

# Loon Area Christian Ministry

Comment

Comment:

January/February 2008

## Personal Notes. . .

The week before last was spent in bed. I came down with a cold that sent me to bed after the Alpha program on Tuesday night and kept me there for the better part of the next four days as it morphed into bronchitis and landed me in a doctor's office. One of the benefits of this bout however, is that I quickly dropped 5 lbs. Better yet, by changing some eating habits, I've kept it off.

My heart goes out to people who are struggling with this issue. Many who deal with obesity—especially in the morbid category—are suffering from the emotional scars of a painful childhood. To criticise them for their appearance is to add to their pain instead of being a tool for God's healing. And there are, of course, those for whom glandular problems are responsible—something over which they have no control. For a few, mandatory medications cause significant increases in weight. Those exceptions noted, however, there is another factor at work that I'd like to address—a factor that's encouraged by our culture and responsible for more weight gain among Americans than anything else—a factor that's hailed as a God-given right and implicitly endorsed by all those companies who profit from it—I'm talking about self-indulgence.

Our character is defined more by the battles we fight than the victories we win. Being a Christian doesn't mean that we don't have struggles; it does mean that the nature of our struggles are different than those in whose lives Christ is absent. The Bible tells us three things that are helpful here: First, "You cannot belong to Christ unless you crucify all self-indulgent passions and desires." I have yet to find a translation that reads "*some* self-indulgent passions and desires." Crucifixion is a choice as much for us as it was for Christ. His choice brought life to us; ours will grow his life in us.

Secondly, self-control is one of the fruits of the Spirit. Therefore, when we surrender our life to Christ and his Holy Spirit takes up residence within us, He brings a self-control that would otherwise be absent. Have you ever noticed a difference in the student body of a Christian school as opposed to most public schools? I have—a dramatic and noticeable difference in body weights. But then that only stands to reason—if they have surrendered their lives to Christ and are seeking to follow Him, then the self-control will be there, not to mention the powerful examples and habits established by their own families, who themselves are followers of Christ.

Thirdly, if we belong to Christ, so do our bodies, a point

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made clear in Paul's letter to the Corinthians. "You are not your own, you have been bought with a price." Our bodies are not our own to do with as we want. They belong to Him, and are intended for his service. We are the stewards of our bodies, not their owners. To treat them properly is to add to the years of effective service we can give to God. To treat them poorly is to deprive God of those years.

The Bible cautions us about "judging by outer appearance". There is no room in the Christian faith for excluding or rejecting others because of their appearance. But it's not others I'm concerned about here, it's us—those who have decided to follow Christ. For some of you, this is not an issue and never has been, you are blessed with a metabolic rate that burns up fat faster than you can consume it, but for the rest of us the question is simple: do we recognise this as a battleground and is it a struggle we're willing to enter. To say "yes" is to invite the Lord to show us the power He makes available when we decide to crucify this area of self-indulgence.

*Blessings, Skip*

## From the "Better Half". . .

Dear Friends,

2008 will be a little different for me than recent years. Instead of going on a short-term mission trip to Russia or Ukraine, I will be spending two weeks in Maine. My daughter Betty is having her ankle fused (an old injury that never completely healed) and will not be able to walk, much less go to work or care for an active family. I'm looking forward to spending the time with them as well as my daughter Michelle and her family.

Something else new and exciting is the Alpha Course that Skip and I are involved in. We belong to a Bible study group that is made up of about 14 people who come from different churches. We started meeting on Sunday evenings as a way of staying in touch with each other as well as learning more about God's Word together. It has been a rewarding and exciting time. One member of our group, Doris Roth, felt led to start an Alpha Program in our community. There are so many people who do not go to church for one reason or another and Alpha offers a safe, non-threatening environment where they can ask questions without fear of ridicule or intimidation.

Doris and her husband Dean went to Virginia for the Alpha training and came back excited and more convinced that this is what we should do. Doris is our official

administrator and has done a great job of organizing and helping the rest of us through the training process. To my surprise, I was asked to lead a small group. Working with young, orphan children is one thing, but adults are a completely different breed! Well, I have survived the first two weeks and no harm done. I can do this, not on my own strength, but by His grace.

I have a Website! Half Moon Jewelry Design is going on-line. The site is set up and soon there will be photos of my work for all to see! The site is on Auctiva.com but you can access it easily by just going to [halfmoonjewelrydesign.com](http://halfmoonjewelrydesign.com). If you don't see any pictures the first time, try again, we are working on it.

