

A person with long brown hair, wearing a dark blue long-sleeved shirt, is holding an open Bible in their left hand. They are wearing a brown beaded bracelet on their left wrist. The background is a blurred church interior with a stained glass window. The text 'alive magazine' and 'October '20' is in the top right corner. The title 'Meeting With God' is written in large white cursive across the center.

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October '20

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THE ENEMY Of MARRIAGE



By: MarriageMissions.com

Are you having marriage problems? If you are, that's actually quite normal. The Apostle Paul said: "...Those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this." (1 Corinthians 7:28) He didn't say you MAY face troubles. He said you WILL. So if you're struggling with marriage problems—that's not unusual. But it's what you do with those marriage problems that are important. And from what we see, the first thing you should do is to take those troubles to God. (That is because "He cares for you.") And secondly, address the enemy of marriage.

So, who/what is the enemy of marriage? You might say that it is the devil and his evil forces. And yes, you would be right. The enemy comes to "steal, kill and destroy." And your marriage is definitely targeted. So, be aware!

But there is another enemy of marriage that ALSO needs to be addressed. And you can't repair what's wrong in your marriage until you face that enemy. As Pastor Scott Engelman says:

"There is something wrong with every marriage. There is an enemy of marriage that we must recognize. And that enemy is within. It is the fact that we have idolatrous hearts. There is something wrong with every marriage because there is something wrong with the heart of every person who gets married."

Recognizing the Enemy of Marriage

If we're truthful, we would agree that this is true. But most of us will not admit that we have idols in our lives.

"Most of us think of an idol as a statue of wood, stone, or metal worshiped by pagan people. But the concept is much broader and far more personal than that. An idol is anything apart from God that we depend on to be happy, fulfilled, or secure. In biblical terms it is something other than God that we set our heart on. (Luke 12:29) It's something that motivates us. (1 Corinthians 4:5) It masters and rules us. (Psalm 119:133; Ephesians 5:5) Or it's something that we trust, fear, or serve. (Isaiah 42:17; Matthew 6:24; Luke 12:4-5) In short, it is something we love and pursue in place of God." (See Philippians 3:19.) (From the Peacemaker Ministries article "Getting to the Heart of Conflict").

Furthermore:

"The truth is, idolatry is not only bowing down to statues, it is anything that means more to you than God does. It is manifested when getting what you want has become more important than what God desires for you. Simply put anything that you are loving, desiring, or serving more than God is an idol of the heart." (From the Biblical Counseling for Women article, "The Idolatrous Heart")

Idolatrous Hearts are the Enemy of Marriage

When we look at that definition, it's easier to agree that we all have idolatrous hearts. We love what we love. And our lifestyle and values will reflect it. That's why we need to line our values and priorities up with God's. This will be a lifetime battle because life demands that we make daily choices. So it's a matter of lining up, and realigning at different points times. And the same thing goes for our marriage. Everyday we are faced with choices to choose our marriage as a priority, or not. Sometimes we make wise choices; other times we don't.

But it's also important to look at the originator of idolatry. It's the devil and his cohorts. We must recognize their plans for us—to destroy us and destroy our marriages.

That doesn't mean that they are solely responsible for destroying our marriages. We have to give in to the temptations set before us for that to happen. That's where our idolatrous hearts come in. But it's important to recognize the danger so we can "stand firm in faith" against these evil plans.

The enemy knows that God has designed the covenant of marriage to be a living picture of Christ's love for His church. For that reason, it's a picture that is under attack continually. Unfortunately many of us are participating in this destruction—without ever realizing it.

Recognize the Enemy of Marriage

To help us better understand and identify the "enemy of marriage" and the effort put forth to tear apart our marriage (and other relationships), we'd like to share with you a portion of a 7 scene play titled, "Satan's Agenda." We posted this in a past Marriage Message a number of years ago. But we believe it bears repeating. (FYI: It is written by Geraldine Harris and Kristen Maddox ©Copyright 1998-2008. All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.)

