

# LIVING BULWARK

The online magazine of The Sword of the Spirit  
sources of strength and renewal for Christian life and mission in today's world

October/November 2012 - Vol. 63



## Love and Friendship

***A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity (Proverbs 17:17)***

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Living Bulwark is committed to fostering renewal of the whole Christian people: Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox. We especially want to give witness to the charismatic, ecumenical, evangelistic, and community dimensions of that renewal. Living Bulwark seeks to equip Christians to grow in holiness, to apply Christian teaching to their lives, and to respond with faith and generosity to the working of the Holy Spirit in our day.

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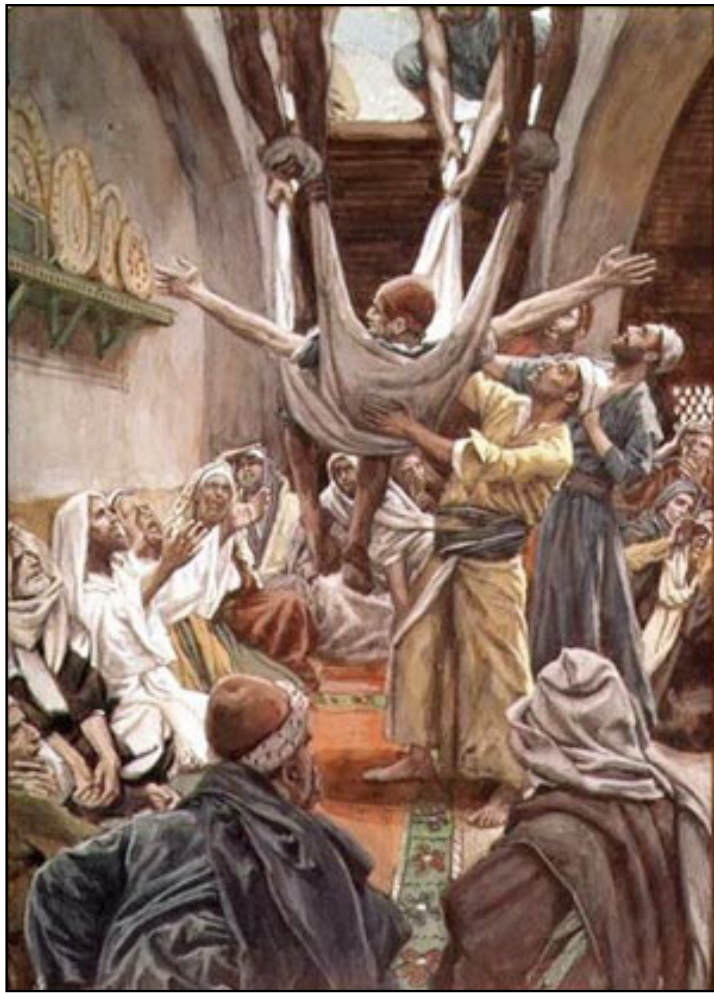


## Daily Meds from the Q Source

### Reflections on Friendship

by Dave Quintana

For many years now, I have been sending a Christmas letter recounting a bit of the past year as well as some thoughts on how I have experienced God working through it all. Many people have responded encouragingly over the years, saying that they greatly look forward to hearing from me and that I should write more. A similar thing happened a number of years ago when I shared some writings about a one-month mini-sabbatical that I took working with the poor in the Philippines. So, what you have before you is their fault! It is also the result of me getting a bit more reflective in my old age, and growing in my desire to attempt to share the riches of God's dealings with me. [excerpt from the Introduction to [\*Daily Meds from the Q Source Book\*](#)]



## Friends Help

Friends are a gift of God – a constant source of help and encouragement. In the Gospel of Matthew Chapter 9 a paralytic’s friends take him up onto the roof of a house where Jesus is teaching and lower him through the ceiling because that is the only way to get him close to Jesus. You see, these friends are willing to do whatever it takes to get their needy friend into Jesus’ presence. Those are the kind of friends I want! In a silly movie (“As Good As It Gets”) waitress Helen Hunt tells abrasive neurotic Jack Nicholson that he must say something nice to her. After a few feeble attempts he stumbles into telling her, “you make me want to be a better man.” That’s the kind of friend that I want to be to others – making them want to be better men, and better women. I like the way Pete Greig puts it – we “choose to be friends travelling together and dreaming along the way.”

*They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”*

Mark 2:2-5 NIV translation





Dave (center) addresses young people in Khandala, India

## Friends Accompany

I have been blessed to live in Latin America (San Jose, Costa Rica), Asia (Manila, Philippines) and Europe (Belfast, N. Ireland and London, UK) as well as my native United States. In each of these places I have also been fortunate enough to travel rather extensively. And you know what I've found? That God gives me dear friends, "special friends," brothers and sisters of the heart, "soul mates" – with whom to share life and service in each place along the way. It is not good for us to be alone. God gives us other people to share and enjoy life with along the way. I am delighted in God's call to me to forsake marriage and family in order to live a life consecrated to him in a special way. And I am also delighted that he grants me married brothers and sisters, dear friends to be encouraged by and to encourage in return.

*One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.*

Proverbs 18:24 NIV translation

## Friends Labor

Some of the most interesting stops along the way in this journey called life have been connecting with other Christian ministries. In them too have I found the Lord gifting me with intimate companions and friends – fellow-workers in the Lord's vineyards. They inspire me and they challenge me. They help me to be more appreciative for what I have, and they help me to open my eyes to see more of what I could be for the Lord. Let me introduce you to a few of my friends. I thank God for old friends such as YWAM (Youth With A Mission), and their heart for the lost and their willingness to dare to do crazy things for God. I thank God for new friends as well, friends like the YMCA in Munich (and other places) that combine cutting-edge youth ministry with rich and full community life. Can I encourage you to surround yourself with friends that are like you, and friends that are different than you are? With friends who will accept you as you are, and also challenge you to not just stay that way?

*Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel.*

Philippians 1:27 NIV translation



Dave (left) on a tour of the squatter area by Payatas dump in Manila

## Friends Challenge

Another friend that has impacted me significantly is CCDA (Christian Community Development Association). They are often found working in difficult areas of inner cities, labouring in love the 3 R's – relocation, redistribution and reconciliation. Their radicalness has made me uncomfortable and challenged my mind and my heart as well as my lifestyle. I also think of my friend Bo who felt led by the Lord to open a home for abandoned elderly in the Philippines. This “Anawim” (or “home”) is a stirring example for me of what the Lord can do with “an open mind and a broken heart.” Or gosh, I could tell you lots of stories of my friend Jodean who works with the poor (“He Cares”) in and around Metro Manila – and the mark made upon my life from the challenge that came to me from my week living and ministering with them that I will carry with me forever.

*Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight; stop doing wrong. Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.*

Isaiah 1:16-17 NIV translation

[Dave Quintana is an elder of the [Servants of the Word](#), a missionary brotherhood of men living single for the Lord. He is also a regional coordinator for the [Sword of the Spirit](#) in Europe and the Middle East. He currently lives in London, England.]



### Daily Meds from the Q Source

By Dave Quintana, published by [Tabor House](#), 2012, 250 pages, \$11.00

Dave Quintana's daily meditations and Bible readings to stir our minds and kindle our hearts in 2013. He explores themes important to all who search to be wise men and women in the Lord, and provides a wealth of personal experience from living and ministering in Central America, Asia, Europe, and the United States. Expect to be challenged. Expect to be inspired. Expect to meet the living and loving God. [Order](#) one for yourself and more to give as gifts!



## Friendship, Health, and Wisdom Are Essential

by Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD)

Two things here on earth are essential – health and a friend. They are the two things most to be prayed for. Woe to the person who despises them.

Health and friendship are natural gifts. God has made human beings for living – hence health – and for not living alone – hence the search for friendship.

Friendship begins in the family, with your spouse and children and extends from there to strangers. But who, in fact, is a stranger? All human beings share a common parentage. Do you fail to recognize that person? There's a human being there! Are you dealing with an adversary? There's a human being there! With an enemy? There's a human being there too! Let a friend remain a friend and turn an enemy into a friend.

However, to these two things that we need to have in this world, health and friendship, we must add a third which is not of this world, namely wisdom.

Divine wisdom is on a different plane from human beings – stupid, sunk in error, attached to superfluities, ignorant of the eternal verities. Divine wisdom is no friend of the foolish and, because it is not their friend, it is to be found far removed from them.

Nevertheless, by taking to itself what was close to us, divine wisdom has come close to us. In this consists the mystery of Christ. Nothing is further from foolishness than divine wisdom and nothing is closer to human beings than their humanity – divine wisdom has assumed humanity and come closer to human beings by means of what is close to them.

So we believe in three things – health, friendship and divine-human wisdom.

[Click [here](#) for a brief bio of Augustine of Hippo]

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[Excerpt from [\*Drinking from the Hidden Fountain: A Patristic Breviary\*](#), edited by Thomas Spidlik, translated by Paul Drake, Cistercian Publications, Kalamazoo, Michigan - Spencer, Massachusetts, 1994. Original Latin source from *Serm. Denis*, 16, 1 (*Miscellanea Agostiniana*, 75-77).]

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## Cementing Friendship with Brotherly Love and Mutual Care

by John Chrysostom ([347-407 AD](#))

We cannot be saved by seeking just our own individual salvation; we need to look first to the good of others.

In warfare, the soldier who takes to flight to save his own skin brings disaster on himself as well as on the others, whereas the good soldier who takes up arms on behalf of his comrades saves his own life along with theirs.

Our life is a warfare, the bitterest of battles. So in loyalty to our King let us draw up the lines of [spiritual] battle ready for blood and slaughter, with our eyes on the salvation of all, encouraging the stalwarts and stirring up the laggards.

Many of our brothers and sisters have fallen in this battle, wounded and covered with blood, with no one to care for them. There is no one to look after them, no layman, no priest, no comrade, no friend, no brother, because we are all of us seeking our own individual salvation, and thereby spoiling our chance of attaining it.

True freedom and glory come from not being concerned with ourselves. We are weak and vulnerable to the devil's attacks because we are not doing this. We are not standing shoulder to shoulder in the fight. We are not fortified with the love of God. We are not using the shield of brotherly love. On the contrary, we are seeking friends and comrades from very different motives – either because of family ties, or from habit, or because we live nearby, instead of the search for sanctity.



All our friendships ought to be cemented with this one bond, the desire to help one another.

[Click [here](#) for a brief bio of John Chrysostom]

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[Excerpt from [Drinking from the Hidden Fountain: A Patristic Breviary](#), edited by Thomas Spidlik, translated by Paul Drake, Cistercian Publications, Kalamazoo, Michigan - Spencer, Massachusetts, 1994. Original source from *On the Gospel of St. Matthew*, 59, 5 (PG58, 581).]

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## Love and Friendship in Thomas Aquinas

by Christoph Schönborn

The one essential thing at the heart of every happy human and Christian life is friendship. It is of this I would like to speak. I have in my own life experienced that friendship is the most precious of all goods, and I am convinced that Saint Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) made friendship the point on which his whole theological work turns, since he defined love, which no doubt is the quintessence of Christianity, as friendship. For many years these thoughts have occupied me.

I consider the treatise on love in the *Secunda Secundae* (the second part of the second book) of the *Summa Theologiae* to be the key, so to speak, to the whole work. I think that all the major themes and concerns of Aquinas are gathered and brought into focus in this treatise. Of course it is impossible to expound the entire treatise in the short time allotted to this talk. Still, I would like to try at least to present some of the central ideas of “quaestio 23”, which is devoted to the nature of love.

## The Contribution of Thomas Aquinas

by R.C. Sproul

*The heavens declare the glory of God,  
and the sky above proclaims his  
handiwork(Psalm 19:1).*

The noted theologian Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) is our fourth example of faith from church history. Even as a child he exhibited a tremendous intellectual talent that would later be applied to the matters of theology. At the age of nineteen he joined the Dominicans, much to his parents chagrin. They kidnapped Aquinas and forced him to stay at home, but when his mother saw him continue to observe the monastic order even there, she helped him to escape.

Aquinas' peers called him a “dumb ox” because of his physical appearance and soft-spoken ways. Over time, however, they began to recognize his fine mind and preaching gifts. They came to believe Aquinas' teacher who said that “this dumb ox will change the world.”

One of the most important contributions that Aquinas made to the church was his teaching on God's revelation. During the thirteenth century, Islam was spreading rapidly and Islamic philosophers became famous both inside and outside of the Islamic world.

These philosophers were particularly known for teaching what was called the “Double Truth Theory of Knowledge.” This theory states that something can be true according to special revelation but false according to natural knowledge (and vice versa). The obvious problem with this theory is that it relativizes truth, making it neither universal nor permanent. Aquinas, however, vigorously denied this theory of knowledge and rose to give an answer.

Aquinas taught that while we know some things from the Bible, such as the Trinity, we know other

## Is love friendship?

Saint Thomas begins his treatise on love immediately with the question of whether it is a kind of friendship. In keeping with his usual method, he begins first with objections to this supposition. They are weighty, as they always are when Saint Thomas broaches an important theme. He deliberately tries to make the counterarguments especially strong, so as then to present his assertion in a way that is even more clear and well founded. This method does not disparage or belittle the opponent, but rather brings out his arguments in the strongest and most concise possible way, so as to underscore the seriousness of the struggle to attain the truth. Saint Thomas never needs to malign or make light of those who think differently, because he is convinced that the light of truth shines brightly enough to prevail on its own.

