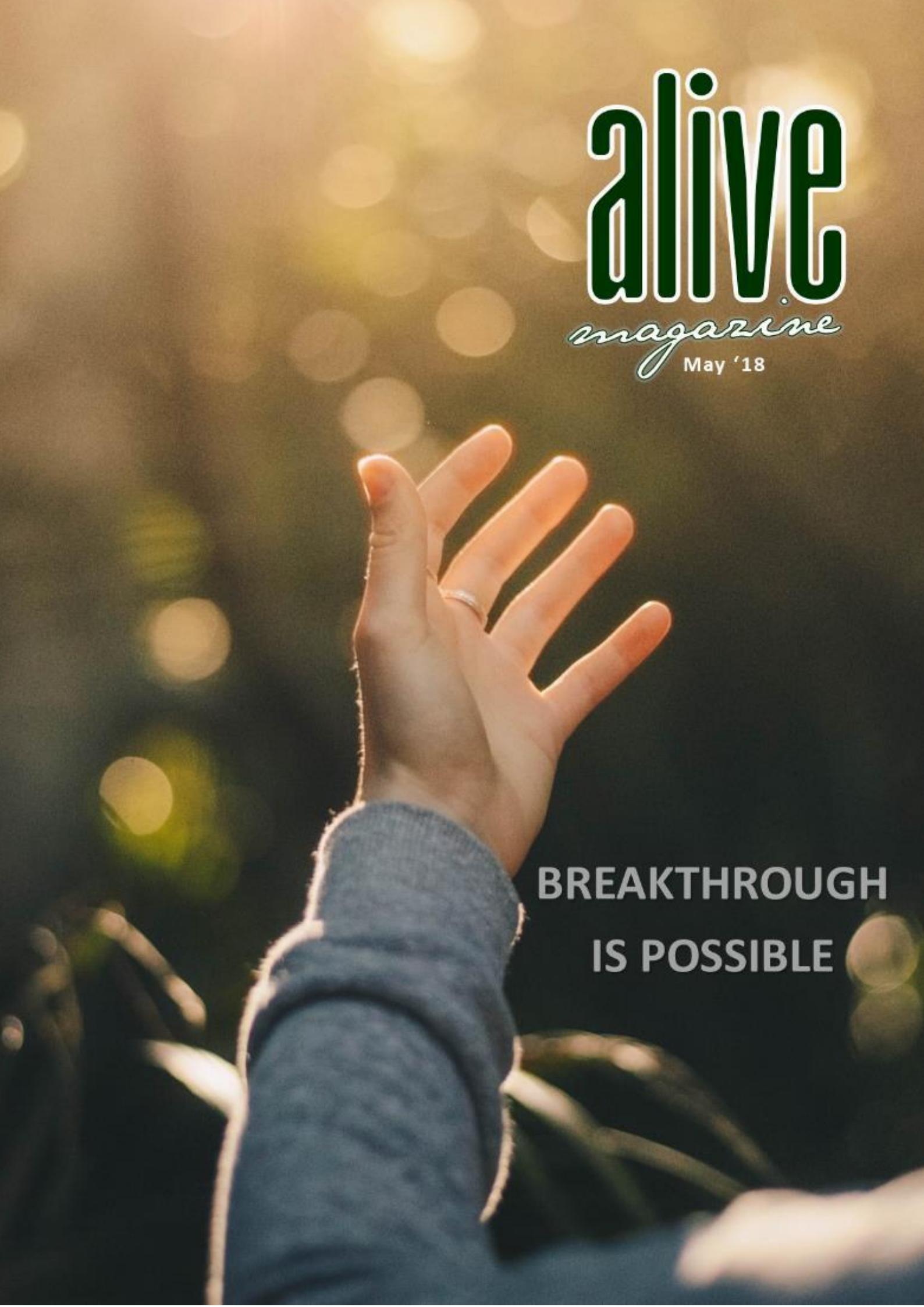

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Some sad news



It is with sadness and a deep sense of loss that I write to advise you that Vanessa Roebert, my wife, passed away on 8 May 2018 after a 20 month battle with cancer. We trusted and we believed to the end and, our mouths were filled with praise to the end, just as we had promised each other and promised the congregation.

Vanessa was the co-founder, with myself, of the ministry, ALIVE TO GOD. At almost 20 years ago now, it was an unheard of idea to use technology and in particular email to reach, touch and encourage people. It exploded and went around the world with almost 200 000 people subscribed at the moment and more than half a million via social media today.

We worked together as a team and she was a diligent labourer. She would not go to sleep until every request had been processed and responded to. She found her destiny and place of ministry through ALIVE TO GOD and in that found great fulfillment and joy. The greatest joy in human life is to do what God has called you to do and she did it with delight.

We know that many of you were praying and trusting with us. Thank you! Today we know that she has 'seen the ONE who sees her' (Genesis 16:13). Our hearts are sad but we are thankful that we are eternal beings have a temporary earthly experience. Her 'earthly experience' is over and when we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be.

Vanessa Roebert is survived by myself, her husband, Andrew, and her two daughters; Caitlin Joy (19) and Amy Charlotte (15) and her precious dog, 'Cupcake'.

The work and ministry of ALIVE TO GOD will continue. She was always concerned that the work must go on and people must continue to be encouraged and strengthened. We know that God will continue to use what she planted, nurtured and established to continue touching people with hope and comfort.