First off, let us be clear here. The scene that we are sharing below is not written in the Bible. It is a fictional scene that we imagine could happen. But you can be the judge here.

We hope that when you are done reading it you'll take the time to look at your own marriage. And then we encourage you to honestly answer the closing question that is posed.

The first scene of this play reads:
"Satan called a worldwide convention of demons. In his opening address he said, 'We can't keep Christians from going to church. We can't keep them from reading their Bibles and knowing the truth. We can't even keep them from forming an intimate relationship with their Savior.





“Once they gain that connection with Jesus, our power over them is broken. So let them go to their churches. Let them have their dinners, but steal their time, so they don’t have time to develop a relationship with Jesus Christ.’

“‘This is what I want you to do,’ said the devil. ‘Distract them from gaining hold of their Savior and maintaining that vital connection throughout their day!’ His demons shouted back, ‘How can we do this?’ ‘Keep them busy in the non-essentials of life and invent as many schemes as possible to occupy their minds,’ he answered.

Temptations

“‘Tempt them to spend, spend, spend, and borrow, borrow, borrow. Persuade the wives and the husbands to work 6-7 days each week, 10-12 hours a day, so they can afford their empty lifestyles. Keep them from spending time with their children. And as their families fragment, soon, their homes will offer no escape from the pressures of work!

“Over-stimulate their minds so that they can’t hear that still, small voice. Entice them to play the radio [or CD player] whenever they drive—to keep [different types of media] and their PCs going constantly in their homes. And see to it that every store and restaurant in the world plays non-biblical music constantly. This will jam their minds. Plus it will break their union with Christ.

“Fill the coffee tables with magazines and newspapers. Pound their minds with the news 24 hours a day. Invade their driving moments with billboards. Flood their mailboxes with junk mail, sweepstakes, and every kind of newsletter and promotional offering free products, services and false hopes. This will also keep them too busy to read their Bibles and other Christian literature that could help them in their everyday lives.

Feed Dissatisfaction

“Keep pictures of skinny, beautiful models in all the magazines and on TV and everywhere you can so the wives become dissatisfied with their own bodies. This will also help their husbands to believe that outward beauty is what’s important. Then they’ll become dissatisfied with their wives as well.

“Keep the wives too tired to love their husbands at night. Give them headaches too! If they don’t give their husbands the love they need, they’ll begin to look elsewhere. (And the reverse can be true as well.) That will eventually fragment their families!

“Even in their recreation, let them be excessive. Have them return from their recreation exhausted. Keep them too busy to go out in nature and reflect on God’s creation. Send them to amusement parks, sporting events, plays, concerts, and movies instead. Keep them busy all the time they’re awake!

Crowding Out God with the Enemy of Marriage

“And when they meet for spiritual fellowship, help them to leave with troubled consciences. Crowd their lives with so many good causes they have no time to seek power from Jesus. Soon they’ll be working in their own strength. They’ll be sacrificing their health and family for the good of the cause.”

“It was a great plan! The demons went eagerly to their assignments influencing Christians everywhere to have little time for their God their marriages or their families, and little or no time to tell others about the power of Jesus to change lives. I guess the question is—has the devil been successful at his scheme? You be the judge!”

Enemy of Marriage?

Can you see how this plan can work? We can become so busy with everything and everyone else to such a point that we neglect that, which is most important! God, our spouse, and our family can take a back seat to everything else if we aren’t careful. We MUST be on the alert! God warns us about this. Our priorities can get so easily turned around in the wrong direction. We often don’t see that idolatry is involved here; but it is.

If you’re having problems in your marriage, don’t lose hope. First, look to God to help you. Secondly, look within. Ask God to reveal to you any idols you are putting into your priorities above the love you should have for Him and your spouse. We encourage you to pray:

“Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” (Psalm 139:23-24)

“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” (Psalm 51:10)

At that point it’s important to note:

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

“Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.” (Proverbs 28:13)

And then as you confess the wrong that God reveals, plead to God:

“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love. According to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!” (Psalm 51:1-2)

Next, pray to God asking Him how to approach your spouse. Approach only with God’s wisdom.



