

Cyber Truths By E-mail

22. How Eager Are You? (August 16, 2006)



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Dear Friends,

Recently, the Holy Spirit gave Mike a word for a close friend of ours, immediately followed by a vision of the man being dead and looking much like he does today. In other words, in the vision, it appeared he was going to die in the near future.

Our friend is now in his mid-forties. Later that day when he came to our home, Mike "danced around" the vision by asking him, "Do you have a will?" Then the Holy Spirit prompted him to be honest and tell him the vision. Some deep and revealing discussion followed regarding matters our friend knew our Lord wanted him to deeply consider and take action on.

In our early years of following Jesus, a missionary friend told us, "**You should ALWAYS be ready to pray, preach, or die for Jesus!**" We've taken those words seriously because there is much circumcision of the heart that's needed to be prepared for the immediate response required to carry out any of these three actions.

***"And so we will be with
the Lord forever.
Therefore encourage each other
with these words"
(1 Thessalonians 4:17b,18).***

How would you respond if someone told you that you had sixty seconds before you were to die? Really, how would you respond? Would there be immediate elation and joy that you will see Jesus face-to-face? Or, are you looking to get to heaven as long as it's still a far-in-the-future event, either because you're not

ready or there are other priorities in your earthly life? Having to consider this question on the spot really reveals where your heart motive lies.

It's like the hand grenade scenario we used at our retreat center to test how really dead to themselves people were: I'd simulate throwing a hand grenade in the middle of a group.

"You have three seconds before the hand grenade blows up.

One...two... three..."

- 0% of the clergy ever jumped on the grenade. Not one!!!
- 10% of non-clergy men jumped on the grenade.
- 50% of the women and teenagers jumped on the hand grenade.

When people don't have time to analyze the pro's and con's, their true heart often shows up!

When I shared the vision with my friend, his immediate response was to become despondent. But we were able to use his reaction to clear up things that were hindering him in his relationship with God. The heaviness of spirit that had been plaguing him for some time began to lift as we talked. He was able to re-align his heart's motive with the only pre-eminent priority in life—Jesus.

In fact, our conversation led to the three of us concentrating more on loving, obedient trust in the Holy Spirit within us. Our earnest desire was to rely more on Him for wisdom and life perspective. You may recall that the biblical definition of **wisdom** is seeing life from God's perspective. This means nullifying any reliance on our soul (our mind, will, and

emotions), and connecting to the Holy Spirit through our spirit. Each of us needs to "re-wire" the way in which we see our life here on earth, releasing the Spirit to guide our heart's motive.

In the days to follow we asked other people about their response if they found out they were to immediately die. No one was ready! And, most didn't like the idea. So how is it with *you* as you read this?

Please consider these questions:

• **Are you more attracted to people and things here on earth, or to eternal life with Jesus?**

There is much more behind the words of Jesus in the verse that follows than people who call themselves "Christian" make part of their life: "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength*" (Mark 12:30). Not only is this command to be our supreme heart's motive; as we live it out in our daily lives it removes all other competing goals and desires in their competing allure.

Does the thought of your death immediately draw you to think of family and others you fear losing? This is a crucial test for all of us. That's why our Lord breaks the above command down to specific criteria to weigh so that we can test ourselves to see who or what we truly cherish:

"Anyone who loves his father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10:37,38). Family is often a key consideration when people

find out they are going to die.

We remember many years ago a man in his thirties who was follower of Jesus. He was happily married and had three young children. He found out he was going to die from a rare form of leukemia. Facing the loss of his wife and children he inquired of the Lord about his death. The Lord told him that He was going to use the courageous manner in which the man faced his death to change the life his lukewarm friend. "Are you prepared to forfeit your life for this man?" the Lord asked him. He responded with an emphatic "Yes!!!"

As the friend observed the undeniable presence and joy of Jesus in the weeks leading up to the man's death, he put all worldly considerations aside and became a true follower of Jesus.

