Virtual Christian Magazine
Hope And Encouragement For The Real World

"But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He says: 'Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.' See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil."—Ephesians 5:13-16

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Leaven: Seeing Ourselves in the Story

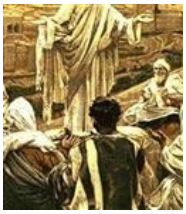
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Leaven: Seeing Ourselves in the Story

By Graemme Marshall

God can show us the leavening—the sin—in our lives. But we must be open and receptive to His correction.



DURING THE DAYS OF UNLEAVENED BREAD, those of us who observe the biblical Holy Days focus a lot on what the apostle Paul had to say about spiritual leaven. "Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, *but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth"* (1 Corinthians 5:8).

Facing the truth about ourselves can be touchy. It is a type of leaven to fail to see when YOU are the cause of your problem, not others. This is a lesson we can learn from the life of King David. It's a lesson that is very important for all of us to learn.

The lesson unfolds by contrasting two names powerfully linked with David. One is Goliath; the other is Bathsheba.

Facing the truth about ourselves can be touchy. It is a type of leaven to fail to see when YOU are the cause of your problem, not others.

They could hardly be more different—Goliath, a mean 3-meter-tall (nearly 10-foot-tall) bully, and Bathsheba, a beautiful woman and innocent victim. As different as these two are in character, appearance and spirit, there's a similarity in their relation to David. Both brought him to a point of testing, to a "look in the mirror" encounter with his heart.

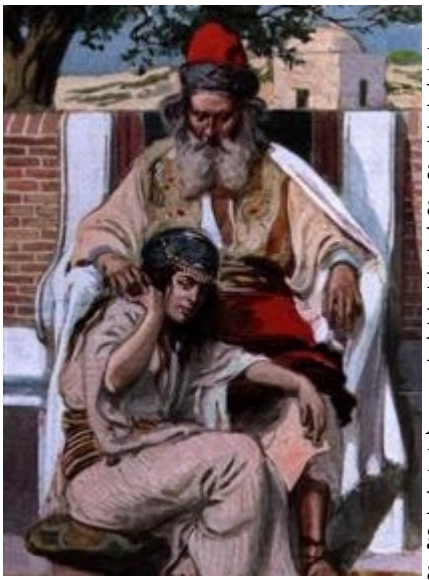
They entered David's life at opposite ends: the giant when David is young, unknown and untested, and the woman when he is old, married and hardened through life's trials. When facing Goliath, David is a man of prayer, more impressed with God than with a giant. When facing Bathsheba, David is spiritually vulnerable with idle time on his hands. It was spring, 2 Samuel 11:1 reads, "when kings go out to battle, *but David remained at Jerusalem."*

We aren't prepared for the sort of story that unfolds with Bathsheba. What began as a lustful whim develops into a sordid sex/murder crime. He abuses his power (2 Samuel 11:3-6, 12). David

sent his servants, *sent* for Bathsheba, then *took* her. Then Joab enters the picture to assist with the murder of Uriah (verses 14-17). It's shocking! And yet David seems blind to it all (especially to a true evaluation of himself).

Now to a question

How does God get YOU to see that YOU are often your problem? It's fair to ask at this time of year, "Am I seeing within myself what God wants me to see?"



How did God get David to see himself? At this point, the prophet Nathan is sent by God (2 Samuel 12:1). As a prophet, Nathan is required to confront sin, even in the king. But it takes courage, skill and tact to make David aware of his wrong actions. Perhaps they sit at morning "coffee" while Nathan begins to report an injustice. He has a story to narrate; but, interestingly enough, Nathan doesn't immediately indicate that David is the subject. Had David been reflective and sensitive to his spiritual condition, perhaps he might have seen the trap before he fell into it.

As the story unfolds, David is unaware he is listening to a sermon. David is emotionally drawn into the story of the poor man and his pet lamb and the callous behavior of the rich landowner. His anger greatly aroused, as king and judge he pronounces a death sentence and fourfold restitution. He claims the man had no pity (verse 6). Yet where was his pity for Uriah? This judgment out of his own mouth would haunt him and his family for a long time (verses 10-14).