MEETING WITH *God*

By: Andrew Roebert

MEETING WITH GOD IS OUR JOY AND PRIVILEGE

What a joy it is to know that we can have a relationship with the Lord. In that relationship, we can talk to Him (prayer) and He can speak to us. We can spend time together with our Saviour and know and feel His presence in our lives.

In Exodus 19, we see how Moses would have regular interaction and he would meet with God.

Moses would speak to Him, and He would speak to Moses. It was during these times that the Lord handed down His instructions and plans to Moses, and through him, to the nation of Israel. Because of what Christ has done, we too can have a relationship with the Lord. - The way has been opened, the veil has been torn and we can enter in and have fellowship with the Lord.



Exodus 19:3 (TLB) 'Moses climbed the rugged mountain to meet with God...'

I love the phrase: 'To meet with God!' As you read these notes, may you discover the joy and privilege of meeting with Him!

GOD DESIRES TO MEET WITH US EVEN MORE THAN WE DESIRE TO MEET WITH HIM!

Man was created by the Lord to have relationship and fellowship with Him. We were created to bring glory to God and to enjoy Him forever. We were also created to 'enjoy Him forever' and this speaks of an ongoing relationship. God's love for us and His desire for relationship with us, precedes our love and desire for relationship with Him.

1 John 4:19 'We love Him because He first loved us.'

God stepped out into creation and created man, and the whole purpose was fellowship, interaction, and relationship, based on love.

1 John 4:10 'And love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.'

When Moses went up the mountain to meet with God, the Lord was already there, waiting for him.

Exodus 19:3 (TLB) 'Moses climbed the rugged mountain to meet with God, and from somewhere in the mountain God called to him...'

I believe that God is calling to you today. He is saying: 'Come up here, I want to spend time with you, I want to know you and be known by you!'

Exodus 19:4 (TLB) 'You have seen... how I brought you to Myself as though on eagles' wings.'

loves us too much just to leave us the way we are.





He is drawing you today, to Himself, so that you can know a living, vital, relationship with Him. Do not hold back, go up and meet with Him for yourself!

THERE IS ALWAYS A PURPOSE IN MEETING WITH GOD.

The Lord wants to touch and use each of our lives in a special and wonderful way. It is said that God loves us just as we are, but He wants to intersect our lives with His presence, and to speak comfort, encourage, bring hope, give direction, provide reassurance, help us, and supply vision to our lives. He wants to show us which way to go and which path to take. He wants to remind us of His greatness, and His great love for us.

Exodus 19:3 (TLB) Moses climbed the rugged mountain to meet with God, and from somewhere in the mountain God called to him and said, 'Give these instructions to the people of Israel.'

Notice that Moses climbed the mountain. He made an effort, to get to God, and the Lord was already there, calling him. Then Moses received his purpose and the vision and instructions from the Lord. Moses relayed what He had received to the people, and they received it.

Exodus 19:8 They all responded in unison, "We will certainly do everything He asks of us." Moses reported the words of the people to the Lord.

The purpose of his meeting with God was to listen and to hear. It resulted in a unity of heart and purpose. It was not an opportunity for an alternative agenda or selfish ambition. We meet with the Lord in order to encounter, experience, and receive from Him.

MEETING WITH GOD REQUIRES SOMETHING OF US.

Before this meeting could take place, Moses and the people had to prepare themselves. The people had to prepare themselves for meeting with God. Their hands, their hearts and their clothes had to be clean. They had to be ready, and once they were ready that could go out with confidence and awe, to see, listen, and hear.

Exodus 19:17 'Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain.'