For Thomas it is self-evident that love is the center and quintessence of the Christian life; after all, the commandment of love of God and love of neighbor is considered the epitome of the Law and thus of the will of God. But that love is a sort of friendship is anything but self-evident. Can there be friendship between God and man, when living together with the friend is an essential element of friendship? We are supposed to love God. But having friendly relations with God is not simply a given that we can take for granted.

The second objection likewise considers friendship to be a narrower concept than the concept of love. Jesus commanded us to love our enemies. Therefore it is possible to love them, but one cannot cultivate friendship with one's enemies. The third objection, too, is along these lines: I may be able to love sinners with the love of God. Does that mean that I can also be friends with them?

The objections seem, therefore, to aim at proving that friendship is something more restricted than love. Love knows no limits; it extends to God and to all mankind. Friendship, in contrast, is possible only with one's equals and with those with whom we have ties of goodwill.

The argument supporting the thesis of Saint Thomas is taken from Jesus' farewell discourse at the Last Supper, when our Lord says to the Twelve, "No longer do I call you servants . . . but I have called you friends" (John 15:15). When I was consecrated a bishop, I took this saying of Jesus as my motto: *Vos autem dixi amicos*. The one and only reason why our Lord calls his apostles friends is, according to Thomas, his love. Therefore the sort of love that Jesus bestowed on his disciples is proved to be friendship.

things by studying God's revelation in nature. An example of the latter would be our understanding of the complexity of the human body. Finally, he said that there were some things we can know both from special revelation and from natural revelation. An example of this is our knowledge that God exists.

Aquinas was emphatic that when both natural revelation and special revelation are rightly understood, the truth learned from one of these areas will never contradict the truth learned from the other.

He rightly said that all aspects of God's revelation are complimentary. We have Aquinas to thank for reminding us that all truth is God's truth and is therefore both universal and permanent.

There is a sense in which every Christian owes a profound debt to Saint Thomas. To understand his contribution we must know something of the historical context in which he wrote. To gain a fair reading of any thinker, past or present, we must ask such questions as "What problems was he trying to solve? Why? What were the vibrant issues at stake in his day? What were the dominant controversies?" We know, for example, that throughout church history the development of theology has been prodded in large part by the threat of serious heresies. It was the heretic Marcion who made it necessary for the church to define the canon of sacred scripture. It was the heresy of Arius that provoked the council of Nicaea. It was the distortions of Nestorius and Eutyches that made the Council of Chalcedon necessary. The heat of controversy has been the crucible by which the truth of theology has been made more sharp, more lucid.

The threat to the church that awakened Saint Thomas from his own dogmatic slumber was one of the most serious challenges that Christendom has ever had to endure. Our present condition in the western world makes it a bit difficult to imagine the enormity of the threat. It was the rise and sweeping expansion of Islam that threatened Christianity in the thirteenth century. Our awareness of the threat tends to be limited to the more colorful and adventuresome element of it



The argumentation that now follows in the main part of the first article is for me one of the greatest and most beautiful passages in the whole theological *Summa*. In a few strokes the Angelic Doctor not only sketches a doctrine about friendship but also sees the final purpose of all of God's salvific works in the establishment of a friendship between God and man. Let us examine somewhat the lines of the argument.

In an earlier article, Thomas had already asked the question of whether it is right and appropriate to divide love (*amor*) into the love of friendship (*amor amicitiae*) and the love of concupiscence or desire (*amor concupiscentiae*). For love is treated by Thomas first under the aspect of passion (*passio*), as the fundamental form of the passion of desire (*concupiscibilis*). There (*quaestio* 26, art. 4 of the *Prima Secundae*) he has already explained that the love that is friendship is undoubtedly superior to the love that is desire. For desire is concerned with something I would like to have for myself. The love of friendship, however, is concerned with the good I wish for the other person. Love, however, is realized more fully when I want something good for another than when I am concerned about my own good.

## Establishing friendship

Now article 1 in question 23 also presupposes this framing of the question. Thomas begins with the quotation from the farewell discourse: "No longer do I call you servants . . . but . . . friends" (John 15:15). But what sort of friendship is it that Jesus is talking about and that he grants to his disciples? "The Philosopher", that is, Aristotle, gives the cue here. Not every love, he says, has the quality of friendship. In order for love to become friendship, it must have the character of goodwill (*benevolentia*). As long as we want something only for our own sake, it is the love of concupiscence. If it is said that someone loves wine, it would be ridiculous to maintain that there is a friendship in that instance. The wine is loved, not for its own sake, but rather for the sake of the joy that it gives me. In this sense Thomas also excludes the possibility that there could be a friendship between a man and a horse. (He must not have read the *Narnia* books by C. S. Lewis; otherwise he would probably have spoken differently about the friendship between boys and horses.)

The decisive element, however, is not just benevolence. Friendship exists only when there is *mutual* goodwill, for "only the friend is friend to the friend", as Aristotle says. There must be reciprocity, therefore, and this presupposes real communication between the friends. We all are familiar with the painful experience of friendships fading when they are not constantly

chronicled in the Crusades. Knights with crosses emblazoned on their chests riding out to free the Holy Land from infidels has a certain romance to it.

Saint Thomas also sought to rescue the Holy Land. Its walls were made of philosophical mortar. His lance was his pen and his coat of armor a monk's garb. For Thomas the war was a war of ideas, a battle of concepts...

We are acutely aware that the church in our day has staggered under the assault of philosophers and scientists. There are few philosophers who see their task as being servants to the truth of God. There are few scientists today who see their task as "thinking God's thoughts after Him." Secular universities are not known for their gentle nurturing of Christian faith. The popular music charts do little to promote the kingdom of God. Modern art and literature are not communicating the beauty of holiness. No wonder that the church seeks a safe place of solace far removed from the battleground of culture.

We need an Aquinas. We need a titanic thinker who will not abandon truth for safety. We need men and women who are willing to compete with secularists in defense of Christ and of his truth. In this regard, the dumb ox of Aquino was heroic.

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[Excerpts from *Heroes of the Faith*, by R.C. Sproul, <http://www.ligonier.org> and chapter on "Thomas Aquinas" by R.C. Sproul in *Chosen Vessels: Portraits of Ten Outstanding Christian Men*, Servant Publications, 1985, Ann Arbor, Michigan]

Robert Charles Sproul, is an American Calvinist theologian, author, and pastor. He is the founder and chairman of Ligonier Ministries near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA. He is a prolific writer, speaker, and teacher.

nourished by mutual exchange, conversation, and encounters.

But can there be a real reciprocity between God and man? Is not the distance between God and man infinite and thus ultimately unbridgeable? It is the most profound conviction of the Christian faith that God really communicates something of himself to us and, furthermore, that he has given himself to us in his Son and in the Holy Spirit. God shares his life with us, and that is why there is a true mutual relation of communion. More precisely: that is why it is possible to establish a friendship on the basis of this gift of God's self-communication.

If there is one expression that, in my opinion, summarizes the entire *Summa Theologiae*, it is *fundari amicitiam*. God wills "to establish a friendship" with his creature. The whole path of human and Christian life has its most profound meaning in this process of establishing friendship with God. And the whole ethics of interpersonal communication among men is summarized in this one expression: establishing friendship.

The prologue to the second book of the *Summa* is very important. There man's entire path is depicted from the perspective of the image and likeness of God. Man is created in God's likeness and is therefore called to realize this divine image by freely moving toward his destination. Continuing now in the vein of this prologue, we can now say more precisely that the entire meaning of human life consists in realizing the likeness of God in friendship with God. Thomas makes it clear that this establishment of a friendship also has a very specific place: fellowship and thus friendship with Jesus Christ. In him God has communicated himself completely to us men. That is why it is essential to establish friendship with God specifically as friendship with Jesus Christ, who came to make us his friends.

Let us look at the replies that Saint Thomas gives to the three objections:

Reply to objection 1. It is true that, at least in our bodily life, there is no immediate fellowship with God. It does exist, however, in the spiritual life. For even now our life is hidden with Christ in God, as the Apostle says (Col 3:3). Hence we already have now a real, albeit imperfect, fellowship with God that will be perfected in the beatific vision of God.

Reply to objection 2. Here Saint Thomas proves very beautifully the possibility of loving one's enemy. There can be no friendship with an enemy; that is possible only between friends. But the friends of my friends nevertheless become in a certain sense my

friends also, even though they are not directly congenial to me. If friendship with God unites us, then on the basis of this friendship we also love those for whom God did not hesitate to send his Son, even though they are our enemies.

Reply to objection 3. The same is true also of love for sinners. Even though direct friendship with them does not seem appropriate, the love that God has for them (and for us too, since we ourselves are sinners) is reason enough to regard them with God's love and in this light to love them also with the love of friendship.

This first and fundamental article of the treatise on love has provided us with the decisive keyword: *fundari amicitiam*. Now it is a question of examining more closely how this friendship between God and us is to be obtained, how it can grow and fully develop. > *continued, see [Part 2](#)*

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> See [Part 2: Friendship with God](#) by Christoph Schönborn

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[Excerpt from [Happiness, God, and Man](#), by Christoph Cardinal Schönborn, Chapter 2, © 2011 [Ignatius Press](#), San Francisco. Used with permission.]

Christoph Cardinal Schönborn, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Vienna, is a highly respected spiritual teacher and writer, and a former student of Pope Benedict XVI. He has written numerous books including *Jesus, the Divine Physician*, *Chance or Purpose?*, *Behold, God's Son*.

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Love and Friendship in Thomas Aquinas, continued  
by Christoph Schönborn



## Part 2 Friendship With God

In the second article of question 23, the doctrine of love as friendship between God and man is once again deepened in a crucial way. The point of departure is the statement by Peter Lombard (d. 1160), the Master of the *Sentences*, that love is not something created but rather the Holy Spirit himself, who dwells in our soul. In other words, God himself is the love in us. On account of its greatness and preeminent importance, love cannot be something created; it must be immediately divine – indeed, God himself. At first reading, that sounds very pious and sublime. Thomas, however, makes it clear that this makes love, not greater, but fundamentally smaller. In what way?

If the Holy Spirit himself were the love in us, then it would not be an act or an attitude (*habitus*) of the man. For then loving would not be up to us; it would not depend on our will. We ourselves would not love, but God in us would be loving himself. Here we come across the central point in the anthropology of Saint Thomas, which has implications for all areas of human life. Love would not be love and could not be friendship if it were not also, on the part of man, a genuine, human act (that is, voluntary and

*Jesus Christ, our true friend,  
laid down his life for us*

by Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

Was it necessary for the Son of God to suffer for us? It was very necessary and for two counts: First as a remedy for our sins, and secondly as a model for us in our behavior.

In the passion of Christ we find a remedy for all the evils which come upon us on account of our sins.

But the passion is not less useful to us as an example. Indeed the passion of Christ is sufficient to instruct us completely in our whole life. For if any one wants to live a perfect life, he has only to despise the things that Christ despised on the cross, and to desire what Christ desired. The cross provides an example of every virtue.

If you are looking for an example of charity, 'Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' This was what Christ did on the cross. If he gave up his life for us, it ought not to be a burden for us to put up with every evil, whatever it be, for his sake.

If you are looking for patience, you will find it in its highest form on the cross. The greatness of patience is measured by two things, either when someone puts up patiently with grievous things, or when he suffers things which he could have evaded but did not. Christ suffered greatly and with patience on the cross: 'when he suffered he did not threaten; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, he opened not his mouth.'

That is how great was the patience of Christ on the cross: 'Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame.'

If you are looking for an example of humility, look

rational). If we were moved “passively” to love, like a tool in the hand of a craftsman, then it would not be love, for, as the first article demonstrated, when love is friendship, then reciprocity is an essential feature of it.

But that is precisely what God enables us to do through the communication of himself, whereby he makes us capable of establishing a friendship with him. Thomas formulates it in his own language as follows: In order to be able to love God in friendship, we need a capability that surpasses our natural abilities and makes us “connatural” with God, so to speak, a capability that makes it possible for us really to love God and to be united to him in friendship.

The explanations of Saint Thomas in the second article are also a textbook example of his method, from which we can learn much. Only in the rarest cases do we find polemics in Thomas. He always tries to strengthen the arguments of those whose viewpoint he does not share. Since he is quite objectively concerned about the truth, he strives to emphasize the portion of truth found in other positions, however unlike his own. This becomes evident precisely in this article. As a young professor he wrote a commentary on the *Sentences* of Master Peter Lombard, which was then the usual university textbook. Hence he respectfully presents the Master’s postulate, too. Just as respectful is the way in which he corrects that position: “If we consider the matter aright, this (that is, the Master’s position) would be, *on the contrary*, detrimental to charity [love].” Now the Master was part of the Augustinian tradition, and in reference to Augustine (d. 430), Thomas carefully notes that this manner of speaking (namely, identifying the love in man with God himself) was customary among the Platonic philosophers and that Augustine had been steeped (*imbutus*) in Platonic teachings. This led to many errors, which Thomas carefully but clearly corrects here.

## Conclusions

We do not show any particular loyalty to Saint Thomas by defending his opinions as polemically as possible against all other possible viewpoints. We imitate his thought and his virtues to the extent that our search for truth motivates us to consult it wherever we find traces of it. Saint Thomas could never have integrated Aristotle so intensively had he not been supported by the conviction that Christ, the Eternal Word, is the Truth that enlightens every man. Wherever a ray of the light of truth can be found, it is important to inquire, to listen, so as to greet with joy the truth that is manifesting itself. Part of this, of course, is a constant willingness to expose and refute errors for the sake of

at the cross. There, God willed to be judged by Pontius Pilate and to die.