David listens to an inspired preacher—who speaks in the third person—and gets all worked up about someone else's flaw. He seethes with indignation out of pity for the poor man and a pet lamb. Pitying and judging are religious sentiments that can be indulged in endlessly, making us feel superior to everyone else. David becomes more righteous by the minute and is absorbed in a huge blur of moral sentimentality. David becomes so insensitive to *his own sin* that he doesn't make the connection that *he* is the villain in Nathan's story.

Then the sudden moral moment of personal truth: YOU are the one! This is what preachers are ordained to do. Somehow by God's Spirit and help, they are to use the third-person approach and compel a first-person recognition. Might this have influenced Paul a millennia later in saying: "You therefore who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? You who say, 'Do not commit adultery,' do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law?" (Romans 2:21-23).

The converted response

But then we have the forever-exemplary converted response of David, "I have sinned" (2 Samuel 12:13). He now realizes his position before God as one caught in sin. Perhaps he writes Psalm 51 after this.

There is an enormous amount of self-deception in sin. The Christian walk is to recognize it within yourself. The qualities we condemn in others can often also be our own character flaws. It is so easy to criticize, but tough to take it in return. Nathan's story entraps David. He doesn't admit his problem until he's told, "YOU are the one." At this point, he doesn't try to justify himself, deny or deflect attention from his problem. Instead, he accepts the rebuke from this other human being, the prophet speaking for God.

There is an enormous amount of self-deception in sin. The Christian walk is to recognize it within yourself.

An important lesson in this is that when being told something about yourself you have to accept the authority of the one telling you, or you will miss the message. In the history of the kings of Israel and Judah, there are many incidents where correction given by God's prophets was refused. Acceptance and change were rare.

As potential rulers in God's Kingdom, how well do we accept rebuke? By resisting, we may be missing a lot of what God might be trying to show. God's message for David was delivered through the "preaching" message of a prophet.

How to ensure we will receive God's message

David accepted correction and then repented. In the same way, when we examine ourselves, we must be listening and applying correction to ourselves. When God confronts us with our sin through Scripture, we must accept it and repent.

In the Passover context, Paul wrote: "For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world" (1 Corinthians 11:31-32). Acknowledgment of sin and true repentance will help bring you a good attitude. David's counsel on how to get it is found in Psalms 19:12-13; 26:2; and 139:23-24.

Genuine heartfelt prayer and meditation on these scriptures—and applying them to yourself—will keep you from being self-righteous, self-justifying or having a "puffed-up" leavened spirit. It will work.

For more information on the Days of Unleavened Bread and God's other Holy Days. Request our free booklet, *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*.

Lessons From the Beatitudes

By David Palmer

Sometimes referred to as the "beautiful attitudes," the Beatitudes offer a study of the qualities and characteristics the "blessed of God" must develop.



IN THE BEAUTIFUL SECTION of Scripture known as the Sermon on the Mount are the Beatitudes, in which Jesus taught some of His greatest lessons. These lessons develop a theme that, interestingly enough, relate to statements in the book of Revelation. The blessed of God are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9), are in the first resurrection (Revelation 20:6) and have a right to the tree of life (Revelation 22:14). So, what lesson was Jesus teaching us?

Poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3)

In the book of Psalms, we find these words: "The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart; and saves such as have a contrite spirit" (Psalm 34:18). The word *contrite* means "full of, or showing, remorse" or, in other words, a willingness to say, "I'm sorry." It is simply a repentant attitude, a feeling or desire to correct a wrong. "But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word" (Isaiah 66:2). This is an individual with a broken-hearted, repentant spirit and a desire to obey God.

Those who mourn (Matthew 5:4)

To mourn means to show sorrow. James admonishes us to "lament and mourn and weep!"

To *mourn* means to show sorrow. James admonishes us to "lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up" (James 4:9-10). Those who mourn feel a sense of humility and sadness, whether the concern is for us, for others or for the plight of our nation. The prophet Isaiah tells us that Jesus will comfort those who mourn (Isaiah 61:3), a passage Jesus quoted early in His ministry (Luke 4:17-21).

The meek (Matthew 5:5; Psalm 37:11)

Meek does not mean weak. We are told in Scripture that Moses was very meek, but Moses was a strong leader. Christ was meek and gentle, but He certainly was not weak. *Meek* means "tame-spirited," a spirit that can be tamed or humbled; a spirit that is submissive, gentle, patient and kind.

Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matthew 5:6)

Righteousness means "to do right; virtuous, upright, just, fair, uncompromising, morally correct, justifiable." It is not the same as self-righteousness, which Christ labeled hypocrisy. Notice how it is expressed in the Bible: "Righteous are You, O LORD, and upright are Your judgments. Your testimonies, whichYou have commanded, are righteous and very faithful… Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Your law is truth… For all Your commandments are righteousness" (Psalm 119:137-138, 142, 172).

The merciful (Matthew 5:7)

Mercy refers to refraining from "the infliction of suffering on the part of the one who has the right or power to inflict it." In other words, it is unmerited pardon or forgiveness. Jesus gave us this example, "And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. [Do unto others]… Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful" (Luke 6:31, 36). "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy… For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him" (Psalm 103:8, 11).

Pure in heart (Matthew 5:8)

Pure has the same connotation as the word *clean*. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10). "Every word of God is pure" (Proverbs 30:5).

Pure is described as "without false ingredients, undefiled, free from discord, innocent, chaste, a desire to be sinless." Paul, in his letter to Titus, wrote, "To the pure [clean of heart] all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure, but even their mind and conscience are defiled" (Titus 1:15). The apostle John reminds us, "Everyone who has this hope in Him [the hope of eternal life] purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 John 3:3).

Pure is described as "without false ingredients, undefiled, free from discord, innocent, chaste, a desire to be sinless.

The peacemakers (Matthew 5:9)

The word *peacemaker,* used in the Sermon on the Mount, is not always synonymous with third-party intervention. While a third party can contribute to a peaceful solution between two other parties, the biblical intention of this statement is more personal. We are to "refrain from strife, to restore, to have harmonious relations, or to reconcile." Jesus put it this way: "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and

then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:23-24). Paul wrote, "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18).

Persecuted for righteousness' sake (Matthew 5:10)

"Blessed are you, when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, for My sake" (Matthew 5:11). Today we have a politically correct society. But political correctness is not always biblical correctness. Myriad lifestyles common in our society are considered correct politically, and to condemn such lifestyle choices can bring ridicule. Nevertheless, we are told, "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).

And so, from the Beatitudes, we learn that the blessed of God are humble, compassionate, meek, righteous, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers and willing to be persecuted for righteousness sake.

What else did Jesus promise to those developing these character qualities? "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34).

Would you like to learn more about the glorious future Jesus Christ will usher in at His return? If so, request our free booklet *The Gospel of the Kingdom*.

Am I My Brother's Keeper?

By Hector M. Earle

We all want to do good—we want to think we would be the one to step up when needed. But often we find ourselves bowing out, when we should be stepping up.



IT'S SO EASY TODAY TO BE ENGROSSED in the busyness of our own affairs that there is always the danger of losing sight of our spiritual calling and duty to our fellowman. In the rat race to make ends meet and our pursuit of "the good life" (defined today as getting the most toys), we forget that real contentment comes from not only obeying God as He directs but also from applying the second great commandment, to love your neighbor. Helping a neighbor where needed can be a sure source of true peace and lifelong happiness.

Deep down the vast majority of us desire to make a difference, but the preoccupation with our own pursuits and interests can stymie that noble intention. This is a mistake. For it is not the one who dies with the most toys who wins. It's the spiritual character we are building that counts.

Ways to help others

Anyone can seize the opportunity to engage in random acts of kindness and compassion...

The world is full of needy people, and we don't have to look very far to find someone in need of a helping hand. Who among us is not moved with compassion when we see images of starving children in famine-filled and war-torn countries? Anyone can seize the opportunity to engage in random acts of kindness and compassion, however small a scale, for the good of a neighbor, whether in the far regions of Africa or just down the street. Jesus gave us the parable of the good Samaritan and defined our neighbor as anyone in need.

Helping neighbors in need came home forcefully for me on Sept. 11, 2001--that tragic date forever seared in many North American memories. Here is how it happened.

While reading a classic story to my sixth graders in a small school near Gander, Newfoundland, we were suddenly interrupted by the sounds of jet engines overhead. Next thing I knew, I was informed by one of my colleagues that the World Trade Center had been hit by two passenger airliners and another had crashed into the Pentagon.