We have to consecrate ourselves. We have to make sure that there is nothing that is standing in the way of our relationship with the Lord. We have to deal with all the 'dirt' or sin in our lives so that we can approach the Lord with no hindrances or blockages. Sometimes people will tell me that it feels like their prayers are bouncing off the ceiling. Perhaps this is because there is still some un-dealt with issue, or there is still some unsurrendered aspect of their lives that needs to be turned over to God, so that there can be a clear channel between us and the Lord. - This is what is required of us, so that nothing stands between us and the Lord. - Do not let there be any unfinished business in your life. Don't allow there to be any 'no-go zones' in your life. Surrender it all to Him, repent of that which needs to be repented of, set aside time to be alone with the Lord, and get ready to meet with Him.

MEETING WITH GOD IS A SACRED MOMENT.

Meeting with God is always a sacred moment. It is for this reason that when we meet with Him, things change. It is never a casual encounter, it is usually life-changing, as He comes and lifts burdens and gives us the love, acceptance, and guidance that we need.

Exodus 19:19b (TLB) 'Moses spoke and God thundered His reply.'

Exodus 19:20 'So the Lord came down upon the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses up to the top of the mountain, and Moses ascended to God.'

This is perhaps the best definition of a meeting with God. It reminds me of a great scripture: James 4:8 'Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.' Can you imagine spending time in the very presence of God? Imagine being shut off from all outside distraction, no TV, no social media, no responsibilities, just God, and you with God. Perhaps He has a Divine Appointment with you? These sacred moments can happen occasionally, and on an on-going basis. As we develop our relationship with Him, He will come to us, and this wonderful aspect of our relationship can become a living, daily, reality in our lives. We can know the pleasure of this secret place and these sacred moments between us and the 'Lover of our Souls'.

MEETING WITH GOD CHANGES US.

Exodus 34:29 'When Moses came down from Mount Sinai..., he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the LORD.'

Moses had been speaking with the Lord. his purpose of meeting with God is to talk to the Lord and know that He hears us, and for us to hear what He wants to say. This is life-changing experience and lifestyle. Some years ago, I heard a song that touched my heart. It spoke about how we need interaction with God, and we need to hear His direction and word to us. One word from the Lord, coming out of our relationship with Him, can change everything.



Here is the song:

WE NEED A WORD FROM THE LORD by Vickie Winans

We don't need another political uprising
We don't need another conqueror on the scene
What we need is a special word, that will bond within our hearts
And give us direction from above
We need a word from the Lord
A word from the Lord
Just one word from the Lord
Will move (or remove) all the doubts
And cause the sun to shine
And give peace of mind
Oh, Speak Lord, speak...

We can come to God angry, desperate, disturbed and concerned and we can leave happy, purposeful, free from doubt, filled with peace of mind and heart, and the sun can shine again in our hearts and lives.

WHO MAY MEET WITH GOD?

Perhaps you are asking the question: 'Is this a possibility for me, or is it reserved for some special person?' The truth is that this type of relationship with God is available to all His sons and daughters. As a child of God, it can be your joy and privilege. The key is, pure hearts, clean hands, right living and a longing or a desire to enter into this type of heavenly relationship with your living God.

Psalm 24:3-5 'Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god. They will receive blessing from the LORD and vindication from God their Saviour.'

You see, Jesus is the way to this intimate and special meeting with God.

John 10:27 'My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.'

Ephesians 2:18 'Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us.'

