our work for Him. Those who have learned to draw “grace for grace” from His fullness will not lack, even in dry and barren times. He can be for us as a satisfying stream. When we have had this experience, our life has realized its purpose. It will then be a blessing to others. We need to let our light shine in the world so that poor and lost souls will also be won and led to the Lord through us.

It is so important to always remain close to the Lord Jesus so that His light can shine through us and show others the way home to the Father’s house! Everyone needs a living Savior who can bring peace to their restless hearts and balm for their burning wounds. The great Savior and Redeemer of humanity desires to confront the sinful world through those who have been saved and freed by Him. It is not so much what we say about Jesus that matters, but what we have received from Him. That is what gives us the strength to work successfully for Him and be a blessing to others.

Anna Sippel



The Forbidden Book



Mother read a story from the children's Bible to Nicholas and Laura, as she did every evening.

"Adam and Eve were very happy in the Garden of Eden until one day, they did something that God had forbidden them to do. God said to them: 'You may eat from all the trees in this garden except for one.' Eve looked at the fruit of this tree—it looked so delicious! Then she heard the serpent say: 'Why don't you take a little? It doesn't matter.' She couldn't resist, picked the fruit, took a bite, and gave it to Adam, who also took a bite. Because of this disobedience, they had to leave the beautiful garden forever."

"I don't understand," said Nicholas. "Why did they do that? There were so many other fruits that they were allowed to eat." "I wouldn't have done that,"

Laura agreed. "I wouldn't leave the beautiful garden for such a small thing."

The next day was Saturday, and the children had the day off. Nicholas and Laura loved books and disappeared into the office after breakfast, where a whole bookshelf was waiting for them. They could spend hours there. But what was that? After just 10 minutes, a loud thump was heard from the office. Startled, Mother ran in to see.

Laura stood there wide-eyed and open-mouthed, staring at her brother who was lying on the

floor and moaning. He had fallen off his chair. Next to him was a book from the top shelf that they were not allowed to take. Father had forbidden it. Mother helped Nicholas up again and looked sadly at the children without saying a word.

Fortunately, nothing happened to Nicholas. But that sad look from Mother hit him in the heart and hurt more than the fall. They were both so sorry. It was only when they had asked for forgiveness from Mother and Jesus that they felt better.

Nicholas and Laura had been disobedient like Adam and Eve and had taken what was forbidden. Now they could understand a little that it is not always easy to be obedient and that it makes others and themselves sad.

But there is a way to put things right again:

Jesus forgives and makes the heart happy again.

A Commandment with a Promise

When we think of obedience, we think of rules and laws that must be followed. Traffic regulations are one example. There are many rules, such as parking restrictions, speed limits, and seatbelt laws. These bylaws are in place to protect everyone and ensure that no one gets hurt. It's important to drive carefully and with consideration of others. Though rules may not sound exciting, they are necessary for our safety. Without them, driving would be very dangerous.

The Bible also requires us to be obedient. Children should obey their parents. This doesn't sound especially appealing either—who likes to tidy their room, brush their teeth, share their favorite things, and the like? I'm sure you can think of many other things, too. But these guidelines are also intended for our benefit—so we can live in a clean, healthy, and calm environment.

But that's not all—the Bible has more to say on this topic: God Himself promises to bless those who are obedient: "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth" (Ephesians 6: 2–3).

Often, bad things happen when we don't obey. For example: It can result in a traffic accident, or we may feel guilty because we did something bad. We have sin in the world because Adam and Eve disobeyed. Disobedience always has serious consequences.

On the other hand, the Bible tells us of the apostle Peter who experienced the value of obeying. He had been trying all night to catch fish. Unfortunately, not a single one swam into his net. Disappointed, he returned to shore in the morning. There he met Jesus, who told him he should try again. Peter couldn't

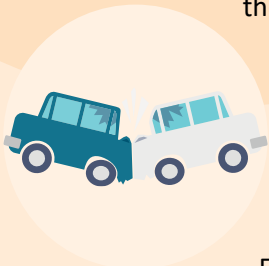
see the point of this—if he hadn't caught a single fish during the night, it certainly wouldn't happen now. But he said to Jesus, "Because You say so, I will do it."

Although it seemed to make no sense, Peter was obedient. And God blessed that. Peter caught so many fish that his net nearly tore, and he needed his friends to help him. God wants to bless you as well. Obedience will be rewarded.

Irina Ritthammer



*"Children, obey your
parents in the Lord,
for this is right."
Ephesians 6:1*





Service **FOR THE LORD**

If you are a child of God, then you will desire to serve and do something for Him. It is good if you want to use your time for ministry in the church or in everyday life.

In the Bible we find plenty of examples of those who served. The best-known example is certainly Jesus Christ—our best role model. But the apostle Paul is also a good example: when he became a child of God, it moved him to repentance and service for God. Repentance and the desire to serve God is a natural consequence of becoming His child. We can love and serve God because He first loved us and freed us from sin and eternal death through Jesus Christ.

