

Virtual Christian Magazine
Hope And Encouragement For The Real World

"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."—John 13:35

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Virtual Christian Magazine Editorial

An Issue Unified by God’s Love

By Patrick Kansa

ONCE AGAIN, at least in the United States, the thoughts of many will turn to love. This is, of course, due to what some may call a “Hallmark Holiday,” Valentine’s Day. The origins of this holiday are well documented (for more information, please refer to the links at the end of this article), but how well do we understand love, itself? In [“If You Love Me...”](#) Robert Berendt explores how many misunderstand love to their own detriment and the detriment of others. He also explores how love, when understood and displayed appropriately, can be a powerfully uplifting force in our lives.

Many people in the world claim to understand God's love and His plan for mankind. But fewer fully understand what God requires of us in return. In "[Keeping the Old Man Buried](#)," Graemme Marshall discusses why baptism is an important step in our lives and why it is pictured as a form of death and resurrection.

For those who are just beginning on the road to conversion, our faults and sins and giving up the gratification of our fleshly desires can seem to be obstacles too large to overcome. Even though we know that "with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26), it is easy for us to become disheartened and discouraged. Certainly, we can, and should, pray for guidance in these times of doubt, but are there other things we can do as well? In "[Overcoming Discouragement](#)", Hector Earle explores some of the common reasons why we become discouraged. He also explores how we can set goals to overcome discouraging times.

Getting in shape is a goal that many have set for themselves. The merits and health benefits of regular exercise are hard to deny. It seems hardly a week goes by without an article or news story reinforcing that fact. But it seems it can be easy to overlook what some call the biggest muscle in the body—the brain. Kathy Foster walks us through how the brain works and why exercise (both physical and mental) is needed for our minds in "[Exercise Your Body, Exercise Your Brain](#)."

However, too much of anything can be a problem—even exercise. If we become too focused on one aspect of our lives, we can easily begin to let other areas go by the wayside. Sometimes, as we see in "[A Trip to the Barbershop](#)" by Dianne Carter, we just need to take a step back, slow down and take part in someone else's life.

The articles in this issue cover a wide range of topics. We can consider them unified, however, by God's love for us and His desire to see us grow as His children, walking the path that He has set before us. You can consider these articles as stepping-stones, leading into further personal study or further reading in other publications. You can take comfort that you are not alone as you "...walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8).

Recommended reading

To learn more about this month's popular holiday, check out "[The History of Valentine's Day](#)" and "[Before You Ask Someone to be Your Valentine](#)".

If You Love Me...

By Robert Berendt

How do you show your love for others?



MANY POEMS, STORIES AND SONGS have been written about love. The power of this unseen concept is immense. It does not exist in the animal kingdom; but in the human realm, love is a powerful force. So powerful that if little babies do not experience love from someone, such as their parents, they will die. It is a concept that is abused among humans. The need to be loved is such a strong force that we often make very poor choices to fulfill it. We may not voice our need, but it drives us from within.

If a person really does love you, he or she will do everything possible to insure your well-being. I have been told that when I was about a year old, when I cried, my older sister would throw everything into the crib to placate me. It was not done to show love, it was done because of her jealousy. She did not want our mother to pay attention to me. Children need to learn to express love in a right and good way.

All of us need to learn this. It should be clear that if someone expresses love for you but then brings you into danger or encourages you to do something that may hurt you, that is not love. It may be fulfilling some need or drive within that person and our response may be fulfilling some drive within ourselves. Only when those drives are healthy, right and good does real love exist. Verses 4-8 of 1 Corinthians describes true love.

True love

I have often heard of young people saying to one another: "If you love me, you will..." Often, the result is that the person does what the other asks to prove their love. That is not love at all from either party. First of all, if a person really does love you, he or she would never ask you to do something that might cause you to lose self-respect, dignity, the respect of others or cause tension within your family. These days the request is all too often related to a sexual act. Such a request does not reflect true love at all. The response doesn't either. You do not need to degrade yourself to prove your



love to someone.

