

August 2012

**Lighted  Lamp
Magazine**



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“God’s hearing of our prayers doth not depend upon sanctification, but upon Christ’s intercession; not upon what we are in ourselves, but what we are in the Lord Jesus; both our persons and our prayers are acceptable in the beloved.

—Thomas Brooks

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From the Editor

One of my favorite verses in Philippians 4:13 (NKJV), "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Once, when I was taking a speech class that was hard for me, I taped it on my wall to remind me of all the other situations God helped me through and that He could help me through this one, too.

You see, there are many things we don't know how to do, but God does! He created the mouths we use to give speeches and designed the way the elements bond. He knows how to find the area of a sphere and how to use that feature of a computer program you can't figure out.

The same is true out of school. Whether you're dealing with sickness, or disagreement in your family, or moving to a new town, God is with His children wherever they go. When life hands out trouble in any form, we can always remember that God is bigger and stronger and wiser than our troubles.

God bless,

Priscilla

Matthew 5:16

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

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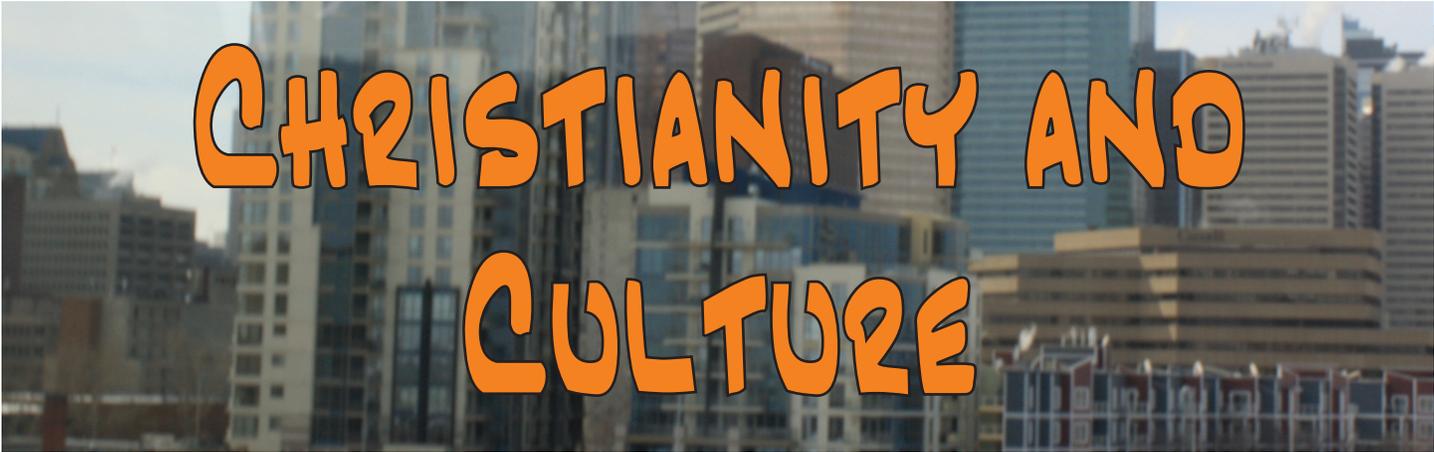
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CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURE

by *Daniel Brady*

It is a common rallying cry in contemporary Evangelicalism that we are to confront and interact with the culture that we as the church inhabit. This is often intended as an analysis of culture in an attempt to procure evangelistic strategies and diagnose spiritual needs of individuals. This approach implicitly defines culture primarily in terms of symptoms and expressions of psychological problems beneath the surface of culture, for which the gospel of Christ is supposed to provide a proper remedy. The cultural forms themselves are essentially irrelevant, except insofar as they express moral dilemmas. A reading of the parables of the Gospels themselves, however, can provide us with a more fundamental understanding of culture as a narrative which situates us as human beings in our most assured identities. Culture, as the fictive realm of human exchanges, symbolic understandings, and eschatological expectations, is a vital component of the creation that God is redeeming through his Son by the Holy Spirit, so that Christians are called not just to challenge existing cultures but to dwell in and create the truly human community and culture of the church.