Suddenly the routines of our school changed in a moment with the buzz of news reports that these disasters may have been the result of a terrorist attack on our neighbor to the south. All teachers and students quickly gathered into the gymnasium to watch the horrific scenes unfold before our very eyes. Some wept while others held hands and hugged each other for support and comfort.



We also learned that all airports in the United States were shut down, and all incoming international flights to America were being diverted to Canada. Shortly afterwards we were informed that Gander had received no less than 32 international flights with more than 6,000 stranded passengers! The next day many residents in the surrounding area rallied together in support of these stranded people. Five schools were shut down and makeshift shelters were set up. Free hotel rooms were made available and people opened up their homes to welcome anyone who needed a hot meal, a bath and a place to stay.

We were informed that Gander had received no less than 32 international flights with more than 6,000 stranded passengers!

Our school was designated as a supply center for towels, soap, blankets, pillows and a host of other life necessities that poured in quickly. Also free telephone and Internet services were provided for travelers to get in contact with loved ones. Counseling services were set up to assist anyone traumatized by the tragedy. Towns outside of Gander also rushed to help and offered free room and board and volunteered free transportation to and from stores and malls.

For seven days and nights the town of Gander and her surrounding communities opened their arms and hearts to strangers. By the time the last plane took off, these strangers had become friends with bonds that will last a long time.

There is an old saying, "Those who help others, help themselves." Certainly this held true for us during the events on 9/11. In our attempts to help stranded passengers feel a little more at home in the midst of trouble in their homeland, we brought ourselves together in the spirit of oneness and community.

What prevents our serving when needed?

By the time the last plane took off, these strangers had become friends with bonds that will last a long time.

Sometimes, due to a feeling of prejudicial fear, we hesitate to approach a stranger. The fear of the unknown and the hesitation to get involved can cause a great deal of coldness in the world. This results in a certain degree of timidity—a kind of mind-set of being too afraid to do anything, which can leave a lot of needy souls among us. Had we turned a blind eye to these stranded passengers in Gander during the days that followed Sept. 11, then I'm afraid another tragedy would have occurred far beyond the Twin Towers—the tragedy of indifference and insensitivity.

Is it not incumbent upon all of us to try to break the barriers of indifference and strive to reach out when needed? The Golden Rule that Jesus so eloquently taught in the Sermon on the Mount was "whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them" (Matthew 7:12). It is true that government welfare takes care of many needy. But like a big ship, government social services require a broad ocean to run on. They cannot get into the nooks and crannies of these small but important human needs.

It can often be up to us as neighbors to fill in the gaps, to keep some people from falling through the cracks and provide that personal touch in lending a helping hand. Helping others when the need is there is a great way to fulfill being our "brother's keeper." Are we our brother's keeper? If we have striven to serve others when the need was there, we can confidently answer, "Most certainly, I am."

Unknown God

By Hector M. Earle

Study the history of any human society down through the ages and you will find some kind of belief in a supernatural god or a multitude of gods intertwined into the culture.



MOST PEOPLE HAVE A BELIEF in a supreme being and have practices and traditions in an attempt to connect to the spirit world.

Paul was appalled at the extent of the idolatry he witnessed in Athens (Acts 17:16). When the local philosophers and religious leaders demanded that he explain his teachings, Paul took the opportunity to introduce them to the reality of the One whom they, in their ignorance, referred to as "the unknown God" (verses 22-23). He introduced God, the true God, as sovereign creator, with a great plan and purpose of salvation for all of mankind. Elsewhere in Scripture, Paul and other inspired writers give us a clearer picture of this "unknown God."

Paul was appalled at the extent of the idolatry he witnessed in Athens.

In 1 Timothy 1:17, Paul explained that God is eternal, immortal and invisible. In Psalm 147:4-7 we see His greatness, power and infinite wisdom and understanding. He can do all things and nothing can be withheld from Him (Job 42:2). He knows our very thoughts (Psalm 94:11; 1 Corinthians 3:20).