The funeral took place on Monday 14 May at CHOOSE LIFE Church in Pretoria.

This scripture is so true in our lives:

Psalm 125:3 'The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.'

May you too find comfort in the knowledge that the Lord loves you and you are valuable and precious in His sight!



Dearest Vanessa. You were a wonderful wife to my eldest son. - Pal Roebert

Vanessa was the sister I never had. She was courageous and a true example of a woman of faith! She had the most amazing eyes that just shone with love and care for those she loved and a smile that could comfort any sadness. She was so easy to talk to and a great listener. . . . . a woman with a heart of gold! - Mandri Roebert

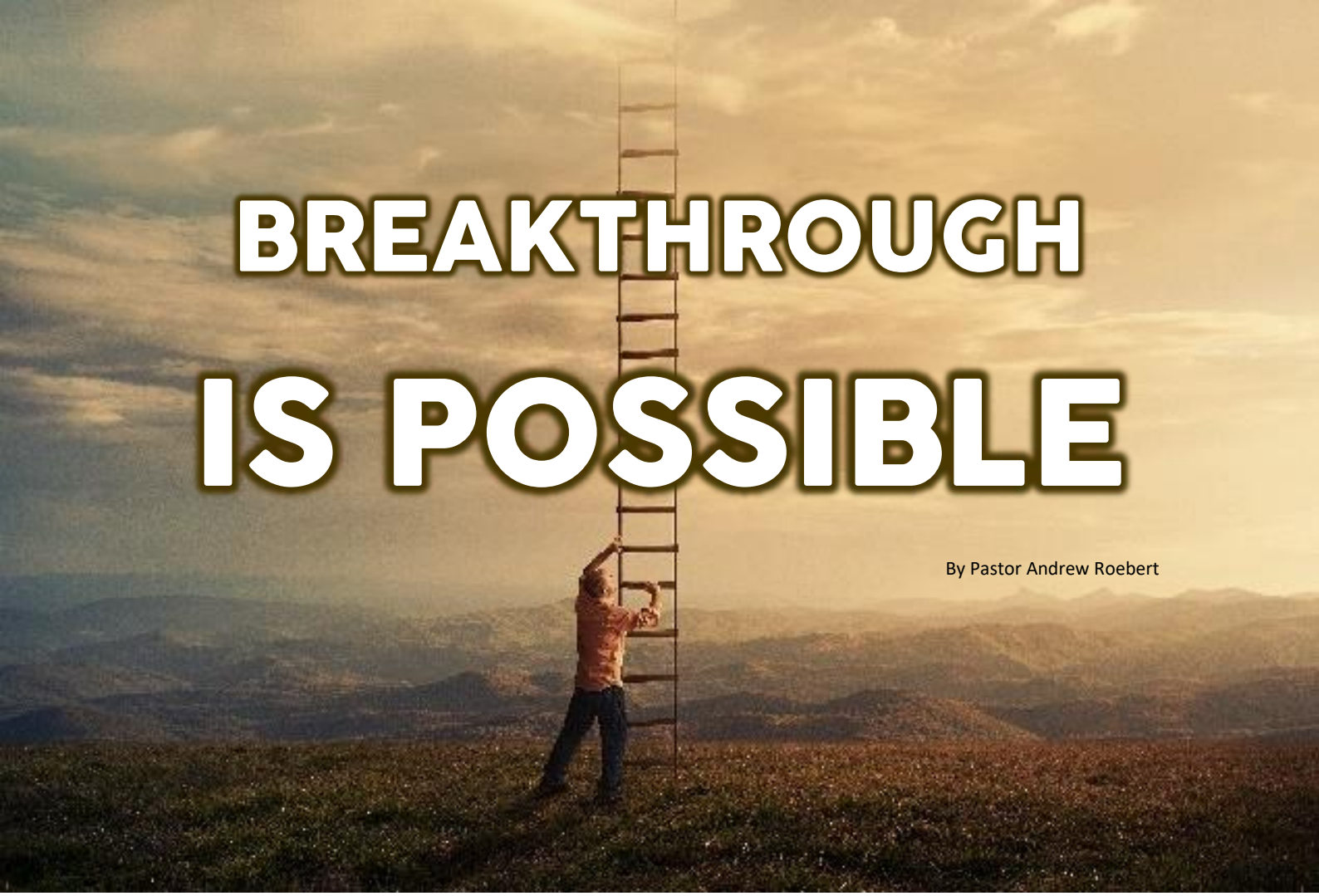
A gracious, compassionate lady, gentle and kind. Beautiful inside and out. - Maxine Visser

Vanessa has a kind heart. Always worried about others, even in her darkest hour. Great mom, stunning wife and special friend with a big heart, always making room for others. Have fun in heaven Vaness. - Dalene Cornelius

Vanessa was always a lady. Not concerned about church politics but only wanting to be there to support Andrew. Her family was always her first priority. I loved her smile it was gentle and genuine and her beauty came as much from the person she was as her actual physical beauty. You will be missed Vanessa. - Barbara Petzer

Dear Andrew and the Roebert family, my sincere condolences with the loss of Vanessa. I will remember her smile, her joy and her warmth towards everyone she encountered. - Gerda Le Roux