If we look at the life of Jesus, we see that He was a servant for the glory of God. Why? Because He repeatedly emphasized that He was not doing His will, but the will of the Father.¹

God's will—surely you want to do that too. And where better to experience God's will than in fellowship with Him? You cultivate this fellowship by regularly reading the Bible, the Word of God, and praying to Him.

In everyday life, you can only recognize the character of your friend—what he likes and what is important to him—if you spend time with him.

It is similar with God. If we want to serve God, we need to know who He is, what He is like and what He expects from us. God can give you this knowledge if you read His word and stay in contact with Him through prayer. This is how Jesus did it. He always relied on the words of God and was constantly in fellowship with the Father.

You may not understand biblical passages immediately. Don't let this discourage you, but keep at it. Bring it to God again and again in prayer so that He can show you what His Word means for your practical

everyday life. “For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened” (Matthew 7: 8).

Jesus lived a life not “to be served, but to serve” (Matthew 20: 28) because He loved people. Why should it be any different for us?

A person’s motives for service can be manifold. If we look at Jesus, we will see that His ministry was characterized by love for us. First Corinthians 13 makes it clear: if our service is not based on love, it is meaningless. God wants our motivation to be love for Him and at the same time for those around us. If we love God, we will also learn to love all our fellow human beings, even if it is sometimes difficult.

If our motives are self-centered and selfish, this is not pleasing service to God. True service goes together with love.

What practical service can you do for God right now?

The short answer: any, if your motivation is love for God and therefore also for your fellow human beings.

However, the Bible also shows that we must prove ourselves in service to God before we are assigned further tasks: “He who *is* faithful in *what is* least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in *what is* least is unjust also in much” (Luke 16: 10). It is like everyday life. Someone who is not able to fulfill the smallest tasks faithfully will also not be able to fulfill larger tasks faithfully.

When we look at the servants of God in the Bible, we realize that they went through a period of preparation before they were assigned what would become their life’s work. Whether it was Moses, Joseph, the disciples, Paul, or others, they had to learn many things, gain experience, and prove faithful in service before God could use them for other tasks.

What does that mean in summary?

There is no template or checklist that you can tick off to find out what your task is. As different as we humans are, as different are the tasks that God can show and give us.

If you love God, you will love His Word, His will, your fellow human beings, and fellowship with Him.

Through fellowship with God, He will show you and place on your heart where and what tasks you can fulfill, no matter how small and insignificant they may be. Most work for God happens in the background where no one sees it, and perhaps no one will ever know about it. Don’t let this unsettle you. God sees your service. Remember: “[W]hatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ” (Colossians 3: 23–24).

What you undertake should never contradict God’s Word. Do not expect to hear the literal voice of God telling you what to do next. God has given us the Bible, which is sufficient to know God, His will, and His plan for us. Stick sincerely to His Word and remain in constant fellowship with Him, and you will recognize what your service to God is to be.

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths” (Proverbs 3: 5–6).

Eduard Zelmer, Eppingen (DE)

¹To look up:

Luke 22:42; John 4:34; John 5:30;

John 6:38

Alone Again!

A while ago, I received a call from an older brother who wanted to share something with me. He told me about the death of his dear wife, to whom he had been married for over 70 years. I just listened. What could I say? Words seemed inadequate. He spoke of a “big hole” in his heart. I would have liked to hug him, but unfortunately I couldn’t over the phone.

In life, one of the hardest things to cope with is the loss of a husband or wife. Just try to put yourself in the shoes of a grieving spouse. You walked together over a long stretch of years, sharing joy and sorrow. The words of your wedding vows “for better, for worse” came true. The vows concluded with “until death do us part.” That seemed in the very distant future. Life was ahead of you, and you were wonderfully blessed. How happy you were! “Marriage is deliverance from loneliness,” was how someone described his bliss. But now reality sets in. Death caused separation. You are alone again!

It all seems like a dream. Your beloved partner is no longer there. His or her place is empty. Emotions toss you to and fro. Feelings of despair overwhelm you. The loneliness, the unbearable silence, it seems to almost kill you. Why, oh, why did this have to happen to me? Why did God allow it to happen at all? The illness, or the unexpected accident, the heart attack—whatever the cause—no one is really prepared for it. And how does one cope with it?

Being married for 30, 40, or more years is more than just a casual friendship. With each passing year, the bond has grown closer—you’re melded together. You are practically joined at the hip. Some even claim that after years of married life together, a certain resemblance can be observed. What has taken years to build, that art of togetherness, the oneness, is gone. It’s all over. Of course, if you have children, they invite you or visit, friends call, someone else delights us with a bouquet of flowers or a slice of cake. So kind of them; it’s nice and great and also appreciated and commendable. But when the evening ends, they leave, and we once more face the dreaded loneliness. Dead silence in the house.

