

# When Prayer Is a Cover-up for Disobedience

Then all the commanders of the forces, and Johanan the son of Kareah and Jezaniah the son of Hoshaiiah, and all the people from the least to the greatest, came near and said to Jeremiah the prophet, "Let our plea for mercy come before you, and pray to the Lord your God for us, for all this remnant—because we are left with but a few, as your eyes see us— that the Lord your God may show us the way we should go, and the thing that we should do." Jeremiah the prophet said to them, "I have heard you. Behold, I will pray to the Lord your God according to your request, and whatever the Lord answers you I will tell you. I will keep nothing back from you." **Jeremiah 42:1-4**

By David Maxson

sacrifice, and so the statement is made, "I need to pray about it."

I wonder what the prayer is for. If the prayer is for courage to do the right thing, that's good. If the prayer is for discernment to make sure everything has been appropriately interpreted and understood correctly, that's good. But if the prayer is for more revelation to come (especially revelation to contradict plain teaching in God's Word), then we've got a problem. It's kind of like when a child asks and doesn't get the response he or she wants and so they ask again and again until they succeed.

To pray for anything more than what God has already said (especially to suit our whims and fancies) is to pray for too much. In that situation we need to get up off of our knees and get our noses back in the Book.

Father, may your will and not our own be done.



"I need to just pray about it."

Sometimes when I hear someone say this, it makes me nervous. What makes me nervous is that the truth of God's Word has been read and comprehended. Yet, the truth may require some inconvenience or

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Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. **(Matthew 5:16)**

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## The Struggles and Advantages of Being Single

By Stephen Rouse



### Thoughts to Ponder

The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit. **(Psalm 34:18)**

God has been teaching me some powerful lessons lately, though many of them have been painful. We live in a society, even among Christians, where the prevailing thought is often "I cannot and will not be happy unless I am in a dating (or whatever you call it) relationship with someone." This is not right, and this must not be a mindset adopted by children of God.

Don't get me wrong, I don't think a day goes by where I don't hurt on some level because I am single. It's lonely sometimes... but not all the time. God has helped me recently to start focusing on some of the advantages I have right now that I may not have later if, by His grace, I am to be married.

I'll first acknowledge the struggles that have been particularly deep for me, and then look at some advantages that have helped me overcome these struggles.

### The Struggles of Being Single

**1. Loneliness.** This one is obvious. After proclaiming everything to be good in His creation, God Himself observed that "it is not good that the man should be alone..." **(Gen 3:18)**. God created us with a need for relationship, not only with Himself, but with other humans. And God didn't just leave man alone; in the rest of the verse He said, "...I will make him a helper fit for him." God gave us a sense of emptiness, and gave us the opportunity to fill that emptiness with something other than ourselves. Personally, I believe God intentionally delayed in creating woman to show man how much he needed her. We are not here for ourselves.

But the child of God, even a single one, should not be characterized by loneliness.

Jesus certainly felt this when He was abandoned at the cross as He cried, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?" **(Mt 27:46)** In a real sense, He had been left completely alone to bear the immeasurable burden at Calvary. But Jesus also understood that in the midst of feeling abandoned, He was not alone. In **John 16:32** He affirmed, "Behold the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me." David reminds us that "the LORD is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit" **(Ps 34:18)**. We are never truly alone if the Lord is with us.

**2. Discontentment.** Sometimes as a single guy, I feel like I don't have much direction. I'm just floating, waiting for something to come along and give me purpose. It's like I'm still waiting for my life to begin. But in reality, not only has life begun, but I'm at a critical stage of life that must not be wasted longing for the next one. There are some days I start to buy into that singleness-and-happiness-cannot-coexist mindset, and those days are usually the most miserable and unproductive ones. Self-pity is the enemy of the Christian. Can you imagine Christ thinking like that?

Paul wasn't kidding when he said, "Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world" **(1 Tim 6:7)**. Contentment is something that God expects out of His people. When His sheep become restless in the green pastures, not only do they miss out on just how green their surroundings are, but they scorn the tender and infinitely wise care of the Shepherd that is watching over them.