Jesus' parables are stories whose components and structure are intended to subvert a first-cen-

tury Jewish understanding of social, political, and religious realities. They not only challenge a cultural norm, but force listeners to reconfigure how they narrate history and by implication to situate themselves within the very story Jesus is telling. It is necessary to recognize that we are to assume a first-century Jewish cultural situation when reading the gospels, and thus place Jesus' teachings in continuity with this tradition, but simultaneously to understand his words as an innovation within the tradition through the redefinition and reordering of its essential elements.

Looking at the parable of the tenants, which can be found in Matthew 21:33-45, we can see how this works. The image of the vineyard would clearly have been understood as Israel herself, who would produce the fruit of righteousness pleasing to God. Israel was to be a blessing to all nations, bringing the wine of God's love across the earth and proclaiming his glory to every last boundary and people group. The owner of this vineyard had gone away for a time, as God had not been present since the Garden of Eden, and in particular had not been dwelling in the Temple like Israel expected him to. Despite this absence, Israel fully expected God to return, and as the parable has it, he first sent servants to gather fruit. These servants were the

prophets of various periods, but rather than respecting the master's emissaries, the vinedressers stone them and thus reject the master himself. At the end of the parable, Matthew notes that the chief priests and the Pharisees know he was speaking about them. Jesus' lament about the hard-heartedness of Israel and her leaders is the first devastating inversion of the traditional story that he makes clear. It is a story of tragedy that God's chosen people would abandon his purpose. Even when the master sends his son, the tenants kill him and throw him out. Jesus, in a shocking redefinition, points himself out to be the son of the story. By now, his readers can see what he is saying: now that even the Son has been rejected, God will no longer privilege national Israel with his purpose. The Kingdom of God will be taken away from them and given to those who can produce its fruits. In a brief parable, Jesus has redrawn the boundaries of imagination for his Jewish listeners and urges them to reconsider who he is. He has defined their cultural, political, and religious situation and through the story itself instantiated a moment of crisis where repentance is now at hand. For Jesus, culture is narrative, and the way to invite his hearers into the people of God gathered around himself requires that he tell them a new story that they can find themselves in. The irony is that those who reject the parable are themselves unable to escape its plot.

The parables supplement each other richly. The parable of the mustard seed, in Matthew 13:31-32, is a further subversion. The Kingdom of God was supposed to be, according to Jewish expectation and not without warrant from the Old Testament, a radical disruption in history by God in order to free Israel from bondage to Rome and let it be its own people in the prom-

ised land it was always meant to own. The temple was not inhabited by God, the prophets had not been speaking to Israel for centuries, and there was no end in sight to the ruthless might of the Roman empire, despite some measure of autonomy that the Jews did enjoy in Judea. Like the parable of the tenants confirmed, Jews knew that God had not been dwelling among his people, that new flesh had not been given to the dead bones on the desert floor, that there was still no eternal Davidic kingship, and that all of this showed that the forgiveness of all Israel's sins had not taken place. With this expectation, Jews were naturally skeptical of claims about the Kingdom of God: why is there still disease, death, oppression, and poverty? Jesus challenges this expectation and says instead that the Kingdom of God is really like a mustard seed. It starts out small, the smallest of all the seeds, and its growth is nearly unnoticeable, but when it is fully grown it will be larger than all other plants and the birds of the air will nest in its shade. Jesus offers a different metaphor to understand God's action that forces us to look with new eyes at the cultural reality of the church he is announcing.

Let us take finally the parable of the prodigal son, found in Luke 15:11-32. The question is still, Who are the characters in the story, and what is different about this story compared to what his audience would have expected? Jews of course found their fundamental identity in being children of Abraham, and thus by implication children of God, since they were the chosen people of promise. The book of Genesis is frequently a story of two sons, one chosen by God, and the other left apart and thus not a child of promise. It was Isaac chosen, and not Ishmael. It was Jacob, and not Esau. It was Abel, and