It seems so difficult to get this lesson through our heads. True love edifies, makes better, improves and brings joy and all the good things of life. Statements such as “If you love me, you will...” (tolerate my drinking, satisfy my needs, forgive me for hitting you, overlook my foul temper, etc.) are all examples of anything but true love. They are requests that are an attempt to use love as a force to make the other person do something that overlooks your own weakness or faults. Such demands show selfishness.

God has inspired that phrase “If you love me...” to be included in the Bible. In John 14:15 Jesus said, “If you love Me...” (see also John 14:23; 15:10). When God makes these statements and asks an action from us to prove that love towards Him, the result is always for our benefit. That is true love, when the loved one benefits and there are inherent positive results from the request. God tells us that if we love Him, we will keep His commandments. There is nothing but good that can come to us for doing this.

The need to be loved is such a strong force that we often make very poor choices to fulfill it.

Jesus said, If you love Me, “feed My sheep” (John 21:16, King James Version throughout). He also promised great rewards. “I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2) and you “will receive an hundredfold...” (Matthew 19:29) are only two of the many examples where Jesus makes us a partner with Him in doing the work of God—a work which results in blessings that last forever. That is the reflection of true love—making requests that will benefit the person who is being asked to do something.



How pleasant it would be if we could learn this vital lesson in our marriages. Men and women come to love one another through sharing the experiences of life, bringing children into the world, building a home and planning for the future together. All too often, though, the mutual respect and focus on the well-being of the other is lacking.

We are human and we are physical. We get tired and have emotional highs and lows. There are times when we feel blue, and perhaps we feel hurt or not wanted. Stresses can build up to the point of a breakdown. Job pressures, physical changes, family struggles and other factors of life all play a role in damaging the pure minded attempt to really show love to one another. In some way every marriage or relationship goes through such highs and lows. We are not like God in that way. Our requests of one another may not be as pure-minded as God’s requests. That is nothing to be ashamed of or to feel despondent about. It simply reflects the fact that we are not as great as God and our respect for Him ought to grow and grow.

It is a good exercise for the self, when we strive to consider others above ourselves: “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Philippians 2:3). That does not mean humiliating the self and developing feelings of worthlessness. We are to love one another *as* we love ourselves (Matthew 19:19), not more than. We are also to love ourselves.

*True love edifies,
makes better,
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life.*

It is within that realm of always considering the requests we make of others and the manner in which we make them that we have the opportunity to grow to be a bit more like God. We need to move from expressing the carnal reactions to life towards expressing the spiritual. Love, when expressed as God expresses it, is a godly act. It seeks the well-being of the other person. It is expressed well throughout 1 Corinthians 13.

When we treasure the wonderful counsel that God gives about how to live and interact with each other, we quickly understand the value of true love. When we say, “If you love me, you will...,” we will always be requesting something that benefits the person who fulfills that request. We will ask with the well-being of the other in mind, and we will have learned to express love as God does and not as humans so often do.



We may slip from time to time, but we'll get up and learn from the slip. The righteous man falls seven times (Proverbs 24:16). You can only fall once if you never get back up. Let us learn from our human falling and let us get up and try again and again. Slowly, and then with growing confidence and joy, we will experience the same joy Jesus felt as He gave Himself for you and for me.

The next time you say “I love you,” I trust you will be thinking of what you can do to let that person know you sincerely want their happiness and well-being. It is in giving that we gain the most. You receive love only when you first give it away.

Recommended reading

For more on expressing godly Love and God's love for mankind, request our free literature [Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension](#) and [What Is Your Destiny?](#)

Keeping the “Old Man” Buried

By Graemme Marshall

In ages past when someone died it wasn't a certainty they were actually dead.



IN AN ENORMOUS GOTHIC BUILDING IN MUNICH, the dead were once laid in long rows all connected by cords leading to bells in the central office of a caretaker. It seems his sleep was disturbed often enough to make the arrangement worthwhile. The sound of the bell announced that someone was not dead after all!