*(Continued on page 2)*

### Classes This Week

|  |   |
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| <b>Tuesday 8:00 PM</b><br>Truth Seekers in room 2326 of the student center | <b>Tuesday 10:00 AM</b><br>Ladies Class at Laura Humphrey's. "Seasoning Your Words" |
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|   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
| Lisa Carter (Luke's mother)                             | Jesse Godwin (Troy's father and Mac's grandfather) | Virginia Box (Sarah Norman's grandmother) | Louise Pack (Anna and Christopher's grandmother)      |
| Gloria Detmer and Carol Dickerson (Toni Herd's Sisters) | Don Lanier (Father of Greg Lanier)                 | David Hartsell (Holly and Brad's Father)  | Jamin Hymel (Chad's son)                              |
| Madeline Morton (Greg Lanier's g'daughter)              | Alexander Locke (Jeremiah's cousin's son)          | Betty Bradford                            | Hazel Gilliland and Sherry Carroll (Toni's relatives) |
| Ricky Tucker (Tyler's cousin)                           | Ermogene Laxson (Sara Lail's grandmother)          | Danny Weldon (Rusty Weldon's brother)     | William Smith (Ken Sullivan's brother)                |
| Gerald White (Christopher, Anna and Wesley's Father)    | Bernice Martin (Will Harris' great-grandmother)    | Sasha Rozier (Makenzie Reynolds' cousin)  | Eva Jean Cavender (Matt's grand-mother)               |
| Bonnie Rhodes Kirkley (Toni Herd's family)              | Howard Vaughan (Mary Ann's Granddad)               | Aubrey Meeks (Toni Herd's Nephew)         | Maria Aragon (Liseth's Mother)                        |

### September Birthdays

- 2-Denise Davis
- 3-Trenton Anderson
- 3-Larry Lauderdale
- 4-Kevin Anderson
- 10-Bj Winslett
- 10-Eleanor Weldon
- 10-Matthew Sullivan
- 11-Sheryl Fowler
- 11-Kimberlee Myers
- 12-Jared Johnson
- 13-Adam Saylor
- 14-Patsy Ogle
- 16-Brittany Bagents
- 17-Laura Weldon
- 21-Sarah Chandler
- 24-Wade Winslett
- 24-Lauren Johnson
- 25-Ashley Collier
- 28-Hallie Hall
- 29-Sandlyn Fultz

### News and Notes

- ☒ - Please pray for the family of new students Chase and Lyndsay Sanders, at the death of their 24-year-old sister, Katelyn.
- ☒ - We will have group meetings tonight.
- ☒ - William Herd's father is nearing death. Please remember this family in your prayers.
- ☒ - Please remember baby Alexander Locke, son of Chad, Jeremiah's cousin, who is in the hospital with a lung aneurysm.
- ☒ - Please pray for Tim Morton, Greg Lanier's son-in-law as he is deployed to Afghanistan this week.
- ☒ - Please pray for Madeline Morton, Greg Lanier's granddaughter, who was taken to the hospital for Type 1 Diabetes.
- ☒ - Please keep those in your prayers who are in the adoption process: Kevin and Jessica Anderson, Craig and Paula Davis
- ☒ - Please remember the family of Ada Owen in the recent death of her uncle, Buddy Scalf
- ☒ - We welcome new members: Isaiah Messer, Charles Painter, Josh Hartsell and Brandon Walker.
- ☒ - All audio is posted to [www.auchurch.com](http://www.auchurch.com).

**Elders**  
Walker Davis (334) 703-0050  
Larry Rouse (334) 734-2133

**SCHEDULE OF SERVICES**  
**Sunday**  
Bible Class .....9:30 AM  
Worship .....10:20 AM  
Evening Worship ..... 6:00 PM  
**Wednesday**  
Bible Classes.....7:00 PM  
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Here's the way to think: "...for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (Phil 4:11-13).

