

## WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

**'OUR LIVES BEGIN TO END THE MOMENT WE BECOME SILENT ABOUT THINGS THAT MATTER.'** Martin Luther King

Luther King

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Eighteenth-century Christian, Jean-Pierre de Caussade wrote, 'The great and firm foundation of the (Christian) spiritual life is the offering of ourselves to God and being subject to his will in all things. We must completely forget ourselves, so that we regard ourselves as an object which has been sold and over which we no longer have any rights. We find all our joy in fulfilling God's pleasure - God's happiness, God's glory and the fact that God is our great and only delight. Once we have this foundation, all we need to do is spend our lives rejoicing that God is God and being so wholly abandoned to God's will that we are quite indifferent as to what we do and equally indifferent as to what use God makes of our activities.'

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**TRUE JOY IS SERENE.** Seneca

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**David Watson** wrote: 'It is the church that is willing to die to worldly standards that will know the power of Christ's resurrection. It may be envied for its depths of loving relationships or its spontaneous joy; it may be hated and persecuted for its revolutionary lifestyle exposing the hollow values and destructive selfishness of the society it seeks to serve, but it certainly cannot be ignored. When God reigns among his people, they become a city set on a hill and cannot be hidden.'

*Last week a friend sent me some material expressing concern about moves being made to write God out of the Constitution and other documents. But ultimately do such things really matter? I suggest that such things don't matter to God because the place that God expects to be seen is in the living of all those people who claim to be 'Christian'. If people cannot see the love of God in Jesus Christ in the living of those who claim to be Christian then that IS a serious matter. All other such things are a distraction from the main game and the living of every Christian is a vitally important living statement in enabling every non-Christian to read of the love God has for them in Jesus Christ. So, let's not become distracted but instead be committed to fulfilling God's Great Commission in our life statement and encouraging others as we do so.*

*Bill*

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**NO MATTER WHERE WE ARE, IT IS OUR FRIENDS THAT MAKE THE WORLD.** Henry Drummond

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*Lord Jesus, please remind us that it is not always through agitation and non-stop activity which lead to justice, but that change often comes through the quiet commitment of a small group of people. Help us raise our small body of people to set about quietly becoming the change God wants to see in our neighbourhood, our nation and the world.*

*Let me hear of Your unfailing love each morning, for I am trusting You. Show me where to walk, for I give myself to You. Rescue me from my enemies, Lord; I run to You for protection. Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God. May Your gracious Spirit lead me forward on a firm footing. For the glory of Your name, O Lord, preserve my life. Because of Your faithfulness, bring me out of this distress. In Your unfailing love, silence all my enemies for I am Your servant. Amen*

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**The great Columbanus affirmed the #1 Christian Gospel virtue of love over all else saying: 'Love has nothing to do with order'. Yet when maintaining 'order' becomes our priority in expressions of the Christian faith, our love is diminished, we are diminished, and our 'Christlikeness', wisdom, generosity, loyalty, faithfulness and courage are all diminished and the beauty of Christ obscured.**

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## **TRUE BELIEVERS DO NOT SHY AWAY FROM**

**OBEDIENCE:** *'For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.'* Romans 6:22. It has been quite overlooked in recent times that the faith of Christ is an absolute arbiter! It pre-emptes the whole redeemed personality and seizes upon the individual to the exclusion of all other claims. Or more accurately, it makes every legitimate claim on the Christian's life conditional, and without hesitation decides the place each claim shall have in the total scheme.

The act of committal to Christ in salvation releases the believing person from the penalty of sin, but it does not release them from the obligation to obey the words of Christ. Rather it brings them under the joyous necessity to be living in obedience to Christ!

Look at the epistles of the New Testament and notice how largely they are given over to what is erroneously called 'hortatory' matter. By dividing the epistles into 'doctrinal' and 'hortatory' passages **we have relieved ourselves of any necessity to obey**. The doctrinal passages require from us nothing except that we believe them. The so-called hortatory passages are harmless enough for the very word by which they are described declares them to be words of advice and encouragement rather than commandments to be obeyed. This is a palpable error.