There is, of course, a time limit on how long one can leave a body lying around. One of the oldest tests to prove death was a lighted candle applied to various parts of the body on the assumption skin no longer blisters once circulation has ceased. This worked for Luigi Vittori, a cavalryman in the service of Pope Pius IX. Luigi was certified dead of asthma in a Rome hospital, but a more skeptical doctor held a flame to his face. Luigi shuddered back to consciousness and resumed his duties at the Vatican with third-degree burns thereafter.



English novelist Wilkie Collins, a close associate of Charles Dickens, left a note by his bedside each night specifying certain precautions to be taken before it was assumed he was dead. Hans Christian Andersen around the same period never went out without a similar note in his pocket.

This kind of concern seems to have arisen largely because of the activities of the Resurrection Men. In Britain, these entrepreneurs dug up and sold the recently dead to the Barber Surgeons Company, which received an official grant of only four corpses a year but paid top prices for additional subjects and asked no embarrassing questions. The trade became public in 1824 when John McIntyre, who was certified

dead and properly buried in his local churchyard, woke up on the dissecting table at a London medical school when the demonstrator's knife pierced his chest.

In times of war and plague when thousands of dead bodies have to be disposed of as quickly as possible, many are buried alive. When medical science was rudimentary or nonexistent, mistakes were often made. Today with people certified by attendant doctors and prepared for disposal by professional undertakers, errors would seem impossible. And yet, on December 11, 1963, 35-year-old Elsie Waring collapsed at her home in London and was taken to the Willesden Hospital where three doctors certified her as dead on arrival. Ten hours later, she gasped and began to breathe again while being lifted into her coffin at Kilburn Public Mortuary.

When medical science was rudimentary or nonexistent, mistakes were often made.

What's the moral of the stories?

When a person intends to commit his life to being a follower of Jesus Christ, he must begin his new way of life by being baptized for the forgiveness of his sins (Acts 2:38). This symbolizes the crucifying (putting to death) and burial of the old way of life and the rising up to follow a new way of life (Romans 6:6, 4).



However, some converts don't follow through and don't much change. Others make good changes but later revert back to old bad habits. For Christians, when the "old man" is buried at baptism, it is often still a struggle to leave the body symbolically buried in the watery grave. There are some who years after their baptism still seem much like the "old man" supposedly buried. Christians must keep their "old man" (or woman) buried or subdued. How much does the old way dictate your lifestyle and attitude?

Many religions practice sprinkling or pouring at baptism. Augustine in the late fourth and fifth centuries laid the foundation for infant baptism in the Roman Church. To them, the infant's head is sprinkled with water to cleanse its soul. Sprinkling water on the head is neither a burial nor immersion to symbolize the "old man" being buried. Being completely *buried* in water symbolizes the death and burial of the old way of life. Coming up out of the water symbolizes a *new life* in Christ.

But leaving the "old man" in the watery grave isn't easy.

The struggle against our erring mind

When Christians sin, they are responsible for their actions. There can be no excuse that others made them do it. C.S. Lewis, in his *Screwtape Letters*, has an interesting perspective on the problem of self-deception, of humans seeing themselves. He writes of a person in a deceived condition such that, "he can practice self-examination for an hour without discovering any of those facts about himself

When Christians sin, they are responsible for their actions.

which are perfectly clear to anyone who lived or worked with him in the same office.” This reminds us of James 1:24: “...for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.”

In another example Lewis explains: “When two humans have lived together for some years it usually happens that each has irritating tones of voice and facial expressions. A lift of the eyebrows that a son learned to dislike in nursery school—which now later he assumes his wife does deliberately to annoy him. And never let him suspect that he has similar annoyances which he cannot see or hear about himself.”

We are to “put off the old self” and put on the “new man” (Ephesians 4:24). Each Passover brings a yearly checkup of how well we are doing in keeping the old man buried. In running our Christian race, the season of God’s feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread is a good time to evaluate whether our “old man or woman” is being kept under the waters of our baptism. Paul’s zealous example is good advice: “But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified” (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).



God’s people should always be working to clear the leaven of sin permanently from our minds, attitudes and lives, every day, all year long (1 Corinthians 5:6-8). Work to be the “new man” and leave the “old man” dead and buried!

