

# Life's Little Lessons

## A Miniscule Speck

The Voyager 1 spacecraft, launched in 1977, is on the edge of our solar system more than 10 billion miles away. In February 1990, when Voyager 1 was almost 4 billion miles from us, scientists turned its camera toward Earth and took some pictures that revealed our planet as an almost imperceptible blue dot on a vast sea of empty space. In the immense reaches of our universe, Earth is just a minuscule speck. On this seemingly insignificant pebble in the ocean of giant galactic objects live more than seven billion people.

If this makes you feel insignificant, God has some good news. In one of David's psalms is a rhetorical question that can move you to step out into the night air, look up at the sky, and rejoice. Psalm 8:3-5 tells us that we are precious in God's eyes: "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers... what is man that You are mindful of him? ... You have crowned him with glory and honor." Imagine! God, who spoke into existence a universe so vast that the Hubble telescope hasn't found the end of it, created you and cares deeply for you. He cared enough to instruct Jesus to leave heaven to die for you. Look up in wonder at God's creation and praise Him that He crowned you with glory through His Son Jesus. When we see the power of God's creation; we feel the power of His love.

"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead..." (Rom. 1:20).

## This Little Light of Mine

The Mission Point Lighthouse was built in 1870 on a peninsula in Northern Michigan to warn ships of sand bars and rocky shores along Lake Michigan. That lighthouse got its name from another kind of lighthouse, a missionary church, built 31 years earlier. In 1839, minister Peter Dougherty became the preacher of a church in Old Mission Community made up of Native Americans who lived farther south on the same peninsula. Under his leadership, a thriving community of farmers, teachers, and craftsmen worked side by side to build a better life for the area.

When believers and followers of Jesus work together in unity, their fellowship in the faith provides spiritual light in the world's darkness (Phil. 2:15-16). Jesus said, "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ... Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:14-16).

The Mission Point Lighthouse warned ships of danger, but the original Old Mission Church provided guidance to anyone who would listen. Believers do the same individually as Christians and collectively in local churches. We are God's lighthouse because Jesus lives in us. Believers help the lost to find their way home when their life shines brightly. "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 1:20).

## A Little Red Tape

The expression "red tape" describes the annoying way that bureaucracy prevents things from getting done. Originally, the phrase referred to the common practice of binding official documents with red ribbon. In the early 1800s, the term was popularized by the writings of Scottish historian Thomas Carlyle, who was protesting governmental foot-dragging. Following the American Civil War, the problem of "red tape" resurfaced as war veterans struggled to receive their benefits. The term denotes frustration and disappointment because of the burdensome hurdles government and business erect to accomplishing urgent goals.

Bureaucratic red tape is almost legendary, but there is one place in the universe where it's never an issue—the throne of God. In Romans 5:2, Paul speaks of Christ, "through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand." When our hearts are broken or our lives are

troubled, there is no red tape hindering our access to God. Jesus Christ has paved the way so that we can have access to enter boldly into the presence of the King of heaven (Heb. 4:16).

Remember, when your heart is hurting, you don't have to cut through a lot of red tape to present your needs to God. Through Christ, we have full and immediate access. God's throne is always accessible to His children.

### **A Little Bit at a Time**

Put a live frog in a pan of hot water and it will leap out. Put the same frog in a pan of cool water and gradually increase the temperature, and the frog will contentedly sit in the pan until the water boils and he is cooked. Likewise with some Christians: expose them to a striking form of evil and they will object to it and avoid it. Expose them to it gradually by incrementally introducing it into pop culture, fashion, and entertainment, and they will gradually come to accept it and even participate in it.

Every age has its own thoughts, ideas, and values that influence the culture, zeitgeist or the "spirit of the age." It is the kind of growing consensus that morally lulls us to sleep, gradually causing us to accept society's latest values.

The apostle Paul called this corrupting atmosphere the "course of this world." Describing the lives of the believers at Ephesus before they encountered Christ, he said that they were "dead in trespasses and sins" and "walked according to the course of this world" (Eph. 2:1-2). This is the world's peer pressure: a satanically inspired system of values and ideas that cultivates a lifestyle independent of God.

Jesus intends for us to live in the world (John 17:15), so worldly influence is nearly impossible to escape. But He's given us His Word to so permeate our thinking that we don't have to become conformed to the world's values (Rom. 12:1-2). Instead, God teaches us to walk in His light (Eph. 5:8), in the Spirit (Gal. 5:25), in love (Eph. 5:2), in truth (3John 4), and in Christ (Col. 2:6). As we walk in God's power and spend time in His Word, He gives us the strength to live according to kingdom values and not the spirit of the age.

### **Little Theories**

Scientists have been looking for the "Theory of Everything." One person who thinks he found it is physicist Brian Greene, who wrote *The Elegant Universe: Superstrings, Hidden Dimensions, and the Quest for the Ultimate Theory*. Greene's "string theory" is a complicated concept suggesting that at its tiniest, subatomic level everything consists of combinations of vibrating strands, or strings. He has described his theory as "a framework with the capacity to explain every fundamental feature upon which the world is constructed."

Over the years, thinkers from Isaac Newton to Albert Einstein to Stephen Hawking to Brian Greene have spent the greater portion of their lives trying to figure out how the universe works, and they have proposed fascinating theories.

In reality, for any theory to explain everything in the universe adequately it must begin and end with God. "All things visible and invisible" (Col. 1:16) have their origin in Him and exist for His glory (Psalm 72:19). The first few verses of John's gospel account tell us that our Lord created the universe, and that without His hand of creation nothing would exist. That's why when we consider the world and everything in it, we can exclaim with Isaiah: "The whole earth is full of His glory!" (Isa. 6:3). All creation is an outstretched finger pointing toward God.