No one speaks, and no one listens. Is talking to yourself the solution? Hardly. A box of tissues is always within reach. Every little gesture, every word that comes to mind moves us to tears. It is almost unbearable. A friend wrote to me about his feelings after the loss of his dear wife: “The loss is constantly palpable, making the loneliness weigh all the more heavily. And when you are the only one left and have no relatives, daily activities become meaningless or lack purpose. You feel like a child who lost a mother. You become isolated.”

Years ago, I read the following in the advice column of a daily newspaper: “My husband snores, and I’m having trouble dealing with this. What should I do?”—I can’t remember what the recommendation was, but I have not forgotten one comment. A woman who had recently lost her husband wrote: “What I would give if I could hear my husband snore just one more time!” I think we get it. The statement clearly expresses the pain of the one left behind.

Question after question arises. But they all seem to culminate into one: What will happen next? What will become of me? The togetherness of marriage is dissolved. You are alone. The road ahead must be traveled alone. Well-meant words and advice from relatives and friends miss the mark. Yes, we know that God is there. We are familiar with the many promises in the Bible. We are also aware that God loves us. That’s true and it’s all well and good, but right now I feel alone. All alone. I have a “hole in my heart.” Even God seems to be hidden in the fog.

My wife, Doreen, and I sometimes talk about death and dying. We think about people who have lost their spouse, but we also talk about our own mortality. The fact is, dying is part of life. And in a marriage, it is rare for both partners to die at the same time. In most cases, one person dies first and leaves their partner behind. That’s how it is. A funeral is planned. Decisions have to be made. Things that were done as a couple and discussed together are now done alone. Literally everything reminds you of being alone.

Are there recommendations to make this process easier? There are books or courses offered to give us



advice on better ways to deal with our grief. One thing is clear, grieving is a process. It is like a dark valley that must be passed through.

David, in his Shepherd's Psalm (Psalm 23:4), also spoke of a "dark valley" on his journey. However, he adds a few words that give the whole situation a decisive twist: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You *are* with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." In the presence of the Good Shepherd, his God, he feels safe and secure. In the same psalm, he describes his Shepherd Who cares for him and ensures that he will not lack anything. In verse 3, he refers to restoration of the soul. That is so reassuring and is exactly what we long for. We find this refreshment in the presence of the Good Shepherd. The entire psalm describes the Shepherd's care. He does not abandon us during this time, even when we feel abandoned by everyone.

Julie Hausmann (1826–1901), who planned to marry an African missionary and join him on the mission field, learned he had passed away before she arrived. Devastated by this blow, she wrote the song "Take Thou My Hand, O Father." In the third verse, she expresses her feelings as follows: "E'en when I am not feeling Thy love or might, still Thou art safely leading, though dark the night. . . ." Anyone who has lost

a loved one understands how she must have felt. And yet we can sense from her words that she is counting on God and wants to be guided by this "Thou," Who safely leads.

We can walk alongside one another as brothers and sisters of faith during times of mourning and simply be there for each other. "Weep with those who weep," we find in Romans 12:15. It is a request to carry one another's burdens. But what do you say and do in such situations when speaking with those grieving? It is often best to say little. People say "I understand you" as their spouse stands beside them. Or "She's in a better place." Well-intended advice includes: "God doesn't give us more than we can carry." This may all be true but unlikely of benefit to a grieving person. Simply being there and listening is often the best thing we can do. Even if we are hearing the story for the third time, we listen with empathy. The person who is now alone finds healing and help in retelling the story. Slowly life will get better. With time, there is renewed courage to carry on, hope is restored, and God's path for the future becomes clear. Life will never be the same, but God's hand holds us firmly with grace for each new day.

*Harry Semenjuk
Wetaskiwin, Alberta*

Alone, Yet Not Truly Alone

Today, I am remembering my late husband, Eric. It would have been our 63rd wedding anniversary. God had other plans. He took him home to his eternal reward 4 years ago this month.

When my husband was diagnosed with Parkinson's, I hugged him outside the doctor's office and exclaimed: "We are in this together!" His was a progressive illness, and later he was placed in a long-term care facility. This separation was already a great loss. However, for us it was a tremendous consolation that throughout his declining health, every day together, we sought refuge in God's Word, in prayer, and in song. Toward the end, in his suffering, he asked God: "If you want to take me home, do it soon." And to me he said: "Do not be upset when I go."

I am thankful to God that he did not have to suffer so long and that he has finished the race to be "Home" at last. Now I must finish the race alone—but not really alone.

We recited this prayer so often: "Be my strong refuge, to which I may resort continually; You have given

the commandment to save me, for You *are* my rock and my fortress" (Psalm 71:3).

Jesus calls us: "Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

Do I miss my husband? Do I reflect and get sad at times? Of course I do!