God dwells in splendor, light and glory, surrounded by a multitude of angelic beings and heavenly host. He is high and glorified and inhabits eternity (Isaiah 57:15). He is the God of love and has demonstrated that love in offering His Son Jesus Christ to make possible the reconciliation of sinful mankind to Himself (John 3:16). He is the God of justice, mercy and forgiveness (Psalm 107:8; 119:89-90). Isaiah 46:9-11 says God is very much involved in His creation and knows the future in advance.

God has also revealed Himself in human flesh through Jesus who is the express image and exact representation of His nature (Hebrews 1:3).

God's nature is further manifested towards us through the power of His Holy Spirit (which is the essence of God's own nature and attributes). It is through the power of His Spirit that Jesus and the Father dwell in believers (John 14:20) and impart both understanding and strength. The Holy

Spirit is God's outflowing power that gives us strength to overcome sin (Luke 1:35). It imparts God's love as it is "poured out" in the hearts of believers (Romans 5:5).



It is the means by which He created and brought into existence the very universe (Psalm 104:30). The Holy Spirit is the power by which He works in the minds of human beings made in His image (Genesis 6:3). It is also the power by which the lame walk, the blind see and the deaf hear. Moreover, that same Holy Spirit will one day quicken our mortal bodies and change them to be like Christ's glorious body forever and we will "be filled with all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:19).

The complete truth of who and what God is goes far beyond anything that can be described in this brief article. The Bible itself gives us the master key to knowing God: Scriptures speak of things beyond our hearing, things beyond our imagining, all prepared by God for those who love him. These are what God has revealed to us through His Spirit, for the Spirit explores everything, even the depths of God's own nature (1 Corinthians 2: 9-10).

The Holy Spirit is the power by which He works in the minds of human beings made in His image.

Never has mankind so desperately needed the true knowledge about God. It seems that we are living in a world clouded with confusion and bewilderment about who and what God really is. God wants us to know and understand Him better than the vague notions the world has of Him today. He challenges us to get to know Him by seeking Him with all our hearts—for if we do so, we will surely find Him (Jeremiah 29:13).

For more answers, request our free booklets Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist? and Who Is God?

The Covenant of Salt

By Jim Anderson

Salt is and has been an important part of people's life. It was even used at one time as currency. But does its value go deeper?



IMPORTANT SINCE PREHISTORIC TIMES as a seasoning agent and to preserve foods, salt also was commonly used in the religious rites of the Greeks, Romans, Hebrews and Christians. It was an important medium of exchange in the commercial ventures of people across the Mediterranean, Aegean and Adriatic Seas and has been subject to severe taxation in Asian countries from ancient to modern times. In the form of salt cakes, it served as money in both ancient Ethiopia and Tibet. The English term *salary* was derived from *salarium,* the Latin term referring to the salt allotment that was issued to soldiers serving in the Roman army.

God's people

Jesus Christ said in Matthew 5:13 during His Sermon on the Mount, "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men." Christ was speaking to His disciples here, including all His people through the ages up until today.

Salt is a lasting symbol, because it protects food from putrefying and preserves it unchanged.

In Luke 14:34-35 the Bible states, "Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

Whenever Jesus uses the phrase, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear," it means, "Pay close attention. This is very important!" He used the phrase eight times in the book of Revelation. Salt is a lasting symbol, because it protects food from putrefying and preserves it unchanged. Most scientists would say the only way salt could lose its savor is to dilute it. The more it is diluted, the less effective it becomes. If we allow ourselves to be diluted by this world, we will certainly become less effective.

Did you know there was a covenant of salt?

Now, salt had a deeper meaning to the people Christ was speaking to, who were mostly of a Jewish background. Salt, along with bread and wine, were staples on the Jewish table. Salt was representative of God's covenant with them.

Salt is a symbol of purity; we are to become pure.

Numbers 18 tells of God giving the tribe of Levi to the Israelites for their priesthood. Verses 23 and 24 tell us that the Levites have no inheritance, because they were set apart to receive the offerings. Verse 19 explains how the Levites would be supported. "All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer to the LORD, I have given you and your sons and daughters with you as an ordinance forever; it is a covenant of salt forever before the LORD with you and your descendants with you."

Leviticus 2:13 shows every offering was required to have salt. "And every offering of your grain offering you shall season with salt; you shall not allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from your grain offering. With all your offerings you shall offer salt." Salt was a symbol of an unbreakable covenant. A covenant of salt between God and man was never to be broken.