not Cain. We also have two sons in this story, one a son who is good to his father, does his work, and is unexceptionable, and another who abandons his father so cruelly as to demand his inheritance immediately, which was equivalent to wishing he were dead. The son who leaves home quickly squanders his wealth and finds himself in a job unthinkable for any orthodox Jew: feeding pigs. It seems clear that given the two sons motif of Genesis, Jesus' audience would have expected the hero of the story to be the son who stayed, the son who was the true child of God the Father. But when the prodigal son decides to return, and seeks only to be a servant in his father's house without any status as a son, the Father takes him into his arms and welcomes him back into his family in celebration. Symbolically, the Gentile, unbelieving son has just been welcomed back as part of God's people. The sinister ending makes Jesus' intention strikingly clear: unrepentant Israel, who thought it loved God and was a part of his people, betrays itself as a foreigner by resenting the forgiveness of the Father. Jesus has through the parable drawn battle lines between those who will reject his story, and thus prove themselves like the first son who was really no son at all, and those who will accept it and return to the Father's house with joy. Israel is no longer defined by national heritage and ethnic solidarity, it has been radically opened up to all people, and the new boundary is between those who have faith and those who do not.

To take these parables together, Jesus is announcing the Kingdom of God as its own cultural reality, its own metanarrative, but without any foundation beyond its own peaceful appeal. In the prodigal son parable, he is redefining the borders of God's people and showing that through Jesus' own arrival, Israel is now

about who accepts Jesus rather than who is a literal descendant of Abraham. The people that believe in Jesus are drawn into a new community, a new Israel, and are invited to model Jesus' own example for living the way God meant humanity to live. The parable of the tenants narrates the failure of Israel to do God's will



and defines Jesus as the climax of God's dealings with Israel as a nation. The story has been left open ended, as Jesus announces a Kingdom no longer confined to its previous locality and now available to a people who will fulfill what God requires. The Son has arrived, and with his death the vineyard has been opened to the Gentiles. Finally, the parable of the mustard seed challenges the assumption that were the ruling

power of God to truly arrive it would result in an immediate, discontinuous burst of transformation. In contrast to the Jewish hope for a sudden triumphalism, the seed grows slowly, behind the scenes, at the level of the new community that Jesus has built around himself as the cornerstone. Culture, the modes of be-

coercive, way. It requires modeling and enactment, the way Jesus enacted the story of God in his feasts with sinners, as well as creative criticism, like the parable of the prodigal son which draws together components of the Jewish narrative of God's plan and retells it in a new key. We are drawn into the story so that we can become like the prodigal son who returns, become like the people who will produce fruit, and finally see God's movement in history in a new way, so that we will ultimately become like Jesus who himself lived these very realities among us. Christianity is a culture, the culture of the church, whose members must continue to show to the rest of the world what life under God's rule is like. ☩



ing of a group, the practices, ideas, narratives, rituals, and hopes, are realities that Jesus is constantly challenging through his ministry in order to bring together people who live in harmony rather with God and each other. Culture exists at the level of narrative imagination, but is no less real for that, and thus to bring about cultural transformation is to narrate a new way of being in the world in a compelling, but not



Guess My Occupation

1. Nehemiah

- a. cupbearer
- b. hunter
- c. vinedresser
- d. priest

2. Rachel

- a. musician
- b. weaver
- c. midwife
- d. shepherdess

3. Zacharias

- a. doctor
- b. carpenter
- c. priest
- d. teacher

4. Paul

- a. tentmaker
- b. foreman
- c. carpenter
- d. fisherman

5. Abel

- a. keeper of sheep
- b. tiller of the ground
- c. tender of trees
- d. wanderer of the earth

6. Zerubbabel

- a. one of David's mighty men
- b. ship-builder
- c. governor
- d. judge

7. Naaman

- a. officer of Pharaoh
- b. Syrian army commander
- c. judge
- d. king of Persia

8. Andrew

- a. carpenter
- b. fisherman
- c. tax collector
- d. vinedresser

9. Luke

- a. carpenter
- b. fisherman
- c. doctor
- d. tax collector

10. Zenas

- a. doctor
- b. teacher
- c. farmer
- d. lawyer

Fold Me Zip

by *Nicole Garcia*

photography by *Isaac Swanson*

I am crying
Somewhere inside
There's a trail
Left by my tears
Follow it back
To a part of my heart
Touch me now, and
Stretch your wings
Fold me up
Rock me to sleep.

How'd I get here?
What is wrong?
Why an I crying
And feeling alone?
How'd it start
What drew blood?
Is it a festered wound
And is it spreading still?
Whisper low
Heal this hurt
Fold me up

And bring me home....