I pray that, in my remaining days, I would lead an exemplary, holy life and be a useful vessel in God's hand. Immersing myself in God's Word and praying, especially for others, and, yes, reading and hearing hymns and sermons has helped me the most during this time. It is also important to look after the body by getting sleep, good nutrition, quiet times, fresh air, and sunshine.

Being thankful for all of God's blessings, for a loving family and church family, and maintaining an attitude of gratitude all help to sustain and encourage me.

"I will say of the LORD, '*He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in Him I will trust*'" (Psalm 91:2).

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Edmonton, Alberta*

Matthew / Levi

Matthew means "gift of the Lord"—a beautiful name. However, Matthew did not honor this name until he met Jesus. His Jewish name was Levi, son of Alphaeus.

Matthew wrote the Gospel of Matthew. One might therefore assume that we know a lot about him, but in fact we learn very little about Matthew. He only mentions himself twice in his entire Gospel: first, when he is called, and second, when he lists all the apostles. Matthew seems to have been a quiet, reserved man. In his account of Jesus, he remains completely in the background.

A Tax Collector

Matthew was a tax collector. None of the twelve apostles was known more as a sinner than he was. Being a tax collector was the worst reputation you could have in Israel at that time. They were the most despised people in all of Israel. They were hated and reviled by the entire Jewish society and mocked even more than the Romans. Why was that?

The tax collectors extorted money from the Israelites in order to fill the Roman treasury and their own pockets. Although there were set rates, they were usually exceeded. Anyone who took part in this work was

trying to enrich themselves. Complaints to Rome were unsuccessful. The state tolerated the abuses because of the secure source of income. The term “tax collector” was therefore used almost synonymously with “sinner.” Many of these people were also truly vile and characterless miscreants who sometimes even used violence to squeeze money out of people.

Matthew belonged to these men. And Jesus called such a man to be His apostle. Back then, no one would have thought of calling a tax collector to follow him—but Jesus did, for Jesus sees not only the outward appearance but also the heart. In his soul, Matthew probably longed for redemption from his sinful state, and Jesus saw this.

It is amazing that just as Jesus invited Philip: “Follow Me,” he also invited Matthew (Matthew 9:9). And just as Philip followed Jesus without hesitation, so did Matthew, and this despite the fact that Philip was a seeking, pious Jew and Matthew a disreputable sinner. That is the grace of God! It seeks both one person and the other and does not want anyone to be lost.

Matthew likely never thought that he could become a follower of Jesus. Perhaps he longed for it, but simply thought of himself as too sinful. Then Jesus comes straight to him and calls him. Perhaps Matthew looked around a few times to see whether someone else with the same name was meant. But no, Jesus meant exactly him!

His joy at this encounter with Jesus was so great that he prepared a big feast for Him. He invited many of his colleagues and friends to introduce Jesus to them. It was a diverse group. They were all sitting together: tax collectors and sinners of all kinds, the disciples, and Jesus in the middle!

That was revolutionary! There had never been anything like it in Israel before. No wonder the religious leaders were angry about it. They were outraged! How could a man who was called a prophet and rabbi have fellowship with such sinful, depraved fellows! But Jesus justified His attitude (Luke 5:31). He did not come for the self-righteous but for those who want to recognize and forsake their sin. Matthew was one of these people. He was someone who was

aware of his sin because it was obvious. He longed for a different life.

Forgiveness

What can be learned from Matthew’s life is very clear—you too can be forgiven! You too can start a new life with God!

When Jesus walked by Matthew’s tax office and called him, Matthew followed without hesitation. What made him promptly leave everything behind and follow Jesus into an uncertain future? Matthew was dissatisfied with his sinful life. Despite his good income and the prospect of wealth, he was tormented by the sin he had committed. Deep down, he had a longing for God.