Can you imagine eating your eggs without salt at breakfast? Few can. Have you ever eaten oatmeal without salt? Or how about a nice juicy steak without salt? Salt adds so much to our lives.

Even ranchers and farmers put out salt for their livestock. Animals need it in their diet.



Matthew, Mark and Luke all cover the subject of salt. "For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt. Salt is good: but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another" (Mark 9:49-50).

As Jesus said, "Salt is good," but too much salt is unhealthy (Mark 9:50). Today salt is all too plentiful and we need to be aware of the many sources of salt, such as in processed foods and restaurant foods. Because of health problems, some people must be on a low-sodium diet or avoid salt altogether. The message here is not to eat more salt, but to understand the significant spiritual analogies with salt in these biblical messages.

Colossians 4:6 says, "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one." The Jameson, Fausset and Brown commentary notes that "seasoned with salt" means "the savor of fresh and lively spiritual wisdom and earnestness, excluding all corrupt communication."

Salt is a symbol of purity; we are to become pure. And as salt adds enjoyment to our lives, God wants us to add joy to the world.

Preserving the truth of God

As salt is a preservative, we must preserve the truth of God. As salt is a seasoning, we must have a zest for God's way of life. Never let it become humdrum. We must not lose our savor. All those animal sacrifices pointed to Jesus Christ and His ultimate sacrifice. The salt pointed to us. As the

salt clung to that sacrifice, we must cling to Christ's sacrifice. Jesus Christ the sacrifice; we the salt.

So, when you pick up your saltshaker each day, and sprinkle a little salt on your food, I hope you will be reminded of the spiritual salt, which you are.

Mentors Promote Success

By John Elliott

Success can be as close as someone helping you through an obstacle... and you helping someone else through his or her obstacle.



THROUGH THE CRISP BLUE SKY the morning sun radiates its mellow warmth onto the forest canopy below us. Mel is our pilot as we soar 4,500 feet above the meandering Ohio River valley. The experience is familiar to me, having piloted aircraft for 21 years.

But there is something unique about this particular flight.

It is Mel's first flight as a licensed pilot, and I am his first passenger. As we share the multitude of cockpit tasks on this cross-country flight, we also reminisce about the myriad events we've had during his pilot training.

It is Mel's first flight as a licensed pilot, and I am his first passenger.

Mel had first flown with me two years ago as a passenger. That day we flew over the urban spectacle of Cincinnati, Ohio, then over woodlands and farm fields that stretch forever in all directions. Subsequent flights would take us cross country over lakes, forests, rivers and mountains. Often I let Mel take the controls as I concentrated on pilotage, navigation or just staring out the window. Through sharing the experience of flight with him, his desire to become a pilot intensified.

One day he said, "I'd sure like to fly! I've wanted to get a pilot's license since I was 15 years old. But I'm sure I could never get one now after being disabled in that railroad accident." Worse, he

has been plagued with severe dyslexia for over 50 years. “But, boy, do I wish I could be a pilot!” he exclaimed in frustration.

Besides learning to fly an airplane, a student pilot must also learn aspects of mechanics, structural engineering, physics and meteorology. All these elements are in constant play during every flight. And any unusual circumstances require that they each be used in an appropriate manner. With Mel’s limitations he considered becoming a pilot an impossibility.



But with my encouragement he decided to go for it. When he ran into snags in his pilot training, I tried to help him. Mel hit some serious obstacles as he neared his written and practical flight tests. Having already experienced various flight tests, I was able to act as a mentor to him—to share information and a perspective that helped him maneuver through the process without a hitch. It made me reflect back to earlier days in Canada when another pilot mentored me through my flight training. It feels good to have the privilege to pass along the favor.

Have you ever shied away from doing something that really intrigued you? Sure you have, and so have I. Typically we lacked the confidence needed to propel ourselves into the unfamiliar circumstances involved. Unsure of how or where to begin, or after hitting a snag along the way, we abandon the process and retreat to our comfort zone. That’s why everybody needs a mentor. And mentoring is highly rewarding and very fulfilling!

Who are mentors?