[We have personally experienced how God used the death of several people to alter the lives of others. In fact, God used the death of our friend, Dick Shand, to stir us to put our trust in Jesus (see Restoring the Early Church: Chapter 4)].

How about you? Are there things on this earth — worldly goals and values — that you don't want to leave more than you want to be with Jesus? Remember God's warning:

"You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God" (James 4:4).

In your inmost being, are you one of those against whom God speaks?

"[I am] always on their lips but far from their hearts" (Jeremiah 12:2).

"These people honor Me with their lips, but

their hearts are far from Me" (Matthew 15:8).

This isn't a 'pass-fail' question right now for you, but it can be when you stand in front of the Judgment Throne of our Lord. It's biblically appropriate for each of us to stop and scrutinize our lives to see where we fall short in our journey of loving, obedient trust and tolerate sin in our lives. Paul had to encourage the Corinthians to scrutinize their own lives to make sure Jesus was more than lip service and a religious add-on: *"Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?"* (2 Corinthians 13:5).

Even as the Israelites at last approached the Promised Land, Joshua exhorted them to scrutinize where their heart's motive lay. That's because "serving the Lord" encompassed far more than ritual and tradition: *"But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve.... But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD"* (Joshua 24:15).

• **Do you fear death?**

We realize that most of us do not want to die a painful, prolonged death. But how about death itself? How do you respond to the notion of your own death—especially your immediate demise?

In our daily existence it's easy for many Christians lose sight of one of the reasons Jesus became human. We are told: *"Since the children have flesh and blood, He too shared in their humanity so that by His death He might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— and free*

those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death" (Hebrews 2:14,15).

We were both given the opportunity to prepare our parents for their death. When Mike told his ailing father he was about to die, his Dad's immediate reply was, "Jesus has been waiting for me!" His Mom had a face full of glee... Sue's last conversation with her unbelieving Dad caused him to respond to our Father's call and put his trust in Jesus. Her Mom gave her life to Jesus on her death bed after years of "soil preparation" by the Spirit through Sue.

If you fear death, you're missing something Jesus accomplished on your behalf, victory over the fear of death. If you fear death, then you're sinning through doubt and disbelief...

• **Is your conscience clear?**

In other words, are you now in fellowship with the Father and His Son, Jesus? Stop and look inside yourself!!! Are you at this very moment living with unfessed sin? (See 1 John 1:9). Remember, when you were baptized, you pledged to keep a good conscience toward God (see 1 Peter 3:21). Are you keeping your pledge right at this moment? If not, why not????

Remember, if Mark 12:30, *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength"*, isn't your pre-eminent heart's motive, you're grieving our Lord. In the Older Testament, God told the Israelites He would never entertain *"any other gods before him"* (see Exodus 20:3 and Deuteronomy 5:7). In us who have embraced His Covenant He will not

entertain any other motives that compete with Him as "gods" or idols. The very meaning of the "covenant" you have in Jesus means to live in union with Him, to have oneness with Him. One of our Father's stipulations for you to enter His Covenant is:

with those you really want to see again in heaven. Any of us may find ourselves standing before the Throne sooner than we think...

Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz

**Your Salvation Pilgrimage
Both Begins and Continues
with Your Forceful Conviction and
Steadfast Determination
to Follow Him**

Answering the call of our Father to trust wholeheartedly in Jesus is a vigorous response from which no earthly power can hold you back! As Jesus proclaimed, following Him is a heart issue filled with forceful determination. This essence is captured in Matthew 13:44-46:

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it."

It takes tremendous certainty to give up everything you've got in order to lay hold of that which our Father is offering you. Keep in your foremost thoughts that your ongoing **genuine repentance**, **agape love**, and **complete trust** produce the type of conviction and determination our Father calls for. And, living this way makes seeing Jesus face-to-face at any moment a thrilling joy that far surpasses anyone or anything in this world!

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