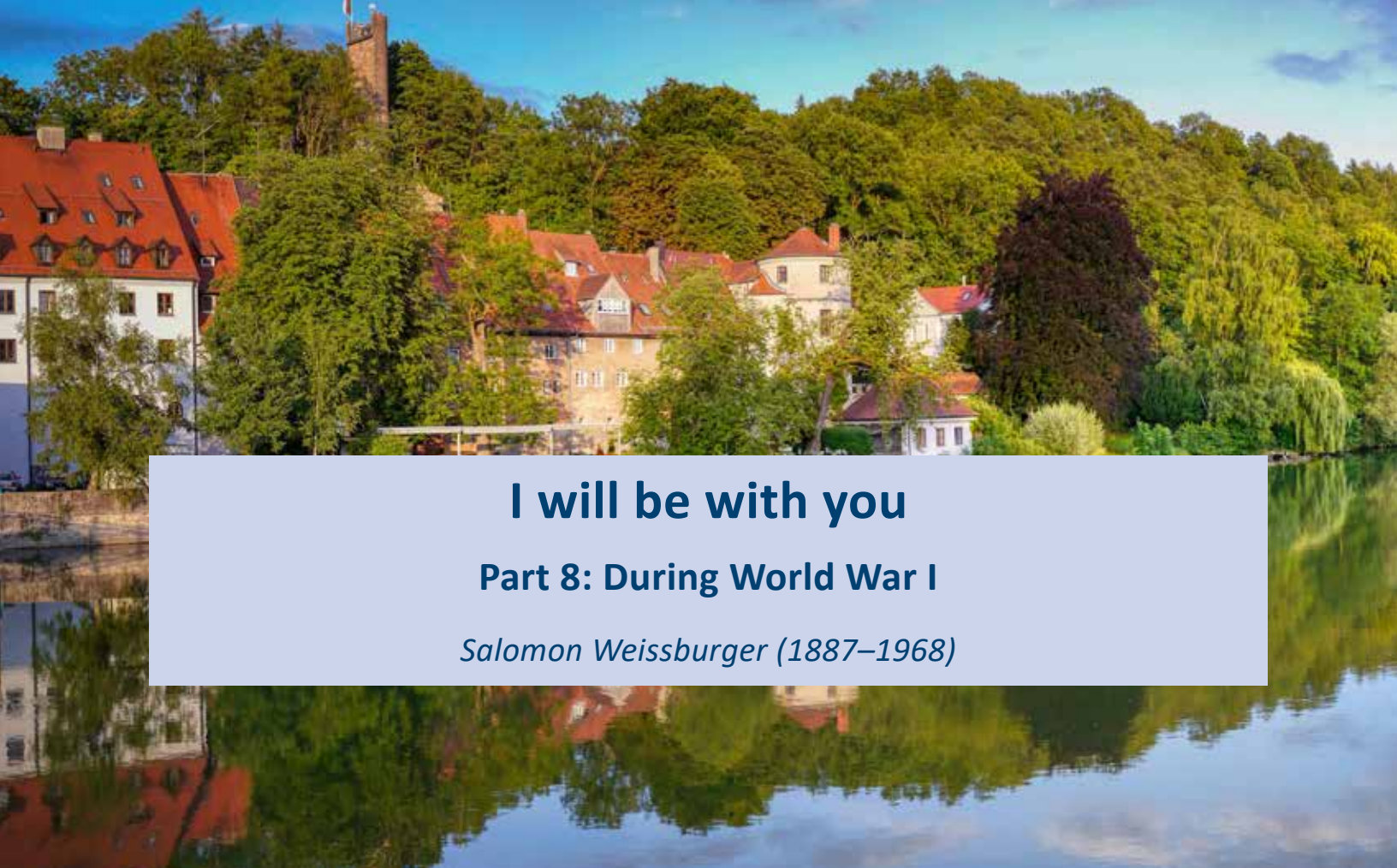
He may have been searching for God even before his encounter with Jesus. He probably knew the Old Testament very well. In his Gospel, we find 99 quotations from the Old Testament. That is more than Mark, Luke, and John combined. As a tax collector, he was not allowed to enter the synagogue, which is perhaps why he studied God’s Word himself. Whether this was the case before he became a follower of Jesus or only afterwards, we do not know. However, one thing is certain: he had a burning desire for God.

When Jesus came, he got up and followed Him. His sins were forgiven, and a new life began.

You too can be forgiven! Do you have this hunger for a new life? This hunger for God? For peace and rest? For a life without sin? Jesus wants to meet you today. He offers you forgiveness too, no matter how your life has gone so far. Perhaps you have fallen deeply, but Jesus wants to pull you out of the lowest place in your life and make it new. Open your heart to Him, accept His gift of love and salvation, and start a new life with Him!

“Jesus answered and said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call *the* righteous, but sinners, to repentance” (Luke 5:31–32).

*Eduard Albrecht
Eppingen, Germany*



I will be with you

Part 8: During World War I

Salomon Weissburger (1887–1968)

Shortly before World War I began, we held several days of services in Wiączemin and in Vistula Territory near Gąbin, all in modern-day Poland. Brothers Doebert and Müller brought the Word. One day, Sister Doebert wrote from Germany that war was on the horizon; the brothers quickly headed home, barely managing to cross the border before the war began. My family and I were not able to leave because my wife had recently given birth to our fourth child when war broke out on August 1, 1914. What could we do? We put ourselves in God's hands.

Around 14 days later, we had to report to the authorities in Gąbin to be deported to eastern Russia. We gave up our apartment and travelled some 12 kilometers to town. Unexpectedly, only I was detained, and my wife and our four children were sent back to our old home while I was put in a camp. This separation lasted for four years, and the next time we saw each other was in late 1918.