Fold me
And rock me slow
Comfort me
In my heartache
Hold me,
Just for mercy's sake.

Fold me up
Hold me close
Whisper low
Take me home...
Your love is all that I need
This I know, this I can see.

Fold me up...
Hold me close...
Whisper low...
Take me home...

I want your wings
To fold me up
To hold me close...
Please just rock me slow....

ALWAYS PRESS ON



Photography by Scetty

by Anna Pendleton

Editor's Note: In this story, the characters must reach the top of the mountain in order to survive. LLM does not condone risking one's life or safety for sport.

"I can't go on! I can't!" Tears streamed down my cheeks as I fell to the rocky ground with a thud. My face was caked with dirt and fresh blood trickling down from the newest of my countless cuts and scrapes and I lay there, breathing heavily with my matted, black hair falling into my eyes.

Dave turned and came running back, crashing to his bare knees next to me. He laid his hand on my shoulder and leaned down, resting his forehead on mine. "You've got to keep going, Madison. Please, you can't quit now. Look, we're almost there!"

I rolled over and hid my face in the ground. "I can't."

Dave nearly sobbed. "Please, Maddy." His breathing came and went in short, gasping pants.

I looked up at my brother who was as beaten up as I was, and maybe more so. Neither of us had eaten in three days and both of us were fading quickly. Failure was inevitable, so why wait for it? Just get it over with.

"We're getting closer, Maddy. We're nearly there. Please get up."

I rolled onto my back with a groan of pain. "We're not almost there, Dave! We've been climbing this stupid mountain for weeks and it just keeps getting harder and harder. It's not

getting any better and it won't!"

"It will get better, though. It will. You can't lose hope now. Look, we can almost see the top. It won't be long until we're standing on it."

"And for what?" I cried. "Just to find another mountain to climb. I'm beat, Dave, and I can't take another step."

"But, once we get to the top of this mountain, we will have what we've been fighting for for so long and the other mountains will be easier because of it."

"Then you go get it and you climb the mountains and you find the goals and you keep fighting. Just leave me here."

"Maddy, no! Stop talking like that. I can't do it without you. I need you."

"You don't need me. I'm dead weight on you and have been ever since we started this."

"Stop talking like that. I'm going to get to the top and so are you. Do you hear me?"

By this time I was defeated and didn't have the willpower to fight it. "Why? What's the point in going on when there's no hope for achieving this?"

"Why?" Dave sounded shocked. "You are the one who always told me that we do everything for God and His glory."

"How is God glorified through this misery?"

Dave let out a heavy sigh. "How is He glorified by us giving up?"



Photography by Katie Prescott

“I...I just...there...”

Dave leaned down, sat me up and held me by my shoulders so that we were looking into each others eyes. “Maddy, you can’t give up now. We knew the journey was going to be hard. We said that at the very beginning and we promised to not give up until we died. Didn’t we? We’ve got to keep going. Because Christ has given us what we need. We have each other. Can’t we go just a little farther, together?”

I crumpled into his arms and cried. “I’m tired, Dave.”

“I know, Maddy. I know. I’m tired too.”

We sat, wrapped in each others arms, stuck between failure and despair. I felt a pang of guilt surge through me as Dave began to quietly sob and make his grasp of me tighter. I could imagine what was going through his mind. He had always fought. He would slip and stumble sometimes, but he never gave up. For Christ.

And for me.

“I’m sorry, Dave.” I said, pulling myself out of his arms and looking up at him.

His left cheek was bruised and black, there was a deep gash in his right temple, his brown hair was almost to his shoulders now, dirty and matted like mine. He was filthy and smelled, but he had never looked more amazing to me than he did at that moment.

I dropped my eyes, unable to meet his gaze. “I’m sorry. I don’t want to quit, but I don’t know if I can go on.”

“Then I’ll carry you.”

I looked up into his bright blue eyes, the only part of him that would still be considered ‘beautiful’. They were spilling over with the kind of love and devotion that people don’t believe exists because it’s so rare.

“You can’t do that, Dave!”



He struggled to get up, then stooped down and scooped me up in his arms and without hesitating, turned and began staggering up the rocky mountainside.