What I loved about Vanessa was her shy warmth and genuine kindness. She didn't attract attention to herself, yet was always so interested in me and my family. Vanessa smiled with her mouth as well as with her eyes. And her faith in, and love for, the Lord was evident even in the midst of her trial. The scripture that makes me think of Vanessa is John 13:1 "Before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world and return to his Father. He had loved his disciples during his ministry on earth, and now he loved them to the very end." It makes me think of Vanessa because she was like Jesus in this regard, with her husband Andrew, daughters Caitlin and Amy, and her dad, mom and sisters being the loves of her life. She loved them right to the very end. I take great comfort in the promise of Eternal life and know that one day in Heaven there will be a wonderful reunion. - Pastor Bruce Taylor



BREAKTHROUGH IS POSSIBLE

By Pastor Andrew Roebert

Many people are battling with discouragement, despair, hopelessness and depression. Perhaps you are feeling like this today. You are not alone. Even the great people of God went through experiences like this. Like Moses, Abraham, Joseph and David. The prophet Jeremiah also faced difficulty and discouragement.

EVEN THE GREAT GET DOWNHEARTED

Jeremiah was a great prophet who had been used by God. He was the one who brought us these great scriptures:

Jeremiah 29:11 'For I know the plans I have for you says the Lord. They are plans for good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.'

Jeremiah 33:3 'Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.'

These are some of the best-known and loved scriptures, yet there was a time when Jeremiah was discouraged.

We find it in: Jeremiah 15:18 'Why is my pain perpetual and my wound incurable, refusing to be healed? Will you indeed be to me like a deceitful brook, like waters that fail and are uncertain?'

Can you see the doubt and discouragement?

GOD'S RESPONSE

God responds to Jeremiah in his discouragement. God gives him some advice to help him out of the hole that he had found himself in.

Jeremiah 15:19 'Therefore thus says the Lord (to Jeremiah): 'If you return (and give up this mistaken tone of distrust and despair), then I will give you again a settled place of quiet and safety, and you will be My minister; and if you separate the precious from the vile (cleansing your own heart from unworthy and unwanted suspicions concerning God's faithfulness - you shall be My mouthpiece. (But do not yield to them). Let them return to you - not you to (the people).'

Let's look at God's response:

- RETURN TO GOD

The first thing that God does is to offer him the option of returning. Oftentimes when we are discouraged we become self-focused and self-orientated. We begin to feel sorry for ourselves. This self-orientation needs to be replaced with a returning to God and becoming God-orientated.

We need to become God-conscious and remind ourselves that God is all-powerful and limitless. We must stop limiting God and return to a pace of faith in God.

Jeremiah 15:19 Therefore thus says the Lord (to Jeremiah): 'If you return'

- A MISTAKEN TONE

Have you ever discovered that when we are going through a hard time we can begin to sound like we are going through a bad patch? Jeremiah had begun to develop this tone. It was a tone of distrust and despair.

Perhaps he was saying things like: 'God has forgotten about me' or 'God does not have a plan for me', or 'trusting God is not really helping me'. Moaning or distrust and despair do not move God, God is moved by faith. When we develop this tone we need to take decisive steps to give up and let go of this attitude so that God can begin to use us again.

Jeremiah 15:19 Therefore thus says the Lord (to Jeremiah): 'If you return (and give up this mistaken tone of distrust and despair)'.

- GET RID OF THE DOUBT

When we develop doubt, we set ourselves up for disaster. Doubt and suspicions about God and His faithfulness are unacceptable and vile to God.

Jeremiah 15:19 'and if you separate the precious form the vile (cleansing your own heart from unworthy and unwarranted suspicions concerning God's faithfulness)'.

Our doubt concerning God is unworthy and unwarranted. Don't let it get a foothold in your life.

THE REWARDS

If we do these things and get rid of the doubt, questions or suspicions then God can begin to use us. While we are full of doubt and negativity, God cannot use us or bring about His plan and purpose for our lives. But if we can deal with these things, then the way is open for God to work in our lives and to use us.

Jeremiah 15:19'Therefore thus says the Lord (to Jeremiah); If you return (and give up this mistaken tone of distrust and despair), then I will give you again a settled place of quiet and safety, and you will be My minister; and if you separate the precious from the vile (cleansing your own heart from unworthy and unwarranted suspicions concerning God's faithfulness), you shall be My mouthpiece.'

Note the rewards:

1. A settled place of quiet and safety
2. You will be My minister
3. You will be My mouthpiece

As we read on we see that God has even greater things in store. We can apply this story to our lives.

Jeremiah 15:18 - 21 'Why is my pain perpetual and my wound incurable, refusing to be healed? Will you indeed be to me like a deceitful brook, like waters that fail and are uncertain? Therefore thus says the Lord [to Jeremiah]: If you return [and give up this mistaken tone of distrust and despair], then I will give you again a settled place of quiet and safety, and you will be My minister; and if you separate the precious from the vile [cleansing your own heart from unworthy and unwarranted suspicions concerning God's faithfulness], you shall be My mouthpiece. [But do not yield to them.] Let them return to you - not you to [the people]. And I will make you to this people a fortified, bronze wall; they will fight against you, but they will not prevail over you, for I am with you to save and deliver you, says the Lord. And I will deliver you out of the hands of the wicked, and I will redeem you out of the palms of the terrible and ruthless tyrants.'



