



Christian Report

To Win...To Disciple...To Equip...To Win

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Forgiving Versus Excusing — Vision Obscured — by ADCS Bob Flynn, USN (Ret), President/CEO

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I find that when I think I am asking God to forgive me I am often in reality (unless I watch myself very carefully) asking Him to do something very different. I am asking Him not to forgive me but to excuse me. But there is all the difference in the world between forgiving and excusing. Forgiveness says, "Yes, you have done this thing, but I accept your apology; I will never hold it against you and everything between us two will be exactly as it was before." But excusing says "I see that you couldn't help it or didn't mean it; you weren't really to blame." If one was not really to blame then there is nothing to forgive. In that sense forgiveness and excusing are almost opposite. (C. S. Lewis, *Virtue and Vice*)

We often needlessly wander through the darkened fortress of discouragement and despair—the high, impenetrable ramparts of our own building. Brick by brick they did rise from the hardness of our own heart—cemented indestructibly by the piteous mortar of our ever-bleeding soul. We are powerless to extricate ourselves from this fallen estate because of our self-deception. We think we are asking forgiveness for our sins, but without accepting responsibility. Did the Scriptures say that Christ

One day Jesus said to His disciples, "There will always be temptations to sin, but what sorrow awaits the person who does the tempting! It would be better to be thrown into the sea with a millstone hung around your neck than to cause one of these little ones to fall into sin. So watch yourselves! If another believer sins, rebuke that person; then if there is ^{G3340}repentance, forgive. Even if that person wrongs you seven times a day and each time turns again and asks forgiveness, you must forgive." (Luke 17:1-4 NLT)

would "excuse" our sins? No, He offered forgiveness if we confess them. If we look to the testimony of the Cross, we can see the Savior offering prayer on our behalf, "Father, forgive them." He could not yet forgive us because we had not repented. Nevertheless, His example was to pray for our forgiveness and not (as we would) harbor ill will in the heart).

We are in darkness when we fail to wrestle with the responsibility of our own sin! Our honest confession must begin with the attitude of our heart. Are we really seeking "excusing" when the Scripture clearly teaches us to seek "forgiveness"? Our journey must begin at the gates of penitence—the work of the Holy Spirit that allows us to grieve over our sin and see its

G3340 μετανοέω metanoóo; contracted metanoóo; fut. metanoósoo, from metá (G3326), denoting change of place or condition, and noéo (G3539), to exercise the mind, think, comprehend. To repent, change the mind, relent. Theologically, it involves regret or sorrow, accompanied by a true change of heart toward God. In a religious sense implying pious sorrow for unbelief and sin and a turning from them unto God and the gospel of Christ. (The Complete Word Study Dictionary—Spiros Zodhiates, Th.D, General Editor)

Penitence — from poeniteo, from poena, pain, punishment. Repentance; pain; sorrow or grief of heart for sins or offenses; contrition. Real penitence springs from a conviction of guilt and ingratitude to God, and is followed by amendment of life. (Noah Webster)

result through His eyes. Then is our repentance possible and our forgiveness assured.

As we walk this path to forgiveness, the Holy Spirit will bring to light the true gravity of our offenses. Though clearly we are no longer the objects of the wrath of God, our sin still comes with its own reward. If we are the conduit through which the offense travels, the gravity

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looms large. But if we heed the conviction of the Holy Spirit upon our heart, then the road back into the Light of Christ appears before us; and what we meant for evil will be transformed by Him who sits upon the throne of the universe.

Consider today the aforementioned words of Clive Staples Lewis and his warning to be careful that forgiveness petitions be not instead desires for excusing! †



10). (Dr. John Darby)

We are here taught,

That the giving of offenses is a great sin, and that which we should every one of us avoid and carefully watch against, Luke 17:1-2. We can expect no other than that offenses will come, considering the perverseness and frowardness that are in the nature of man, and the wise purpose

and counsel of God, who will carry on his work even by those offenses, and bring good out of evil. It is almost impossible but that offenses will come, and therefore we are concerned to provide accordingly; but woe to him through whom they come, his doom will be heavy (Luke 17:2), more terrible than that of the worst of the malefactors

who are condemned to be thrown into the sea, for they perish under a load of guilt more ponderous than that of millstones. This includes a woe, 1. To persecutors, who offer any injury to the least of Christ's little ones, in word or deed, by which they are discouraged in serving Christ, and doing their duty, or in danger of being driven off from it. 2. To seducers, who corrupt the truths of Christ and his ordinances, and so trouble the minds of the disciples; for they are those by whom offenses come. 3. To those who, under the profession of the Christian name, live scandalously, and thereby weaken the bands and sadden the hearts of God's people; for by them the offense comes, and it is no abatement of their guilt, nor will be any of their punishment, that it is impossible but offenses will come. (Matthew Henry)