He had barely taken ten steps when I felt his arms shaking and heard his breathing shorten. Even my skin and bone frame was too much for him to carry now.

“Dave, please you can’t do this. Let me walk.”

He ignored me and kept fighting for another step. Then another and another.

“You’re going to kill yourself!” I struggled to get free from his arms, but he just grasped tighter and stared straight ahead.

I began to sob as he grew weaker and weaker. “Dave, what are you doing?”

“We don’t give up.” He panted. “We always press on.”

“Yes, I know. Let me down, I’ll walk. I won’t give up, okay? Please?”

“We’re not giving up, Maddy.” It was then, through the tone of his voice and the way he was moving, that I realized that he was growing delirious from lack of food, water and strength. Carrying me was the last straw and he was now going on adrenaline, moving like a machine fueled by hope, love, determination and the subconscious knowledge of Christ.

“No, Dave we’re not giving up. Now let me walk.”

“No, I’ll carry you. You can’t go on, so I’ll carry you.”

I didn’t know what to do. He wouldn’t be reasoned with, but he couldn’t go on carrying me. He’d die.

There was a rumble that sounded like it came from deep inside the mountain, just above us.

Dave didn't seem to take any notice of and continued to take another, robot like step.

"Dave." I tugged at his shirt. "Dave, what's that sound?"

The rumble grew louder and stronger and I felt the ground shift.

"Dave, listen!" I was beginning to panic.

"No, Maddy. We're not quitting now."

"I know, I know. But listen, something's wrong. Do you hear me? Stop!"

Again, he ignored me.

A few small rocks zoomed down from above us

and it felt like the whole mountain was shaking as the rumble grew more and more intense.

Each step that Dave took felt more desperate and strenuous.

"Dave! Do you hear me? You've got to stop! There's going to be a landslide!"

A slight smile lit up his eyes. "It's all for Christ. He gives us the strength."

I blinked quickly, trying to keep my vision clear of the tears and choked on the dust that had begun to stir up.

"I'll take care of you, Maddy. Don't be afraid."

I had to do something to get Dave to wake from this stupor, so I raised my hand and brought it down hard on his cheek, shouting, "Dave! Wake up!"

The mountain shifted again as Dave's eyes grew wide for a moment and he shook his head, blinking down at me.

"Maddy, wha-where-" He looked up quickly as a large rock slid down, barely missing us.

I heaved a sigh of relief, then felt the mountain sway again and the fear returned in full force. "A landslide is brewing. Put me down, quickly."

He put me on my feet and grabbed my hand, running up and to the left towards a small cliff that projected out of the side of the mountain, creating something like a shelter. We ducked under it just as a large portion of rock broke free and flew down towards us.



Photography by Isaac Swanson

Dave wrapped his arms around me and we stayed there, huddled together while dust, rock and other debris flew past and around us.

It felt now like the entire mountain was swaying from side to side, throwing small and giant stones around. There was an earth shattering crack as a large piece of mountain broke free and tumbled down, knocking more out with it as it crashed and banged down, disappearing out of sight within mere seconds.

Then suddenly... silence.

We didn't move for a moment, waiting to make sure it was safe. Then Dave released me and began to crawl out from under our safe-house. "Wait here."

I watched as he felt his way down the piles of loose rocks, crawling along, feeling out each spot before putting his weight on it. There was a slope, right in front of us, that was much steeper now than it had been before the landslide and led to a flat ledge thirty feet below.

"It seems to be okay." He said looking back at me. "Wait there, I'll come get you."

I crawled to the edge of the overhang and waited for him.

Then, just as he had nearly reached me and was holding his hand out for me to take, his foot landed on a loose rock that gave way under him. He let out a choked scream as his body twisted around and he went crashing down towards the ledge, the pile of rocks that he had been standing on going with him.

"Dave!" I shouted out and began running and

sliding after him.

I tumbled down, doing somersaults. I felt my head banging against the hard ground, causing me to quickly feel light headed. My right arm caught on a sharp rock and a piercing pain shot through my entire right side as I continued to slide down on my back, then on my side.

I reached the bottom just moments after Dave. My right arm was sliced open just below my elbow and blood covered from there to my fingertips.