Belonging to God

By Pastor Andrew Roebert

Every human being wants a sense of belonging. We want to feel wanted and required. We like to feel we belong somewhere or that we have a place where we fit in. This need for a sense of belonging is what drives people under peer pressure. This pressure within us to belong can even become destructive. BUT, if you have given your life to God, you can know that you belong to Him. It is from this relationship that we can enjoy a sense of belonging. We can know that we are members of His family.

A FATHER-SON RELATIONSHIP

When we belong to God we can enjoy a father-son relationship. Unlike belonging to a certain group where peer pressure forces us into conformity, belonging to God brings relationship. This relationship is the basis for a lifelong walk with God. God wants to be a father to us.

Fathers encourage, fathers help and assist, fathers guide and give direction and fathers correct and discipline. In this relationship is the ultimate form of belonging. Here we can find our place, our purpose and our destiny. If you have given you life to God you can call Him your Father.

BELONGING BECAUSE YOU ARE CHOSEN

This sense of belonging can be ours because God has chosen us. God desires relationship with us.

Deuteronomy 14:2 You belong exclusively to the Lord your God, and He has chosen you to be His own possession.

We have been selected to be able to have this relationship with God.

John 15:16 You did not choose Me, but I chose you.

We have been accepted or chosen by God, so that we can know that we belong to Him. We can enjoy a knowledge that we belong exclusively to the Lord.

BELONGING TO GOD IS SOMETHING OTHERS CAN SEE

If we know that we belong to God it should be something that those around us can see. If we belong to God and have felt His touch on our lives, we should be different. This difference should be something that is obvious to others. Otherwise how will they know that we belong to God?

Deuteronomy 28:10 All the nations in the world shall see that you belong to the Lord, and they will stand in awe.

Can people see in your life that something special that comes from being connected to the living God? They should be able to see it.

BELONGING MEANS WE HAVE WHAT WE NEED

Human beings need a sense of belonging because there is a need within us to be accepted. We need to feel that we are accepted. This need for acceptance needs to be met. If we belong to God, He wants to meet our every need, including the need to be accepted.

Psalm 34:9 If you belong to the Lord, reverence Him; for everyone who does this has everything he needs.

I believe that this acceptance and sense of belonging is something we can experience. It may start with faith and head-knowledge, but it was never meant to remain that way. We were meant to experience this 'knowing' that we belong to God.

OUR BELONGING COST

The fact that we can belong to God did not come cheaply. It cost a great deal. Jesus had to come to earth and die for us so that we could belong and know a sense of belonging.

1 Corinthians 7:23 You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.

Jesus paid that price for you and me. The fact that we were bought indicates ownership. It is this very ownership that gives us our sense of belonging. You have been bought with a price.

BELONGING TO GOD BRINGS US NEAR TO GOD

If we belong to God and have been chosen by Him, it shows us that we have been brought close to Him.

Ephesians 2:13 But now you belong to Christ Jesus, and though you once were far away from God, now you have been brought very near to Him because of what Jesus Christ has done for you with His blood.

Because our sense of belonging is the result of our relationship with God, we can experience Him as being very near to us. Once we were far away from God but now we can be very near to Him. I can think of nothing better.

MEMBERS OF GOD'S FAMILY

Our sense of belonging has been formalised. God did not want us to have any doubt as to where we belong. He wanted to settle the matter once and for all. To do this He made us members of His own family. There can be no greater sense of belonging than within our family. God wanted us to experience this within His family.

Ephesians 2:19 Now you are no longer strangers to God and foreigners to heaven, but you are members of God's very own family, citizens of God's country, and you belong in God's household with every other Christian.

We are not strangers and we are not foreigners. We are members of God's family. We are Citizens of God's country. We belong to God's household.

THE RESULTS OF BELONGING

The result of us belonging to influences the way we live. It should affect every aspect of our lives. It should affect the way in which we deal with others.

Ephesians 4:32 Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God has forgiven you because you belong to Christ.

How are you treating those around you? Are you being kind, tenderhearted and forgiving? The reality of God's love for us should lead us to loving others.

THERE IS SOMEONE IN OUR HEARTS

This belonging can be a reality within our hearts. We can know that Jesus Christ is living in our hearts. This is the ultimate sense of belonging.

1 John 4:4 Dear young friends, you belong to God and have already won your fight with those who are against Christ because there is Someone in your hearts who is stronger than any evil teacher in this wicked world.

We can know Someone in our hearts. Can you honestly say that this is true in your life? It starts as you invite Him (Jesus) into your life and give Him the place of priority. As a result we can know this awesome sense of belonging that comes from knowing God.

COME TO ME

By Pastor Andrew Roebert

We want to look at one of the great invitations that Jesus made. The invitation is that we are invited to 'COME TO HIM'. Today His invitation to us still stands. It is still in the heart of God that we would 'COME TO HIM'. When we respond to this invitation, we must respond like children. Ready to go and sit with our God, our Saviour. Today Jesus is saying: 'COME TO ME!'. What we need to do is respond.

THE STORY

The story during which Jesus made this invitation is well-known and special. It is a story of man's longing! It is a story that shows us the heart of mankind! It is a story that shows us the heart of God!

Luke 18:15-17 One day some parents brought their little children to Jesus so he could touch them and bless them, but the disciples told them not to bother Him (They rebuked them!). Then Jesus called for the children and said to the disciples, "Let the children come to Me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I assure you, anyone who doesn't have their kind of faith will never get into the Kingdom of God."

