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### THE CHEERLEADER AND THE ATHLETE

She was a beautiful, intelligent cheerleader. He was a tall, good-looking athlete from a wealthy family. They married, had two kids, lived in a big home, flew around in their own jet, and went to church every Sunday. It appeared to be a perfect life.

But he was manic-depressive, undiagnosed bi-polar, and he abused her terribly both verbally and physically. She finally divorced him. She went into a prolonged depression and started looking for love in all the wrong places. He called her and threatened suicide. She said, "Good, you ought to do that!" He flew his plane into a mountain. She was racked with guilt, and her life went downhill even farther.

One day she sat in her kitchen thinking about her life. She was overwhelmed with bitterness and self-disgust. She cried out, "To hell with you, God!" A few moments of stillness followed, and then she heard within her heart a very clear response: "To heaven with you, Kay!"

In her testimony she said that at that moment she fell on her knees a harlot and got up a saint. Since that time she has authored over a hundred Christian books and wrote an inductive Bible study that has touched millions of lives.

Her name is Kay Arthur.

### THE BIBLE:

#### Where did it come from and what is it for?

Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:16 - *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God...*(NKJV) The NIV translation reads, *All Scripture is God-breathed...* This is the more literal translation. The word in Greek is *theopneustos*, which literally means "God-breathed." This is Scripture's most important statement about itself, meaning that Scripture is the product of God's creative breath. Therefore, since the Bible is God's own utterance, it is correctly called "the Word of God." It is essential for Christians to believe that the Bible is infallible and authoritative. The NIV continues, *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

Paul wrote these words in a letter to his young protégé, Timothy. But in a manner we cannot understand, God was behind the scenes inspiring Paul, breathing through Paul, so that God Himself was truly the author of this letter and of all the writing in the Old and New Testaments. (When Paul wrote these words, not all of the New Testament was even in existence, so at that time he was specifically referring to the Old Testament and to parts of the New Testament. Over the course of time, other materials were written, and God confirmed to the church which writings He had "breathed" or inspired, and therefore should be included in the canon of the

New Testament See 2 Peter 3:16-17 where Peter affirms that Paul's writings are "Scripture.")

So what is Scripture for? God tells us in 2 Tim. 3:16 that Scripture is useful for four things: teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.

- **Teaching** - This is probably the use we are most familiar with. Preaching, Bible studies, Sunday School, television and radio teaching, books, etc. teach us what the Bible says (the doctrine or revelation of God, of man, of the church, of divine judgment, of salvation, of the hereafter, etc.) and what it means (because the teachings in the Bible are certainly not easy to understand). Churches and denominations have a lot of variety in their doctrines, their understanding of the meaning of particular Scriptures.
- **Rebuking** - Wow! This is not a Politically Correct word these days, but it is important to determine the Scriptural meaning rather than the cultural meaning of this word. The cultural meaning of the word "rebuke," from the dictionary, is - "To blame or scold in a sharp way; reprimand." This is not the biblical meaning. The Greek words translated "rebuke" mean, "To make someone aware of his sin, or to expose his fault, or to chasten," but the Bible sees it as an act of love, just as a loving parent must at times rebuke a child for his good. Rebuking is a major pastoral function as determined by the many times this word is used in the Pastoral letters.
- **Correcting** - Means to restore a Christian to a right state; to improve; to instruct or discipline. Again, the role of parents with their children would be the simplest way to understand this word.
- **Training in righteousness** - Thayer says this means "To cultivate the soul, especially by correcting mistakes and curbing the passions." Teaching is more intellectual, whereas training suggests something more hands on.

Note the importance that God places on right believing which leads to right living. This emphasizes that preaching and teaching is not just for head knowledge.

And what is the ultimate purpose for all of this? Verse 17 states: So that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us that we are saved by God's grace through faith, emphasizing that we are not saved by our "works;" that is, by our deeds of service to God or people. But the next verse says, *For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.* In other words, we are not saved by our good works but for good works. If we are not active in serving God, it shows that we are not really saved. And the Bible, the Word of God, is our tutor.