When I was detained, I first slept for some time due to exhaustion. Then, upon awakening, I immediately

thanked the Lord and gratefully accepted everything from God's hand. This spirit of thankfulness protected me during the following years of detention as well, and the Lord shielded me from all dissatisfaction. Praise be to God for full salvation in Christ! He helped me in the dark hours of my life.

In the same night, we (several other Germans and I) were brought to some barracks in Warsaw. If I remember correctly, it was a Saturday. The following Monday, we were sent to eastern Russia by cargo train, along with around 1000 men. After travelling for ten days and ten nights, we arrived in Orenburg via Moscow. We then crossed the Ural River into Siberia and were placed in a big, fortress-like yard with high walls and towers. The walls were very thick, and there was a primitive living area where we were quartered. We got a little to eat as well.

The police in Orenburg ordered us to walk to Yermolayevo, around 120 kilometers (75 mi) away. Upon arrival, we were hosted by Russian farmers who themselves had barely enough to survive. Since no supplies



*“Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will declare what
He has done for my soul.” (Psalm 66: 16)*

were being provided by the government, many ended up in great need.

Most of the prisoners came from comfortable backgrounds, so they had a hard time adjusting to their reduced means. In desperation, they tried to work in the fields of a big farm, but not being used to the work, they barely eked out an existence.

As a family, we were always short of money, but before I was detained, God performed a miracle by providing me with enough money to survive until we prisoners received support from Germany via the American consulate. In this time of need, Brother Ebel helped me several times too. What a faithful God we have! It pays to trust Him.

Since we were forbidden from speaking German or holding services, nine months passed in which I was not really able to talk about God’s Word with anyone or to pray with others. I served the Lord quietly, but throughout all this, the Lord gave me a content and thankful heart. During this time, I was able to live out sanctification in a practical way, and it was well with my soul.

We were detained along with around 300 others in this village. As I was walking through the village one day, a voice clearly told me to go into a big house. Inside, I met the parents of Brother Gustav Sonnenberg. They, too, were believers and detainees. This meeting gave me the first opportunity since my arrival to talk about God’s Word and to kneel together before God. Fifty years have passed since then, but I still remember the deep impression it made on me to be together with children of God.

Years later, I met up with their son, Gustav Sonnenberg, and he talked about the visit I had made to his parents and the impression it left on him. When we held camp services in Ortelsburg, East Prussia (now Szczytno, Poland), he felt drawn to attend and gave his heart to the Lord there. The Lord fashioned him into a highly diligent and competent servant in His kingdom. That is well known, so I will not write more on the subject here. Suffice it to say, glory to the Lord! Oh, how rewarding to be faithful to Him despite all tribulations. Even if we seemingly have no success. ■

Covering and Uncovering Sin

*“He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.”
(Proverbs 28: 13)*

It is human nature to deny or cover up one’s sin, but God will uncover it. God hates sin and all sinfulness.

Let me cite some examples from the Bible which show the consequences of covering sin. To begin with, we have the case of Adam and Eve. They were disobedient to God and then tried to hide. They had lost their innocence, and it was replaced by a heavy feeling of guilt. They covered themselves with fig leaves and looked for a place to hide among the trees of the garden. Then they heard God call to Adam: “Where are you?” This question is revealing. Their disobedience had severe consequences. They lost nearness to and fellowship with God. And what tragic consequences did the fall have for the whole human race! Sin, to which they had opened the door, brought them much heartache. Cain killed his brother and then tried to cover up his sin and excuse himself by asking, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” But his brother’s blood cried out to heaven for revenge. The curse of God was upon Cain.

Joseph’s brothers sold him to Egypt and tried to cover up their sin. They carried the blood-soaked garment of Joseph to their father and told him that they had found it like this. Their old father believed them, and that brought him indescribable sorrow. God waited for a long time but finally uncovered their sin. Joseph’s brothers were forced to bow down before him in deep humility and shame.

The twelve disciples of our Lord were dining at the table with Him. To their astonishment, Jesus told them that one of them would betray Him. It seemed inconceivable to the disciples, but just a short while later, they had to face the fallout of this terrible reality. In the case of Ananias and Sapphira, they tried to deceive God and the apostles. The Holy Spirit revealed this to Peter so that their sin was uncovered, and they died on the spot.

Humans are prone to cover up their sin. They try to excuse themselves, no matter how severe the sin they

committed may be. They feel good justifying their actions, but the end result is destruction. “He who covers his sins will not prosper.” God will reveal and uncover sin.

Notice that our Bible text also says: “but whoever confesses.” This is the way out. The natural human tendency is not to be humiliated or to humble oneself in this manner, but that is God’s way, and there is none other that leads to peace. When Paul preached, many confessed their sins and uncovered their evil doings. As long as people try to keep their sin hidden and secret, they cannot find peace and come to rest since guilt will continue to burden the conscience. In the end, their destruction is sure. God will bring it all out into the open. Isn’t it much better, as long as there is still time, to confess one’s sin and seek peace with God?