This is a remarkable story! There are four role players in this story:

1. The parents.
2. The children.
3. The disciples.
4. Jesus.

I wonder how each of those groups felt about this experience?

WE ALL KNOW WE NEED GOD

In this story we see how parents were spontaneously bringing their children to Jesus. They must have known that there was some benefit to having their children around Jesus. These parents desired that their children would experience Jesus and get His blessing on their lives. These parents had brought their children and some may have traveled a long way. In the same way today parents still want their children to be dedicated, baptized or christened. They want the blessing of God on the lives of their children. There is this deep seated knowledge that we need God and God's blessing in the lives of our children. BUT it goes further, because we know that we need God's blessing and presence in our daily lives. In a very real sense we all know that need for the touch of God in our lives. We can find it! As we push in, and just like the children in this story, find a place at the feet of our Creator.

THERE WILL ALWAYS BE OBSTACLES

When it comes to getting closer to God there will always be obstacles, hurdles and hindrances. There will always be things that try to keep us away from God. It could be religious leaders, our spouse, our children, our work, our careers, our health, our wealth, our hobbies, the busyness of life and many other things. The issue is that we need to recognise and deal with them. We must never allow circumstances, people and pressures to keep us away from God. In this story the 'well-meaning' disciples decided it was too much for Jesus and they felt these parents and their children were bothering Jesus. So the disciples got a bit strong. The Bible uses the word 'rebuked'. This means to 'criticize sharply' or to 'reprimand'. Whatever it means they were being forceful in an attempt to get these people away from Jesus. The devil will be forceful in making sure that he keeps you as far away from God as he can. There will always be obstacles, BUT press through, God is waiting for you!

THE RESPONSE OF JESUS

Then Jesus intervenes. This is what makes this story so remarkable. He does not just leave it there and agree with what His disciples are doing. He recognizes what is going on and He puts a stop to it in a very decisive action. Jesus tells His disciples: 'DON'T STOP THEM!'. He was not mincing words about this, He wanted what the disciples were doing to stop and stop right now. He was not diplomatic or gentle, He was direct and clear. I believe that Jesus wanted this matter cleared up. He wanted it known that despite what the disciples had wanted, He wanted His children to come to Him! And He said it just like that: 'Let the children come to Me.'

THE TOUCH OF GOD

The touch of God is such an essential ingredient in our lives.

Mark 1:40 – 42 Now a leper came to Him, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, "If You are willing, You can make me clean." Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed.

Notice the process:

1. Desperation and determination
2. The touch
3. The words
4. The healing

We all need to experience the touch of God in our lives. Many people here and around the world have begun to experience a fresh touch from God.

Acts 3:19 So repent (change your mind and purpose); turn around and return [to God], that your sins may be erased (blotted out, wiped clean), that times of refreshing (of recovering from the effects of heat, of reviving with fresh air) may come from the presence of the Lord.

Matthew 11:28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy-laden and overburdened, and I will cause you to rest. [I will ease and relieve and refresh your souls.]

THE INVITATION

And so Jesus invites the children to come to Him. 'Let the children come to Me!' This matter was settled once and for all. The heart and the intention of Jesus was that these children should have access to Him. Today you and I are children of God. As such we can receive this same invitation from God. Today Jesus is saying to you as His child: 'COME TO ME!' It is the same child-like faith that brings us to a place of receiving God's blessing and favour as well as being able to be with Him and enjoy His presence in our lives. We must never allow anything to block or stop us from enjoying this connection with God. We must respond to the invitation and as we hear the words: 'COME TO ME!' we must say: 'Lord, HERE I AM I COME TO YOU RIGHT NOW!'. What is an invitation worth if we do not respond?

What are we to make of all this?

1. God has time for each one of us!

2. God invites us to come to Him. Your Heavenly Father is drawing you to Himself!

3. As children of God it is our natural response to want to be with our heavenly Father.

4. There will always be those things trying to stop us.

5. Press in and press on to know and experience more of God.

6. We need the touch of God!

7. He is waiting for us to come to Him in child-like faith!



Should we as Christians watch television?

GotQuestions.org

Many Christians struggle with the issue of whether or not to watch television and, if we do watch, how much TV should we watch? Television, like many other diversions we have in today's society, has the ability to do both great good and great harm.

On the plus side for the Christian, television can be a wonderful educational tool. News and weather reports have saved countless lives, and we have access to entertainment, sports, and information that can be helpful and uplifting. From a Christian standpoint, TV has been used to share the gospel to virtually every nation on earth (Matthew 28:19), and countless lives have been changed through Christian television broadcasts.

On the negative side for the Christian, many people become addicted to television viewing or mindlessly sucked in to whatever show may be on at the moment. This takes people away from family, friends, and time in God's Word. Many of the most popular shows today focus on the worst that mankind has to offer, and evil is glorified as good (see 2 Timothy 3:1–5 and Isaiah 5:20). Even on so-called Christian television, there are some men and women claiming to be ministers of God who are more concerned about money and prestige than saving souls (see 2 Timothy 4:3–4).

The impact of television in our lives comes in what we do with it. Christians should not let TV control them; rather, they should use TV as the communication tool it was meant to be.

A discerning Christian television viewer will ask some questions and prayerfully answer them:

– What is my motive for watching this TV show? (See 1 Corinthians 10:31.)