## HELPING YOUR CHILD GROW THROUGH TRIALS

(From *The Gift of Honor*, by Gary Smalley)

When Kari was 18, she slammed into the back of a car during a rainstorm when another woman turned from the wrong lane. Norma and I were away when she got home, but one of our friends had dropped by the house to see us. When he saw the damaged car, he burst into angry words and lectured her about what a careless driver she was and how she could have killed herself or someone else. About that time, we pulled into the driveway. Kari was already crying over what this friend had said, and when she saw us she cried even harder.

At that first moment, all we did was hold her and let her tell us the story. In a little while, she was able to wipe her eyes and smile for the first time. Our friend was so surprised by the contrast, he apologized to Kari for being so upset with her. He may have learned in his home that accidents were first met with angry words or emotions, not softness and a gentle touch.

When one of my children is hurting, compounding it by reacting with angry words doesn't add to the solution. Responding with gentleness helps the child see that if Dad and Mom aren't panicking and becoming angry, then maybe the situation isn't hopeless.

One young man we counseled told us how difficult it was to share minor hurts or problems with his mother because every negative thing was blown way out of proportion. Once he came home from school and told her that he thought he may have flunked a test. Dropping the mixing bowl, she threw up her hands and began crying. "What are we going to do with you?" she said between sobs, "What are we going to do?" The young man said, "I can remember thinking, 'How do I know what we're going to do with me? I'm only in the tenth grade! That's why I came to you'"

Sit quietly for a few minutes of reflection: "How do I act and react in the face of accidents or stressful situations? Am I calm and serene, or do I react with strong emotions, anger, and fear? How does my attitude affect my family? What kinds of things happened in the past to train me to react in an over-the-top manner? Can God help me to feel more peace and display more peace and confidence in Him in every circumstance?"

## THE SIN OF ACEDIA

Bet I got you on that one! I found a new sin for you to feel guilty about. Actually, my daughter, Jeannine, found it for me. She found a 330-page book in the sale rack and brought it home to me. Its title is *Acedia and Me*, by Kathleen Norris. I had never heard of Kathleen, but the cover said that she is "a best-selling author on spiritual subjects." I was instantly suspicious of that word "spiritual," because many times that is Oprah's type of spiritual. But I soon learned that Kathleen is a Christian, was raised as a Lutheran, spent a huge amount of time studying the works of monks in monasteries, and recently lost her beloved husband of 30 years to cancer. She taught me about acedia. Acedia is pronounced, ah-say'-dee-ah, and it is sure enough a big old sin. In fact, it was one of the "Seven Deadly Sins" of antiquity. The Seven Deadly Sins were:

1. **Pride** - This was the first and most serious. The demon

- connected with pride (supposedly) was Lucifer. The virtue which is the opposite of pride is Humility.
2. **Lust** - Demon, Asmodeus. Virtue, Chastity.
  3. **Gluttony** - Demon, Beelzebub. Virtue, Temperance.
  4. **Greed** - Demon, Mammon. Virtue, Charity.
  5. **Acedia** - This name was later changed to **Sloth**. Demon, Abaddon. Virtue, Diligence.
  6. **Wrath** - Demon, Satan. Virtue, Patience.
  7. **Envy** - Demon, Leviathan. Virtue, Kindness.

If we are perceptive, we will discover that since we are fallen creatures we have within us to some degree each of the deadly sins listed, including acedia. Acedia is difficult to pin down, but let me share some scattered ideas from her book. The observations in parentheses are my own thoughts:

Acedia is a sin of omission rather than commission. Not only does acedia make us unable to care, it takes away our ability to feel bad about not caring. If we can no longer weep, or desire, or feel pain and grief, well, that's all right; we settle for that, we'll get by. (But that is sort of a living death. I think of the girls and women who become "cutters" because they have lost the ability to feel. They feel like zombies, and they cut themselves because that physical pain at least gives them some assurance that they are alive. Horrible!)