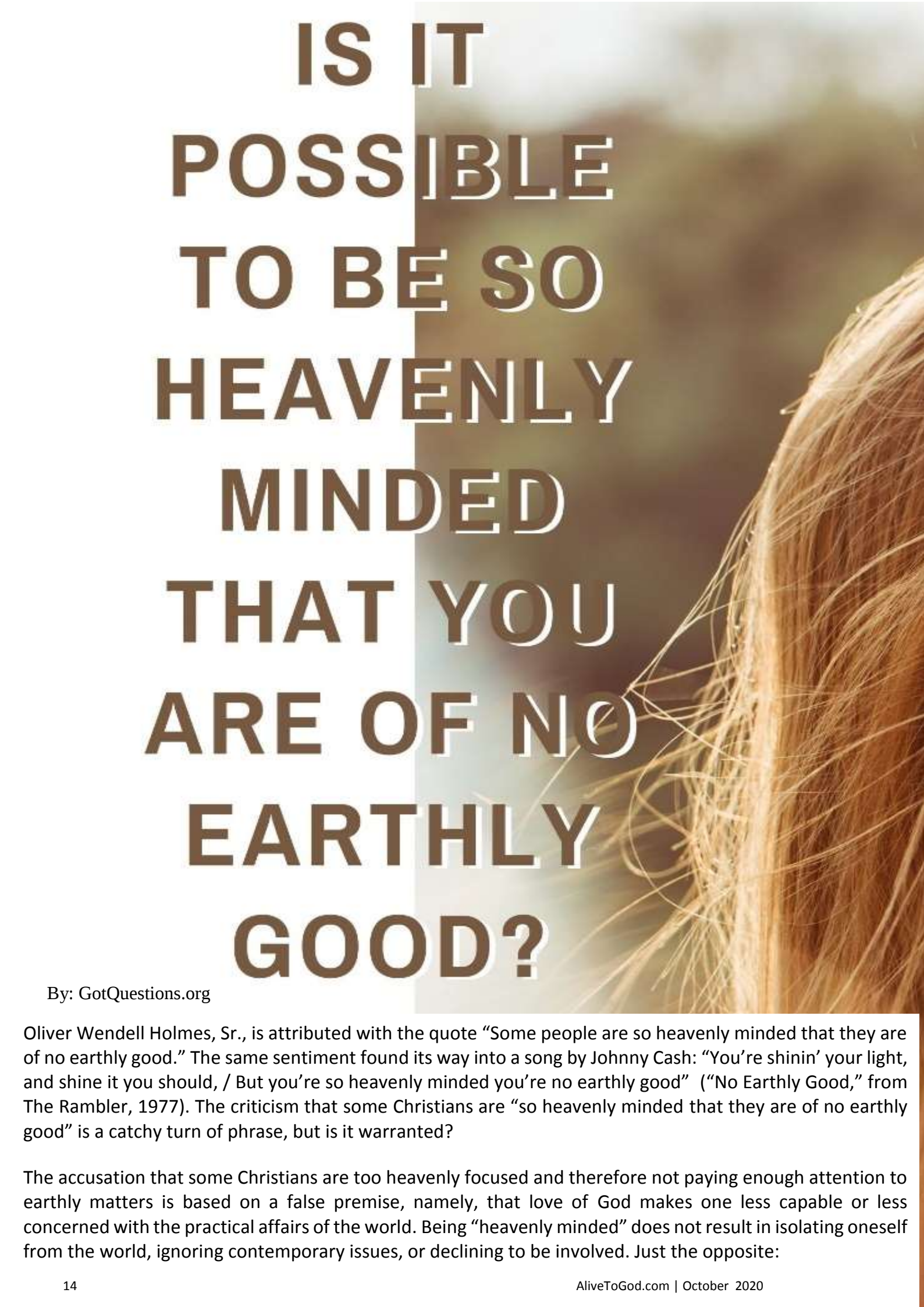
All of us, children of God, can come to the Father.

Hebrews 4:16 'So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive His mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.'

Its for you, my friend.

- Do not settle for anything less.





IS IT POSSIBLE TO BE SO HEAVENLY MINDED THAT YOU ARE OF NO EARTHLY GOOD?

By: GotQuestions.org

Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., is attributed with the quote “Some people are so heavenly minded that they are of no earthly good.” The same sentiment found its way into a song by Johnny Cash: “You’re shinin’ your light, and shine it you should, / But you’re so heavenly minded you’re no earthly good” (“No Earthly Good,” from The Rambler, 1977). The criticism that some Christians are “so heavenly minded that they are of no earthly good” is a catchy turn of phrase, but is it warranted?

The accusation that some Christians are too heavenly focused and therefore not paying enough attention to earthly matters is based on a false premise, namely, that love of God makes one less capable or less concerned with the practical affairs of the world. Being “heavenly minded” does not result in isolating oneself from the world, ignoring contemporary issues, or declining to be involved. Just the opposite:

being heavenly minded results in attempting to please God, who has given us work to do in this world.