Recommended reading

To learn more about how you can live a new life, read the booklet [*Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*](#).

Overcoming Discouragement

By Hector M. Earle

God has guaranteed our success if we put our trust in Him to help us overcome those debilitating feelings of discouragement.



WE ALL HAVE OUR DAYS OF THE BLUES and setbacks. Fortunately, for many of us these days are few, and in many cases we can bounce back and get on with our lives. However, for some people discouragement can be a continuous battle. It can leave a person feeling listless and useless.

The negative effects of this debilitating emotion can also wreak havoc on our lives, leading to all kinds of failures and setbacks. Discouragement has been known to reverse progress, destroy enthusiasm and bring on depression. If left untreated, the results can be catastrophic. To make matters worse, discouragement is said to be a very difficult emotion to trace and perhaps one of the hardest to overcome.

Sources of discouragement

While there may be many known and unknown causes for discouragement, there seem to be two common ones that are more prevalent than others.

The most common cause of discouragement is being overwhelmed by goals and tasks that seem too big to reach. The expectation to make the grade appears awesome and, in some cases, the mountain seems almost impossible to climb. Consequently, people view their shortcomings with doubts and misgivings. This leads to the tendency to give up and quit.

Ironically, discouragement can also come from having a lack of goals. While there are many who become fearful at the enormity of their tasks, there are many others who get depressed because they have no meaningful planned goals at all. Deep inside is a lingering, nagging frustration because they are accomplishing nothing worthwhile. Their lives can be compared to a ship at sea tossed to and fro by the waves with no goal or destination in sight.

The most common cause of discouragement is being overwhelmed by goals and tasks that seem too big to reach.

Whether we are discouraged because of the enormity of our goals or depressed due to the lack of goals, the result can be a life of regression, stagnation and depression.

Growth is vital

Both kinds of discouragement lead to one common element—a lack of growth and progress. In essence, then, a lack of progress is a root cause of disappointments and setbacks for many people. A careful study of the Bible reveals that our Creator has put a desire in all of us to achieve, to grow and to succeed.

Growth, then, is the principal thing that governs life, and when we see growth stymied, we naturally get discouraged and depressed. Growth is also the principal element that we see in all of creation, from the sprouting of a seed to the birth of a child. All life starts small then grows through many stages of development until it reaches maturity. Life is meant to be an active, ongoing process, forever reaching higher levels of achievement and usefulness. Therefore whenever one fails to grow in character, he or she experiences a deep sense of emptiness and failure. The inevitable result is discouragement and despair.

Sometimes a little more push, a higher reach or a more determined effort make the difference between success and failure.

Set goals

It is vital then for all of us to embark on a program of setting positive goals in order to grow and lead a rich and productive life. People who say life is meaningless and not worthwhile are really saying that they themselves have no personal goals that are worthwhile. Developing goals worth shooting for and breaking down those goals into manageable steps prevents us from being overwhelmed with the “bigness” of the tasks.



Approaching goals one step at a time enables a person to grow in confidence and courage. The key is to *begin*, as accentuated in the old Chinese proverb: “A journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step.” You have to start before you can finish and be determined to follow through to the end. When one goal is finished, it’s important to begin another one. It’s a healthy practice to always have something ahead of you to look forward to; some worthy cause to work for and hope for. Remember, standing still and living a stagnant life is what brings on discouragement.

You will no doubt meet hardships and obstacles on your journey, but look on obstacles not as problems and setbacks, but as challenges and opportunities to learn

new ways to accomplish your goals. Sometimes a little more push, a higher reach or a more determined effort can make the difference between success and failure.

Clearly the only sure way to master discouragement is to establish meaningful goals and grow daily toward their fulfillment.

The main ingredient

Although we have a part to play in reaching our goals, we cannot go it alone. We can only go so far.

The real secret of a successful life of growth and development lies in the power and might of our Creator God and the power of His Holy Spirit through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. If we are to accomplish goals that bring lasting happiness, we must be spiritually united with Christ and wholly dependent on God for direction and guidance (Proverbs 3:5-6). This is the key ingredient.

