

Love Thy Neighbor in Service

Deep Forgiveness

Become unburdened. "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." (Matthew 11:28 NIV)

That statement is the answer to the thing every human being wants here on earth: Freedom from all the fear. What is going to happen to me in the near future? What is going to happen to me when I die?

Early in 2008 the fear is running high here in America. Terrorism used to be a main concern. However, as the residential housing market has fallen apart from low demand, the easy money in the mortgage market has dried up due to the foreclosures and gas prices seem to be moving ever higher, just what is going to happen becomes a reasonable concern? It appears we are heading into a recession. Many jobs may be lost.

Working with the poor and homeless, the value of a job for both emotional and financial needs to be met is extremely high. A weak economy will mean many people will fall on hard times and many people have already lost their homes. This world

can be a scary place.

The answer by the U.S. standard is to attempt to get enough money to make you bullet proof financially. Getting to that place is a myth. No matter how much money you obtain, the sense that just a little more will make you comfortable and bullet proof never seems to go away. All the earthly paths, when



followed, (money, power, a new spouse, stuff, sports, sex, drugs, alcohol) are empty whenever you get close to the place you thought would be enough to solve the problem.

If you are over 40 you have come to understand this or have at least begun to see that what you thought would fix everything may not, has not or did not. The problem for most is there is no where to turn. Achievement has been had or whatever you thought your life would become is clear it never

will. Neither works to free your heart and mind. Suddenly, it has become clear you are actually not going to stay here forever. One or both of your parents may have died, and the simple thought you are next looms in the distance.

Now what? Answers are no longer quick and simple. The fear of death is real and **BIG!** They call this the mid-life crisis. Maybe for the first time in life you are actually forced to ask the question: Why am I here? Who in the world created me, and for what purpose? So far nothing I have done or experienced has answered those questions. Jesus gives His simple answer. "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened."

As best I can tell, that is every human being who is being honest and is over 40. "And I will give you rest." That is probably the best statement I have heard in years. I have not found rest in any place I have assumed it may have been hidden. Everything simply leads to emptiness, business or more difficulty. "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me." We were all ok with Jesus statements right up to this point. A yoke in Jesus day was the piece of wood placed upon either a single ox or two oxen's

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shoulder to allow them to pull a plow, wagon or whatever else need to be moved.

Taking Jesus' yoke means to trust Him, to submit ourselves to Him. I have never read the Bible, have only heard Jesus' words a few times in church or heard second hand what He said, but I have a suspicion this may mean change. Did I say I was empty, unfulfilled, or confused about why I am here? I did not mean that. I am going back to work, tennis, golf, television, raising the kids or whatever it takes to keep my mind off this path of thought.

"Learn from me." Pick up a Bible, study it in quiet, and really think about what Jesus' words mean. Hunt hard for the meaning in what Jesus said and did. Do it with the same passion and effort you put into chasing money, power, a new man, a new woman, a sport or whatever the thing was that was supposed to fill the emptiness you feel inside you. "For I am gentle and humble in heart." I created you for a specific purpose, and I knew what it was before you arrived on this planet. My demands are not so great they will crush you or ruin your life.

"And you will find rest for your souls." In Me, if you truly spend the time and effort (not simply going to church because you think you get some points in heaven), you will find the answer that fills the empty hole in your heart and soul. Rest is

available in me and only in me the way you have desired for your entire life. The whole idea of actually looking hard for Jesus and inside ourselves terrifies each one of us.

Since you cannot see it clearly in yourself, I will give an example in another person. I have written about him many times. He was one of the first people we tried to help. Ted has sat in a wheel chair on Marietta Street or in the adjacent alley off and on for over 16-17 years now.

I do not know about his childhood. He went to Vietnam and I assume killed many people in the war. The trauma of that event has left him drinking everyday in an attempt to kill the pain. We have told him many times the answer lies in Jesus Christ. He has told me once he believes in Jesus. I am no person to doubt what Ted says. However, I do know Ted sits there every day

diving back into his stupor to avoid finding out what believing in Jesus Christ really means.

We have all been to church once or read the bible a few times but that is not what Jesus means when He says, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me." By the way, for those of you thinking Ted's problem is that he is just poor, he receives a check of over \$800 monthly from the VA and has complete hospital benefits. That is enough to get off the streets, take care of his needs and still have plenty of time to seek Jesus. The simple question arises about Ted. Why in the world won't he take the step? Who in their right mind would simply remain in the pain? Ted has to suffer so much emotional and physical pain daily. Can't he see the answer? It is so clear to those of us looking into Ted's life.

Accept Jesus Christ as the son of

What can you do?

We need your prayers! It is the most important thing you can do for the ministry.

"The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."

(James 5:16 NIV)

LTN is committed to spreading the Gospel by Christ's example to "love thy neighbor as thyself." Matthew 22:39. To this end, LTN has designed programs with the purpose of helping clients build a relationship of faith in God, regain their dignity and eventually, regain their self-sufficiency. Contact us to learn more about the services and programs.

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Accept His Forgiveness

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God as He claims. Accept Jesus' death on the cross for the forgiveness of all his (Ted's) sins (past, present and future), forgive himself for all the people he killed in Vietnam and anything else that burdens him he may have done to other people. Jesus commands us to forgive ourselves just as He has forgiven us. Otherwise you are saying that Jesus' death on the cross was not enough payment for what you may have done (thinking this way is actually sinning). Forgive everyone, as Jesus commands, who did anything that causes him (Ted) any pain to this day. Finally, understand that the acceptance of Jesus Christ means eternity with the Father/Jesus in heaven.

Each one of us can see where Ted needs to be looking for his freedom. It simply lies in no other place. The problem is we are all Ted. Whatever your pain may be large or small, take this moment **(REALLY STOP FOR A MOMENT)** and think specifically what is the thing that you have buried that really bothers you deep down. It could be something someone did to you (a parent, friend, ex. spouse or complete stranger) or something you did to someone else. We all have many but some really hurt. Have you been able to free yourself from the hurt, pain, guilt, shame or fear associated with the event(s)? If not, likely you do not or have not actually accepted Jesus at the depth needed.

"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me" is no

Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

Matthew 22:39



small statement to be taken lightly. Anything of true value takes time, effort and energy to find or understand. The creator of the universe is no different. (Confession to a close friend and asking Jesus to forgive you is a great place to start for those deep, painful, hidden secrets. Christian counseling may also be in order.)

"Ask and it will be given you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened." (Matthew 7:7 NIV). Tired of the burden yet? Looking for rest for your soul? Have an empty place inside of you nothing on the earth can or has filled? Go seek Jesus/Lord/Holy Spirit and the rest will arrive like never before.

God bless you,

Handwritten signature of John Chapman, Jr.

John Chapman, Jr.