– Does this television show contain material that, as a Christian, I cannot hear or view with a pure mind? (See Psalm 101:3.)

– Will watching this TV show further my understanding of my culture and therefore help me communicate Christ more effectively? Or am I seeking a thrill and secretly relishing scenes of evil?

– Am I committed to obtaining truth from the Word of God rather than from powerful media forms such as television?

– Can I separate the wheat from the chaff? Can I rejoice in /Biblical themes a TV show might present while rejecting its ungodly elements? Or do the ungodly elements overwhelm any good contained in the show?

– Is there a better use of my time?

It's difficult to give a hard-and-fast rule about how much television a Christians should watch—or whether he should watch any at all. Ultimately, that decision is between the believer and God—or, in the case of minors, between their parents and God. Christians considering the issue of television should examine the Word, pray about it, listen to their conscience, and follow the Spirit's leading.

Here are some verses that may help in discerning what is appropriate TV viewing for a Christian:

Matthew 5:28: "But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

Matthew 6:22–23: "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!"

Romans 12:2: "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will."

Romans 13:13–14: "Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature."

Philippians 4:8: "Finally brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."

1 Thessalonians 5:21–22: "Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil."



What should a Christ-centered life look like?

www.GotQuestions.org

A Christ-centered (or Christocentric) life is one that is focused upon a commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord. At the core of every human decision is a motivation. Some people are motivated by the quest for pleasure or money. Some center their entire lives on a goal, a job, or even their families. These things are not wrong in themselves; however, that which we center our lives on can become our god.

The human heart was designed for worship, and if it does not worship God, it will worship something else. If we are not Christ-centered, we will be centered on something else. Worship is measured by the amount of time, money, and emotional energy expended. Our gods can be identified by the level of passionate commitment they evoke in us, and, after a while, we begin to resemble them. We talk about them, think about them, dream about them, and scheme to spend more time with them. People who know us best usually know where our deepest passions lie because worship is hard to hide.

Followers of Christ who center their lives on Him start to become more like Him. They talk about Him, think about Him, dream about Him, and scheme to spend more time with Him. They choose to obey His commands out of love and honor for their Lord, not from fear of being caught in sin. The greatest desire of Christ-centered believers is to please Him and grow to be more like Him. Their lives echo Paul's words in Philippians 3:10: "I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of His resurrection and participation in His sufferings, becoming like Him in his death." The chief aim of a Christ-centered life is to glorify God.

But a Christ-centered life is not to be confused with a religion-centered life. The Pharisees in Jesus' day were religion-centered. They ate, drank, and slept the Law. They could spout rules, codes, and judgments as fast as a child can recite the ABC's, but Jesus had harsh rebuke for them. They were Law-centered but not love-centered, and it made all the difference (Matthew 23:25; Luke 11:42). A religion-centered life strives for supremacy, attention, and glory based upon performance. It keeps score and judges itself and others by self-made standards. Christ-centered lives rest in the finished work of Jesus on their behalf and yearn for holiness as a means of staying close to Him (Hebrews 12:14).

The secret to living a Christ-centered life is understanding the "fear of the Lord" (Psalm 19:9; Proverbs 16:6). The fear of the Lord is the continual awareness that our loving heavenly Father is watching and evaluating everything we think, say, or do. Those who live Christ-centered lives have developed a tangible awareness of the presence of Jesus (Matthew 28:20). They make decisions based upon the question "Would this please the Lord?" They avoid Satan's traps and worldly entanglements because they evaluate their choices: "If Jesus was spending the day with me, would I do that? Watch that? Say that?" (1 Timothy 3:7; Ephesians 6:11). Every lifestyle decision is weighed on heaven's scales and evaluated for its eternal significance. Lesser loves fall by the wayside because they steal time, resources, and energy away from the real passion of life—pleasing Jesus. However, living with the fear of the Lord requires a conscious, ongoing commitment to it, and even the most devoted will fail at times.

No person has ever lived a perfect life except Jesus (Hebrews 4:15). Even those who deeply desire a Christ-centered life will stumble, fall, sin, and make fleshly decisions in moments of weakness (1 John 1:8–10). But a Christ-centered person cannot endure living in disharmony with God and will quickly confess sin and be restored to fellowship with Him. This process of living in continual harmony with God is called sanctification. It is a lifelong process by which God makes us more like Jesus (Romans 8:29; Hebrews 12:14). When we first center our hearts on Him, our lives quickly follow.

Don't Let Bitterness Poison Your Marriage

By Cindy Wright - MarriageMissions.com



The Bible says in Hebrews 12, "Make every effort to live in peace with all men (which would include your spouse) and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many."

But what do you do when your spouse hurts you so deeply that a bitter root is growing within? Despite your every effort, this bitterness is taking over, and it is poisoning your marriage.

Someone once said, "Bitterness is an acid that hurts more the object in which it's stored than the object on which it is poured." You may not want to take it in, but you find yourself taking it in anyway.