Jesus said, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Also, in Acts 17:28, it states, "In Him we live and move and have our being." And again, "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us" (Ephesians 3:20).

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Human effort alone is insufficient; we need the power and strength of God's Spirit to empower us and give us the courage and motivation to press forward to accomplish our goals. "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7).

In summary then, the secret to overcoming discouragement and experiencing a fruitful life is becoming aware that God has created in all of us a desire to achieve, grow and succeed. To fulfill this desire, we must set the right goals and allow God to determine what they should be and rely on Him for guidance and direction. We must focus on achieving goals every day of our lives and attain them through "bite-size" accomplishments, all the while allowing the help from our Almighty Creator to bring everything together for the right results.

God has guaranteed our success if we put our trust in Him to help us overcome discouragement and become the productive, happy and successful persons we were meant to be.

Recommended reading

For more about finding and achieving the greater purpose in life, see the helpful brochure [Making Life Work](#). You might also be interested in the reprint article "[Depression: Ways to Win the Battle](#)".

Exercise Your Body and Exercise Your Brain

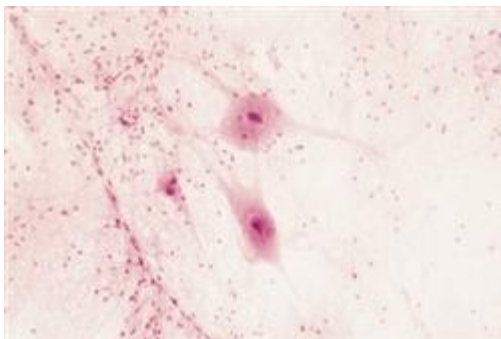
By Kathy Foster

Many focus on keeping their body in shape — what about their brain?



DO YOU EVER THINK ABOUT *HOW YOU THINK*? Do you ever wonder *how* your brain works? Have you ever wondered how things are stored in your memory? Do you ever worry about losing mental sharpness? Do you want to maintain a strong, active mind? King David must have thought about things like that when he wrote, “*I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made*” (Psalm 139:14).

The human brain is like an amazing personal computer—but it’s far more complex than any computer that has ever existed. The functioning part of the brain is made up of billions of neurons. The actual size of a neuron is about 1/100th the size of the dot at the end of this sentence. Neurons are the brain’s nerve cells. Think of a neuron as a sun with rays extending out from all sides—thousands of them—these rays are called dendrites. Dendrites form on the neurons as a result of learning.



Dendrites are like branches. One of them is longer than the others and is called the axon. The dendrites between neurons don’t touch each other. They are separated by a tiny gap, known as a synapse. Electrical impulses travel along the axon, cross the synapse and are received by the dendrites of another neuron. An impulse can travel all the way through a person in 1/5 of a second!

A fatty substance known as myelin coats the axon. This acts as insulation and increases the speed at which impulses travel. It is interesting to note that myelin is thicker around the axons that are used more often.

Researchers have now discovered the brain does generate neurons in the part of the brain that stores learning and memory. It used to be thought the brain cells could not regenerate.

As we get older, the number of neurons we have may decrease, but the brain can continue to build new connections (dendrites) on the neurons. When you learn something new, your brain begins to build new connections. Repeating a new skill makes the connections stronger. If you are required to perform a very difficult skill, a greater number of dendrites are built on the neurons, which results in more places for learning to be stored.

A walk can help

For the brain to perform well, it needs several important things. One of these is oxygen. We all know exercise is important in maintaining our physical health, but did you know it is also important in order to keep your brain working at an optimum level?

Physical exercise increases blood circulation, which then increases oxygen in the brain. Even small amounts of moderate exercise, like taking a walk, will increase the amount of oxygen in your brain. Mental sharpness is directly linked to the amount of oxygen available to the brain. Higher levels of oxygen increase mental performance, which translates into faster reactions, better memory, clearer thinking, higher concentration and reduced stress. Simply put, the more oxygen—the better the brain performs.

The human brain is like an amazing personal computer—but it's far more complex than any computer that has ever existed.