Committed, heavenly minded Christians have always tackled the social, environmental, and political problems of the day. Some of the most impactful people in history have been Christians whose faith moved them to action. As C. S. Lewis states in *Mere Christianity*, “If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next” (HarperCollins, 2001, p. 134).



Devoted Christians such as John Newton and William Wilberforce worked tirelessly to abolish the slave trade in England. Christians such as missionary Amy Carmichael, philanthropist George Mueller, and journalist Robert Raikes rescued children in peril, founded orphanages, and established schools. History is full of Christians who positively impacted the world. Their motivation was not simply the need for social reform; rather, they were compelled to do what they did by their strong faith in Jesus and their heavenly focus. It is the very fact that Christians are “heavenly minded” that causes them to help others while spreading the life-changing truth of the gospel.

The Bible insists that Christians be focused on heavenly things: “So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:18). When Christians have their eyes set on Christ, they gain an eternal perspective, and they are of great “earthly good” as their faith impacts their lives and the lives of others (Colossians 3:2; Hebrews 12:1–3).

Scripture teaches that good deeds naturally follow when a person places faith in Jesus Christ (James 2:18). Christians serve the Lord and positively impact the world because of their hope of eternity with Him (1 Corinthians 15:58). True religion involves helping orphans and widows in their distress (James 1:27), doing to others as we would have them do to us (Luke 6:31), giving to those in need (Proverbs 19:17; Acts 20:35), dealing honestly in business (Leviticus 19:11), treating animals humanely (Proverbs 14:21), and proclaiming freedom to those who are enslaved by sin (Ephesians 1:7). A truly heavenly minded Christian is one who lives out his or her faith in service to the Savior and who wants to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8).

It is the earthly minded who accomplish nothing of eternal value. People who are earthly minded are of the world and seek after its desires, which are not from God (1 John 2:15). Being earthly minded is short-sighted: “The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever” (1 John 2:17). It is those who are focused on serving Christ and bringing Him glory who will make a lasting impact on earth and for eternity (see Matthew 6:19–21).

WHAT ARE BOUNDARIES?

and are they biblical?

By: GotQuestions.org

A boundary is a “dividing line.” In geography, a boundary is that which marks the end of one property or jurisdiction and the beginning of another. In interpersonal relationships, a boundary is what divides one person from another, so that each can have separate identities, responsibilities, and privileges. A boundary creates necessary “space” between individuals. Healthy boundaries define expectations and show respect for others.

Biblically speaking, boundaries are related to self-control. The Bible commands us to control ourselves, whereas our human nature desires to control others (Titus 2:12). If left unchecked, our natural desires run roughshod over others. Personal boundaries help to limit our selfish inclination to control or manipulate others. Likewise, boundaries protect us from those who have no self-control and who wish to control us. A person with clear, healthy boundaries communicates to others what is and is not permissible, saying, in effect, “This is my jurisdiction, and you have no right to interfere.”

Boundaries can be used in healthy ways and sinful ways. The way to know which boundaries are godly is to examine the motive. Are you protecting yourself or someone weaker from potential harm, either emotional or physical? If so, then you are setting healthy and needful boundaries. However, if you are maintaining distance simply because you desire to exclude someone, that is sinful. Boundaries that maintain cliques or prohibit ministry opportunities are unhelpful.

Proper boundaries aid believers in keeping out worldly influences. Children of the light have no fellowship with darkness and are thus separate from the world (2 Corinthians 6:14). Being kind and friendly is Christ-like, but we are not to embrace the world’s way of doing things (James 4:4). Our wish is not to keep people away, but when people are being destructive, the boundaries we set can limit the evil they commit against us.