The following are a few thoughts for you to consider

• "When others (including our spouse) hurts us in ways we don't deserve, at some point we will come to the crossroads of decision. We will have to look our pain square in the face and ask, 'Am I going to hang on to my anger and do violence to myself, or am I going to forgive those who have wounded me? Am I going to allow bitterness to poison and putrefy my soul, or am I going to invite God to empower me to let the anger go?'" (Pam Vredevelt, from the book, The Wounded Woman)

• "The choices we make form the rudder that directs our marriage journey. Good choices keep us sailing smoothly in the right direction. Bad choices steer us toward the rocks. And every day in marriage, choices are made that keep couples headed where they want to go or lead them to places that they dread." (Dr's. Les and Leslie Parrott, from the book, When Bad Things Happen to Good Marriages: How to Stay Together When Life Pulls You Apart)

• "Listen to these words: 'We stand at the crossroads, each minute, each hour, each day, making choices. We choose the thoughts we allow ourselves to think, the passions we allow ourselves to feel, and the actions we allow ourselves to perform. Each choice is made in the context of whatever value system we've selected to govern our lives. In selecting that value system, we are, in a very real way, making the most important choice we will ever make.' Benjamin Franklin said this, and his words have more wisdom for married couples than he probably ever knew."

Keep in mind that

"In order to thrive, bitterness averts its gaze from God's grace and mercy, focusing instead on the multitude of ways He and people we've counted on have let us down." (Roberta Rand Caponey from, "Overcoming Bitterness")

There probably isn't any of us would want to choose to hold onto bitterness. But how do you make a different "choice?"

There is a prayer that you might look over to see if it expresses the prayer of your heart. There are a few scriptures you could also through, as well.

Hopefully, these things, along with what you can read in the Bible, and other articles you can read on MarriageMissions.com can minister to your heart. Most importantly, work through all of this with our Wonderful Counselor, the Holy Spirit. He can help you to release whatever bitterness you are struggling with.

Keep in mind that the enemy of our faith does not want you to break free "so you can more on with your life." As you embrace the grace and power of God to let go of your bitterness, the enemy loses.

As author Tim Kimmel wrote

"There's nothing gracious about letting the forces of evil hold you hostage to crimes done against you. God wants to release you from their hold so you can enjoy a full and free life with your spouse."

Right now, you are a prisoner to the memories and feelings that keep haunting you concerning past hurts. You may think that you will never be free, because it is so pervasive. But I can tell you from personal experience that this is a lie from the pit of Hell. I had some horrible things done to me earlier in my life that tortured my mind for a number of years. I truly thought I would never get past it. But with God's help, I have. I am free. Thank God, I am free. The journey was long, and painful, but it was worth leaning into the Lord to get to this point of freedom.

Also, my mom (and several other close family members and friends I know) suffered from the horrors of having a spouse who betrayed her. She also never thought she would be able to release the bitterness that grew within her heart. But she did. It was a long, painful journey of leaning upon the Lord. But God is faithful.

Dr. Kimmel gives this insight in his book, Grace Filled Marriage. He writes

"Perhaps even the thought of never being able to get beyond these things is just the dark side continuing to lie to you. I don't know about you, but the last person I want having any say in how I'm supposed to respond in these kinds of situations is the evil one who got me there in the first place."

Do what it takes to fight these lies. Lean into the healing God can give you as you look to Him to help you break free from bitterness.

To help you in this journey of healing, you can pray through the prayer and the scriptures below. We pray God will minister to your heart and to your situation.

The following is a prayer, written by Stormie Omartian, that you may want to pray

Help me not to hold myself apart from [my spouse] emotionally, mentally, or physically because of unforgiveness. Where either of us needs to ask forgiveness of the other, help us to do so. If there is something I'm not seeing that is adding to this problem, reveal it to me and help me to understand it. Remove any wedge of confusion that has created misunderstanding or miscommunication.

Where there is behavior that needs to change in either of us, I pray You would enable that change to happen. As much as I want to hang on to my anger toward [my spouse] because I feel it is justified, I want to do what You want. I release all those feelings to You. Give me a renewed sense of love for him and words to heal this situation.

Here are some scriptures to earnestly pray

"Search me, O 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)

"Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long." (Psalm 25:4-5)

Dealing with negative people What does the Bible say?