Exercise not only delivers oxygen, it stimulates the brain and enhances learning. The brain improves with exercise much like the muscles do. The implications of this are that both adults and children need physical exercise every day in order for their brains to function well while learning.

So can mental exercise

However, insuring your brain will perform at a higher level involves more than just exercising your body. You need mental exercise and stimulation, as well. Mental exercise involves repeating something we have learned and mental stimulation involves experiencing something new. The brain craves novelty and needs the stimulation of learning new things. Mental exercise actually helps the brain to build new connections between the neurons.

Repeating a new skill or a new learning thickens the coating around the axon and makes the brain pathway for that skill more efficient. This is where memory comes into play.

Learning is how we get knowledge—memory is how we keep it. We can learn something like a grocery list, store it in short-term memory and then lose it when it is no longer needed. In order to store something in long-term memory, it must initially be repeated many times, and then reviewed again over a longer period of time. There is very little long-term memory of new learning if it is not reviewed and repeated.

The implications of this are that both adults and children need physical exercise every day in order for their brains to function well while learning.

We have to be actively engaged mentally while we are learning in order to remember what we learn. This means we are concentrating on what we are learning and not distracted by other sights and sounds around us. The more our senses are involved in learning—taste, touch, sight, sound and smell, as well as movement and emotions—the more attention we pay to what we are learning and the more we remember.

Review, repeat, remember!

We also need review and repetition to remember what we learn. If we take notes during a lecture, review them several times, think about and evaluate what we learn, we will remember more than if we just sit back and listen. Active mental and physical participation while learning is far more effective than passive learning.



Most of what we do each day is habitual. In effect, we have memorized much of our daily routine. We do many things without even thinking about them. Similarly, as we repeat a new skill or activity, it becomes more and more automatic until we perform it without really thinking about it, like driving a car or riding a bike. We exert very little brainpower when doing things that have become habits. Repeating new learning strengthens the pathways along which brain impulses travel. The more an action or thinking is repeated, the more automatic it becomes. Over time, it becomes a habit. Your thinking becomes who you are. Solomon wrote, “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7).

It is important to learn good habits to begin with because unlearning and relearning habits is very difficult. Learning a new skill takes much more brainpower than repeating an old one. However, when you diligently practice a new skill over time, the likelihood it will become a permanent habit is greatly increased.

Challenge your brain

Your brain is designed for constant growth—both physically and spiritually. When things become routine, you need to challenge your brain by learning something new.

How do you exercise your brain? What can you do to stimulate your brain and help it to build new connections? Do something new. Read an interesting book, take a class, go on a trip, go out to a different place for lunch, learn a new skill or hobby, join a club, take a different route home, explore a tourist attraction in your hometown that you’ve never been to, do volunteer work in your community or even teach something you know to someone else. New activities stimulate the brain. Repeating those new things builds new connections in your brain.

Most of what we do each day is habitual. In effect, we have memorized much of our daily routine.

If you have children, teach them new games and read books to them that are above their reading ability. Talk to them about “what if,” “why” and “what do you think about...”

Read stories about people in the Bible to your children, then talk about the choices those people made and the results of those choices. Ask them which of the Ten Commandments were kept or broken. Ask your children to think about what they would do in a similar situation. Teaching your children to think about cause and effect will sharpen your thinking skills, as well as theirs.

New brain research shows your brain does not have to slowly die year after year.

New brain research shows your brain does not have to slowly die year after year. It can continue to grow and learn throughout your lifetime. Each of us has an active choice in whether and how much that happens. Your brain needs oxygen gained through physical exercise and it needs mental stimulation gained through learning new things to keep it sharp. You can maintain a strong and active mind. Go out and learn something new!

Recommended reading

If you want to learn more about how your brain works, check out one of these books:

- David A. Sousa, *How the Brain Learns* (second edition), 2001.
- Eric Jensen, *Teaching With the Brain in Mind*, 1998.
- Lawrence C. Katz, Ph. D., and Manning Rubin, *Keep Your Brain Alive*, 1999.

And if you want to give your brain some valuable stimulation, how about spending time studying the Bible? The booklet [*How to Understand the Bible*](#) can be a valuable help!

