

“I Sought for a Man”

Jehovah said: “I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land...” (Ez. 22:30). Where are the men? What kind of man is God looking for?

A Free Man

Many people think they are free because they are having fun and doing as they please. They give little or no thought to God, assuming that a life of commitment to Christ is restrictive and dull. In his book *Call To Discipleship*, Juan Carlos Ortiz puts this type of thinking into perspective. Suppose that a ship is sinking and the captain knows it. So he tells the passengers that those in second class are free to go up to first class. Those who care to drink may have all the whiskey, vodka, or wine they want--it's free! Anyone who wants to play soccer in the dining room may do so. If anything is broken, it's no problem. The passengers are delighted and think they are completely free. But soon they will all be drowned.

That's a picture of the kingdom of darkness. People have "freedom"--sex, drugs, alcohol, anything they desire. They are convinced that they are kings and queens of their own tiny kingdoms. But the spirit of this world directs them, and ultimately it will destroy them.

Real freedom is found in Jesus Christ. He empowers us to become all we were designed to be. His restrictions are like wings to a bird or sails to a ship. He came to be your Savior, and the truth will set you free.

An Honest Man

An epitaph on an old gravestone in an abandoned cemetery reads: “J. Holgate: An honest man.” Nothing is known of Holgate's life, but because his marker was unusually ornate, he must have struck it rich. But whatever he accomplished in his lifetime, he's remembered for just one thing: He was “an honest man.”

Diogenes of Sinope, the cynical, iconoclastic Greek philosopher, spent a lifetime in search of honesty by carrying about a lit lamp in broad daylight for effect, finally concluded that an honest man could not be found. It was an ironic search because Diogenes himself was banished from Sinope as a young man for counterfeiting coins. Honest people are hard to find in any age, but the trait is one that greatly matters. Honesty is not the best policy; it's the ONLY policy, and one of the marks of a man or woman who lives by God's will. David writes, “Lord, who may dwell in Your holy hill? He who walks uprightly” (Psalm 15:1-2).

Ask yourself: Am I trustworthy and honorable in all my affairs? Do my words ring true? Do I speak the truth in love or do I fumble and fade the facts now and then, or exaggerate to impress? If so, we may turn to God with complete confidence and ask for forgiveness and for a good and honest heart—to help you make truthfulness an integral part of your nature. Live in such a way that when people think of honesty and integrity, they will think of you.

A Subject Man

It was a sad day on May 3, 2003 on Cannon Mountain when “The Old Man of the Mountain” broke apart and slid down the mountainside. This 40-foot profile of an old man's face, carved by nature in the White Mountain Range of New Hampshire, had long been an attraction to tourists, a solid presence for residents, and the official state emblem, featured on the state quarter by the US Mint. It was written about by Nathaniel Hawthorne in his short story “The Great Stone Face.” Some nearby residents were devastated when The Old Man fell. One

woman said, “I grew up thinking that someone was watching over me. I feel a little less watched-over now.”

There are times when a dependable presence disappears. Something or someone we’ve relied on is gone, and our life is shaken. Maybe it’s the loss of a parent or a mate, or a mentor. The loss makes us feel off-balance, unstable. We might even feel that God is no longer watching over us. But “the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry” (Psalm 34:15). He “is near to those who have a broken heart” (v.18). He is the Rock whose presence we can always depend on (Deut. 32:4). God’s presence is real. He continually watches over us. He is rock-solid. The question is not where is God, but where isn’t He?

A Fatherly Man

A sign in an optometrist’s office: “Eighty percent of everything children learn in their first 12 years is through their eyes.” Think of all the children visually processing life through reading, television, film, events, surroundings, and observing the behavior of others, especially their families. On Father’s Day, we often think about the powerful influence of a dad.

Paul urged fathers not to frustrate their children to the point of anger, but to “bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). Think of the powerful example of a dad whose behavior and consistency inspire admiration from his children. He’s not perfect, but he’s moving in the right direction. A great power for good is at work when our actions reflect the character of God, rather than distort it.

That’s challenging for any parent, so it’s no coincidence that Paul urges us to “be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might” (v.10). Only through imitating His strength can we reflect the love and patience of our heavenly Father. We teach our children far more by how we live than by what we say. Fathers must not only give us life, but must also show us how to live.

A Forward-Focused Man

Two of Australia’s indigenous creatures, kangaroos and emus, have something in common—they seldom move backward. Kangaroos, because of the shape of their body and the length of their strong tail, can bounce along with forward movement, but they cannot shift easily into reverse. Emus can run fast on their strong legs, but the joints in their knees seem to make backward movement difficult. Both animals appear on Australia’s coat of arms as a symbol that the nation is to be ever moving forward and making progress.

The apostle Paul called for a similar approach to the life of faith in his letter to the Philippians: “Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (3:13-14).

While it is wise to learn from the past, we shouldn’t live in the past. The past is supposed to be a guidepost, not a hitching post. We cannot redo or undo the past, but by God’s word we can press forward and serve God faithfully today and in the future. The life of faith is a journey forward as we become like Christ. The things that are true of Christ are true of me when I am truly in Christ. I will go anywhere, provided it is forward.