

We Thank the Lord

Let your example be written in large enough letters so the world can always read it. Anna Anderson's husband died early in their marriage, leaving her with three young daughters and a difficult future. Although trained in Virginia as a teacher, she lacked full credentials to work in the Philadelphia schools, so she took in laundry, did ironing, and later scrubbed floors at a large department store. As African-Americans, they often experienced racial prejudice and discrimination. When doors of opportunity closed, Anna believed that if they would trust the Lord with all their heart and acknowledge Him in all their ways, He would direct their paths (Prov. 3:5-6). She taught her daughters to depend on God, follow Him, and always be thankful.

When her firstborn, Marian, rose to become an internationally acclaimed classical singer, Anna continued to pray for her, and always gave God credit for her success. Reporters, who asked Anna how she felt after attending Marian's concerts at Carnegie Hall and her 1955 debut with the Metropolitan Opera, heard her say, "We thank the Lord." Her reply was not a cliché, but sincere gratefulness to God. Rather than lament what she lacked, Anna Anderson expressed gratitude for what she had and used it for God's glory. We should follow her example with faith, confidence, and a heartfelt, "We thank the Lord."

Fired for Gossip

In some offices, you can get fired for gossiping. According to a 2002 survey, the average employee gossips 65 hours a year. One Chicago firm decided to become a "gossip-free zone." They require that employees never talk badly about co-workers behind their backs. If you're caught, you lose your job. Some have taken a refreshing alternative to gossip. They combat it with prayer. Instead of putting down well-known people who get in trouble with bad choices, they encourage others to pray for them.

Among God's commands to His people is "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" (Ex. 20:16). While this may be talking primarily about lying at judicial proceedings, gossip could also be included in the command because it violates the law of love toward our neighbor. Proverbs uses strong language to describe this use of our words. It's like "a club, a sword, and a sharp arrow" against others (25:18).

Gossip feeds into our natural desires to feel superior to others and to belong or fit in, so combating it in our personal lives can be a challenge. But if we choose to love through prayer, our lives can be a gossip-free zone. You can never justify gossip. Don't tell me what the gossip said about me; tell me instead why he felt comfortable enough to say it to you. (A. Cetas)

Captain Thunderbolt

When an English robber calling himself Captain Thunderbolt escaped the law and moved to the eastern US in 1818, he began practicing medicine. He took on the name Dr. John Wilson. Often he wore three suits of clothes to escape recognition by making himself look larger and covering up a deformed leg.

Just before the man died, he asked his friends to bury him without removing his clothes. But to prepare his body for proper burial, that request could not be honored. The mortician was surprised to find scars from wounds and a withered leg. A search of "Dr. Wilson's" house revealed a stash of watches, jewelry, and diamonds. The sheriff learned that the doctor was in fact Thunderbolt, a thief in disguise. They had been fooled!

Satan and his followers have disguises too. It says in 2Corinthians 11:15, "[Satan's] ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness." But how? One way is

through false doctrine. Paul warned us not to be deceived by the devil's craftiness (v.3). Don't be fooled. Satan has many tools, but deception is the handle that fits them all.

Worth Dying For

Sophie Scholl was a young German woman during the 1940s. She saw the deterioration of her country under the iron rule of the Nazi regime, and she determined to make a difference. She and her brother, with a small group of friends, began to peacefully protest not only the actions but the values that the Nazis had forced upon the nation. Sophie and others were arrested and executed for speaking out against the evil in their land. Although she wasn't anxious to die, she saw that the conditions in her country had to be addressed—even if it meant her death.

Sophie's story raises a critical question for us as well. What would we be willing to die for? Jim Elliot and four others gave their lives in the jungles of South America because they were committed to their ministry. Elliot revealed the heart that drove such sacrifice when he wrote, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose." The apostle Paul put it this way: "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21).

Some things really are worth dying for—and in them we gain the reward of the One who declares, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matt. 25:21, 23). Those who faithfully bear the cross in this life will wear the crown in the life to come. (B. Crowder)

"Not How Good, But How Well"

In soul-winning, Christians are called to faithfulness, not results. The Puritans wisely sought to connect all of life to its source in God, bringing the two worlds together rather than dividing them into sacred and secular. They had a saying, "God loveth adverbs; and careth not how good, but how well." Adverbs describe verbs—our words of action and activity. The proverb implies that God cares more about the spirit in which we live than the concrete results.

Pleasing God doesn't mean that we must busy ourselves with only "spiritual" activities. As the Puritans said, whether cleaning house or preaching sermons, shoeing horses or translating the Bible, any human activity may constitute an offering to God.

We spend much time immersed in the mundane. "But we have the mind of Christ," Paul reminds us (1Cor. 2:16). That truth is to guide everything we do. Caring for an elderly parent. Cleaning up after a child. Sitting on a porch with a neighbor. Fielding a customer's complaint. Filling out patient charts at a nurses' station. Sitting in traffic. Sawing lumber. Reporting tips. Shopping for groceries. We need faith and the mind of the Lord Jesus to recognize something of lasting value in even our most ordinary tasks. The world crowns success; God crowns faithfulness. (P. Yancey)

A Moments Wisdom

- Jesus took my place on the cross to give me a place in heaven.
- The pain of disappointment is soothed by a heart of gratitude.
- God's love does not keep us from trials; it helps us get through them.