God bless, *Joyce*

## Loon Mountain

There are lots of smiles on people's faces due to the great snow conditions this season. I heard someone say that it's the best snowfall we've had this time of year since 1995.

The mountain has opened their South Peak, and it's both a pleasure to ski and a boon to the mountain in terms of taking some of the pressure off of the rest of the area.

## Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

This year's service, held in cooperation with New Hope Fellowship, saw a record-breaking attendance of close to 300 people. New Hope's participation was a real blessing as they provided both a worship team to help lead the singing, plus a great sound system and a projection system for the words to the carols as well as a video call to worship. Two of the younger girls from the Duane and Jennifer Brown family sang the first verse of Silent Night and Pastor Brian Morphonius not only manned the audio/visual system but also contributed his voice to the scripture readings. Our collection that night, typically given away, went to a Loon employee whose newborn baby had just undergone surgery to correct a life-threatening birth defect. The baby is doing very well now and the father just stopped me up at Loon today and thanked me profusely for the \$850 (another record) we collected for he and his wife. "You don't know how much that helped with all that we had going on," he said.

## Downhill Worship Services

Our winter services are starting with a bang. The increase in skier numbers is positively effecting our own attendance figures.

Of note was another record—two people indicated a desire to accept Christ on their response forms following the service during Christmas vacation. This time I think my message was instrumental. I preached on the healing of Naaman in 2 Kings, pointing out that Naaman had done absolutely nothing to deserve to be healed by God, and that God had healed him simply because he loved him. Naaman's willingness to follow God's directions was the

element of faith that resulted in his healing, and his subsequent conversion had all the markings of a born-again experience, circa 850 B.C.

## Encore Thrift Shop

We finished the year with virtually the same amount of sales as last year, which was pretty good considering that we started the year 30% behind.

Bob Paste has volunteered his time to help me move furniture and has been a great blessing. He's a body-builder, so he's especially equipped for success in this particular endeavor.

### FINANCES

(Received from Thrift Store, Real Estate, Weddings and Donations for all of 2007)

<u>Budgeted</u>	<u>Received</u>	<u>Difference</u>
88,800	92,754	3,954

## Across the Desk. . .

Some American Christians consider persecution antiquated and believe that it happened thousands or hundreds of years ago, but doesn't happen today.

However, the Voice of the Martyrs® indicates that "More Christians have been killed for their faith in the 20th century than have been martyred in the total history of Christianity."

We shouldn't be surprised. In John 15:18, Jesus said that if the world hated Him, that it would hate those who follow Him. So, what can we do about the overseas persecution done to our brothers and sisters? And how should we handle persecution in the United States?

A Sudanese Christian boy has his knees and feet nailed to a board and he is left to die. When rescued he says he forgives the man who did this because Jesus was also nailed and forgave him. A Vietnamese pastor is sentenced to two years in prison. When he is offered an early release, he declines stating that he has a group of new Believers in the prison he has to disciple. A Colombian missionary is kidnapped and told she only has two hours to live. She tells her captors that if she only has two hours to live, she wants to spend it telling them about Jesus.

The persecution of Christians around the world is a tragic reality. Our brothers and sisters are beaten and tortured simply for their faith in Jesus Christ. And some pay with the ultimate price. However, in the midst of this persecution is some of the boldest stories of faith you will ever read. (Want to know more? Google "Voice of the Martyrs" and subscribe to their monthly newsletter)

I guess like many of you, I'm keeping my eye on my weight and trying to keep it under control. My dad set a good example. Following heart surgery, he and mother radically changed their diets, cutting out fats and sweets. My dad immediately dropped about 25lbs, and lived to be 98 years old. My mother is 94.

Dale needed his daddy. Through his misbehavior, Dale was saying, "You won't even talk to me. Don't you love me anymore?" I took Dale to our bedroom and held him. I filled his emotional tank with eye contact, physical contact, and focused attention. After three or four minutes, he was his usual lovable, sweet self. —D. Ross Campbell in *The Transformation of a Man's Heart*

### Oswald Chambers

#### My Utmost for His Highest July 30

Disillusionment means having no more misconceptions, false impressions, and false judgments in life; it means being free from these deceptions. However, though no longer deceived, our experience of disillusionment may actually leave us cynical and overly critical in our judgment of others. But the disillusionment that comes from God brings us to the point where we see people as they really are, yet without any cynicism or any stinging and bitter criticism. Many of the things in life that inflict the greatest injury, grief, or pain, stem from the fact that we suffer from illusions. We are not true to one another as *facts*, seeing each other as we really are; we are only true to our misconceived *ideas* of one another. According to our thinking, everything is either delightful and good, or it is evil, malicious, and cowardly.

