

Life's Little Lessons VI

Where is God!?

“But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; My steps had nearly slipped. For I was envious of the boastful, When I saw the prosperity of the wicked... Behold, these are the ungodly, Who are always at ease; They increase in riches. Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain, And washed my hands in innocence. For all day long I have been plagued, And chastened every morning” (Asaph, Psalm 73:2-3, 12-14).

For a good portion of my life, I bore with the temptation to hold the perspective of those who rail against God for allowing pain. I could find no way to explain a world as toxic as this one, where the righteous suffer and the malicious prosper. As I visited people whose pain far exceeded my own, I was surprised by its effects. Suffering seemed as likely to reinforce faith in some as to sow doubt in others.

My anger about pain has melted mostly for one reason: growing in my knowledge and understanding of God. He has given us joy, love, contentment, and goodness, all of which enable us to hope and persevere. And He has given us trials, burdens, chastening, and loss, all of which enable us to grow to become more like Him. It leaves us with faith in an immeasurably loving and wise Father, a faith becoming so solid that no amount of suffering can erode it.

Where is God when it hurts? He has been there from the beginning. He designed a pain system that, in the midst of a fallen world, bears His stamp. He transforms pain, using it to teach and strengthen us if we allow it to turn us toward Him. God the Son has hurt and bled and cried and suffered. He has dignified for all time those who suffer, by sharing their pain. But one day He will gather the armies of heaven and will unleash them against the enemies of God. The world will see in one terrifying moment the full vindication and victory of the righteous before the wicked ones' eternal pain and loss begins. Then God will dwell among us by the pure river of water of life walking on streets of gold under the boughs of the tree of life where pain and sorrow will never be experienced again (Rev. 20:11 - 22:6).

Pain will either turn us against God or draw us to Him.

Who is the Author of Scripture?

A question by Thomas Manton (1620–1677), once a lecturer at Westminster Abbey, still holds relevance for us today. He asked: “Who is the author of Scripture? God. What is the end of Scripture? God. Why was the Scripture written, but that we might everlastingly enjoy the blessed God?”

It is said of some people that the more you know them the less you admire them; but the reverse is true of God. Familiarity with the Word of God, or rather the God of the Word, breeds affection, and affection seeks yet greater familiarity. As you open your Bible, remember that God, the One who loves you the most, has a message for you. Knowing the Bible helps us to know the God of the Bible.

Sundials, Seeds, and Scripture

“He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him” (Psalm 126:6). There is a story about a man who was treated kindly by people in a remote village in Africa. The man, wanting to show his appreciation, sent the natives a gift. He sent them a sundial thinking that it would help all the people in the village to determine the time of day. The natives were so appreciate of the gift that they built a hut over it to protect it from the elements. Naturally, by thus treating the sundial, they

rendered it useless for its designed purpose. Likewise, we need to show our appreciation of truth by diligently teaching it to others. Seed left in the barn does not produce a crop.

Mothers Modeling Scripture

During the early years of the Protestant Reformation in Europe, Katharina Von Bora, a former nun, married Martin Luther (1525). By all accounts, the two had a joyous married life. Luther said, "There is no bond on earth so sweet, nor any separation so bitter, as that which occurs in a good marriage."

Because Katharina rose at 4 a.m. to care for her responsibilities, Luther referred to her as the "morning star of Wittenberg." She was industrious in tending the vegetable garden and orchard. Also, she administered the family business and managed the Luthers' home and property. In time, the couple had six children for whom Katharina felt the home was a school of character development. Her energetic industry and care for the family made her a woman of influence.

Katharina seems to have been a woman like the one described in Proverbs 31. She was indeed a virtuous wife who awoke "while it was yet night" and provided "food for her household" (v.15). She also watched "over the ways of her household, and did not eat the bread of idleness" (v.27).

From the illustrative lives of persons like Katharina, we can learn more about the love, diligence, and reverence that is needed to be a woman of moral influence. Good mothers not only tell us how to live, they show us.

Design Confirms Scripture

"I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth" (Psalm 139:14-15).

The body's entire structure, from head to foot, is a miracle of precision engineering and production. No matter what portion of the human body is considered, one cannot but be impressed with what a marvelous mechanism each member is. The major organs alone--and there are 10 of them--perform such unique feats of electric conduction that it would take many volumes to explain each one adequately. In the fraction of a second that it takes you to read one word on this page, the marrow in your bones produces over 100,000 red blood cells. (From Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations)

Truly, we are fearfully and wonderfully made by an awesome Creator. To say that it all just happened by chance is sheer nonsense.

Never Say Never and the Gospel of Christ

While two aged soldiers of the cross walked along the path of the former Berlin Wall, the European minister told his American visitor, "This is one of those 'never say never' places in my life." He explained that during the years when the Wall divided the city, he had made a dozen trips through Checkpoint Charlie to encourage members of the church living under continuing surveillance and opposition in East Germany. More than once, he had been detained, questioned, and harassed by the border guards.

In 1988, he took his teenage children to West Berlin and told them, "Take a good look at this wall, because someday when you bring your children here, this wall will still be standing." A year later it was gone.

When Saul of Tarsus began to attack the followers of Jesus, no one could have imagined that he would ever become a disciple of Christ. "Never! Not a chance. (see Acts 8:1-

3)” Yet only one chapter later (Acts 9:1-9) is the account of Saul’s blinding encounter with Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus. Within a few days of that life-changing event, Saul was preaching in the synagogues of Damascus that Jesus was the Son of God, to the astonishment of all who heard him (vv.20-21). When it comes to God’s work by the Gospel in the hearts of the most difficult people we know, we should never say “never.”