I frantically looked around for Dave. My vision was blinded by the blood pouring into my left eye from a deep cut in my forehead. I wiped at my eyes, smearing the blood out of my eye and across my face. I was coughing violently in the



Photography by Isaac Swanson

cloud of dust and had to keep wiping the steady flow of blood out of my eye, and even then it was hard to see clearly. I looked around through the haze, but all I saw were piles of small and large stones.

“Dave?” I struggled to breathe as pain shot through my entire body. “Dave!”

I began to dig, ignoring the razor sharp edges that were slicing my hands and arms as blood continued to drip from my wounds, staining the rocks around me.

“Please, God. Please!” I shouted desperately. My voice sounded unclear and far off.

I kept scratching through the stones, crying and choking.

A few feet to my left a small pile of rocks moved slightly. I looked up and crawled as fast as I could towards it.

I shoved the rocks away and soon saw Dave’s leg. I continued to dig and push until I had uncovered him completely.

My heart raced and pounded as I leaned down to see if he was alive. He was breathing.

“Dave?” I rubbed his hand, trying to get some sign of consciousness. “Talk to me. Please.”

He didn’t move and I began sobbing again, though my mind was slowly beginning to clear. “Come on, Dave. Please.”

I collapsed next to him and cried silently, holding his hand. “Please, Lord. I’m sorry. I won’t give up. Just please...please don’t take him from

me now.”

Dave let out a half sob, half groan and his fingers moved in my hand. I leaned in closer to him.

“M-Maddy? What happened?”

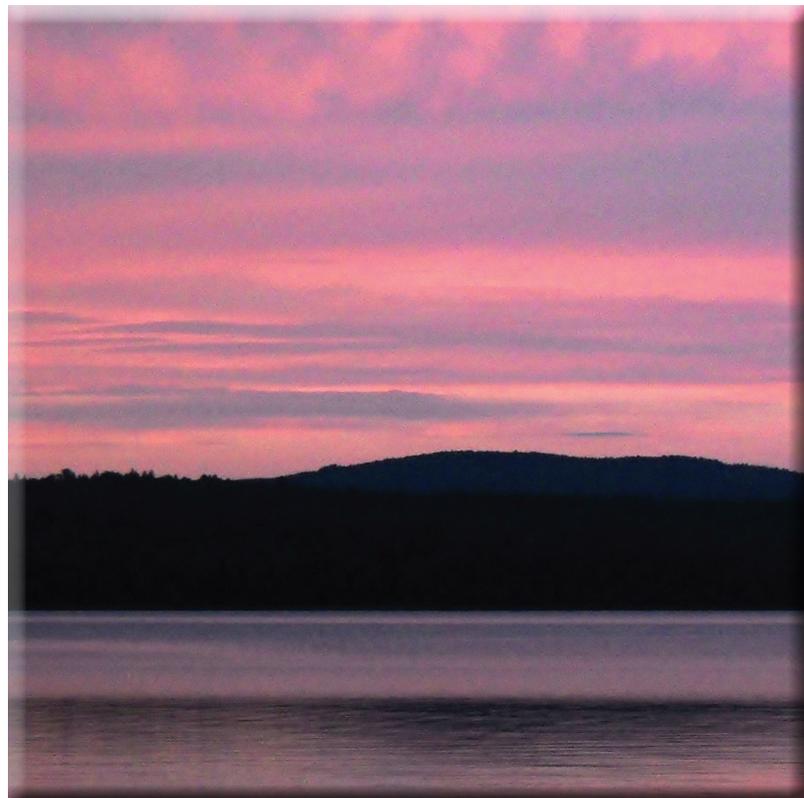
“I’m here. Don’t move right now. You fell down the mountain.”

He groaned again as his eyelids twitched several times and finally slowly opened. “Are you okay?”

I let out a sob. “I’m okay, Dave. I’m okay.”

“You’re bleeding.” He said nervously, looking down at my blood soaked hand, that I had laid on his bruised and beaten one, then up at my covered face.

“I’m okay.” I smiled down at him. “You’re alive



and still with me and God is here... I'm okay."

Neither of us said anything more for a moment, but just laid there, catching our breath and trying to ignore the pain.

"What are we going to do?" I asked, sitting up.

