

Heart and Home Harmony

Aiming for hearts, homes, and lives in harmony with:
God and His Church, and the rest of His creation through the Holy Spirit.

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Here in the North Country

The Days are Lengthening

Scripture texts are from Modern King James Version

That means more light – more warmth – growth – spring is coming!

How we welcome light. A night may seem long and problems looming, but the dawn brings a more hopeful perspective. Light – how we miss it when we are trying to accomplish something. How much easier it is to succeed when a light is turned on or we get to the place “Oh, now I see!”

The only time we want to work in the dark is when we are doing something we do not want to be seen doing. Why do we sometimes welcome the cover of darkness?

In the Bible, John tells us: **And this is the condemnation, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the Light, because their deeds were evil. For every one who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who practices truth comes to the Light so that**

his works may be revealed, that they exist, having been worked in God. (John 3:19-21)

John said of Jesus: **He was the true Light; He enlightens every man coming into the world.** (John 1:9) Read the first 18 verses of John 1. God has enlightened every person with a certain yearning for something (Himself) and a sense that things like murder, stealing, and adultery are wrong, a sense of right and wrong. If we are honest, we know that we have not always done what is true and right. Sin has corrupted our hearts and blinded our eyes. Hanging on the cross, Christ Jesus said, **Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.** (Luke 23:34)

Paul said: **But also if our gospel is hidden, it is hidden to those being lost, in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving ones, so that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ (who is the image of God) should not**

dawn on them. For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For it is God who said, "Out of darkness Light shall shine;" who shone in our hearts to give the brightness of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. 4:3-6)

The Greek word translated sin is thought to come from a word that means, "to miss the mark (and so not share in the prize), ie (fig.) to err, esp. (morally) to sin." We are all aiming for something, but with blinded eyes, it is no wonder we miss the mark. We misuse others and they misuse us. With such corrupted and broken hearts, we are not a pretty sight inside. No wonder we try so hard to hide what is inside. But we might be surprised to know how much sticks out to our fellow man. And we may be caught.

God, of course, sees everything. When we face Him in judgment, all will be brought to light. He is light and must destroy those who remain in inner spiritual darkness and refuse to fit into the order of His program.

And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matt. 25:30)

Then Jesus spoke again to them, saying, I am the Light of

the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. (John 8:12)

Do not wait until it is too late. Believe and come to the Light. Fear not. It doesn't matter how filthy our rags are, He will clean us and clothe us with righteousness. It doesn't matter how broken up we are, He will heal us and make us whole. Tell Him about all your heartaches. Confess every sin as it is revealed. If we surrender all to His hands, He will make us into profitable servants that need never be ashamed.

Confess faults to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. (James 5:16)

Besides being called the Light, Christ is called the Word. He said he will send the Spirit and ...**when He, the Spirit of Truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth.** (John 16:13) This Spirit moved men to write what we know as the Bible; therefore, we can know that it is a

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light by which we can try the spirits. See 1 John 4:1-6.

Your Word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path. The entrance of Your Words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple. (Psalms 119:105 & 130)

Some people make the mistake of depending on their own understanding and feelings. By our own sight, we are as helpless without the Son as our natural eyes are without the sun.

Woe to those who call evil good and good evil; who put darkness for light and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe to those wise in their own eyes, and bright in their own sight! (Isaiah 5:20-21). With confusion like that, woe is inevitable. What else can we expect if we fear not to disregard the word of One so much mightier and wiser than we, the One who sees the whole picture?

He came: **to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.** (Luke 1:79) How marvelous it is to live in this glorious Light! However, sometimes we are unaware that we have things that are shading that light. We may have hidden some dark ugliness in a closet in our heart. It seems just too painful to dig it up and

bring it to the light, so we come up with excuses why it would be better to let it buried.

But, it creates a blind spot. Things look clear from our viewpoint. We aim to bless our loved ones and wonder why we have missed the mark. We know not what we have done, for we cannot see into the hearts of our children, family, friends – oh, the pain, the estrangements because of our lack of clear vision. How many lost souls cannot find the way because of the bushels over our light? (See Matt. 5:14-16)

And this is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us. (1 John 1:5-10)

We must come to the Person who is Light, the Prince of Peace.

Those who do, become one in Him. Halleluiah! The pain of being exposed may be great but it soon gives way to the joy of fuller fellowship with the Father and with one another. The sting of regret is softened by the sweetness of forgiveness. Allow Him to polish your heart. It's rough at first, but afterward you will reflect the Light more clearly.

You are the light of the world. Matt. 5:14. This world desperately needs light. If only our nations and churches would know what they are doing.....

But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more to the perfect day. The way of the wicked is as darkness; they know not at what they stumble. (Prov. 4:18-19)

We are thankful for the Light that has, in mercy, shown

us so much about ourselves and our actions. How much more will the day reveal?

We also have a more sure Word of prophecy, to which you do well to take heed, as to a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the Daystar arises in your hearts... (2 Pet. 1:19)

This morning we awoke to a world sheathed in ice. Now snow is blowing – but the days are lengthening – spring will follow.

May the Light, that can even melt icy hearts, shine in yours. Fear not what it may reveal. Step out in faith and follow. **I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.** (Philippians 4:13)

Enjoy the long days!

Sincerely,

Luke and Rachel Martin

Pickled String Beans

6 quarts string beans

2 tablespoons salt

3 cups sugar

3 pints vinegar

1 teaspoon ground mustard

1 teaspoon celery seed

2 teaspoons turmeric

Cook the cut beans in a little water till tender, but not soft.

Mix all together, put in jars and

process in a boiling water bath 5 -10 minutes.