**3. Jealousy.** This is where it gets hard. This is where being single stops being just a self-contained struggle, but starts to erode the unity of the body of Christ. I've not been one to think of this as a struggle for me, but recent tests have proven me wrong. I'll be honest: it's hard when you attend the weddings of those you've previously been really close to—it's just hard. But there is a calling that we have: "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep" (Rom 12:15). When we can learn to honestly, honestly have joy when our brother or sister receives that which we most deeply desire—that, my brethren, is dying to self. That is taking up your cross. And that is what following Christ is all about.

If you haven't seen them, you should read Gary Henry's devotionals surrounding this. I've been pricked to the heart about this, and I pray that if this is something you're struggling with, you will take it seriously and make your heart pure before God and your brethren.

#### Advantages of Being Single

**1. Freedom.** From what I've heard from my married friends, this is one I'll appreciate a whole lot more from the other side. As an unattached guy, I can make most of my decisions without a lot of consultation with others. Certainly my decisions affect those around me, and I need to tailor my choices to serve others; but for the most part flying solo I get to call the shots. I can decide to take crazy road trips to Bible studies at the last minute. I can drive into the wee hours of the morning as long as I've got my Gatorade and peanut butter crackers. I can fill my schedule with serving the church whenever is most convenient for them. There are many areas of service that are most accessible to those not yet married.

Peter lays out this principle in **1 Peter 2:16**: "Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God." If we have fewer responsibilities to fulfill to a wife or husband, we then have a responsibility to use the time and energy we have to serve the Lord and His people with that zeal. So much energy is wasted wallowing in self-pity and wishing we could hurry up and find someone. How much more effective would we be in the Lord's service if we saw being single as an opportunity instead of a burden?

**2. Focus.** There are only so many things we can do at once. If we want to enjoy the wonderful God-given joys of marriage, it's going to be a huge time investment. To gain one good opportunity, we will have to give up other good opportunities. Paul spoke about these things in **1 Cor 7:32-35**. "The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife,

and his interests are divided... I say this... to secure your undivided attention to the Lord." It is certainly God's will for husbands and wives to be taking time for each other and investing in that relationship, but that means less time to be doing other good things in the Lord's service.

Those who are single have an amazing chance to revel in a kind of unbridled zeal in pursuing the things of the Lord. There is a purity to one's life consisting primarily of one's self and the Lord. If you have the opportunity to take advantage of that, don't take it for granted. Study. Pray. Use the extra hours in your schedule to dig deep roots in the character of the Lord Jesus Christ. Learn to "delight yourself in the Lord" (Ps 37:4). You may not get another chance quite like this after you're married. And especially after you have kids. You don't just magically become more devoted to God after you get married, so make sure you're developing into the kind of married person the Lord wants you to be, even while you're single.

**3. Opportunity to Trust.** God has created a world in which both pleasures and pains are a tremendous blessing to the Christian. We are directed to "count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know the testing of your faith produces steadfastness" (Jas 1:2-3). Each emptiness, each hour of loneliness, each unfulfilled desire is an opportunity to learn to really trust in God. When we are doing well, like Israel, we so easily and thoughtlessly trust in ourselves. But the more we hurt, the harder we lean on God. And that is when we can say, "when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor 12:10).

Tommy Peeler recently said, "God's love for us is more intense than that of the best parent for a child (Isa 49:15; Matt 7:11). Therefore, we can rest assured that the things that God prohibits are not forbidden to keep us from enjoying life, but they are given to prevent us destroying ourselves." I've come to realize that the repeated frustrations in my relationship efforts may not be God trying to punish me or just so I can suffer, but to keep me from self-destructing. I don't know if He's guided things like this for that specific purpose (He knows I'm not exactly suave when it comes to these things—I've brought enough on myself), but I do know that this is an opportunity to learn to wait on the Lord. It is when I completely let go and give Him my heart that I learn to say, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want," and really mean it.