Grace is the spring of the Christian's walk, and furnishes directions for it. He cannot with impunity (chapter 17) despise the weak. He must not be weary of pardoning his brother. If he have faith but as a grain of mustard seed, the power of God is, so to speak, at his disposal. Nevertheless, when he has done all, he has but done his duty (Luke 17:5-

Marriage — The Importance of our Words — by MSgt Rick Hiltman, USAF, CMF Board of Directors

Each of us on our wedding day made vows to our spouse. If you said traditional vows, they probably followed those displayed in the inset.

Noah Webster defines a vow as: "A solemn promise; as the vows of unchangeable love and fidelity. In a moral and religious sense, vows are promises to God, as they appeal to God to witness their sincerity, and the violation of them is a most heinous offense."

The Bible abounds with God's promises to us. Some of these promises God defines as covenants. A covenant is a binding and solemn agreement to do or refrain from doing a specified thing. In simplistic terms, a covenant



could be defined as an agreement stated more strongly than a pledge or vow. How does God define what we agreed to on our

wedding day?

"You ask 'Why?' It is because the Lord is acting as a witness between you and the wife of

your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant." Malachi 2:14 NIV

"Who has left the partner of her youth and ignored the covenant she made before God." Proverbs 2:17 NIV

"When a man makes a vow to the Lord or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said." Numbers 30:2 NIV

Clearly, God views my words and actions on my wedding day as

DEARLY beloved, we are gathered together here in the sight of God, and in the face of this company, to join together this Man and this Woman in holy Matrimony; which is an honorable estate, instituted of God, signifying unto us the mystical union that is between Christ and his Church: which holy estate Christ adorned and beautified with his presence and first miracle that he wrought in Cana of Galilee, and is commended of Saint Paul to be honorable among all men: and therefore is not by any to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly; but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God. Into this holy estate these two persons present come now to be joined. If any man can show just cause, why they may not lawfully be joined together, let him now speak, or else hereafter for ever hold his peace.

the beginning of a covenant agreement entered into with my beloved spouse. The honoring of the marital covenant between God and husbands and wives is dear to God's heart. Our words and how we honor them is at the foundation of our character. But it appears we have entered an age that is breaking God's heart (as well as that of children and spouses), when covenants are not honored. Are we rendering these vows meaningless today? There appears to be an epidemic on our hands!

"He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity." Proverbs 21:23 NIV

Trust is built by reliable

Marriage — The Importance of our Words — by MSgt Rick Hiltman, USAF

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words, and relationships are built on trust. Consequently, our words form the foundational layer of relationships. They are far more important than we realize, and they must be guarded like a valuable treasure if we want to have the kind of relationships that people dream about: honest, caring, devoted, self-sacrificing and lifelong. Looking at this from God's viewpoint, what impact did your vows have on you; and do they still stand true today?

Combat has a way of getting a man's attention like nothing else. Looking down the muzzle of a tank gun has a way of making a man willing to consider making some changes in the way he lives. Not many can say they have had to face something like this. Making a vow or the thought of breaking a vow should also stop us in our tracks and make us consider making some changes.

The Divorce Generation? Twentieth-century divorce statistics in America are staggering. A growing trend to disregard our word is emerging rapidly. A reflection of this trend is seen clearly in the number of lawyers in this country. The number of lawyers has tripled from 1960 to 1990! Why would an occupation increase so rapidly in thirty years? Hosea knew the answer eight centuries before Christ.

“They make many promises, take false oaths and make agreements; therefore lawsuits spring up like poisonous weeds in a plowed field.” Hosea 10:4 NIV

All too often we find ourselves in an upside-down world. This condition is nothing new. The Word of the Lord through Isaiah invoked a stern warning upon those “that call evil good and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for

sweet and sweet for bitter!” Isaiah 5:20 NIV

Will you have this Man/Woman to be your wedded husband/wife, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of Matrimony? Will you love him/her, comfort him/her, honor, and keep him/her in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, keep only unto him/her, so long as you both shall live?