The exhortations in the epistles are to be understood as apostolic injunctions carrying the weight of mandatory charges from the Head of the Church. They are intended to be obeyed (lived), not accepted or rejected as we choose. If we would

have God's blessing upon us we must begin to obey Him! (The real nature of our Christian faith is clearly visible in every aspect of our living: our behaviour, our attitudes, our values, our words, our relationships, our responses. And sadly our living is often very different to what we claim as Christians, hence the suspicion many in society have towards the Christian Church in general. A great deal of the solution lies in our hands if we have the courage and faith to be growing in 'Christlikeness'. Bill)

A. W. Tozer quoted in 'Renewed Day by Day' excerpts from 'The Divine Conquest' reading for 8th August.  
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**Lord Jesus, please open my eyes to discover the joy of serving others. Let me do small (and big) things with great love today.**

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**BE STILL AND KNOW: 'This is the first and greatest commandment.'**

Matthew 22:38 NLT. Jesus commands us to love God with all our heart, soul and mind. He describes this as 'The greatest and first commandment', because until and unless we have surrendered the gatekeepers of our lives, our heart, soul and mind to God, we are in no position to live effectively under God's authority.

Of course, there are moments of 'godly behaviour'. Yet these are sporadic responses to the urge to love and serve God that is a consequence of choosing to follow Him. However, the core principle is that I surrender my very self to God and turn the whole of who I am over into God's hands. This doesn't happen without struggles since my fallen self makes many stands resisting both the will and way of God.

As we walked through the valley of the shadow of death with Katy's (my wife) MS, I consistently reacted to the pain and disappointment. My first thought was never to surrender to God's way. My heart grew bitter, my soul was conscious of our sacrifice and its isolating nature, my mind filled with angry thoughts that expressed themselves through unacceptable behaviours. My own pain, anger and bitterness determined who I was; it also crafted a negative view of God. The last place I sought was that of prayer and contemplation. I was invigorated by my complaint as the gatekeepers to my life constantly told me I was hard done by, was rejected and abandoned by God, encouraged me to take it out on others and in the process damaged myself to the point of destruction.

That journey very nearly led to my complete implosion, but it was God's way of leading me into a deeper understanding of who I was, of the nature of relationship with God, and introduced me to the reality of my life's gatekeepers. In pain I learned the need to surrender heart, soul and mind to God. Recognising the need only set me on a path which itself was long and winding. Learning the practice of surrender was challenging at every step.

QUESTION: Take time to review whether you could honestly say you love God with all your heart, mind and soul.

PRAYER: Father God, I surrender again to you my heart, my soul, my mind, my will.

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**AS CHRISTIANS WE NEED TO BE PEOPLE WHO ARE  
REACHING OUT TO OTHERS WE DON'T  
UNDERSTAND  
and who probably don't understand us!**

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*Did you hear some of the many statements as to the positive effect of 'ENCOURAGEMENT' in the lives of participants in the Paralympics? Now imagine the tidal wave effect if such positive encouragement was set loose within, and out from, every member of the Christian Church in your local area, within Australia, and around the world! If it was to start with YOU! Isn't it time we all ceased being so encouragement stingy in our living of the exciting faith available to all in Jesus Christ? But, just in case you hadn't realised it, 'encouragement' isn't simply telling others how 'great' they are. Simply praising others is good but praise by itself runs the danger of encouraging complacency and runs the real danger of fostering arrogance. **Real encouragement is being committed to getting alongside others and actively doing whatever it takes to enable them to do better, to be better people and that may involve an occasional 'slap on the ear' or 'kick up the pants'!** So we can see how vitally important real encouragement plays in every Christians living*

SO! How many 'others' do you reach out to with the 'encouragement' of these emails each week? Or do you decide in the negative for 'others' assuming they have no interest or need for such encouragement? To make such a decision is a serious responsibility which if wrong has potential serious consequences.

So! Who could you forward this email on to as your encouragement offering to them?

A key factor in every Christians ministry to 'others' is 'encouragement', so the above may be something you could use to positive effect in another's life. And there is no limit to the number of 'others' each us us could be encouraging.

SO! Why not get on board and give it a try? Bill