I'm putting this up on Valentine's Day because I know that this is a day of rejoicing for many and a day of misery for others. I feel like I need to put somewhat of a caveat saying: Um, yeah, I still want to get married. But God has blessed me SO much to be where I am in life right now. I feel more content than I have in a very long time, and I wanted to share some of the things God has used to bring me here in hope that it could help my fellow singles. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (2 Cor 1:3-4).



## Undercover Agents for Christ?

By Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

Most of us know the MO of undercover agents for law enforcement. They try to blend in with the crowd that they think might include whomever they are trying to catch. They try to dress, talk, and generally mimic the habits that crowd. They try hard to befriend as many as possible and get close to them. An outside looking in would not be able to distinguish the agent from the rest of the crowd. This may be necessary and work in law enforcement, but is it a good MO for evangelism?

Occasionally, a brother will look at a subculture and decide that since they need saving (and they do) that the best way to do it is go undercover much like the cops do. Now they will not call it that, but that is what it is. There are the drug subculture, disco/nightclub subculture, and hippy-like subculture to name a few. The idea is that in order to reach them with the gospel one needs to mingle and blend in with them as much as possible. This involves adapting to their characteristic slang and jargon, conforming to their sloven appearance, mannerisms and sometimes to their hygiene (or lack of) habits. The idea is to pass himself off as "one of the boys" in order to slip the gospel to them. All the while putting themselves in the position of having to walk a tight rope to keep from slipping over into the mire with which they has surrounded themselves.

More often than not, when called out for this unwise practice, they will cite Paul's words, "To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9:22) as justification for this practice. This is a gross misuse of this passage. Paul's "all things," "all means" and "all men" are limited by the context. Without so limiting it, the case could be made for becoming a liar, or a fornicator, or a drunkard in order to gain some of them for the Lord. When one reads the whole context it can easily be seen that he is not speaking of covertly going into dens of iniquity to evangelize. In context, he is speaking of Christians' using their rights or liberties in a way that would not harm brethren spiritually. He shows that this was his practice wherever he went whether among Jews or Gentiles or among weak brethren.

All of chapters 8-10 of 1 Corinthians is dealing with the use and misuse of liberties in Christ – especially the right to eat meat offered to idols. Paul knew or assumed that his readers knew that the meat was just meat like any other meat. In chapter 8, despite the fact that they had a right to eat such meat, they should not go into the idol's temple and eat it with the idolaters because it

would embolden the weak brethren to eat as an act of worship to idols.

In chapter 9, Paul answers the objection they might raise that they should be able to exercise their liberty anywhere they pleased. He then uses himself as an example of willingness to forgo rights for the betterment of brethren and the cause of Christ. If Paul could forego his rights for the good of others, why would they not be willing to forego their right to meat under the circumstances described? Tho he could show that he had the rights to "live of the gospel," and to "lead about a wife," he did not always use them. His readers should take note of this when considering whether or not to exercise a right being considered. When he said that among Jews he became a Jew, or among the gentiles (those without law) he became as a gentile and when among the weak he became weak; he simply means that when among each class he was willing to forgo any right that he might have if saw that it might cause them to not be receptive to his effort to save them.

In chapter 10, he gives an additional serious warning against going into the idols temple and eating with them. He warns the strong that they may not be as strong as they fancy themselves to be in claiming to be able to eat the meat without slipping into idol worship. In the first half of the chapter he shows that Israel slipped into apostasy after escaping from Egypt. There was the danger of following their example. The warning is to the one that "thinketh he standeth" (v. 12). He then warns them to flee idolatry. Then, he returns to showing why they could not enter the temple and eat the meat offered to idols at the idols table. He contrasts two tables: the Lord's table and the idol's table. They, as Christians, could not eat at both tables. There was no compatibility between the two.

Then he proceeds to show circumstances where they could safely eat such meat. One was they could go buy it at the meat market and eat it (v. 25). Another was when invited to a meal by their neighbor and were served it with no strings attached by the host (vv. 26-27).

So, this is not the passage to justify throwing out generally accepted decorum and decency to become as closely as possible identified with a drug, revery, and punk scene in order to hopefully win some. Such cheapens the gospel and hinders its effectiveness.