I take you to be my wedded Husband/Wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I pledge you my troth.

O GOD, who hast so consecrated the state of Matrimony that in it is represented the spiritual marriage and unity between Christ and his Church; Look mercifully upon these thy servants, that they may love, honor, and cherish each other, and so live together in faithfulness and patience, in wisdom and true godliness, that their home may be a haven of blessing and of peace; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit ever, one God, world without end. Amen.

FORASMUCH as you have consented together in holy wedlock, and have witnessed the same before God and this company, and thereto have given and pledged their troth, each to the other, and have declared the same by giving and receiving a Ring, and by joining hands; I pronounce that they are Man and Wife.

of his thoughtless decree, his friend Daniel was forced to go into the lion's

When my bride of twenty years suddenly and unexpectedly left in 2005 while I was deployed, I was devastated. I cried out to God. I fasted. I listened. I meditated day and night. I read. I asked questions. My situation was hopeless as I watched my family crumble from 18,500 miles away. The situation today in our world is grim as well, but there is hope; there are answers. My testimony is all too common in many ways, especially in our military. But I affirm: Promises, vows and covenants are made to last even in times when it hurts to keep them; and keeping these agreements always involves a cost. There is a cost to serving Jesus and there is a cost to laying your life down for your spouse as well. Covenants take our lives and yet give us so much more. In Biblical times, more often than not, even the godless kept their word, even at personal expense. Take for example King Darius. Because

den. The reason was, “the laws of the Medes and Persians cannot be repealed.” Daniel 6:12 NIV The king had great power, but not the power to retract his words. Yes, even this godless culture recognized the value of words and the price to pay to sustain them. Time has changed how we look at our words. We are more “sophisticated” now. We have the power to change our words easily to protect us from inconveniences they might cause. But are we now in a culture of increasing meaninglessness because we are rendering our words meaningless as well?

It's time for change, one person at a time. It's time for men to be counted, one at a time. It is a war, not of the world, but of the mind. It is a war in which heroes take part, a war within the heart. So now I stand by my covenant, always praying, believing in things unseen; for this is how faith is measured, and this war's greatest gift is mine. It is He, the One I most adore. My hope is that the words in this article will encourage you to stand firm in your marriage even when it hurts. You are not alone — there are others. He is creating armies on either shore believing on His promise. Yes, do you hear His voice telling you to wait, just a bit more? Do you hear His voice telling you to keep faith, to intercede and to love just a bit more? My prayer is that God's people will not bow their knee to the God of Baal and that Christians will continue to stand firm in their vows. May they return to their reverence of the Lord by paying close attention to what He says to them and what they say to Him. It's time...

New Members

SSG Doug & Brandy Allen, USA
PO2 Angie Jeffery, USN (Ret)
Mrs. Neilia Kinney
PO2 Ern & Sid Orci, USN (Ret)
HMC Jim Richey, USN
SSG Ritchie & Jennifer Rickert, II, USA
Mrs. Gretchen Ross
Mrs. Tiffani Tennis
SR Auguste Tinde, USN

Promotions

Cpl Patrick Peralta, USMC
SSgt Daniel Salazar, II, USMC
MAJ Mike Wood, USA

CMF Week at White Sulphur Springs July 31 through August 7, 2009

Make your plans now to attend CMF week at White Sulphur Springs Christian Camp and Conference Center.

The topic for our studies will be "Intimacy or Isolation: Choosing God's Plan for Your Marriage." Our speaker will be the Reverend Mr. Larry Hoskins, Th. M, Senior Pastor, Grace Church Aurora, Colorado, Vice Chairman, CMF Board of Directors.

Summer Family Camp is the primary ministry of White Sulphur Springs. Families, singles, young and old come together for a week or weekend to worship God, listen to His voice, and fellowship with other believers from the military society. Adults enjoy speakers and relevant discussions during the mornings and evenings, while youth of all ages attend programs geared for their age group. Afternoons

are unscheduled to allow families and friends to hike, bowl, canoe, play volleyball, read, or catch crawdads in the streams. Special activities include horseback riding, a hayride and campfire, an afternoon tea, a square dance, a picnic, and "dress-up" theme meals.