If you are looking for an example of obedience, follow him who was obedient to the Father, even unto death. ‘For as by one man’s disobedience’, (this refers to Adam), ‘many were made sinners, so by one man’s obedience many will be made righteous.’

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[Excerpt from *Conferences on the Creed*, Chapter 6]

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truth. Both of these, however, greeting the truth and refuting error, require that one be well prepared to converse. Saint Thomas incomparably conducted a dialogue with all the masters of the past and the present. There is probably no better or more reliable guide to a Christian culture of dialogue than Saint Thomas.

*Quaestio* 23 indicates, so to speak, the anthropological and theological foundation on which this truly Christian and humanistic attitude of Saint Thomas is based: his image of God and man. There can be friendship only when there is genuine reciprocity in freedom: *mutuus amor*, *mutua inhaesio*, a real togetherness with and in each other.

The great thing about Saint Thomas' image of God is that he sees God, not only as the First Cause of everything, but also as being so powerful and great that he has given his creatures the power to be causes themselves, the ability to work on their own and not just passively to be moved by the supreme principle, by the First Cause.

Especially today it would be very timely and important to study carefully Saint Thomas' discussion with Islamic philosophy, especially that of Averroes. Thomas fought with all the power of his mind against Averroes' teaching that God alone is the cause of all. God is not exalted by diminishing his creatures. His true greatness is manifested, not in the complete powerlessness of creatures, but rather in their empowerment to be able to work on their own as causes.

The consequence of this view is the whole breadth of the Catholic understanding of secondary causes, of the relative autonomy of secular areas of activity. In my opinion it could be demonstrated that the scientific culture of countries with a Christian character has to do with this view of the independent efficacy of creatures. One would have to show, furthermore, how the Western understanding of participation and democracy developed out of this view. The consequences of Christian humanism become particularly evident in the area of human dignity and human rights.

Of course one would also have to discuss the dangers inherent in this humanism, which come to light when the dependence of the secondary causes on the First Cause is denied, when the autonomy of the world and of man forgets that it is creaturely and arrogates to itself an independence that it does not in fact possess.

There is probably no better place to study this paradox and to take



it to heart than the treatise of Saint Thomas on love as friendship: the paradox of the freedom granted to man by God, of the reciprocity between the Eternal One and us that is made possible by God, of the real friendship between him, the Infinite One, and us, his mortal creatures.

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> Return to [Part 1: Is Love Friendship?](#) by Christoph Schönborn

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Excerpt from [Happiness, God, and Man](#), by Christoph Cardinal Schönborn, Chapter 2, © 2011 [Ignatius Press](#), San Francisco. Used with permission.]

Christoph Cardinal Schönborn, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Vienna, is a highly respected spiritual teacher and writer, and a former student of Pope Benedict XVI. He has written numerous books including *Jesus, the Divine Physician*, *Chance or Purpose?*, *Behold, God's Son*.

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## From Father to Son: Things My Dad Taught Me About Life

by Ted Kennedy III



### Introduction

The doctor's words left no doubt: "Mr. Kennedy, your father's kidneys have started to fail, and there is nothing more we can do. In his weakened condition, it is impossible to operate. He has somewhere between two days and a week to live. I'm sorry, but there is nothing else that we can do for him."

My Dad was eighty years old, and a few months earlier he had gone into the hospital for preventative surgery. The surgery appeared to be successful, but later that day his abdominal aorta tore, and he almost bled to death. The doctors managed to save him, and he struggled through several months of recovery and relapse, advance and setback.

Many family members had spent many hours at the hospital over the last few months, and now the end was near. There was a certain comfort in the doctor's words, because at least Dad's struggle would be over. The man who had always been there from my earliest years was about to depart. There was no more rehab, no more struggle, no more advances, no more setbacks.

Later that night, I was talking with Fr. Pat Egan, who happened to be at our house for dinner, and I recounted one of the stories here – an important lesson in life that Dad had taught me. I sighed: "I just wish I had been able to go through some of the things he taught me, and thank him one more time."

"You can still do that," Fr. Pat replied.

"But he can't talk any more," I said. "I'm not even sure he could understand what I would tell him. He's going to heaven soon – why would he care about what I have to say?"

"Let me assure you," Fr. Pat said as he laid his hand on my arm, "your father very much wants to hear what you have to say, and even if he can't talk, he can still hear and understand. It isn't too late to share these things with him. Go ahead and do it. It will be important for him and for you."

As I was going to bed, I decided that I would go over to the hospital first thing in the morning, and share what I could remember of all the many things Dad had taught me. I started going over some of them in my mind, wondering how I could remember them all, and then drifted off to sleep.

The next morning, I suddenly found myself wide awake more than an hour before my normal rising time. I jumped out of bed, went over to my desk, and started up my computer. I typed furiously for over an hour. I listed the lessons Dad had taught me, phrases of his that had become famous in our family, scenes from my childhood in which he had imparted some piece of wisdom or advice.

For some of the points, I put down two words, and for some I typed out a paragraph. Several times, I interrupted one of the longer points because other episodes came crowding in to my memory and I didn't want to forget them. As fast as the memories came, I typed.

I jumped in the car and drove over to the hospital. When I got to Dad's room, I was relieved that no one else was around – the hospital was pretty empty at that hour. I closed the door and told him I had some things to share with him. He couldn't talk, but I grasped his hand, and he squeezed back – a surprisingly strong grip. I told him that the doctors didn't give him very long to live, and that this might be the last time I would see him. I said I wanted to thank him for all he had done for me, and especially for the things he had taught me. I told him I would write a little book of all these things, and call it "From Father to Son." As I talked, he regularly squeezed my hand. Fr. Pat was right – he understood what I was saying, and it meant something to him. So I went through the list, recounted all the stories, and thanked him one last time for all he had done for me.

It was one of the best times we ever had together. It took about an hour – me talking and crying and laughing, and Dad occasionally squeezing my hand with the strength he had left.

When I finished, we just looked at each other for a few moments. He couldn't talk, but he repeatedly squeezed my hand. I knew he had heard and understood.

I said goodbye for what we both knew was the last time. His last gesture to me as I left his room that day was a miniature salute with his hand – a gesture he had often used in the past. It would have been accompanied by the words "see ya later, big fella," if he could have spoken. But I understood - the gesture said it all. He knew that "later" meant in heaven. That little salute was his final salute to one of his junior officers, to whom he was now entrusting the care of the ship. That was the last time I saw him conscious, the last time I spoke to him, and the final salute I received from him.

This book is an attempt to capture some of those things that Dad taught me, for which I thanked him on that last morning together, and to pass them on.

I hope that in reading this, you can recall similar stories and events in your own life, and perhaps even write them down and share them with your Dad. I hope to encourage younger folks to thank and honor your parents while you can. The day will come when they are gone, and you will find that the greatest memories you have are of times when you expressed your thanks for the things they did for you, and honored them for their role in your life.



This book is my last gesture of honor towards my Dad.

As I said at his funeral:

“Dad, the world is a poorer place without you,  
But a better place because of you.  
Well done, good and faithful servant,  
Enter into the joy of your Master.”

May we all have that said about us when we reach the end of our days.

What follows are a few little stories about things I learned from my Dad over quite a number of years. They are roughly chronological, but not strictly so.

Most people who have read earlier versions of these stories say that they like sitting down in the evening and reading two or three at a time. Then they take some time to reflect on their own fathers (or their kids), and either enjoy the memories, or think about ways they could implement some insight they gleaned from the stories.

However it works for you, I pray that in these simple stories you may find refreshment, guidance, hope, healing, and greater appreciation for your own Dad, or for those who have functioned as surrogate Dads for you. Or if you are a father, I pray that you may find inspiration and wisdom for all that you can do, and be, for your children.

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Ted Kennedy is a member of the [Servants of the Word](#), an ecumenical brotherhood of men living single for the Lord. He is steward and trainer for the Servants of the Word international formation house in Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA. Ted is a vice president at Service Brands International, a franchising company headquartered in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

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## From Father to Son: Things My Dad Taught Me About Life

by Ted Kennedy III



### 1. Trust Your Strengths and Know Your Limits

Dad had an expression which he loved to use when talking about ability: learn what you could do “on a continuing basis.” That is, what you could reliably do over and over again. These were your strengths, and you could trust them. They were the foundation on which you could build.

This especially came home to me my senior year in high school. I was on the basketball team, and I was a pretty good player. I was what you would call a “hustle” player. I always hustled – during warm-ups, during scrimmages, during sprints at the end of practice... I hustled at *everything*. It was the way I could excel. I wasn’t a big guy, but I could out-work anyone in the known universe.

My senior season started out well. In fact, in my second game I scored a career-high 22 points. It was funny because Dad was at the game, but he walked out to get a drink during a two minute stretch in which I scored 8 points. In fact, I scored 6 points in less than 10 seconds on the game clock. I drove to the basket and scored. I started back down the court, feigning like I wasn’t looking, then suddenly came back, intercepted the in-bounds pass and laid the ball in. Then I headed back down the court and said to myself, “Heck, let’s try that again.” I did it again, and to my shock it worked! I intercepted the pass, got fouled as I shot, and made the free throws.

Anyway, Dad happened to miss the whole thing. The next day the sports section of the paper said “Pioneer Defeats Trenton – Ted Kennedy leads the way.” Dad saw it and said, “You played okay, but it wasn’t that good.” I told him it was

probably because of the flurry of points I got right at the beginning of the fourth quarter, to which he said, “What flurry?” We pieced together the fact that he had missed my big moment and had a laugh together about the whole thing.

But Dad jumped right in to help me keep my sense of perspective. “You know, you played a good game last night, but you’re not really that good. Don’t expect to do that every game.” Well I was a bit offended at this. It seemed to me like my Dad should be the one saying stuff like “Keep up the good work – you can play like that all the time,” and here he was saying that I shouldn’t expect to do it regularly.

We talked this through, and he clarified what he wanted me to understand: I was a good basketball player, and there were a lot of things I could do, but I wasn’t a *great* player. I needed to have a realistic assessment of my abilities. If I thought that the way I performed in my best game was the way I could play all the time, I was setting myself up for failure. If my best game was “normal,” then every other game was a failure.

This wasn’t an easy thing for me to hear, especially after my best game. I wish I had been more open to what Dad was trying to teach me right then. I did learn the lesson, and it helped me play better, but I didn’t learn it right away. I still had the lingering thought that I really was as good as my best game – which made subsequent games not very satisfying.

Later that season, Dad pulled me aside. “You know,” he said, “you’re too concerned about playing perfect basketball. Every time you make a mistake, you say to yourself, ‘well, I won’t ever do *that* again.’ By the end of the season, you’re only going to have one move left! Don’t expect yourself to play perfectly, and don’t expect every game to be your best. When you play great games, have fun, but don’t burden yourself by expecting that you should do that all the time. If you do, everything short of your very best will be a failure – and that means most of your life will be a failure.”

I finally took the advice to heart. For the rest of the season I worried less about my mistakes and stopped trying to play the perfect game. I learned to trust the things I could do “on a continuing basis.” I accepted the occasional great plays as something that happened from time to time, but didn’t get down on myself when they didn’t happen consistently.

The real payoff was in that spring during tennis season. I decided I would incorporate Dad’s philosophy right from the start of the season. I knew the things I could do well, and I trusted those. I modified my game to not be as flashy, but to be steadier: a slower spin serve instead of a smashing flat serve; rushing the net more often to take advantage of my volleying ability, and so on. And I played the best tennis of my life. Our team ended up second in the state, and I made it to the quarter-finals in doubles. And through the whole thing I was much more relaxed and self-aware. I knew what I could do consistently, and where I was weak. I played to my strengths and built on them. I knew I wasn’t the greatest player out there, but I was confident in what I could do, and I had a lot of fun with the occasional great shot.

Dad had taught me how to trust my strengths, know my limits, play my best, and be content with the outcome.