But confessing our sin is not yet enough. We must also be willing to do away with our sins and forsake them. Our text says: “Whoever confesses and forsakes *them* will have mercy” (Proverbs 28:13). The Lord does a thorough job. Confessing sin relieves the conscience. Yes, but final victory cannot be claimed unless the sin is forsaken. To be freed from sin, we must stop sinning. Sinful ways can only be broken if we stop giving in to them. We must do this with our whole heart and inner being. Sinful thoughts must be restrained, and sinful desires must be resisted. Whoever does so will receive mercy from God. God will assist us and help us to be victorious. His great love will envelop us. He is gracious and compassionate. He is able to forgive and blot out all sin, and this He will do. He not only reveals and uncovers sins but also forgives and cleanses of all sin. They are cast into the sea of forgetfulness. God says, “I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more” (Hebrews 8: 12).

If you do not yet have peace with God, then humble yourself before the Lord today. Procrastination can only lead to negative consequences. Yes, even to eternal damnation. ■



Those Who Sow with Tears

In 1921, the missionary couple David and Svea Flood traveled with their 2-year-old son David Jr. from Sweden to Central Africa to a colony in the Belgian Congo. There they worked together with a Scandinavian couple, Joel and Berta Eriksson. They asked God what He wanted them to do and received the impression that they should leave the main mission station and take the gospel to a remote area.

This was a huge leap of faith. Using bush knives, the four hacked their way inland and reached the village of N'dolera. The chief turned them away, saying: "We cannot allow you, as white people, to live here because our gods would be offended."

The two couples decided to settle a good half kilometer outside of the village and build mud huts. They prayed long and in vain for a spiritual breakthrough. The only contact they had with the villagers was a young boy who was allowed to sell them chickens and eggs twice a week. Svea Flood came to the conclusion that if this African boy was the only one she could talk to, she would try to lead him to Jesus. And indeed, she was successful. Otherwise, however, there was no other encouragement. On the contrary: one after another of the small team fell ill with malaria. At some point, the Erikssons felt that they had suffered enough and went back to the central mission station.

David and Svea Flood stayed in N'dolera to continue on their own. But then Svea became pregnant. As the time of her delivery approached, the village chief became a little friendlier and allowed a midwife to help her. On April 13, 1923, a baby girl was born, whom they named Aina Cecilia. However, the delivery proved to be very exhausting for Svea, who was already weakened by malaria. The birth took its toll on her, and she died 18 days later.

At that moment, something broke within David Flood. He dug a primitive grave, buried his 27-year-old wife, and took his children back to the mission station. There he gave his newborn daughter to the Erikssons and snarled: "I'm going back to Sweden. I've lost my wife, and I can't take care of this baby. God has ruined my life." With that, he left for the harbor with his son David Jr., turned his back on his vocation, and gave up his faith in God.

Seven months later, both Erikssons were struck down by an unknown illness and died within a few days. Some suspected poisoning. The baby was given to the American missionaries Arthur and Anna Berg, who changed her Swedish name Aina to Agnes (Aggie) and eventually took her to the USA at the age of three.

The Bergs loved the little girl and feared that if they tried to return to Africa, Aggie could be taken away ►



from them because she only had a birth certificate but no passport and was therefore considered stateless. They decided to remain in the USA and switch from missionary service to church service. Aggie grew up in South Dakota. As a young woman, she studied at North Central Bible College in Minneapolis. It was there that she met her future husband Dewey Hurst.

Years passed. The Hursts were a blessing in their service to God. Aggie had a daughter, then a son. At some point, her husband became president of a Christian college in the Seattle area, and Aggie was fascinated to find so much Scandinavian tradition there.

One day, she found a Swedish Christian magazine in her mailbox. She had no idea who had sent it to her, and of course she couldn't understand a word. But as she leafed through it, she suddenly noticed a photo. In a primitive setting, there was a grave with a white cross, and on the cross were the words SVEA FLOOD.

Aggie jumped in her car and drove to visit a college professor who she knew could translate the article. "What does it say?" she asked. The teacher summarized the article: It was about missionaries who came to N'dolera a long time ago; the birth of a white baby; the death of the young mother; a little African boy who was led to Christ; and how this boy grew up and finally persuaded the village chief to allow him to build a school in the village long after the white missionaries had left. The article described how he gradually won all the students to Christ; the children led their parents to Christ; even the village chief became a Christian. Today, there are 600 believers in this one village and all because of the sacrifice of David and Svea Flood.

For their silver wedding anniversary, the Hurst couple received a trip to Sweden as a gift from the college. There, Aggie tried to find her biological father. As she found out, he had remarried and had become the father of four more children. Aggie met them first. It was a wonderful reunion. When Aggie inquired about David, her older brother, her half-brothers pointed to the other side of the hotel lobby, where a solitary figure sat slumped in an armchair. David Jr. was addicted to alcohol which had almost destroyed his life.