Discounts: WSS offers a 10% discount on lodging and meals for officers in grades O1-O3, and a 20% discount for enlisted members, midshipmen, cadets and other single undergraduate college students, and a 20% discount for combat returnees (within 6 mo.).
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Manns Choice, PA 15550
phone: 814.623.5583 · fax: 814.623.1520
email: office@whitesulphursprings.org
Website: <http://wss.ocf.gospelcom.net/>

Join the Link-up Team!

Remember how you felt when you arrived at your new duty station? You didn't know a soul, weren't familiar with your surroundings, and were generally apprehensive. The most prevalent stress placed upon members of the military and their families is caused by moving or traveling. One way that we can prevent this stress is to "Link-Up" with other Christians. To that end, we publish a yearly Directory of worldwide referrals. We are in the process of compiling our Spring 2009 issue and want to give you the opportunity to participate. If you are interested, click on the Information->"Join The Link Up Team" button at our website and submit the secure electronic form or submit the enclosed printed form to us by mail.
<http://www.CMFHQ.org>

Generosity

Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. (Philippians 2:3-4 NLT)

We probably wouldn't think of this particular passage in the

context of generosity. However, it encapsulates the concept while at the same time serving as the antithesis of our temporal practice. We are by nature, selfish. We do try to impress others. We are arrogant and are always critical of others and not normally interested in their well-being. When we give we keep track, instead of not letting the left hand know what the

right hand is doing. We seek our kudos from the IRS in our deductions. We see in these words the qualifications for delivering the Gospel to a lost and dying world and the methodology for its funding. This cannot be accomplished in the power of the flesh but must be motivated by the Grace that comes from knowing Christ.

The Nuggets of Faith— by SMSgt Tony (T-Bar) Barnes, USAF (Ret), CMF Board of Directors

I love newspapers. This morning I picked up my copy of the Colorado Springs Gazette and read through its many features. There was the national and state coverage of the recent elections. In the metro section, there was some information on a drug trial. Also listed were the classified advertisements where people attempt to sell anything from water pumps to watermelons. Listed in the business section were small articles about my favorite restaurant's third quarter earnings. And, of course there was the obituary listing of people who had entered into eternity over the last few days.

But, try as I might I never could find a column that listed those people who were baptized the previous week. I could not find a listing of those who had walked an aisle at church and made a life-giving decision to accept the gift of salvation from Jesus Christ. Why is it we will celebrate another victory for the Longhorns or the Crimson Tide and yet ignore the crimson tide that has been flowing for 2,000 years from a hill on the outskirts of Jerusalem?

Why is it that we can root and wave our hands in the air for nine men on a field who hit a ball with a stick? How many of us were glued to the television sets for a couple of weeks while athletes represented their country in sports I had never encountered? And, naturally we root for "da boys" struggling over a line of scrimmage in Texas Stadium.

I would give my right arm if I could just hear Tom Brokaw or Katie Couric announce on a regular basis that some famous actors, athletes or politicians had given their lives to Christ. Just as we sometimes hear a story of how many people have been injured in a train wreck, I would love to hear coverage on the positive side of life. Occasionally, a story might venture into mainstream news coverage of a miracle cure that is inexplicable. But, for the most part, spiritual matters are never mentioned on mainstream news. Yet, the spiritual truths of Christianity are far more significant than the level of the Dow Jones Industrial Average.

I suppose I will never see my dream

come true, and my right arm is likely to stay attached to my torso. But, the Bible tells us that a day will come when every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Every single person will reach that point when they will confess Christ. Unfortunately for some, that Day of Judgment will be too late. Men like Adolph Hitler and Jack the Ripper will bow the knee and confess Christ on that judgment day. But, unless they had been born again through faith in Jesus Christ, that day will be too late.

I long for the return of Christ. In fact, it wouldn't break my heart if he were to return even before I can send this column to my editor. However, if he waits longer, I will continue to tell people of the love of Christ that makes Him want to change your life. I will tell of the plan God has for your life, and I will tell of the immense joy that can be found through a relationship with Jesus Christ. If you know Jesus Christ as your Lord, I celebrate with you. But, if you have never reached that point in your life...come on in, the water is fine.