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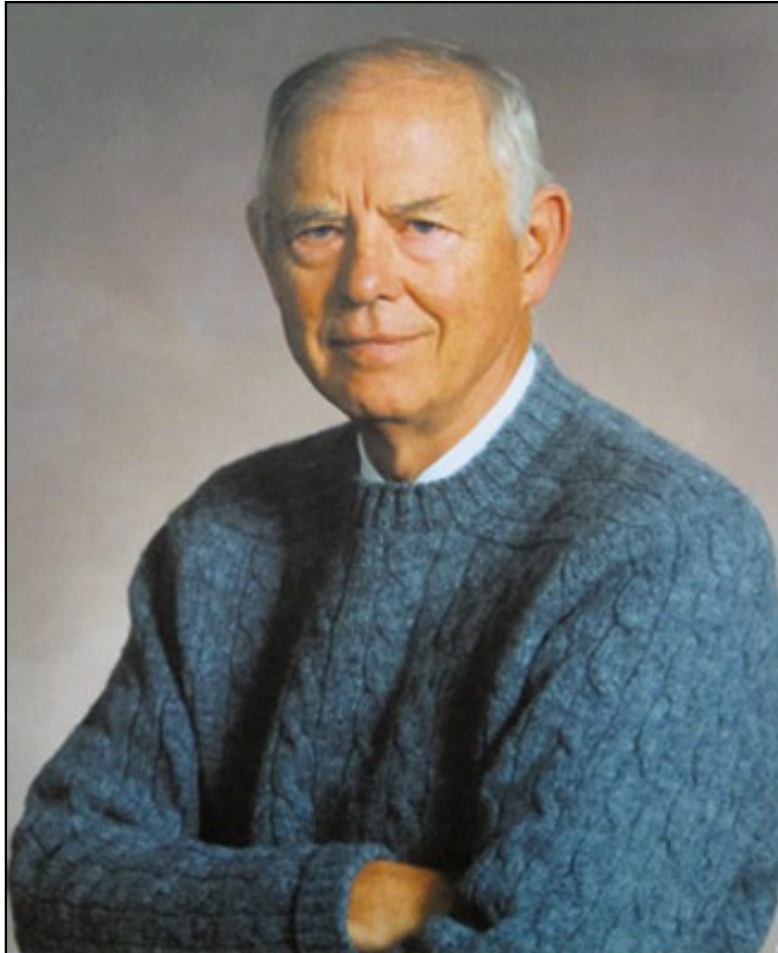
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## From Father to Son: Things My Dad Taught Me About Life

by Ted Kennedy III



### 2. One Dad and One Father

From my youngest years, Dad had always begun his prayers with “Heavenly Father...”, and the phrase became just part of what you say when you pray. But around the time I turned forty, I went through a change in the way I approached my earthly father and my heavenly father. At that time, Dad’s prayer became mine in a deeper way. I began praying “Heavenly Father,” not because I had been taught to say it, but because it was *true*. God had become my Heavenly Father, my Eternal Father, my True Father.

My earthly Father, my Dad, had cared for me, trained me, raised me, and introduced me to my Heavenly Father. I was filled with gratitude to him for all he had done, and I struggled for a way to express it. Then I came up with a plan: I would always call my earthly father “Dad” and my heavenly father “Father.” This would be a tribute to Dad because I knew that the greatest desire of his heart was for me to come to know God my True Father, and this was acknowledgement that he had succeeded. I had come to know my Father, my True Father, so Dad’s mission in my life was accomplished. He didn’t have to be my Father any more. God would handle that. God was now the one who was stronger than anyone or anything, who could handle every problem, solve every dilemma, and care for me in every circumstance.

But Dad would always have that second place of honor: he was my Dad, my only Dad, who led me to my Father. He was the one, like John the Baptist, who showed the way to my Heavenly Father, and then stepped aside. He allowed himself to decrease so God could increase in my life. But his was the pre-eminent position among those on earth: he was my Dad. There would never be another.

Not even God my Father could be my Dad.

So for me, the greatest honor I could pay to my earthly father is to call him my Dad. And one of the greatest joys of my life was to have the chance, four days before he died, to tell him about this and to thank him for all he had done, to tell him that he had succeeded in his mission, and that he could go in peace.

His last gesture to me as I left his room that day was a miniature salute with his hand - it would have been accompanied by the words "see ya later, big fella," if he could have spoken. That was his final salute to one of his junior officers, to whom he was now entrusting the care of the ship. That was the last time I saw him conscious, the last time I spoke to him, and the final salute I received from him. He was passing the mantel of leadership on, and entrusting me one final time to our Heavenly Father.

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## Empty Until Filled with Him

“But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.  
The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water  
welling up to eternal life.” - John 4:14

by Mary Schaefer

Soon after the start of the 2012 [Detroit Summer Outreach](#) (DSO) I was continually reminded of how empty I was. How can I give when I have nothing left? God reminded me that I am indeed empty. For he is the filler. He is the one who fills, who overflows, and continues to fill. There should be no fear in giving, because if I give from what he has given to me, there is abundance. If I draw from my own strength, I will be empty. I need to look to him, not myself. For I am meant to receive so I can give; not give so I can receive. Without the grace, the love, the peace of God, I have nothing to give. I am indeed empty until I am filled with him.



Mary Schaefer grew up in the [Work of Christ Community](#) in Lansing, Michigan, USA. She is living and working in Detroit and is a member of Detroit Community Outreach.

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## Finding God's Glory in Broken Places

by Camille Chippewa

"Know then, O beautiful soul, that you are the image of God. Know that you are the glory of God. Hear how you are his glory... Know then, O man, your greatness, and be vigilant."

– from a sermon by Saint Ambrose of Milan (330-397 AD)

Saint Ambrose's writing on the ultimate redemption and life "for the praise of God's glory" in all things reflects what I believe has been my personal call to serve in Detroit this past summer.

"The image and likeness of God is reflected in all of his creation and in all people. Except me." This is a lie that I have believed for most of my life. While I possessed the inherent knowledge that I am not, and never have been exempt from the whole work of God's creation, my head and my heart were in total disagreement of my share in the inheritance of God's kingdom.

I had recently finished a year of volunteer service in London, UK, called "Standing in the Gap." That year of service laid an excellent foundation for me to grow in the knowledge that I am truly a child of God – but doubts still lingered and continued to riddle my thoughts. For a long time I had found it difficult to believe in God. This only made believing that I am worthy of being loved an even greater struggle. Lacking the knowledge of the true source of love – God himself – made it difficult to accept love for myself. How can you accept something you don't understand?

This past year I have begun to better understand who God is and how great his love for each one of us. The

Lord has healed my heart, but I know that I am only at the beginning stage of what God wants to do in me – still much work of his transforming grace needs to be done in me.

Deciding to come and serve in Detroit this past summer had been a struggle for me. For quite a while I was unsure if I could really do it or not. I did decide to come, but I arrived three weeks late into the program, which meant I missed all of the program's official training. While some of the [Detroit Summer Outreach](#) (DSO) team members may have felt under-prepared, I just felt unworthy. "Why would I be asked to join the DSO team at such a late date? Why I am worthy to serve here? Why would DSO want me, after all? Am I really good enough?" The Lord answered my questions swiftly. I am not here because I am superwoman. I am not here for my worthiness. In fact, I believe I am here for my brokenness. I am broken, yet I am still a "new creation" – a daughter refashioned in the Lord's own glory. The truth is, we are all broken sinful creatures, yet we are also, at the same time, the Lord's own pride and glory.

This past summer I have experienced the Lord's glory and work of creation through my work with children in Detroit, with many poor people in this city, as well as with the brothers and sisters on the DSO team. The Lord is at work to heal and refashion his people in his glory. The Lord has been teaching me how to find strength in the broken places. It doesn't matter if the broken places are my own weaknesses, the brokenness of this city, or any other brokenness I experience. The Lord's own glory can work in and through any broken vessel and he can make of our weakness something that is great (2 Corinthians 4:7). Through our weakness we are made strong, and that is something I need to "be vigilant" about and to never forget. The Lord calls us to remember what he has done for us in Jesus Christ and what he continues to do in and through us for his own glory. I pray that I will continue to do that with his help, not only today, but tomorrow and every day of my life.

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## Growing in Christian Character Series



### Perseverance and the Strength to Finish Well

By Don Schwager

Eric Liddell (1902-1945), called the “Flying Scotsman” for his running speed, excelled in perseverance. As a young man he loved athletics, especially rugby and running. Eric was also a very committed Christian who wanted to follow in his parents’ footsteps as a missionary. His passion for sports was only excelled by his passion for spreading the Gospel in mission lands.

Eric was born in China in 1902. Both of his parents came from Scotland. At the age of six Eric, along with his older brother Robby, attended a boarding school in England for sons of missionaries. In 1921 he joined his brother Robby at the University of Edinburgh. He studied pure science and graduated in 1925. He also studied theology from October 1924 to June 1925. While studying in Edinburgh, Eric joined the Scottish national rugby union team. He played 7 out of 8 Five Nations matches in Europe. Eric also excelled in running, winning Scottish titles in 100 and 220 yard sprints, and 440 yard contests.

In 1921 Eric gave up rugby to concentrate on running. He didn’t think he could give his best by trying to succeed at both. He won several running competitions between 1921-1923.

The movie, *Chariots of Fire* depicts a scene, during a competition between France and Scotland, in which Eric is knocked off the race course by another runner. With remarkable courage and determination Eric picks himself up and continues the race. He not only catches up with the other runners, but surpasses all of them at the finish line.

In 1924 Eric competed in the Paris Olympics. He was favored to win the 100 meter race, but declined to run in it because it was held on a Sunday. He wanted to follow his religious conviction to rest on Sunday in honor of the Lord's Day. Eric ran in the 200 meter race and won a bronze medal. His second race was the 440 meter. He was not expected to do well in the 440 race, but he surprised everyone when he won a gold medal and set a new world record at the same time. After winning the gold medal he told reporters, "The secret of my success over the 400 meter is that I run the first 200 meters as fast as I can. Then, for the second 200 meters, with God's help I run faster."

*The Bulletin*, Scotland's popular photo paper of that day, wrote: "This is the crowning distinction of Liddell's great career on the track, and no more modest or unaffected world champion could be desired. Liddell has **built up his success by hard work and perseverance**, and although hardly a beautiful runner he has even triumphed over his defects of style."



Eric Liddell makes the finish line in record time for an Olympic gold medal in Paris 1924

At the height of Eric's running career, he gave it up to return to China as a missionary. He married Florence Mackenzie, the daughter of a missionary couple from Canada. Eric's and Florence's first two daughters were born in China. A third daughter was born in Canada, a few months after Eric had sent his wife and children to Canada during the Japanese occupation of China between 1941-1945. Eric was planning to rejoin them later, but was forced by the Japanese occupying army to a prison camp for "enemy nationals." One of the survivors of the camp, named David Michell, who is now Director for Canada Overseas Missionary Fellowship, describes Eric's impact on him and the hundreds of young people who were interred in the overcrowded camp during the war.

Eric Liddell's twenty years in China were eventful, to say the least... Deliberately walking away from the fame and glory that could have been his in Britain, he responded to God's call and went to China as a missionary with the London Missionary Society, following in his father's footsteps. [During World War II the Japanese armies rounded up all "enemy nationals" for internment in a prison camp]... I was sent to the same camp where Eric Liddell was, along with many other missionary children.

Eric Liddell stood out among the 1800 people packed into our camp, which measured only 150 by 200 yards. He was in charge of the building where we younger children, who had already been away from our parents for four years because of the war, lived with our teachers. He lived in the very crowded



men's dormitory near us (each man had a space of only three by six feet) and supervised our daily roll call when the guards came to count us.

One day a week 'Uncle Eric' would look after us, giving our teachers (all missionaries of the China Inland Mission and all women) a break. His gentle face and warm smile, even as he taught us games with the limited equipment available, showed us how much he loved children and how much he missed his own."

...But for Eric Liddell death came just months before liberation. He was buried in the little cemetery in the Japanese part of the camp where others who had died during internment had been laid to rest.... None of us will ever forget this man who was totally committed to putting God first, a man whose humble life combined muscular Christianity with radiant godliness.

What was his secret? He unreservedly committed his life to Jesus Christ as his Saviour and Lord. That friendship meant everything to him. By the flickering light of a peanut-oil lamp, early each morning he and a roommate in the men's cramped dormitory studied the Bible and talked with God for an hour.

As a Christian, Eric Liddell's desire was to know God more deeply, and as a missionary, to make him known more fully.

His training, hard work, and perseverance paid off not only on the track field, but even more importantly in his call to be a disciple and a missionary worker for Christ in China. The Lord Jesus was the "pioneer and perfecter of his faith" who trained him through discipline and perseverance.

Athletes and missionaries are not the only ones who need perseverance, every Christian who wants to follow the Lord Jesus needs perseverance.

### What is perseverance?

A key Greek word for "perseverance" (*kartereo*) which was used by the ancient Greeks, as well as by the New Testament writers, literally meant "to be strong," "to be courageous," "to persist at," "to hold fast to something," "to occupy oneself diligently with something," "to endure steadfastly," "to suffer." In connection with persons it meant "to stay by," "remain with," and "to be loyal to someone." The New Testament Letter to the Hebrews used the analogy of a race to describe how perseverance is essential for staying the course and finishing well: "Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1).

Another key Greek word for perseverance (*hupomene*) described the inner quality of patiently enduring and courageously bearing up under trials and suffering. It was described as "manly constancy or strength under trial." For the Greeks this virtue depicted strong, courageous, and brave resistance to some hostile power, and the endurance of pain and affliction with a steadfast spirit that would not be bowed down with grief or despair. The Letter to the Hebrews encourages Christians to follow the example of Jesus who patiently and courageously endured the cross for our sake: "Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or faint-hearted" (Hebrews 12:3).

C.S. Lewis describes how perseverance in the virtues builds strong character in people:

There is a difference between doing some particular just or temperate action and being a just or temperate man. Someone who is not a good tennis player may now and then make a good shot. What

you mean by a good player is a man whose eye and muscles and nerves have been so trained by making innumerable good shots that they can now be relied on. He has a certain tone or quality which is there even when he is not playing, just as a mathematician's mind has a certain habit and outlook which is there even when he is not doing mathematics. In the same way a man who perseveres in doing just actions gets in the end a certain quality of character. Now it is that quality rather than the particular actions which we mean when we talk of all "virtue."

- *Mere Christianity*, Chapter 12, "The Cardinal Virtues"

## Perseverance as a character trait

The virtue of perseverance is the patient determination to stay the course and to finish strong in the pursuit of what is good. It holds fast and persists in pursuing the good in the face of difficulty, discouragement, setbacks, or suffering. It does not vacillate, waver, hesitate, or falter in pursuing what is good. And it resists quitting in the face of difficulty.