Refusing to be disillusioned is the cause of much of the suffering of human life. And this is how that suffering happens— if we love someone, but do not love God, we demand total perfection and righteousness from that person, and when we do not get it we become cruel and vindictive; yet we are demanding of a human being something which he or she cannot possibly give. There is only one Being who can completely satisfy to the absolute depth of the hurting human heart, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord is so obviously uncompromising with regard to every human relationship because He knows that every relationship that is not based on faithfulness to Himself will end in disaster. Our Lord trusted no one, and never placed His faith in people, yet He was never suspicious or bitter. Our Lord's confidence in God, and in what God's grace could do for anyone, was so perfect that He never despaired, never giving up hope for any person. If our trust is placed in human beings, we will end up despairing of everyone.

ODB 1/22/08

Key Bible Verse: "Since I, the Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet" (John 13:14). Bonus Reading: [John 13:3-](#)

### Men Of Integrity 7/30/07

Pat and my five-year-old son, Dale, were at the airport to meet me when I returned from three days away. I was so anxious to talk with my wife that I inadvertently ignored Dale. He repeatedly tried to get my attention, but in a less than kind voice I said something like, "I need to talk to your mother—just hold your horses." By the time we got home, my usually people-pleasing child had the whole family in turmoil. His behavior had so deteriorated that I was on the verge of spanking him.

Then Pat whispered to me, "Why don't you practice what you preach?" I was about to punish my boy when I was misbehaving myself. I wasn't fulfilling my basic responsibilities as a Christian father. I forgot to ask myself, *What does my child need?* An empty emotional tank is the most common cause of misbehavior in a young child.

[17](#)

Every Wednesday afternoon, Richard Selzer visits his public library to mix it up with elders by the newspaper rack. As the young doctor held the door for one wobbly gent in his 80s, he apologized for his gait, saying, "The hinges is rusty." As "Neckerchief" sat down to read *Time* magazine, he hissed softly in pain.

"The hinges?" the doctor whispered.

"Nope. The toes."

"What's wrong with them?"

"The nails is too long. I can't get at 'em. I'm walkin' on 'em." Richard slipped out to his office to fetch the toenail cutters. Returning, he told Neckerchief,

"Come to the men's room. I'll cut your toenails."

"Don't untie my shoes," the old man cautioned. "I just slide 'em on and off." Doc peeled away two pairs of socks, revealing dried blood and big toes resembling goat horns. It took an hour to remove those claws and cleanse the toes. Once his socks and shoes were back on, Necker-chief stood up and tested his feet. "That's a Cadillac of a job!" he exclaimed. "It don't hurt.

How much do I owe ya?"

"On the house," Doctor Selzer replied. Now he always brings nail clippers, and later on trimmed the toenails of "Stovepipe," then of "Mrs. Fringe" (tying up the ladies' room for half an hour).

—Ted Engstrom and Paul Cedar in *Compassionate Leadership*

My Response: What professionals have you observed engaged in self-effacing service?

Thought to Apply: God is not looking for more stars; he's looking for more servants.—Howard Hendricks

## Focus on the Family newsletter

Now you can learn about today's persecuted church, discover practical ways you can help, and be encouraged by their incredible stories with a FREE subscription to The Voice of the Martyrs monthly newsletter.

This award-winning newsletter brings you into the hearts and minds of today's persecuted church. You will be inspired; you will be challenged; and you own faith may never be the same.

(Whole article from fof)

by Shana Schutte

Christian persecution started with Jesus when He was sentenced to die on a cross. Following His death,

early believers were tortured, beaten, stoned, burned, hanged, beheaded, eaten by wild animals and crucified for their faith. All of the disciples died by these or other methods, with the exception of John, who lived to an old age on the Island of Patmos, after he miraculously escaped from a cauldron of boiling oil. [1](#)

According to Foxe's Book of Martyrs,[2](#) 10 waves of persecution occurred from A.D. 67 to A.D. 303 under the leadership of Roman Emperors Nero, Domitian, Diocletian and others. Even the well-known Bible translator William Tyndale was burned at the stake by decree of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V on October 6, 1530 for doing God's work. [3](#)

Some American Christians consider persecution antiquated and believe that it happened thousands or hundreds of years ago, but doesn't happen today.

