

The Procrastinating Servant

By Jack Williams

14 years old - "I've just become a Christian, I don't know enough and I'm still too young to be involved in the work of the church."

16 years old - "I've just got my driver's license. I have to work to take care of my driving expenses. And of course this is the time in my life when I am very busy with friends, and you wouldn't believe all the school activities I have! I'll get involved a little later."

18 years old - "I just graduated from high school! Now I need a little time for myself before I enter the 'real world.' I'll have more time for the work of the church later."

20 years old - "I never knew college took so much time! When I get out and on my own I'll have time for church work then."

22 years old - "Boy, did you have any idea how hard it was to get started in the work place? It takes all my energy to get my career on line. And on top of that I just got married... I have to spend time to mold my new family life, too. In a couple of years I'll be ready to really dig into the work of the church."

24 years old - "Children! I never believed my parents when they told me how much time and money it took to raise them. I sure don't have time for the work of the church now... but when my kids get older I'll be able to do my share of the work then."

36 years old - "It seems the older the kids get the more they are involved in! Home from work, then to the school functions, then sports... I'll be glad when the kids get older so I can really be involved in the work of the church."

46 years old - "I've never had so much fun! Grandchildren! I should have had them first (Ha!). I can't deprive them... when they get older I'll be able to really be involved in the church."

56 years old - "I'm on my last push at work now. I've got to really bear down for a few years now so I can be ready for retirement. And of course we have our place at the lake we're fixing up. In a few years I'll be able to quit the 'rat race' and really get involved in the church."

66 years old - "Retirement at last! I've worked hard so many years and now I can enjoy the fruit of my efforts. It's time now for the young ones here at church to carry on and let us 'veterans' rest a little."

78 years old - "My health is so poor. I can barely accomplish the smallest of tasks at home. Surely no one expects me to help the church; God will understand."

81 years old - His funeral service takes place. Night has fallen and no more work can be done.

Isn't it great to see people who will use their time, resources and abilities in God's service now rather than put it off for later?

I Dreamt of The Room

In that place where we all drift into dreams, I found myself in the room. There were no distinguishing features save for the one wall covered with small index card files. They were like the ones in libraries that list titles by author or subject in alphabetical order. But these files, which stretched from floor to ceiling and seemingly endlessly in either direction, had very different headings.

As I drew near the wall of files, the first to catch my attention was one that read "Girls I Have Liked". I opened it and began flipping through the cards. I quickly shut it, shocked to realize that I recognized the names written on each one. And then without being told, I knew exactly where I was. This lifeless room with its small files was a crude catalog system for my life. Here were written the actions of my every moment, big and small, in a detail my memory couldn't match.

A sense of wonder and curiosity, coupled with mild horror, stirred within me as I began randomly opening files and exploring their content. Some brought joy and sweet memories; others a sense of shame and regret so intense that I would look over my shoulder to see if anyone was watching.

A file named "Friends" was next to one marked "Friends I Have Betrayed". The titles ranged from the mundane to the outright weird. "Books I Have Read", "Lies I Have Told", "Comfort I Have Given", "Jokes I Have Laughed At". Some were almost hilarious in their exactness: "Things I've Yelled at My Brothers." Others I couldn't laugh at: "Things I Have Done in My Anger", "Things I Have Muttered Under My Breath at My Parents". I never ceased to be surprised by the contents.

Often there were many more cards than I expected. Sometimes fewer than I hoped. I was overwhelmed by the sheer volume of the life I had lived. Could it be possible that I had the time in my years to write each of these thousands or even millions of cards? But each card confirmed this truth. Each was written in my own handwriting. Each signed with my signature.

When I pulled out the file marked "Songs I Have Listened To", I realized the files grew to contain their contents. The cards were packed tightly, and yet after two or three yards, I hadn't found the end of the file. I shut it, shamed, not so much by the sinful quality of music, but more by the vast amount of my time I knew that file represented. When I came to a file marked "Lustful Thoughts", I felt a chill run through my body. I pulled the file out only an inch, not willing to test its size, and drew out a card. I shuddered at its detailed content. I felt sick to think that such a moment had been recorded. An almost animal rage broke on me. One thought dominated my mind: "No one must ever see these cards! No one must ever see this room! I have to destroy them!" In an insane frenzy I yanked the file out. Its size didn't matter now. I had to empty it and burn the cards. But as I took it at one end and began pounding it on the floor, I could not dislodge a single card. I became desperate and pulled out a card, only to find it as strong as steel when I tried to tear it. Defeated and utterly helpless, I returned the file to its slot. Leaning my forehead against the wall, I let out a long, self-pitying sigh. And then I saw it. The title bore "People I Have Shared the Gospel With". The handle was brighter than those around it, newer, almost unused. I pulled on its handle and a small box not more than three inches long fell into my hands. I could count the cards it contained on one hand. And then the tears came. I began to weep. Sobs so deep that the hurt started in my stomach and shook through me. I fell on my knees and cried. I cried out of shame, from the overwhelming shame of it all. The rows of file shelves swirled in my tear-filled eyes. No one must ever, ever know of this room. I must lock it up and hide the key. But then as I pushed away the tears, I saw Him. No, please not Him. Not here. Oh, anyone but Jesus. I watched helplessly as He began to open the files and read the cards. I couldn't bear to watch His response. And in the moments I could bring myself to look at His face, I saw a sorrow deeper than my own. He seemed to intuitively go to the worst boxes. Why did He have to read every one?

Finally He turned and looked at me from across the room. He looked at me with pity in His eyes. But this was a pity that didn't anger me. I dropped my head, covered my face with my hands and began to cry again. He walked over and put His arm around me. He could have said so many things. But He didn't say a word. He stood with me. Then He got up and walked back to the wall of files. Starting at one end of the room, He took out a file and, one by one, began to sign His name over mine on each card.

"No!" I shouted rushing to Him. All I could find to say was "No, no," as I pulled the card from Him. His name shouldn't be on these cards. But there it was, written in red so rich, so dark, so alive. The name of Jesus covered mine. It was written with His blood. He gently took the card back. He smiled a sad smile and began to sign the cards. I don't think I'll ever understand how He did it so quickly, but the next instant it seemed I heard Him close the last file and walk back to my side. He placed His hand on my shoulder and said, "It is finished." I stood up, and He led me out of the room. There was no lock on its door. There were still cards to be written. (via Bible Explorer, Dec. 1996)