A Trip to the Barbershop

By Dianne Carter

Sometimes we just need to slow down and relax.



MY FATHER, AT 80 YEARS OLD, was diagnosed with colorectal cancer. Due to late detection, he opted for no treatment. I hadn't seen my dad in three years and had planned to visit in a few months. I decided to visit right away, not knowing how long he'd be with us, or how quickly he might deteriorate.

One morning while I was there, Dad announced that he wanted to go to the barbershop. Dad knows his eyesight isn't so good now and, although he still has a valid driver's license, prefers not to drive. I offered to drive him, and he took me up on it.

As I followed his instructions, “turn left at the next corner; get into the left lane,” etc., I marveled at how he knows all the back roads of the city, traveling on the expressway or on the access roads only when absolutely necessary. How is it that he managed to find a barbershop so far away? Was our house once that far away from civilization?

I decided to visit right away, not knowing how long he'd be with us or how quickly he might deteriorate.

Once we arrived, I felt as though we had truly stepped back in time. The barber, Andy, was also 80 years old. Dad had been getting his hair cut there for over 30 years! There were model airplanes suspended from the ceiling. Only one chair graced the establishment. One barber, one chair.



Andy used scissors and a straight razor. He took his time. My dad was the last customer before Andy closed for lunch. A friend was waiting to go with him.

I watched and listened while the three men talked and enjoyed each other's company. Every once in a while, I joined in too. There was no rush; it was a pleasant and relaxing experience.

My usually somewhat gruff father's face changed into a more mellow expression. His muscles relaxed, and he was even pleasant. The best thing for me was when he introduced me as “his daughter from Florida, a real gem, a real gem.” Boy, did that make my day!

Sometimes in our rush-rush world, we need to take a trip back into time, where things are slower and we can relax and enjoy each other. Somehow, we need to decide it's okay to do fewer things in a day—or maybe even nothing.

God knows that we tend to try to do too many things. He says in Matthew 6:33, “But seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” So, we can learn to prioritize and realize that it's these moments of connection with each other that make it all worthwhile.

Recommended reading

For additional reading, see our booklet [*Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?*](#)

Letters to the Editor

Forgive

Hi, I just wanted to know if forgiving 70 times seven is to be done daily, and if so, where does it say that? I know we are to forgive our brethren as God has forgiven us, but I'm just curious where that has come from...

Thank you.

— CeL

Your question is both profound and vital to the foundation of all human relationships. All of us are hurt by others at one time or another—whether accidentally or intentionally. And if we're really honest with ourselves, we will have to admit that we, too, have hurt others. Hopefully we have done so accidentally and not intentionally. It is easy for Christians to talk about the need for forgiveness because that concept is so fundamental. Yet, in real life, it is often hard to practice because of the emotional hurt we feel.

In the model prayer, Jesus Christ said to ask the Father to forgive our sins as we forgive others (Matthew 6:12). Two verses later, after completing the model prayer, He returns to the idea of forgiveness and says (in verses 14 and 15) that if we forgive others, God will also forgive us. But if we don't forgive others, neither will God forgive us. We cannot choose when and how often we should forgive, it needs to be all the time.

In Matthew 18 Peter asked if forgiving someone seven times was enough (verse 21). Jesus' answer in the next verse says to forgive 70 times seven—implying that we never stop forgiving. He then gives a parable about forgiveness and ends in verse 35 with the statement, "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

One note of caution, however. Forgiving does not mean you give someone the right to injure you again (such as in cases of abuse). This does not seem to be your question, but we mention it, lest someone wrongly get the idea that Christians have to continue putting themselves in positions to be hurt. In order for the relationship to be healthy, the other person needs to be willing to not repeat whatever the hurt was.

Lessons From Creation

Hello... I loved the article by Kevin Ford, "[Lessons From Creation](#)". It's such an inspiring subject, and the article is well-written. It whetted my appetite, and I would have liked for the article to have been much longer with more amazing facts about God's creation.

Thanks!

— Don Hooser

Some feedback messages are edited for space and/or clarity