Boundaries are about taking responsibility for our own lives. God gives us freedom to choose to live within His boundaries or outside of them, and to live outside of God’s boundaries means to accept the consequences. Living inside God’s boundaries brings blessing, and living outside of them brings destruction and death (Romans 6:23). Adam and Eve had one boundary in the Garden of Eden: abstain from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The Lord gave them freedom to remain within His bounds, but they chose to overstep the boundary and sin. Their response to God’s revelation of their sin was to blame someone else rather than take responsibility for their lack of self-control. Eve blamed Satan, and Adam blamed Eve (Genesis 3:12-13). Boundaries limit destructive behaviors, and that is why both God and society have laws and consequences for those who overstep those laws (Romans 13:1-4).

A healthy marriage requires boundaries. Marital boundaries keep sex and intimacy within the relationship while respecting each person's needs. Violating these boundaries will quickly destroy trust.

Boundaries are also helpful in parenting. Setting healthy limits for children will protect them (Proverbs 22:6). Unhealthy boundaries tend to be controlling and selfishly motivated. Boundaries should guide a child to individuate into the person God created him or her to be. Boundaries allow children to develop an identity separate from their parents within the safety of their family. Without an identity, people "vanish" into other people or expect them not to have any differences.

Children often feel boundaries are "mean" when they are immature. When they grow up, they usually realize the boundaries were to keep them safe. Adults who were raised without protective boundaries often feel that someone saying "no" to them is "mean," because they never learned self-control. Naturally, when children do not get what they want, they are disappointed, but learning to accept "no" from others is essential to godly character; however, setting boundaries with children must be done in loving ways in order for the child to feel loved (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21; Titus 2:4). The Lord's instruction for parents is that they teach a child boundaries (Proverbs 19:18). Boundaries help a child see that life is not about pursuing what he wants but surrendering to the Lord and following Him. Boundaries set with unconditional love will teach children to surrender to the Lord because they trust God knows what is best and will bring true contentment.

Learning boundaries as a child is important. It is more difficult to learn boundaries later in life. Children will not grow up to respect God's boundaries if they do not learn boundaries in their home. Modeling is necessary; parents cannot teach boundaries and not abide by them themselves.



A person with healthy boundaries takes responsibility for his own life and allows others to live theirs. The goal of boundaries is to make sacrifices for people when appropriate, but never in a destructive manner. We should be available for people in a crisis, but unavailable to indulgent demands. Being gracious is not a blank check for others to continually drain our emotional account. Saying “yes” out of fear of rejection is really a selfish motive for being kind. Being kind in order to gain someone’s favor smacks of hypocrisy and shows a need for boundaries. Fear of man’s disapproval can lead to codependency, the unhealthy alternative to interdependency.



Boundaries teach us to accept one another as being different yet still valuable. God uses boundaries to help us appreciate the differences in people rather than be upset by them. A godly friend tells us what we need to hear, not necessarily what we want to hear (Proverbs 27:6). We are free to be ourselves with others if we control ourselves. Boundaries are not selfish when we use our freedom to serve and love one another because we are keeping our own flesh under control (Galatians 5:13). In a godly relationship, both people are free to love each other and to be themselves because neither is using or manipulating the other.

Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). A believer who sees his need for self-control so he can take responsibility for his own actions and not encroach on others will seek the Lord's help for growth in this character trait. Boundaries are a fruit of submitting to God's will, and He will enable us to make godly choices.

Being Christ-like means we can say "no" in unselfish, helpful ways. Sometimes, love requires us to say "no" to those we love. For example, if a family member is abusing alcohol at a family gathering, then it is Christ-like to tell him not to do so. A proper boundary has then been set. If the response is to get angry, leave, and never come back, then that person simply was not able to respect the boundary. It is not sinful to say "no" to someone if he is crossing personal boundaries in harmful and destructive ways. Every boy or girl on a date should have clear boundaries that must not be crossed.

Boundaries can be difficult to establish because saying "no" may have been off limits or mistakenly taught as being ungodly. God says to tell the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). God tells us to humbly control ourselves, lovingly confront sin, graciously accept others, and overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21). Plus, He promises wisdom in every circumstance (James 1:5).

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