Now Aggie wanted to see her father. None of her half-brothers had spoken to him in years, but her half-sister said: "You can talk to him, even though he is very ill now. But you have to know: When he hears the name of God, he throws a tantrum every time." Aggie was not deterred.

Together with her half-sister, she set off to visit her father. They drove to a poor area of Stockholm, entered a run-down building, and climbed the stairs to the third floor. The apartment looked a mess, with bottles of alcohol lying around everywhere. Her father, the former missionary David Flood, lay on a rumpled bed in the corner. He was now 73 years old and diabetic. He had also recently had a stroke and suffered from cataracts in both eyes.

"Dad?" said Aggie cautiously. "It's me, the little girl you left behind in Africa." He turned to her and began to cry. "Aina," he managed to get out after a while, "I didn't want to give you away, I just didn't know what to do with two small children." "It's okay, Dad," she replied and took him gently in her arms. "God has taken care of me." The man froze immediately. The tears

stopped. “God has forgotten us all. He destroyed our whole family! First He sent us to Africa, and then He shamefully abandoned us. We took on so much, and what came of it? Nothing! Lost years!

He turned back to the wall. Aggie stroked his face and continued unabashedly: “Dad, I have a little story to tell you, and it’s a true story. You didn’t go to Africa for nothing. Mom didn’t die for nothing. The little boy you won for the Lord has grown up and led the whole village to Jesus Christ. The one seed you sowed has continued to grow. Today there are 600 Africans serving the Lord because you followed the call of God in your life. Dad, Jesus loves you. He has never hated you.”

The old man turned again to look his daughter in the eye. His body relaxed. He began to talk. And by the end of the afternoon, he gave his heart back to the God whom he had worshipped so many years before. Over the next few days, father and daughter shared many heartfelt moments together. Soon, Aggie and her husband had to return to America, and a few weeks later, David Flood went home to be with the Lord.

A few years later, the Hursts attended a major missionary conference in London, where a report on Zaire (formerly the Belgian Congo) was given. Ruhigita Ndagora, the superintendent of a church representing some 110,000 baptized believers, spoke eloquently about the spread of the gospel in his country. Aggie couldn’t help but ask him afterwards if he had ever heard of David and Svea Flood.

“Oui, madame,” the man replied in French before someone translated for him into English. “It was Svea Flood who led me to Jesus Christ. When I was a little boy, I brought her and her husband food. They had a little girl, but I don’t know what became of her.” “That girl is me!” exclaimed Aggie. “I am Aina!” Ndagora grabbed Aggie’s hands, hugged her, and rocked her back and forth in the African way, while tears streamed down his face. He looked deep into her eyes and said: “Your mother’s grave and the memory of her is honored by all of us to this day. You must come to Africa and see it. Your mother is the most famous person in our history!”

After some time, Aggie Hurst and her husband actually made a trip to Africa. They were greeted by cheering crowds of villagers. Aggie even met the man her father had hired many years ago to carry her to the mission station in a hammock cradle. The most dramatic moment, of course, was when the pastor accompanied Aggie to see the white cross on her mother’s grave. She knelt on the ground to pray and thank God. Later that day in church, the pastor read John 12:24: “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.” Then he read Psalm 126:5: “Those who sow in tears will reap in joy.”

Summary of the book One Witness by Aggie Hurst (1923–1982)

Announcements

Camp Meeting in Blaubeuren, Germany

August 16 – 21, 2024

www.lagerversammlung.de

Church of God Edmonton

75th Anniversary Celebration and Church Convention

“Your unfailing love, O LORD, is as vast as the heavens” (Psalm 36: 5, NLT)

August 31, 2024 - 2 pm and 6 pm

September 1, 2024 - 10 am, 2 pm and 6 pm

www.edmontonchurchofgod.com

Strength for the Day

When the stars grow dim at daybreak
And the sun begins to shine,
When darkness fades and I awake
To the warmth of light sublime.
In my heart I say a prayer:
Hear, o Lord my earnest plea:
On this day be Thou my leader;
Be my guide and strengthen me.

When day brightens in the morrow,
My heart calms and is consoled.
I tell Jesus all my sorrow
And the anguish of my soul.
My concerns and fears I bring Him,
Pray for strength upon my way.
Lord, You know my daily burdens;
Be my strength and help today.

You're my light in times of darkness;
You're a lamp upon my way.
Poisoned darts are rendered harmless;
Through Your wounds I'm whole today.
Give me hope when storms are brewing;
Help me finish what's begun.
Bless and sanctify my doing
Till my day is o'er and done.

Strength for the day, strength for the day;
Give me, o Savior, the strength for today.
You Lord alone, You Lord alone,
Be Thou my guide, give me strength from Your throne.

Hermann Engelhardt