Perseverance is the mean between giving into "softness" – seeking the path of least resistance, ease, and comfort on the one hand, and the stubborn, unyielding insistence of holding fast to one's personal opinions, preferences, or self-serving goals.

### Distinguishing True Perseverance from Its Two Extremes: Being Soft or Spineless and being Stubborn or Inflexible

Soft/Spineless	True Perseverance	Stubborn/Inflexible
<p>A "soft" person is a comfort seeker, someone who drifts along without making a firm commitment, easily changes course or quits whenever the going gets tough, uncomfortable, or painful.</p> <p>A "soft" person is apathetic, numb, uncaring, disinterested, or indifferent towards pursuing people, activities, or a course of action. Lacks the will-power or motivation to care about much of anything.</p> <p>A "soft" person easily vacillates, goes with prevailing opinions simply to please others and appear likeable.</p>	<p>A man or woman of perseverance possesses the patient determination to stay the course and to finish strong in the pursuit of what is good. Perseverance is the patient determination to stand for what is right.</p> <p>Perseverance holds fast and persists in pursuing the good in the face of difficulty, setbacks, discouragement, or suffering. It resists quitting in the face of difficulty.</p> <p>Perseverance does not vacillate, waver, hesitate, or falter in pursuing what is good.</p>	<p>A stubborn person is headstrong, obstinate, or willful by holding to their own personal opinion, purpose, and course of action in spite of reason, good arguments, or persuasion.</p> <p>Stubborn people are resistant, difficult, and persistent in their personal opinions, preferences, and getting things to go their own way.</p> <p>Stubborn people can be pushed to outbursts of emotion. They have an outward façade of toughness but can be as fragile as eggs on the inside.</p>

<p>A “spineless” person is someone who “doesn’t have a spine” – someone who backs down from confrontation or sneaks around and has others do the job for them.</p> <p>“Spineless” people don’t have a conscience of their own so they play on others’ consciences to get what they want.</p> <p>Soft and “spineless” people are often swayed by anxiety or discouragement.</p>	<p>Those who persevere remain steadfast and resolute. They hold steady to the right course of action; not quitting or giving in to pressure to change one’s course in order to “save face,” avoid opposition, or endure suffering.</p> <p>Perseverance is the patient determination to stand for what is right and to pursue what is good in the face of difficulty, adversity, or suffering.</p> <p>Perseverance is also connected to patience and courage. Patience enables us to bear affliction without anxiety or discouragement. Patience is courage borne out over time.</p>	<p>Stubborn people are determined not to agree with other people’s wishes or to accept their suggestions. They refuse to change.</p> <p>Stubborn people are adamant. They insist that their idea or course be taken regardless of what others think best, always thinking they are right. “I’m right because I say so.”</p>
<p>A “soft” person is afraid to take a stand, not wanting to take a position, make a decision, or hold to a course of action if it will be difficult, or involve sacrifice and pain.</p> <p>Gives up too easily, especially if the most difficult thing to do is wait patiently and endure.</p>	<p>Perseverance is “sticktuitiveness” – the determination to finish what you started regardless of the obstacles that stand in the way.</p> <p>Perseverance grows with the dogged effort to finish a task, render a service, or overcome laziness or some other fault.</p>	<p>Stubborn people are inflexible, narrow-minded, and can’t be persuaded to consider changing their mind, attitude, or approach to a problem, course of action, or strategy.</p>

## Patience and courage

Perseverance is also connected to patience and courage. Patience enables us to bear affliction without anxiety or discouragement. Patience is courage borne out over time (James 1:2-4; Luke 21:19).

Courage also requires that we be ready to die for the sake of what is right. We must be willing to die rather than sin. The martyrs, by laying down their lives for the Lord Jesus Christ and the spread of the gospel make the supreme act of courage.

## Examples from the Bible

In the Book of Ruth in the Old Testament we read the story of two remarkable women, named Ruth and Naomi. They steadfastly stood by each other in a time of suffering for the people of Israel. Ruth was determined to remain loyal to her mother-in-law, Naomi, and persisted in following Naomi back to her home town of Bethlehem where she could serve Naomi and her people.

The Lord Jesus told his follows that he would honor as his true and loyal disciples those “who continue (remain steadfast) in his word” (John 8:31).

In the parable of the widow and the unrighteous judge, Jesus told his disciples to “persevere in prayer and not lose heart” (Luke 18:1). He also explained that those who persist (persevere) in “seeking, asking, and knocking” will receive the answer to their petitions (Luke 11:5-13).

Paul the Apostle also taught that perseverance was a necessary condition for prayer: “be constant (persistent) in prayer” (Romans 12:12), “continue steadfastly in prayer” (Colossians 4:2), and “keep alert with perseverance, making supplication for all the saints” (Ephesians 6:18).

## Running the race with perseverance

In the New Testament Letter to the Hebrews, Chapter 12, the author exhorts his fellow Christians to persevere in running the race set before them.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:1-2).

What is the race – the particular course or goal – which the Lord Jesus has set for you, and for all of his followers as well? The image of a race used in Hebrews 12 could refer to a foot race in a stadium or to a long distance run (a marathon) which was often used in battles and for sending messages between distant towns or provinces. A long distance run required great endurance, stamina, discipline, and mental concentration. The author of Hebrews sums it up with the word “perseverance.”

Why is perseverance needed? Runners can get tired, distracted, wearied with sore muscles, or hurt with cuts and bruises. And then there were often obstacles along the path – rocks, ravines, steep hills, flooded streams or rivers to cross, maybe bad weather conditions, or maybe even enemies waiting to ambush them. In the life of a disciple there are many obstacles and challenges that must be faced and overcome if we are to stay on course and finish well. What might be some of the obstacles and challenges which you have experienced?

We do not run the race alone. There is a cloud of witnesses to encourage us to stay the course and not quit, or lose sight of the goal. These witnesses include those who have run the race before our time – our forbearers in the faith who persevered in their faith and calling to the very end of their lives. Our fellow Christians who know us – our brothers and sisters in Christ – also witness the race we are on. They, too, encourage and help us keep our eyes on the goal – the finish line of the race. How can you better draw strength and encouragement from your brothers and sisters in the Lord?

And best of all, the Lord Jesus is the “pioneer and perfecter” of our race. He has gone ahead of us and marked the way for us. We can be sure we are on the right path if we keep our eyes on him. Do you trust the Lord Jesus to show you the way forward? Ask him to free you of any obstacles that might keep you from fully trusting in him.

Hebrews says that Jesus was made perfect through suffering. Through his suffering on the cross he completed the work the Father sent him to do, to redeem us from our sins and win for us eternal life. Jesus is the goal, the one we go to meet and he is the companion who accompanies us on our journey. We struggle with sin and like a runner we must shed whatever would impede us in the race. We must part with old habits, self-indulgences, and associations which keep us from following Christ and his way of holiness. But we do not struggle alone. The Lord Jesus is with us and he disciplines us for our good that we may share his holiness. Discipline comes from the same root as disciple. If we want to be true disciples of Christ that we must allow the Lord Jesus to train and form us into the kind of men and women he intends us to be. We can resent discipline, approach it with self-pity or in rebellious complaint, or we can accept it as coming from a loving Father.

## Joy and perseverance

We face many tests in life – but the most important test is the daily choice and decision to put our faith and trust in God – to rely on his power and strength, rather than relying on our own human resources. As disciples of the Lord Jesus we can expect trials, challenges, and difficulties. The world, the flesh, and the devil are at war against the kingdom of God and against those who serve it’s king, the Lord Jesus Christ. God allows testing – not to fail us – but to make us strong, mature, and complete. That is why perseverance is necessary for passing the test.

Perseverance keeps us going strong, not giving up, not quitting, not giving into despair, discouragement, or sadness when difficulties or setbacks try to weigh us down.

Like the long-distance runners, those who persevere in their faith win the “crown of life” when they complete the finish line. James also tells us that they receive a very precious gift right from the start of the race – the gift of joy – a spiritual fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything (James 1:2-4, NIV translation).

This joy is a spiritual source of strength and consolation – as we struggle, work hard, and patiently endure trials and wait for God’s kingdom to become fully manifest. The Lord himself gives us a joy that no sadness can diminish, no trial can defeat. It is a joy that is also contagious – that draws others who want to share in it and to discover its true source.

What is the source of this supreme joy and happiness? When Jesus began preaching the good news of the kingdom of God, he taught his disciples the beatitudes (Luke 6, Matthew 5). The word beatitude literally means happiness or blessedness. Jesus’ way of happiness, however, demands a transformation from within –a conversion of heart and mind which can only come about through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

How can one possibly find joy and happiness in facing trials and in suffering for the Lord Jesus? If we want to be filled with the joy and happiness of heaven, then we must empty ourselves of all that would shut God out of our hearts. God reveals to the humble of heart the true source of abundant life and happiness. Jesus promises his disciples that the joys of heaven will more than compensate for the troubles and hardships they can expect in this world. Thomas Aquinas said: “No person can live without joy. That is why someone deprived of spiritual joy goes after carnal pleasures.” Do *you* know the joy of persevering to the finish line in God’s love and strength?

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> See related articles on [Christian character](#) in the Living Bulwark archives.

[Don Schwager is a member of the [Servants of the Word](#) and author of the [Daily Scripture Readings and Meditations](#) website.]

*Training in Excellence:  
How godly character forms young people  
and strengthens Christian communities*



## Training in Excellence

**How godly character  
forms young people  
and strengthens  
Christian communities**

Don Schwager

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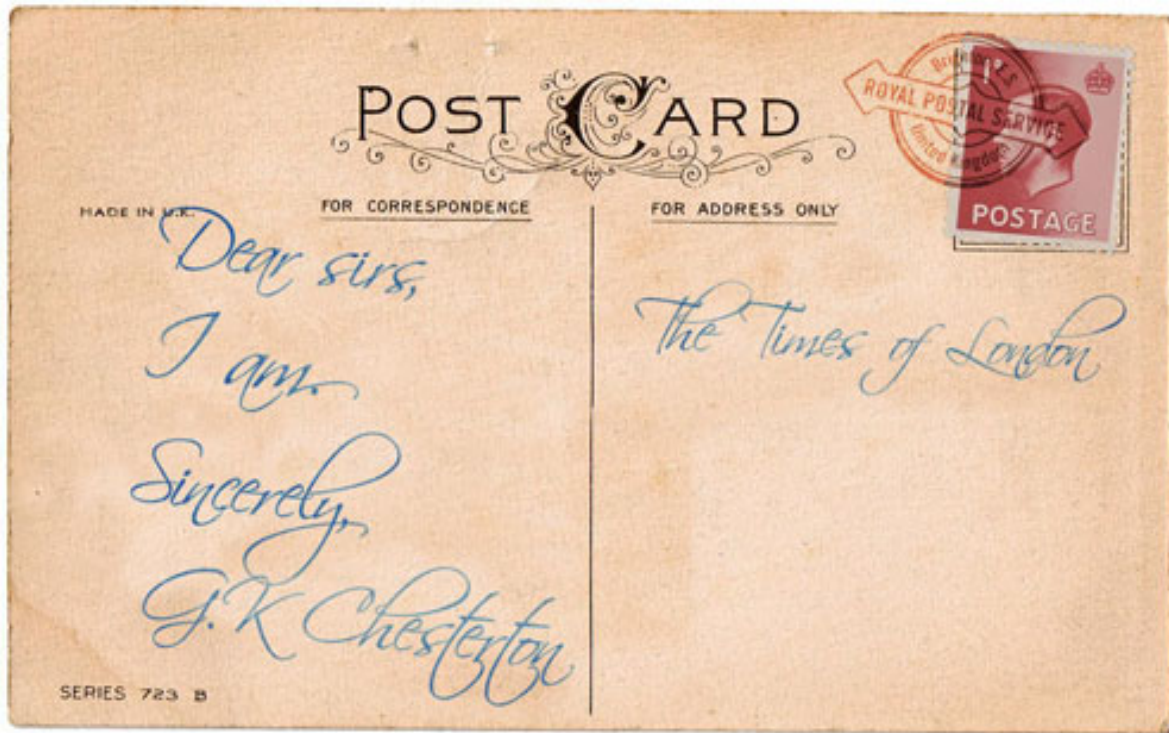
by Don Schwager, available in December 2012,  
published by [Kairos - Europe and the Middle East](http://www.kairos-eme.org).

The book is intended as a study aid for those who have a direct role in helping to form Christian character, especially in young people. It is directed to youth workers, pastoral leaders, teachers, and parents. It aims to help people better understand what the Scriptures say about Christian character and the virtues and helping the young to apply them.

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## The Spiritual Quagmire of Self-Esteem

by Sam Williamson

*The Times of London* once asked leading British intellectuals to write an essay answering this question, “What is wrong with the world?” G. K. Chesterton responded with a postcard,

*Dear Sirs,  
I am.  
Sincerely yours,  
G.K. Chesterton*

I think that’s right. He is the problem. I mean, ***I am.*** (The former slips out so easily, doesn’t it? Isn’t the problem with the world everybody else?)

Chesterton’s response challenges our modern Self-esteem philosophy. We’re taught to build up our self-esteem, to feel we are worthwhile, to believe in our value.