## Christian Persecution on the Rise

However, the Voice of the Martyrs[4](#) indicates that "More Christians have been killed for their faith in the 20th century than have been martyred in the total history of Christianity." Currently, in some overseas countries, the high level of persecution is difficult for Americans to comprehend.

Numerous Internet headlines regularly report incidences such as, "Report Claims Up to 3,000 Christians Killed in China."[5](#) "Churches Raided by Police" and "India Evangelist Killed and Sacrificed for Hindu Goddess."[6](#)

According to the Farsi Christian News Network,[7](#) in July of 2007 an Iranian Christian couple was sentenced by government agents to whipping, two years after attending a house church where they participated in worship. Abuse was reportedly so severe that the woman decided not to return to church.

On September 27, 2007, the International Christian Concern[8](#) reported that six Christian convert families were ostracized and threatened by local Muslims in West Bengal's Murshidabad district in India. Several in the group suffered when local shop owners were told not to sell to them, and villagers were instructed not to associate with them. One woman was even stripped because the Muslims wanted to make sure she hadn't been marked with Christian symbols. All were forced to deny Christ; otherwise they would have been killed.

According to Open Door, an organization devoted to helping Christians under extreme conditions, Christian persecution and genocide in Sudan is extreme:

"Caught in the crossfire of the ongoing civil war, Sudanese Christians are suffering untold atrocities.

Christian children are often abducted and forced to attend Islamic schools in the North.

An armed group called the 'Lord's Resistance Army' operates a scorched earth policy, burning anything in their path to the ground - churches, crops, homes, villages. People are tortured, mutilated, massacred, raped, enslaved and even denied aid unless they can prove they are Muslims."

Rebels have reportedly killed 1.5 million non-Muslims, including untold numbers of Christians, in the Darfur region. Forced conversion to Islam is a part of government policy.

These are just a few examples of Christian persecution overseas.

## **What About the United States?**

Contrary to what many believe, Christian persecution doesn't only happen overseas. It's even happening here in our own backyard. When American Christian, Cassie Bernall admitted to believing in God, she was shot and killed at Columbine High School on April 20, 1999 in Colorado, during the deadly rampage instigated by Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris.

Later, while 150 teenagers attended a youth prayer rally at Wedgwood Baptist church in Fort Worth on September 15 the same year, a gunman burst in and fired at the crowd. Eyewitness reports say that he loudly ridiculed their religious beliefs.<sup>9</sup> Seven people were killed, and seven more injured before he turned the gun on himself.

More recently, 24-year-old Matthew Murray of the Denver, Colo. area barged into New Life Church in Colorado Springs just as services had ended, killing two and wounding three others. Hours earlier, Murray had killed two and wounded two others at a Youth With a Mission facility in Arvada. A New Life security guard shot Murray, helping stop his murderous rampage against Christians.

However, not all persecution in the U.S. is so severe. Many times, it goes unnoticed. It's a part of television sitcoms when Christians are conveyed as being homosexual haters, and preachers are shown as idiotic and unreasonable.

In the public school system, persecution is also often obscured. In an article by Thomas Horn, he notes a study conducted by former New York University professor Dr. Paul Vitz. Dr. Vitz, and a committee

examined 60 social studies and history textbooks used in U. S. public schools. The results showed that almost every reference to the early Christian influence in the United States had been removed.<sup>10</sup> Whether overseas or at home, Satan is moving to manipulate men to carry out his work. He wants to destroy God's voice on the earth through people who hate Christ.

We shouldn't be surprised.

In John 15:18, Jesus said that if the world hated Him, that it would hate those who follow Him.

So, what can we do about the overseas persecution that is done to our brothers and sisters? And how should we handle persecution in the United States?

## **Stay humble and submit to God**

Few things are more difficult than humbling oneself when someone is persecuting us, whether we are facing a gun or an employer who dislikes us for our faith. Of course we are called to defend the gospel, but also instructed to live our lives with an attitude of humility. This sets us apart from our enemies as those who know the true God.

In Philippians 2:7-9 we are instructed to have the mind of Christ by emulating His humility and obedience that He demonstrated even in the face of death. Granted, most of us will never die as a result of religious persecution. However, we should always entrust ourselves to God, who is ultimately in control. This means that we do not insult our accusers, retaliate or make threats (1 Peter 2:23). After all, we have no idea how our humility and love will affect those who hate us. We hold tremendous power through love to help others come to Him.

In Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge, a guerrilla group, was led by a man named Pol Pot who overthrew the Cambodian government in 1975, starved millions of people and murdered Christians and Muslims. In 1995, one of Pol Pot's torturers came to Christ and acknowledged his sin when a Cambodian pastor living in Los Angeles shared the gospel with him. Without the pastor's humility and love, this man may not have received Christ.