Bean Salad

For a quick winter salad, take a quart of pickled beans, add 2-4 cups cooked dry beans (any kind or mixture of kinds), chopped onion and crushed garlic to taste, and 2 tablespoons olive oil.

The True Friend

By Patrick McMahon

What is the value of a good friend? Some people would say that they don't need others to survive. In some cases this may be true. The majority of people in this world have a real need for others. We do need other people to live. Living is much different from survival. I used to think that there was no need for others in my life. Gradually I realized that there was a social void needing to be filled. Once in a while, even today, the old feeling surfaces and I wish I could crawl back into a shell. Maybe I couldn't make more mistakes that would hurt others. Maybe then my faults wouldn't be displayed in a way that would negatively affect the lives of those around. I have realized over the years that I probably don't make an ideal friend. In spite of this, there have been a few people willing to venture into friendship with me. These people would be considered good friends in my book. What qualities make these people treasured friends? What makes a true friend?

Proverbs 20:5 says, **“Counsel in the heart of a man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out.”** A good friend will always be a counselor of sorts. The true friend

is compassionate. Such a person knows just what it takes to be true. The man of understanding is able to draw out of himself all of the attributes of a friend.

“A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly; and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24). When I decided that I needed others, I also figured out that if I was friendly to others first, most people were friendly in return. True friends, however, develop a closeness that far exceeds the closeness of blood relatives. I have said that a couple of my closest friends have become like brothers to me. They know things about me that only a brother would know. There are things we see in each other that not even family members would recognize.

The most essential element in a successful friendship is TRUST. Trust can be either the most constructive or the most destructive element of a relationship, depending on how it is administered. Can I be trusted with confidential information that is found deep within the heart of a friend? Am I able to handle with care the good and the bad, the pleasant times and the rough times, and still feel a love toward my friend? Am

I honest? Complete honesty is extremely valuable in building a relationship.

Love is a necessity for one to be a good friend. This is an unconditional commitment to care about the other person no matter what the circumstances are. Selfishness is the ruin of many relationships. True friendship and true love are really the opposite of selfishness. When our friend's needs are placed before our own then we are focused on caring about another – this is love. Let us take some advice from the greatest friend of all – Jesus. He says, **“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends”** (John 15:13).

Patience is in the heart of a good friend. Being a friend is not always easy. As a friend, one may have to give and give without getting a return. Giving in a relationship takes on many forms: emotional support, trustworthiness, encouragement, being the “door mat” or the one who gets stepped on or used, and also being a listener.

The listener is simply available for a friend to share his troubles, trials, temptations, sorrows, joys, and happy moments with. To be a friend doesn't mean that one must always have the answers or the solution to every problem. Rather, listening requires one to lend an ear and present an open heart.

In any relationship mistakes are sometimes made. People get hurt, sometimes due to the behavior of others. In a true friendship, neither party intentionally hurts the other. At times misunderstandings will cause ill feelings. A good friend is forgiving. At the same time we must be willing to apologize when we have hurt another person. There should be a desire to work to make a relationship strong.

Jesus is our ultimate example of friendship. He DID lay down His life for His friends – you and me. There is no greater act of devotion than Jesus' sacrifice of Himself on the cross so that our sins may be forgiven. If there is no one left in the world that we can trust, be assured that Jesus will never let us down. Jesus is always there. He is always listening. He is always willing to forgive. Jesus has all the love we could ever need. Take your concerns to Jesus. He says, **“Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you”** (John 15:15). Let us take our example from the true friend. Jesus has given us the answer to: What makes a true friend? If we follow Him we cannot go wrong. As Christians let us be nothing less than true friends. ♥

The Mail Box

Dear Heart and Home Harmony,

I want to express thanks to the author of “To All Who Are Mentally Ill or Mentally Well.” (Winter 2003) I found much encouragement from your article. It was a relief to find out that there are more people like me. It takes courage to be open about our struggles and about our past. Most likely, the reason it’s so hard is because some won’t understand and therefore will criticize us. It’s humbling for me to realize, though, that no doubt if I had chosen to scoff at my past and deny my current problems, I too, would criticize. Suddenly you see things in a new light when you yourself are walking the journey toward healing. The shoes fit differently when they are on your own feet. “Oh, Lord, help us to be more compassionate toward one another.”

The following article on “Healing,” in the same issue, also gave much good advice and food for thought. A line that stood out to me was: “If we can’t face ourselves and what ails us, we will never be able to have restored emotional health.” And neither will we be there for our children’s needs, most likely. If our past is causing us problems in the present, those problems are not in the past!

We are not meant to deal with our pain and struggles all by ourselves. How crippling it can be to keep past abuse cloaked in secrecy and shame! Let’s join hands in this battle against evil. Someone needs to speak out to educate others. Thank you, once again, to the authors for doing just that. Because of daring to share, may you find a new level of healing. Be comforted, for now you have a larger circle of friends praying for you.

– By a fellow pilgrim

Dear Fellow Pilgrim,

Thank you for the encouraging letter. More than one reader has mentioned that the book “The Wounded Heart — hope for adult victims of childhood sexual abuse,” by Dan B. Allender was a great help to them. Other books that have been helpful are “Angry Men and the Women Who Love Them” by Paul Hegstrom and “The Verbally Abusive Relationship” by Patricia Evans.

–The Editors





Trapped

By Elisabeth Toews

Here we sit —
you on your side of the room
and I on mine.

Inside,
I am who I am
and
you are who you are.

I sit here,
caught in the trap
of what I think
that you think
that I am.
I am silent because I am afraid.

Maybe
you are caught in a trap
of what you think
that I think
that you are.

Maybe
if we'd reach
through our barriers
we could set each other free.

Oh,
if you would just look up
and lock into my eyes
and smile!