Yet cracks are forming in the self-esteem movement. Loren Slater, a psychologist and writer, wrote a critique of self-esteem. In it she says,

There is enough evidence from 20 years of studies to conclude that people with high self-esteem pose a greater threat to people around them than people with low self-esteem, and low self-esteem is not the source of any of our country’s biggest problems. ([The Problem With Self-Esteem](#))

I think Chesterton would agree with Slater's observation, that "low self-esteem is not the source of any of our country's biggest problems."

Because we are.

Grasping for self-esteem (or self-worth) is a way of trying to get glory from something other than God, and it always, inevitably, fails miserably. Let's look at two examples from scripture.

### A tale of two kings

King Saul began his life as a hick boy from the farms. Then God made him king. But Saul wasn't content with the kingship *gift* from God; he needed to earn it, to *prove* to God (and himself) that he was worth the gift. He rejected esteem that comes as a gift and grasped for esteem that comes from self-value.

In Saul's need for personal self-esteem, he disobeyed God in a raid. Then he "*set up a monument to himself*" (1 Samuel 15:12), and finally he brought home the conquered king.

Saul is now a King of Kings. He is finally something. He feels pretty good about himself.

Samuel corrects Saul with, "Though you are little in your own eyes, are you not the head of the tribes of Israel? The Lord anointed you king over Israel" (vs. 17). Samuel commends Saul when he is "little in his own eyes." He asks, why can't you be satisfied with God's undeserved affirmation?

Saul's repentance is anything but heart change; "I have sinned; yet *honor me now before the elders of my people and before Israel*, and return with me" (vs. 30) He clings to the high self-esteem of kingship over the low self-esteem of, "It was just a gift," and, "I am the problem."

### And then there's David

King David also began life as a hick boy from the farms. Then God made him king. David's sins are worse than Saul's. He commits adultery with a close friend's wife, his cover-up is worse than Watergate, and he arranges the murder of one of his top generals.

When Nathan corrects him, David's response is Psalm 51, "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!"

David doesn't say, "Have mercy on me *because I deserve it*," or "blot out my transgressions *because I feel really bad*." He doesn't grasp for his kingship. There was no, "*Honor me now before the elders*."

He asks God to look at him solely on the basis of God's "steadfast love and abundant mercy." David says "I'm the problem with the world, and I need your help."

Saul grasped for self-esteem. David grasped for God.

### And isn't that the gospel?

The gospel originally spread among the poor, the slaves, the outcast, and the socially marginalized. It spread not because these people were great or had high self-esteem. It spread because they knew they weren't and didn't.

The gospel is not God affirming the greatness of the great; it is God pouring his greatness into the lowly.

The gospel is not God crowning the virile prince; it is God turning the boyish shepherd into a king.

The gospel is not God saving the worthy (or those who think they are); it is God saving the unworthy and who know it. As C. S. Lewis paraphrased Paul, “To have died for valuable men would have been not divine but merely heroic; but God died for sinners.”

In the end, though, the gospel provides us with ultimate confidence. To be loved – not merely pitied, but loved – by the Most Beautiful; to be honored by the Most Honorable; to receive God’s love while in the midst of knowing we don’t deserve it; well, if that doesn’t help us lift our heads, no personal self-esteem ever will.

Self-esteem is fragile. We will fail. The gift of undeserved esteem from God is strong and enduring. We’ll always be unworthy of the gift. That can’t be taken away.

G. K. Chesterton described Christians this way, “We become taller when we bow.”

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Sam Williamson grew up in Detroit, Michigan, USA. He is the son of a Presbyterian pastor and grandson of missionaries to China. He moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan in 1975. He worked in London England from 1979 to 1982, helping to establish [Antioch](#), a member community of the Sword of the Spirit. After about twenty-five years as an executive at a software company in Ann Arbor he sensed God call him to something new. He left the software company in 2008 and now speaks at men's retreats, churches, and campus outreaches. He is married to Carla Williamson and they have four grown children and a grandson. He has a blog site, [www.beliefsoftheheart.com](http://www.beliefsoftheheart.com), and can be reached at [Sam@BeliefsoftheHeart.com](mailto:Sam@BeliefsoftheHeart.com).



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## Movie Master

Taking a stand for good culture  
and right morality

by Michael Shaughnessy

There are Christians who simply avoid watching movies altogether. Most, however, go to the cinema at least now and then. Those aged 12-24 are twice as likely to be frequent movie-goers.

Choosing what movie to see can be a challenge. Picking "the best there is" often can yield a pretty bad result. However, it is not that hard to make a good decision if you avoid just judging by the movie trailer and rating. Go to a couple of movie review sites and get more information. It takes just a few minutes. Here are a few. Add them to your browser toolbar:

- [PluggedIn](#) by Focus on the Family
- [Common Sense Media](#)
- [Kids In Mind](#)

To master the movies, make a practice of walking out of inferior or offensive movies. Surely you have seen a movie and thought, "This is lousy." Next time, get up, walk out and ask for your money back. You will probably get your money and also be taking a stand for good culture and right morality!

This article was first published in the August 2012 Issue of the [Kairos North American Youth Culture Newsletter](#).

Mike Shaughnessy is an elder in [The Servants of the Word](#) and the Director of [Kairos in North America](#). Kairos is an international federation of outreaches to high school, university and post university aged people.

> See [previous articles](#) related to the [Media](#)



## He's Not My Superhero

by Dr. Dan Keating

There is a superhero model of salvation: the people are in trouble, an evil character has gained control and is about to enslave the people. Just when it looks most hopeless, the superhero arrives and defeats the bad guy in the nick of time. The people applaud and cheer as the superhero leaves to return to his alter-identity. The people have their ordered, peaceful life back until the next bad guy arrives on the scene.

This superhero view of God is quite close to what American teens think about God. They believe he exists, is good, and watches over things, but he doesn't get particularly involved in our life unless things go really wrong. That's when we call upon him. He rescues us and then goes off again to a safe and convenient distance.

Unfortunately, this is NOT a good model for what Christ has done for us. Jesus did not fly in, defeat our enemy and then go off again leaving us pretty much the way we were.

Although he came to defeat the devil, he didn't leave when that was done. He remains among us and is changing us. He took on our nature so we could take on his – and by rising from the dead he received a glorified human nature. This "super" nature is what he is passing on to us. We aren't just rescued. We are remade.

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The Bone Surgeon: A personal story of a life-changing revolution  
by Andrzej Solecki

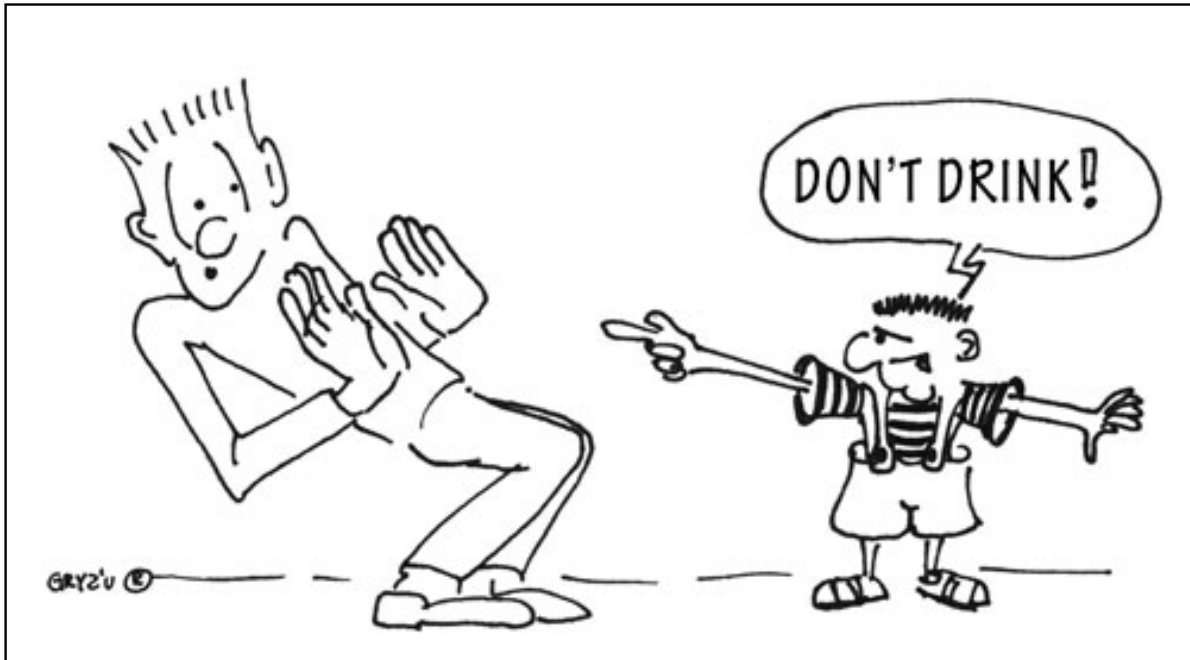


illustration by Grzegorz Grys

## Chapter 7: “Don’t Drink!” and Staszek’s Story

A few months had passed since My Great Revolution, when my old friend from Rabka, Kuba called me and said:

‘Ala and I would like you to be our son’s godfather.’

I used to love such events in the past, as they were usually followed by receptions. But this time the perspective of another drinking session and another hangover was surprisingly not so appealing to me anymore. Especially as it was to be combined with the ceremony of baptism.

‘O.K’, I replied, ‘but only under one condition. There won’t be any vodka at the christening party.’

A moment of silence followed.

‘Why? Are you ill?’

‘No, I’m not ill—but I would rather not explain that over the phone.’

‘Well, let us think about it and I’ll call you back in half an hour.’

Half an hour later, Kuba called to tell me they agreed. They were probably recovering from some recent parties. The ceremony at church was as nice as any other christening, but the party back at Kuba’s place seemed more like a wake. The conversation at the table was strained. I was under the impression that the guests were sending me reproachful looks and thus finding me guilty of killing the joy. Suddenly, Kuba took a bottle of French champagne out of his fridge.

‘You said: no vodka!’, he said to me.

That was true. I meant: “no alcohol”, but I said: “no vodka.”

‘You’re right, I only mentioned vodka’, I admitted.

Kuba poured the champagne into the glasses and placed one full of the beautiful sparkling liquid in front of me, which made my mouth water.

I was facing a serious dilemma.

Should I – the ‘wet blanket’ – drink the champagne or not? I really felt like giving in, but a part of me knew that I shouldn’t. The guests stood up to give a toast and my dilemma was still unsolved. I started to pray in my heart,

‘Lord Jesus, please tell me what to do! And please, be quick! I need a clear answer, so I don’t have any doubts about it.’

At this point our little children burst into the room in single file, completely focused on some game they were playing. Then, out of the blue, my son Wojtek stepped out of the line, pointed his finger at me and said loudly:

‘Don’t drink!’

Then he ran quickly to join the children who had already disappeared in another room. A thrill went down my spine. Everybody was waiting for me with their glasses raised to the toast. I reached out my hand towards the table and grabbed a cup of coffee, which was standing next to my glass.

‘Aren’t you going to have champagne?’, Kuba asked.

‘No, I’m not’, I replied.

After dinner, we took Wojtek for a little interrogation.

‘Why did you tell Dad not to drink?’

He didn’t seem to know what we were talking about, as if he couldn’t remember the incident. We left him alone.

That is when I made the decision about the abstinence from alcohol. I realized that it was the only way to go for a man with my personality. I had no sense of moderation or self-restraint in basically anything. Besides, it became clear to me that it was not ‘just that one glass’ of French champagne that God wanted me to sacrifice. In 1985, at a retreat in Kamesznica, I signed a declaration of total abstinence for the rest of my life. I offered it as a fast for all those who were still at “the heart and soul of the party” stage, and already on the skids. I have never regretted this decision. God has given me many other

ways of experiencing joy that is out of this world.

So... a teetotal bone surgeon? That is some paradox! One of my fellow surgeons in the ward could not understand it. He once asked me:

‘So, you do not drink at all?’

‘That’s right, I don’t.’

‘You must be miserable, then.’

‘Well, I think you’re much more miserable than me,’ I replied. I’m still not sure if he got the message.

A few years later, my boss, the head of the trauma ward asked me,

‘Have you heard about Staszek?’

Staszek was a physiotherapist in our ward. There was nothing unusual about him, except that he had been absent from work for about a week.

‘I haven’t heard anything,’ I replied.

‘He’s in Bulowice in the detoxification clinic.’

‘That’s weird,’ I thought. He was a good employee, he had never looked as if he was “under the influence” and I had never smelled alcohol from him. There were a few workers of our hospital that I would have singled out as possible candidates for ‘rehab’, but Staszek was not one of them.

I can’t remember why, but I decided to visit him in the clinic. The detoxification ward in Bulowice, a village near Bielsko-Bia? a, is located in the old, quite neglected palace of the Larisch barons, which is surrounded by an enormous, equally neglected park. The weather was beautiful on the day of my visit there, so we sat on a bench in the park. Besides the fact, that I believed that God could help him, I had no plan for the meeting. We quickly moved onto first name terms.

‘Stasiu, I know that there is a God and that He cares about you. I have met Him. I used to drink like hell, but He dragged me out of it,’ I began.

‘What am I supposed to do ?’, he asked.

‘First of all, turn to God in an honest prayer.’

‘But how do I do that? I don’t remember when the last time I prayed was, or if I ever had prayed...’

Ok, so what do I say to that??.... My mind was blank.

‘Do the following, tonight. Kneel down next to your bed, cover your face with your hands, then say: God, please help me pray, for I can’t do it on my own.’

'Maybe I'll try,' his reply wasn't too enthusiastic.