## **Become Informed**

Although we are called to endure trials, God does not instruct us to cease from speaking His truth just because someone tells us to be quiet. Disciples throughout history, as well as Jesus, held out the Word of Life (Philippians 2:16) in the face of persecution. Part of being able to speak out means that we must stay informed about what is happening in our culture and with laws about faith expression.

Sometimes Christians are persecuted because they are uninformed.

For example, many believe that it is against the law for children to share their faith in the public school system. This is a lie that has been perpetrated by the media, school officials and uninformed parents. The American Center for Law and Justice outlines many ways students can share their faith legally. [11](#)

## Pray

In Matthew 5:44, we are instructed to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. As one body, we can lift up our Christian brothers and sisters in Christ as if the offenses were being done unto us here in the United States.

Additionally, the Voice of the Martyrs at [www.persecution.org](http://www.persecution.org) regularly posts incidences of overseas persecution. [Christianmonitor.org](http://Christianmonitor.org) does the same and includes specific prayer requests.

If you are being persecuted, ask fellow believers to pray with you to endure and to respond in a godly way.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.allaboutfollowingjesus.org/early-christian-persecution-faq.htm>

<sup>2</sup> Foxes Book of Martyrs, 1926 Edition, pages 1-32

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.allaboutfollowingjesus.org/william-tyndale-faq.htm>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.voiceofthemartyrs.com>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.christianmonitor.org>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.persecution.org>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.persecutionblog.com>

<sup>8</sup> [persecution.org](http://www.persecution.org)

<sup>9</sup>

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.baptiststandard.com/1999/9\\_22/pages/guman.html](http://www.baptiststandard.com/1999/9_22/pages/guman.html)

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.worthynews.com/christian-persecution.html>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.aclj.org/Issues/Issue.aspx?ID=3>

## My Utmost 8/24

The illustration of prayer that our Lord used here is one of a good child who is asking for something good. We talk about prayer as if God hears us regardless of what our relationship is to Him (see [Matthew 5:45](#)). Never say that it is not God's will to give you what you ask. Don't faint and give up, but find out the reason you have not received; increase the intensity of your search and examine the evidence. Is your relationship right with your spouse,

your children, and your fellow students? Are you a "good child" in those relationships? Do you have to say to the Lord, "I have been irritable and cross, but I still want spiritual blessings"? You cannot receive and will have to do without them until you have the attitude of a "good child."

We mistake defiance for devotion, arguing with God instead of surrendering. We refuse to look at the evidence that clearly indicates where we are wrong. Have I been asking God to give me money for something I want, while refusing to pay someone what I owe him? Have I been asking God for liberty while I am withholding it from someone who belongs to me? Have I refused to forgive someone, and have I been unkind to that person? Have I been living as God's child among my relatives and friends? (see [Matthew 7:12](#)).

I am a child of God only by being born again, and as His child I am good only as I "walk in the light" ([1 John 1:7](#)). For most of us, prayer simply becomes some trivial religious expression, a matter of mystical and emotional fellowship with God. We are all good at producing spiritual fog that blinds our sight. But if we will search out and examine the evidence, we will see very clearly what is wrong—a friendship, an unpaid debt, or an improper attitude. There is no use praying unless we are living as children of God. Then Jesus says, regarding His children, "Everyone who asks receives . . ." ([Matthew 7:8](#)).

## Oswald Chambers, May 30

Suppose God tells you to do something that is an enormous test of your common sense, totally going against it. What will you do? Will you hold back? If you get into the habit of doing something physically, you will do it every time you are tested until you break the habit through sheer determination. And the same is true spiritually. Again and again you will come right up to what Jesus wants, but every time you will turn back at the true point of testing, until you are determined to abandon yourself to God in total surrender. Yet we tend to say, "Yes, but—suppose I do obey God in this matter, what about . . . ?" Or we say, "Yes, I will obey God if what He asks of me doesn't go against my common sense, but don't ask me to take a step in the dark."

Jesus Christ demands the same unrestrained, adventurous spirit in those who have placed their trust in Him that the natural man exhibits. If a person is ever going to do anything worthwhile, there will be times when he must risk everything by his leap in the dark. In the spiritual realm, Jesus Christ demands that you risk everything you hold on to or believe through common sense, and leap by faith into what He says. Once you obey, you will immediately find that what He says is as solidly consistent as common sense.