"I-I can't ask you to get back up and go again. That's... you..." His eyes were full of tears and I could see defeat trying to knock his spirit out.

I wasn't going to let that happen.

"Dave." I said, gently helping him sit up. "I seem to remember someone telling me recently...that we knew this journey was going to be hard and we said we'd go to the death. We may be pretty close to dead right now, but we aren't licked yet. I, for one, am not going to let this old mountain get the better of me just now. Not when we've come this far. We've fallen, but we're experts in getting back up. Aren't we?"

Dave stared up at me with a look of astonishment and pride on his face. "You... you're... you can go on?"

"Don't we do it for Christ? If we're doing this for Him, and this is what He wants us to do, I can go on. Forever. He's enough to keep us going. Can...will... you go on, too?"

Dave wrapped his arms around me and held me in a hug. "I want to go on, Maddy. I want to."

He groaned and reached down towards his legs. I followed his hand with my eyes and looked at his legs. His left one was clearly broken and it was hard to tell about the other.

"I know you want to, Dave."

"I just... I don't know...if I...can."

I looked deep into his eyes, still alive and beautiful. He was so full of hope and determination. He was a whole, free, alive spirit trapped inside a worn, weary and broken body.

I took a deep breath and stood up, keeping my eyes fixed on his, and held my hand out to him. "Then I will carry you."

Dave's face displayed his disbelief. "You can't do that, Maddy. Maybe...I mean... I know there's some way I can go on. But...you can't...do that."

"I will if I have to. We are both getting to the top of this mountain. Remember?" Then remembering his words of delirium I grabbed his hands and pulled him up, letting his weight fall on me. "We don't give up, Dave. We always press on." ☺



Photography by Katie Prescott

Seasoned with Salt

by LeAnne Nelson

Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

— Colossians 4:6 (ESV)

I spent all my years of school in secular environments. I remember back in middle school it was the first time that I really encountered swearing. I had grown up in a Christian family and most of my friends were part of my church, so this idea of swearing was an alien one. My friends laughed when I created the “Swear Jar”, but to me it was a big deal.

Over the next six years, I battled long and hard for a swearing free environment when I was with my friends. Though no money ever went into the swear jar, I used it as a reminder that I didn’t want to hear what they had to say if it involved those kinds of words. It didn’t ever really happen, but it definitely made an impact on those around me.

My dad works in construction and is around swearing a lot. One time when he was asked why he didn’t swear his response was “try not

swearing, it’s way harder.” Whenever I think of this I think of the verse in Matthew 7 that tells us to “enter through the narrow gate... Small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life” (Matthew 7:13, 14 NIV).

While swearing might not seem like a big deal to some Christians, in my opinion, it is a small compromise that leads to bigger and bigger ones. As Christians, we are called to be different than the world. As it says in James 3:10-12 (NIV): “Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.”

Another area of our culture’s speech that I think is lacking in ‘salt’ is in our use of holy. Whether the word is attached to cow or cheese or whatever, I think that it is putting emphasis where it shouldn’t be. By definition holy means “having a spiritually pure quality” or something holy is “specially recognized as or declared sacred by religious use or authority; consecrated” (dictionary.com). I don’t know if you’ve ever been

to a dairy farm, but cows definitely do not have “a spiritually pure quality.”

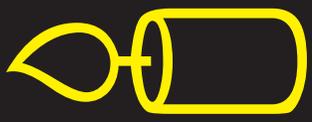
In essence, calling something other than God “holy”, is taking away from His glory and His might. He is the other one worthy of the recognition and the only perfect being. He does not deserve to have His rightful praise be directed towards another thing, even if we don’t mean it that way.

I think that not swearing and not using the word

“holy,” except in regards to God, is a great way to proclaim to the world that you are different. I can’t count how many conversations I’ve had with my non-Christian friends about my faith because of my dislike of swearing. Though it’s definitely not easy, I think it’s worth it. Think of it as a challenge and draw on God for strength. I don’t want to come across as holier-than-thou, but I do believe that it is an area of compromise that we shouldn’t have in our lives. Take the narrow road and be a person whose conversation is sprinkled with salt. ☩

Photography by Priscilla





LL Maggazine

Matthew 5:16