I promised to come back the following week.

During my next visit, Staszek was a completely changed person. He was looking me straight in the eyes and he was smiling brightly.

'What happened?,' I asked.

'I went to confession and received Holy Communion...I pray everyday... It's such a joy to know God! I feel I won't ever drink again.'

'But how did that happen?'

'That night, after you left, I knelt next to my bed and I prayed just the way you told me to: "God, I don't know how to pray, please help me!" Then something happened, my eyes filled up with tears, I felt great joy somewhere in here,' he said pointing to his chest. 'I don't know for how long I stayed like that. The next day I went to confession. And that's it. I want to follow that path, I want to stop drinking and try to get my family back.'

Great joy is the best description of what I felt after talking to Staszek. I was happy to witness a grown man being born again. His life got a little twisted after leaving the clinic, but, as far as I know, he pulled himself together, came back to his wife and hasn't been drinking since.

One week later, thanks to Staszek's recommendation, me and a couple of my friends from the community were invited to the clinic to share our experience of faith with other patients. This is how our ministry to people addicted to alcohol began. Today a large group of brothers from the community, whom I occasionally join, serve the people deceived by alcohol and by the world.

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Click on links below to read separate chapters.

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The Bone Surgeon: A personal story of a life-changing revolution  
by Andrzej Solecki

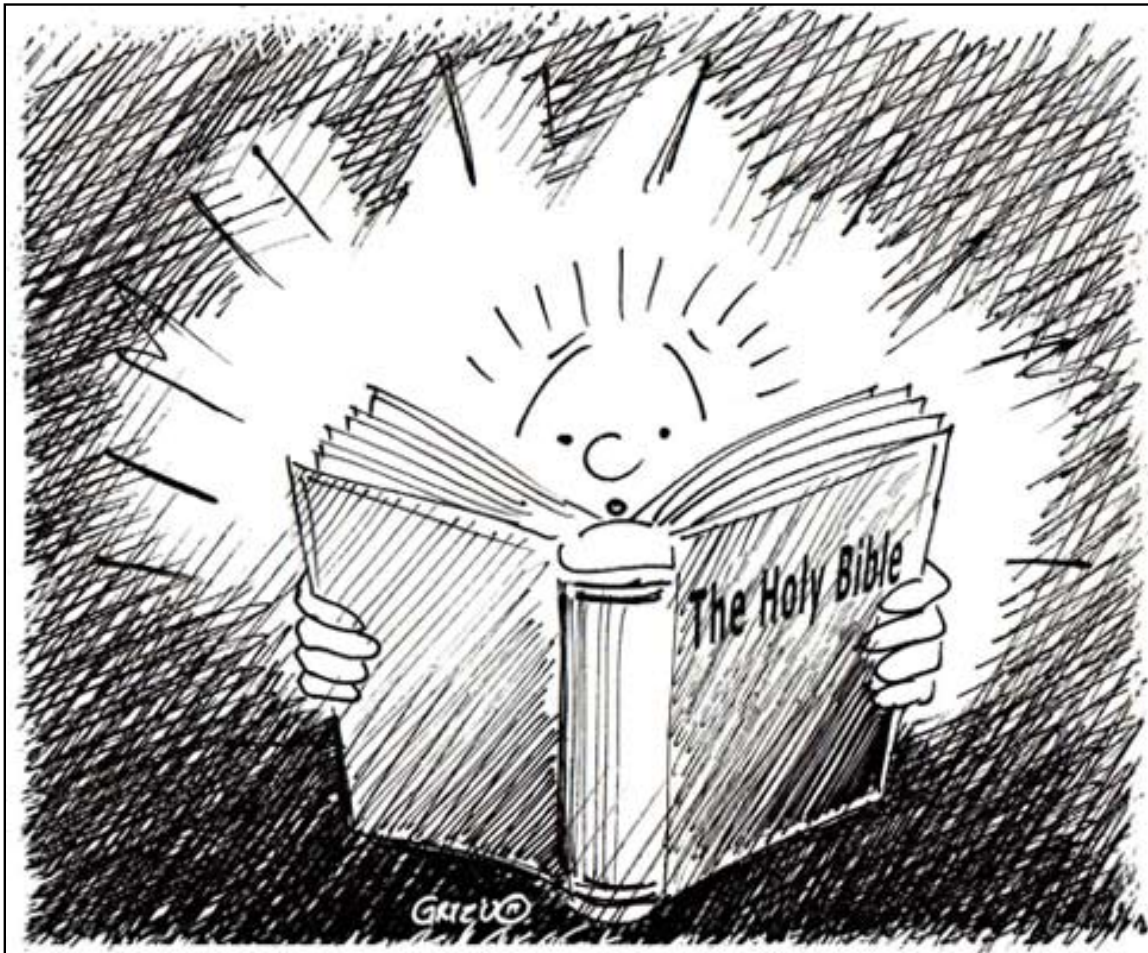


illustration by Grzegorz Gryś

## Chapter 8: Adventures With the Light of the Word

My new source of inspiration became The Holy Scriptures, which, as a “normal Catholic,” I had never read before. When they were read out during the holy masses (which as a young man and an adult person I attended only sporadically), they were usually incomprehensible for me, especially the passages, which started with the word “brothers”.

Whenever I heard “brothers,” I would take it as a signal to sit back and think about something more interesting. After My Great Revolution, things changed. A lot of words from the Letters to the early Church started to speak straight into my mind and into my heart. I remember that once during a mass, the priest read out the following passage from the Letter to the Galatians:

May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been



crucified to me and I to the world.

The message behind this sentence struck me with absolute clarity the moment I heard it. My heart was filled with great joy and a desire to live my life that way. After the mass, I went to the sacristy to ask the clerk where I could find the passage. He was a little bit surprised by my question, but he said that the passage was a Gospel Acclamation and that it was found in the Letter to the Galatians, chapter 6, verse 14. What an unusual feeling to understand a reading that usually comes after the word "brothers"! I actually wanted to live like the man who wrote it!

I started experiencing such things more and more often and I realized that in that way God was feeding me with his Word. And that special passage from the Letter to the Galatians became a true and very practical compass for me. Whenever I am tempted to brag about something, these words come back to me. Unfortunately, they often come as an afterthought and sound more like remorse: "You're proud of *something else* again!" I wish I was humble by nature like some people I know, but unfortunately I tend to be rather vain, so I use this verse to put my feet back on the ground and learn humility from it.

A significant role in giving a new shape to my life was played by my friendship with Father Joachim Badeni. When our community was being formed, he was transferred from Kraków to Ustron, which is a stone's throw from Bielsko-Biala. One night I was giving him a lift to the monastery from one of our meetings.

'How long have you been faithful to your commitments?', he asked about my involvement in Church and abstinence from alcohol.

'It's been about four years now, Father.'

'And how have you managed to persevere so long?', the question came from a man who had lived the ascetic life and worked with students in Poznan, Wrocław and Kraków for many years.

I had to think for a moment. How did I do that?

'Father', I replied 'I suppose I have this highlander's nature, that I acquired as a young man. I just got the 'bit between my teeth' and I've been holding on to it ever since.

'That's interesting', he replied 'because for me it's just been God's grace.'

Now, that was embarrassing! I realized I was a moron! Got the bit between my teeth! Tough guy! Right! Like it would work in my case! Why was I proud of *something else* again? Of some imaginary quality I don't even possess! That was a very important lesson of humility that came through just a few simple words of Father Joachim Badeni. Instead of saying, 'It's only by grace, you fool', he said that the way I saw it was interesting. . .

Another time I was waiting for someone at the hospital. I had a half of an hour to spare and the weather was beautiful, so I sat on a bench outside, took out my Bible and began to read Paul's Letter to the Galatians. Here is what I came across:

Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law.  
(Galatians 5, 16-18, NRSV)

Quite a difficult passage; I gawked at the verses. Suddenly the lines started to glow like a neon sign. That's obvious! Of course! Without the guidance and the power of the Holy Spirit, all the Old Testament laws, including the Ten

Commandments are “imposed from the outside”, strange. “Flesh”, that is the fallen nature will always fight against it. The obligation to observe the law is like slavery. Everyone who is a slave to the flesh sees the Gospel teachings as a violation of their nature. If you choose to be guided by the Holy Spirit, you will understand the intentions of the Lawmaker and you will gladly fulfill His law, which you will consider your own. That’s what freedom in the Holy Spirit is! So there I was, sitting on a bench with a Bible on my lap, much more impressed by the light of the Word of God than by the beautiful sunshine.

I owe one of my latest adventures with the Word to my father-in-law. The father of my wife and her sister Grazyna is a really tough guy. He is a lawyer, at the age of 82 still working actively and skiing in his free time. A couple of weeks ago, while staying at the hospital, he read *The Heavenly Man*, a book about the persecuted church in China. The book was a present from Grazyna, who has a gift of evangelizing the members of our family. After reading the book, my father-in-law went to the hospital chapel to confess his sins for the first time in sixty years. I was abroad when I heard the news and reacted to it like a ‘doubting Thomas’ ‘I would not believe in my father-in-law’s conversion until I had talked to him personally.’

I went to the hospital right after my return to Poland. He welcomed me with a relaxed smile on his face.

‘Andrzej! I’ve been reading the Bible! I’m looking at Matthew’s Gospel at the moment. There are so many questions that I would like to ask you. Will you explain some things to me?’, he showed me a piece of paper filled with dense writing.

I could not believe it! He looked like the guy I had known, but he spoke like a completely different person!

‘I’ll try, but I can’t promise I’ll know all the answers.’

‘There’s this passage in the Gospel of Matthew’, he opened his Bible and started reading:

Then the disciples came and asked him, ‘Why do you speak to them in parables?’ He answered, ‘To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. (Matthew 13, 10-12, NRSV)

‘What is this all about? What does it mean that those who have will be given?’

‘Couldn’t he have chosen an easier passage?’, I thought. ‘I don’t understand this one myself!’

‘This passage is one of the most difficult in the Bible... and it has been interpreted in many ways...’, as I said this, I began to pray for help to the Holy Spirit. Suddenly it hit me! The words took on the familiar glow.

‘Dad, what was the difference between Jesus’ disciples and the crowds that followed him?’

‘I don’t know.’

‘The crowds were with him a few hours a day or a few days a week. The disciples stayed with him 24 hours a day, each day of the week. They had a close relationship with Jesus—that is what made them different from the crowd. This is what you can have and what you need in order to understand *the secrets of the kingdom*, that is the Word of God itself. To those who remain in close relationship with Jesus, the understanding of the Word will be added. From those who do not have a relationship with Jesus, their status, fame will be taken away, even if they were a learned Pharisee or had a PhD in Theology...

‘Ah, so, it’s about a close relationship with Jesus?’

'Yes, Dad, it's about a 24/7 friendship.'

If I had tried to talk to my father-in-law about friendship with Jesus one week before, he would have only given me a surprised look...

'Thank you, Holy Spirit!', I said in my heart.

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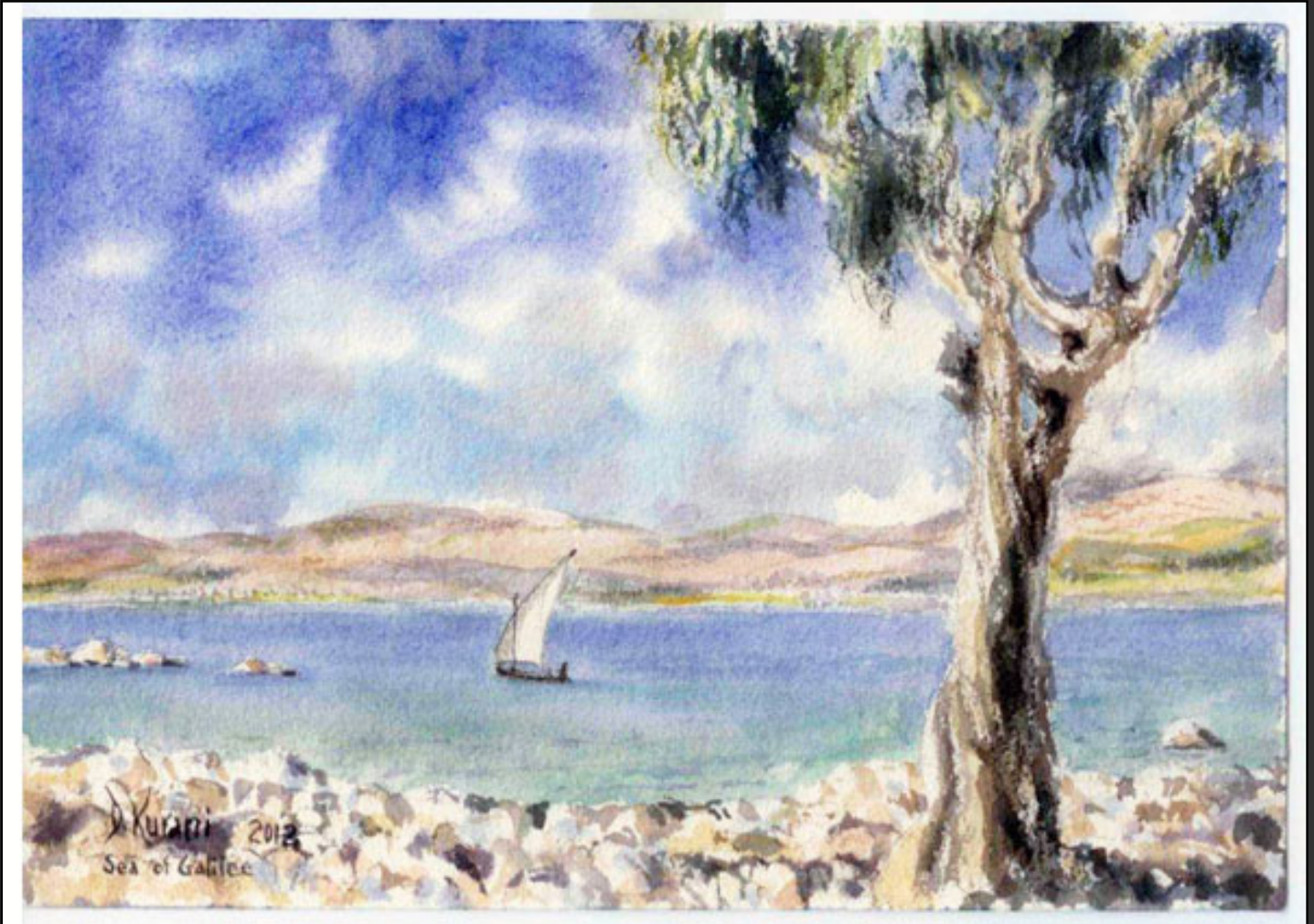
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Scenes from the Holy Land - art work series by David Kurani