The Church has made too much of the sin of pride, which seduces us into thinking too highly of ourselves, and it has not made enough of the sin of sloth, which allows us to settle for being less than we can be. The Presbyterian pastor John Buchanan believes that passivity and indifference are as bad as intentional evil. They are also an ancient curse. The primal sin in Eden involves Adam and Eve refusing to take responsibility for their sin. God responds to this display of sloth by sending the first people, who had been intended for God's assignment of meaningful work, as well as for the holy leisure of paradise (a day of rest), into a land where they must labor for their sustenance in the midst of "thorns and thistles" and without restful fulfillment.

Fred Caddock defines the sin of sloth (acedia) so clearly that it stings. What we casually dismiss as mere laziness, he says, is "the ability to look at a starving child with a swollen stomach and say, 'Well, it's not my kid.' Or to see an old man sitting alone among the pigeons in the park and say, 'Well, that's not my dad.' It is that capacity of the human spirit to look out upon the world and everything God made and say, 'I don't care.'"

News media have contributed to the confusion in our minds. Within an hour we can be confronted about a suicide bombing, a celebrity divorce, a new discovery about high blood pressure or hemorrhoids; the Red Cross; a horrifying story about child sex offenders; a coming rise in gas prices, etc., etc. It all comes to us on the same level. The ceaseless bombardment of image and verbiage makes us impervious to caring.

Acedia includes sloth, laziness, listlessness, and indolence. Solomon spoke of this soul-sickness 3,000 years ago in Proverbs 24: ***I went by the field of the lazy man*** (note - this is speaking of a man or woman who is spiritually lazy) ***and by the vineyard of the man devoid of understanding, and there it was overgrown with thorns;*** (Jesus' parable of the seed scattered on different soils)...***its stone wall was broken down;***

*...a little slumber, and your (spiritual) poverty will come like a robber.* (Picture a guy with a big belly, sitting on the couch drinking beer or smoking pot, watching TV with glassy eyes, while his kids are running wild.)

Acedia is expressed through boredom, hopelessness, and despair. (Surely the escapism of wide-spread drug and alcohol use among the young and a growing rate of suicide are connected to this.)

Waiting seems at odds with progress, and we seldom ask whether it might have a purpose. What are we waiting for except for increasing disability and the indignities of old age? But Isaiah sees it as a source of vitality: *Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles.* For thousands of years the psalmists and prophets have been a source of strength for people facing plague, warfare, massacre, imprisonment, execution, and exile. This kind of radical hope in God is the sort of hope that matters, for it can conquer not just acedia and despair, but death itself.

### **POWER STEERING**

Power steering is a helpful analogy to explain how the Christian life mysteriously combines our working and God's working in and through us. Think of a big, heavy car where the power steering is not working.

We have been given free will, we are not robots, and God will not take over the steering wheel. But our arms will get mighty tired without the power steering, and eventually we won't be able to keep our car on the road and out of the ditch.

Consider Phil. 2:12-13.....(**you**) *work out your salvation.....for it is God who works in you.....*

### **SECRETS OF THE UNIVERSE NOW UNDERSTOOD!**

Sometime back Time Magazine had exciting news. They reported that due to the precision measurements of the Wilkinson Microwave Anisotropy Probe, cosmology is "finally on a firm foundation." At last "scientists have clarity," because with these measurements "they now have the numbers that explain the universe." A scientist from Princeton University says that they now understand that the universe is made of three things: (1) 4% ordinary atoms (2) 23% dark matter - whose nature is unknown (3) 73% dark energy - whose nature is likewise unknown.

In other words, scientists now understand everything. Except for 96%.

Blessings to you all,

**Glenn**

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