Mentors are people just like you who have already “been there and done that.” Whether skilled professionals or hobbyists with a special knack, people form a vast resource for mentoring others through the “rookie” stage of any new endeavor. Whether it’s achieving a university degree or mastering the art of fly tying, having a mentor to lean on along the way makes your success a probability.

One very common kind of mentor is a parent. Parents mentor their children as they rear them and later become mentors of their children as they experience having children of their own.

Mentors are people just like you who have already “been there and done that.”

Mentoring can also take the form of associations, clubs, advisory boards, newsletters and trade magazines. Government programs attempt to mentor small business owners who seek out one another’s advice. And sport and recreation enthusiasts eagerly share tips with others of similar interest. Nearly every endeavor today has enthusiasts, clubs or magazines that mentor newcomers to the field.

Use a mentor

While being a mentor is a rewarding and fulfilling experience, sometimes we all need a mentor ourselves. If you want to be successful in any endeavor, spend time with those who are already successful in it. Nearly everybody loves to share advice, especially in a field they are accomplished in.

When my wife Merrie and I were expecting our first child, we stopped at the home of the late Walter Dickinson in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Our mission was to glean the keys of rearing responsible, balanced and self-assured children, like he and his wife had raised. Without his mentoring, we would have never stumbled upon the keys they had used so successfully in their family.

Our youngest daughter, Michelle, once encountered a roadblock in learning algebra. Some concept didn't click and for weeks she could advance no further. What a blessing to find Mr. Rudd, a retired math teacher whose garage is a classroom devoted to helping students with math problems! In just a couple of hours Michelle was back up to speed!

The Supreme Mentor

Physical people aren't the only ones we can lean upon. While we all begin life with expectations of sheer happiness, trials become an integral part of the human experience. In the Bible, Job reeled in confusion as his well-manicured life crumbled around him. He could have used some mentoring by someone with wisdom and experience. Instead, devoid of a suitable mentor, he stumbled somewhat in his time of trial. Though Job didn't specifically ask for it, God began to mentor Job, and that cleared up his confusion and brought about his spiritual growth. Oftentimes, our needs require leaning on God and His Word for advice.

If you want to be successful in any endeavor, spend time with those who are already successful in it.

Sometimes we have personal trials we can't readily share with others. Some of the most intense aspects of life require more than what humans can help with. For the most important things in life we have a Supreme Mentor, Jesus Christ, who fully understands our situation. The apostle Paul said, "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:15-16). Prayer is direct contact with the One who knows our dilemmas best.

What a blessing to have the concern of the God Family focused upon us. The Father even knows the number of hairs on your head right now! (Matthew 10:30) How comforting to know that God is involved in our lives, and that He has given us His Word, the Bible, to mentor us through any circumstance we will encounter. Those God is calling and working with now have an intense focus on them by God. God is there for us every step along the way, and He is totally dependable. "For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' So we may boldly say: 'The LORD is my helper; I will not fear'" (Hebrews 13:5-6).

Be a mentor!

Just as God is there for us, we as God's children should be mentoring others as they rise to their potential as people and children of God. Whether assisting in health matters, like the physician, Luke, or helping someone cope with the intense experience of mental or physical abuse, as the apostle Paul wrote of, we all can mentor others through those experiences in which we have expertise.

What do you do that others wish they could master? Do your talents in the workplace excel? Do you have a gift at decorating, cooking or crocheting? Perhaps a skill you've developed in a favorite sport or hobby has others wishing they could copy you. Or you've learned the solid principles of success and challenges in your field. Typically we each have several areas in which we are accomplished that others are struggling to master. So when the opportunity arises, be a mentor!

Letters to the Editor

Printing VCM for checkout



Thanks to everyone at VCM! All aspects of this online magazine are extremely well-done; but as a reader, I especially appreciate the well-written, meaningful articles.

In our small church area, only five of the 12 households have Internet access, so I sometimes print an especially relevant article for those who are interested in having a copy.

Even though the graphics and layout are quite attractive, the online version can really "drink the ink," so I usually reformat without the graphics before printing a specific article.

This month I tried something different. I printed one copy of the complete PDF file of the latest issue and have made it available for "checkout" from the church library. It will be interesting to see how many folks actually "check it out" and take it home to read!

Thanks again for a great publication.

— ladybug

Some feedback messages are edited for space and/or clarity