The Sea of Galilee, watercolor, 18x25.5 cms, by David Kurani

### The Sea of Galilee

Villages, ruins, and archaeological treasures beckoning to an older way of life are here. Fields planted with grain, rocky hillsides with pasturage for sheep and goats are still to be seen, and the boats and nets of the fishermen look like they might be unchanged from those of long ago. And on one side there is Tiberias; with some older churches and a Roman sea-fort on its waterfront. There are, of course, modern features too, like new buildings, bungalows, and, surprisingly, eucalyptus trees brought in recently; they are quick to grow in the local soil - shouldering aside the old stones they encounter almost with impertinence; but they cannot change the gentle hills and ancient topography.



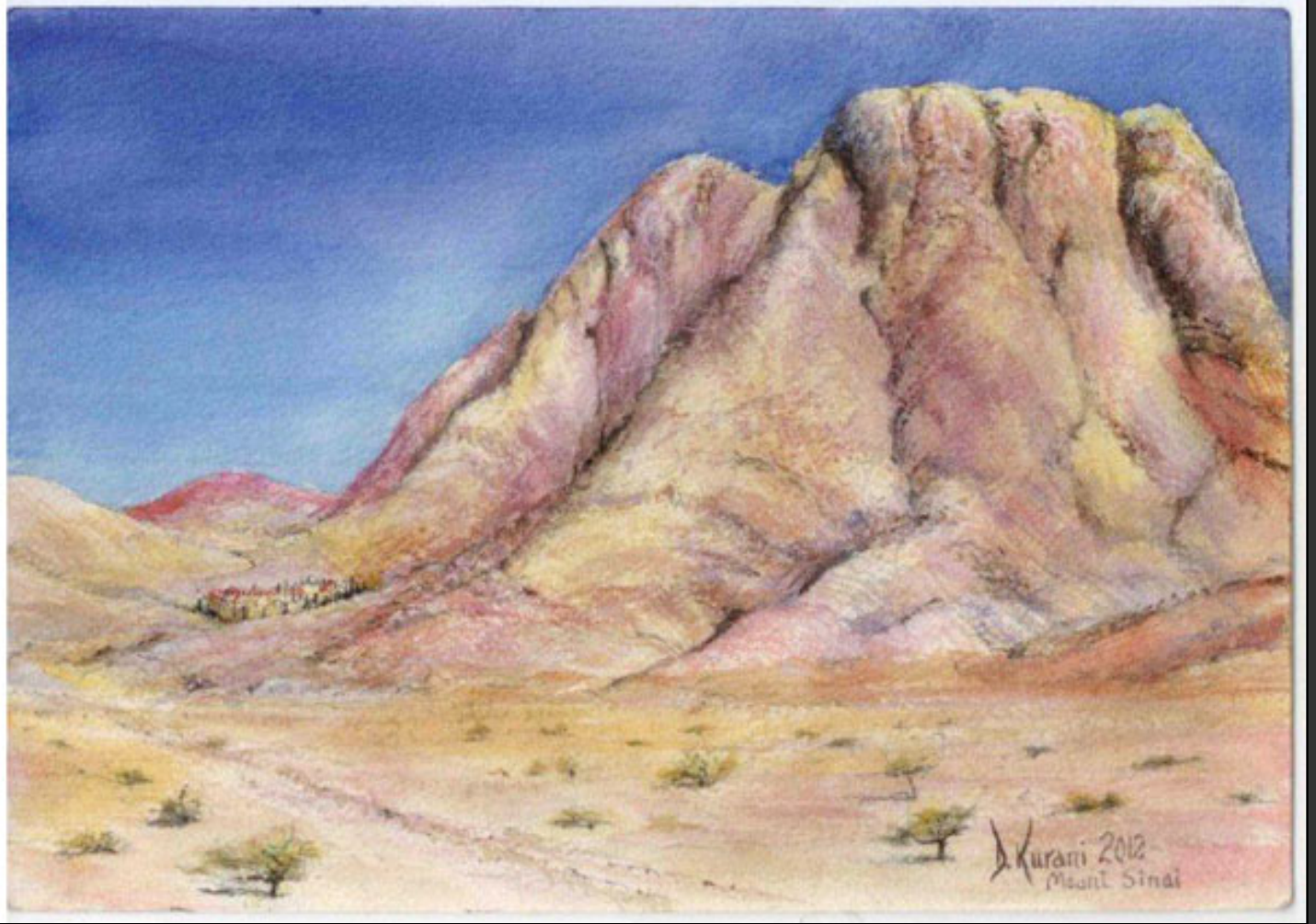


Bethlehem, from the Shepherd's Field, watercolor, 18x25.5 cms, by David Kurani

## Bethlehem, from the Shepherd's Field

I visited Bethlehem in the Easter of 1967. The Church of the Nativity can be spotted as the high tower on the brow of the hill, center left in this picture. I walked around the town with my mother and was affected by its simplicity which seemed to resonate with its illustrious past; the unchanged hills, the stone-cut walls, the white clay roofs and roads, and of course the central grotto; once a simple stable, and now a lodestone for deep devotion.



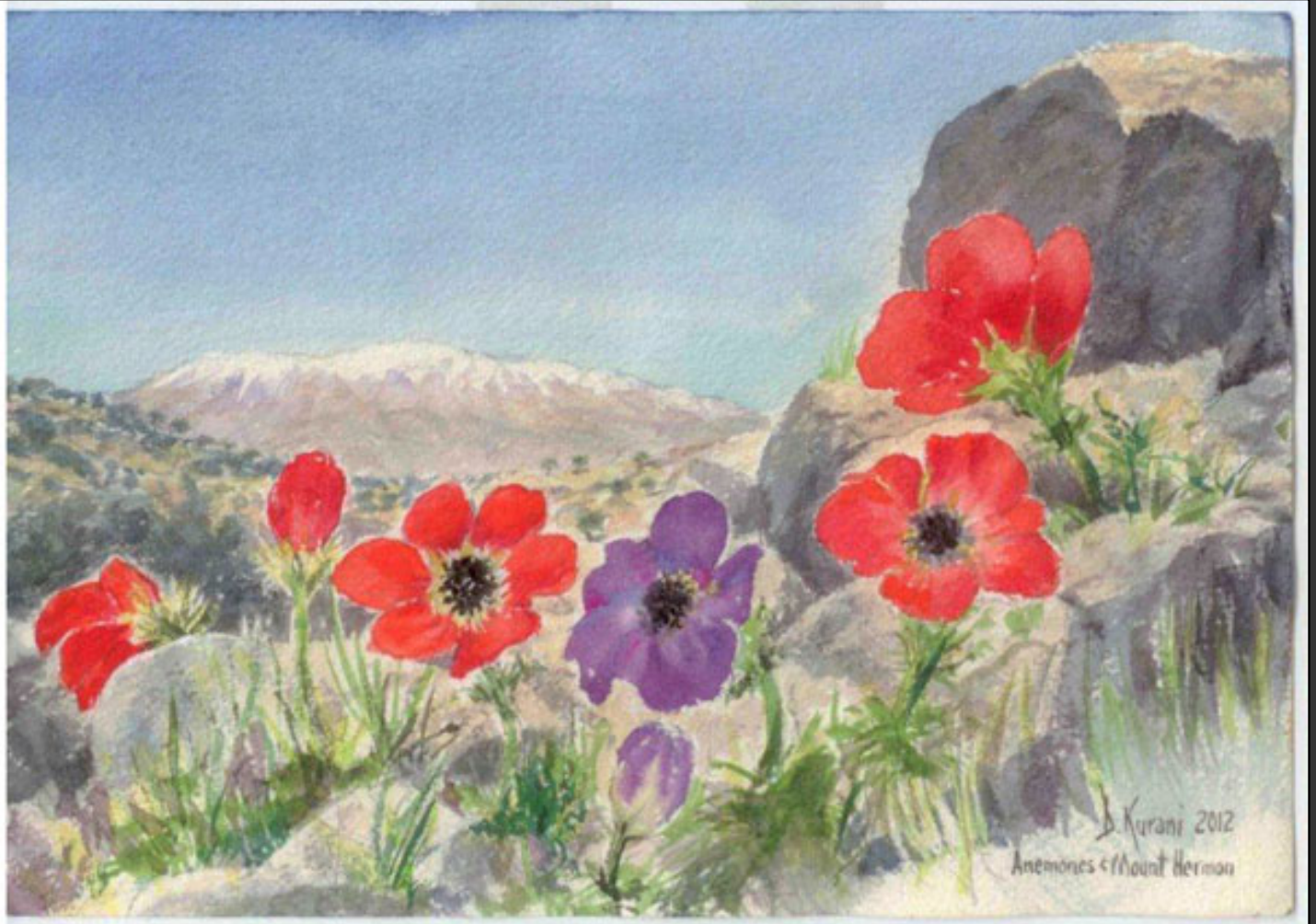


Mount Sinai and St. Catherine's Monastery, watercolor, 18x25.5 cms, by David Kurani

## Mount Sinai and St. Catherine's Monastery

I have friends who have climbed to the peak of Mount Sinai (or 'Jabal Moussa' - the mountains of Moses as it is known in the arabic of the locals). They say it is a taxing but wonderfully inspirational climb - especially to arrive to the peak at dawn and watch the glory of sunrise there. Truly a "widening" experience hard to put into words but easy to perceive in it the "finger of God". I imagine the plain encamped and full of people, all facing the mountain which then shakes, thunders, is covered with smoke and inspires the deepest and almost unbearable awe.

Now, able to lie still in the quiet of the New Covenant, the mountain shelters the Monastery of Saint Catherine at its foot - the smallest of the autocephalous (independently governed) Orthodox churches (the largest being the Russian Orthodox Church); an oasis of faith for pilgrims to the site, and a repository for objects articulate of God's past actions.



Anemones before Mount Hermon, watercolor, 18x25.5 cms, by David Kurani

## Anemones before Mount Hermon

Anemones in the wild are what many believe to be the "lilies of the field" that Jesus referred to, comparing them to (and saying they surpassed) the glorious robes of Solomon. There's an interesting note; Solomon's robes were probably dyed Tyrean purple - that being the standard for the accoutrements of royalty at the time since purple-colored cloth could be achieved in no other way than by the expensive and jealously guarded secrets of the purple-dye trade in nearby Tyre.

Just outside of Tyre there are mounds and even hills of the shells of the Murex water snails; harvested from the sea-bed, each with a small hole bored in the side to extract the precious ink for the dye. Depending on how it was processed, the dye could give a range of colors from crimson through the purples, to a deep indigo - just the same range as the anemones; red but sometimes purple and even, occasionally, white. It's as though God threw down a color gauntlet and said "There; match that;" which then man more or less did - but not so effortlessly.

In the background is Mount Hermon, one candidate for being the "high mountain" of Jesus's transfiguration (the other candidate being Mount Tabor). From Hermon one can see a vast panorama from the Lebanon mountains in the north, to the Sea of Galilee in the south.

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David is a noted Lebanese landscape artist. He teaches classes in art and theater at the American University of Beirut, Lebanon. David has exhibited widely in art galleries and private collections

throughout Lebanon, Europe, and the USA. He and his wife Gisele and their three sons are active members of the People of God in Lebanon, a member community of the Sword of the Spirit.

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Also see [Archives Art Works](#) by David Kurani

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## There's a Wideness in God's Mercy

by Frederick William Faber (1814-1863)

There's a wideness in God's mercy  
like the wideness of the sea;  
there's a kindness in God's justice,  
which is more than liberty.  
There is welcome for the sinner,  
and more graces for the good;  
there is mercy with the Savior;  
there is healing in his blood.

There is no place where earth's sorrows  
are more felt than up in heaven;  
there is no place where earth's failings  
have such kindly judgment given.  
There is plentiful redemption

in the blood that has been shed;  
there is joy for all the members  
in the sorrows of the Head.

For the love of God is broader  
than the measure of the mind;  
and the heart of the Eternal  
is most wonderfully kind.  
If our love were but more faithful,  
we should trust God's every word;  
and our life would be thanksgiving  
for the goodness of the Lord.

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