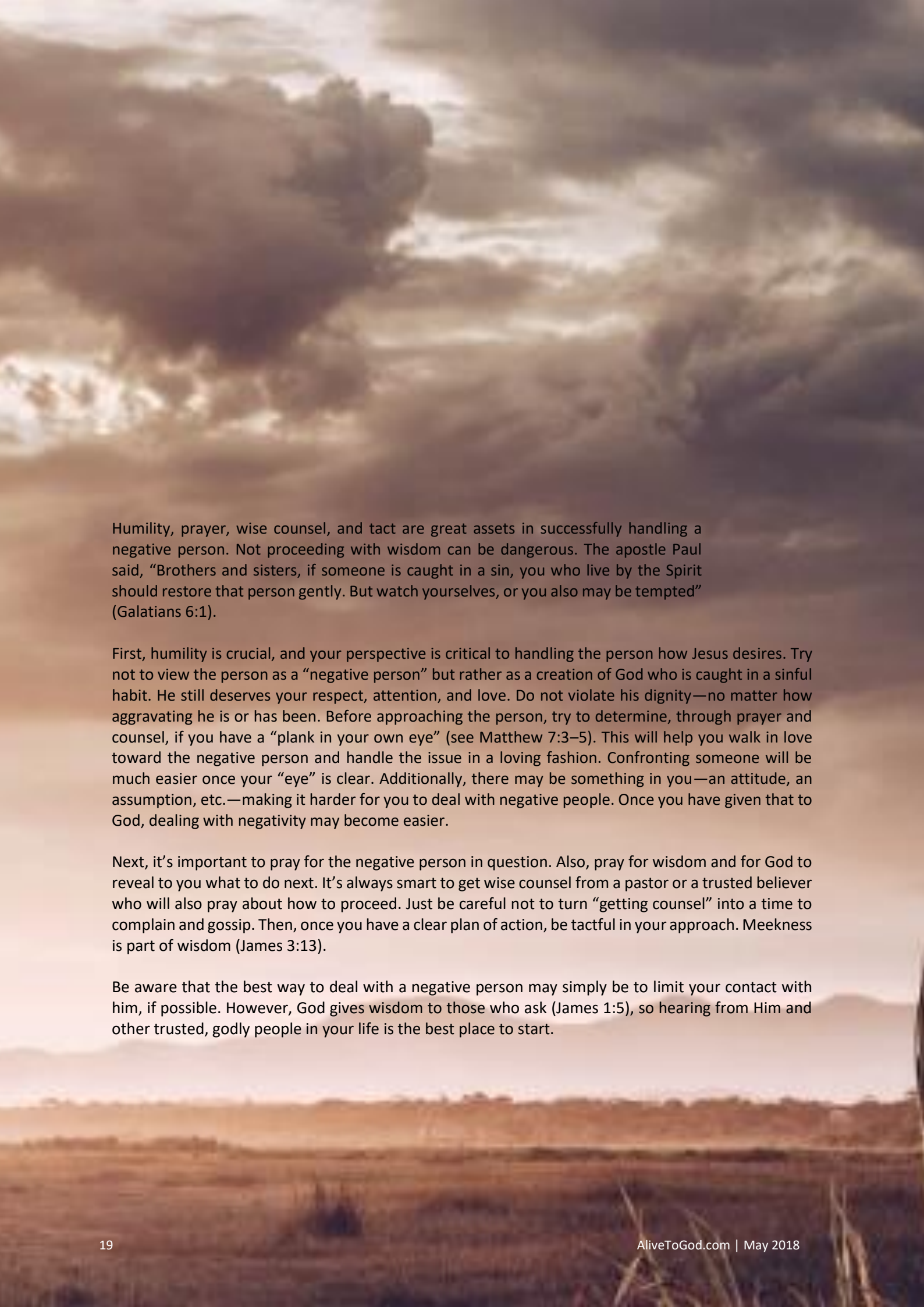
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We all have occasions that require dealing with negative people. There are two categories of negative people: those who believe in Jesus as their Lord and Savior and those who do not. These two types of negative people require different approaches. The Bible offers insight and wisdom on how to handle both kinds.

First, though, what do we mean by "negative people"? Negative people tend to focus on others' faults (or their own faults). They may regularly point out shortcomings with their comments, attitudes, and frowns. Negative people will approach situations from a pessimistic viewpoint, assuming the worst in any given situation. Sometimes negative people disguise their negativity by using humor or sarcasm, but it still ultimately results in someone being or feeling put down.

In dealing with negative people, one serious consideration is whether or not there is a church structure in place in which to handle them. If the negative person is a member of your church or someone at work who has expressed a desire to walk in a Christian manner with you, then he or she should be treated as a believer. For dealing with negative people in the believer's category, we turn to Matthew 18:15–17. That passage clearly lays out the progression of how fellow Christians should deal with each other in regard to sin. A negative, fault-finding, bitter attitude is a sin; Israel sinned against God in the wilderness by complaining about their circumstances (Numbers 11:1). You have a responsibility as a brother or sister in Christ to lovingly "point out their fault just between the two of you" (Matthew 18:15). Again, this is a responsibility all believers have to each other.

For non-believers, it's different, since they do not fall under the rules of church discipline detailed in Matthew 18. How you approach negative unbelievers must be decided on a case-by-case basis. To reemphasise, you do not have a responsibility to "show them their fault" according to the Bible. But there are still some godly tools that can help you proceed in the best manner.



Humility, prayer, wise counsel, and tact are great assets in successfully handling a negative person. Not proceeding with wisdom can be dangerous. The apostle Paul said, “Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted” (Galatians 6:1).

First, humility is crucial, and your perspective is critical to handling the person how Jesus desires. Try not to view the person as a “negative person” but rather as a creation of God who is caught in a sinful habit. He still deserves your respect, attention, and love. Do not violate his dignity—no matter how aggravating he is or has been. Before approaching the person, try to determine, through prayer and counsel, if you have a “plank in your own eye” (see Matthew 7:3–5). This will help you walk in love toward the negative person and handle the issue in a loving fashion. Confronting someone will be much easier once your “eye” is clear. Additionally, there may be something in you—an attitude, an assumption, etc.—making it harder for you to deal with negative people. Once you have given that to God, dealing with negativity may become easier.

Next, it’s important to pray for the negative person in question. Also, pray for wisdom and for God to reveal to you what to do next. It’s always smart to get wise counsel from a pastor or a trusted believer who will also pray about how to proceed. Just be careful not to turn “getting counsel” into a time to complain and gossip. Then, once you have a clear plan of action, be tactful in your approach. Meekness is part of wisdom (James 3:13).

Be aware that the best way to deal with a negative person may simply be to limit your contact with him, if possible. However, God gives wisdom to those who ask (James 1:5), so hearing from Him and other trusted, godly people in your life is the best place to start.


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