

Wholeness

Quarterly World Digest of Christian Healing

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Gratis.

Beauty, Redefined

Shauna Amick

We had just checked into the hotel after a 14-hour drive, and all five of us wore the badge of weary traveler. Our youngest daughter, Sarah, perhaps played the part best, with her windblown hair, and clothes showing evidence of a fast food dinner eaten way too fast in the car. Exploring the hotel's amenities was the last thing on our minds. All we wanted was to find our room and recover from the road. My husband and I, along with our two older children, scanned hallway signs directing us to our final destination for the night. Sarah, however, dawdled behind, peeking down hallways and into corridors.

It was then that it happened. Sarah dropped her suitcase with a thud and gasped so loudly that the rest of us turned to see what the matter was. Whatever Sarah saw didn't just grab her attention, it took her breath away. She took off down the hall and the rest of us ran to catch up. What we found waiting for us was an elegant sunken dance floor, designed for wedding reception father-daughter dances.

This unexpected delight took us all by surprise, but most of all Sarah, who was instantly transported into the ballroom scene of her favorite Disney movie, *Beauty and the Beast*. Sarah had no doubt seen that movie a hundred times. She had reenacted it over and over again in our living room at home, but now – standing in front of this grand ballroom – Sarah became Belle. No longer was she a dirty little girl worn out from a long, hard journey. She had been transformed into a beautiful princess, just waiting for her prince to notice her.

We all knew what she was thinking; her open mouth and the twinkle in her tired eyes said it all. Her Daddy put down his bags, reached out his hand and invited Sarah onto the sparkling marble tiles. "Can I have this dance, my love?"

Sarah took her father's strong hand. Alone on the dance floor, they began a magnificent waltz. Before long a crowd gathered. Hotel guests on the way to their rooms stopped to watch and whisper. Cleaning ladies put their rags down, tears welling in their eyes. Witnessing this love between a father and his child – knowing that in that moment my daughter believed herself to be the exquisite apple of her Daddy's eye – it all brought special joy to my heart, too. What mother wouldn't melt at that sight? I soaked up the significance of the dance, and then I wondered ... Would this scene be quite so poignant if Sarah didn't have Down syndrome? Would passersby smile at Sarah and her Daddy, but find no reason to stop and stare? Was it hard for those at the edge of the dance floor to imagine loving Sarah; to celebrate her for all God created her to be? Did they see her as the Beauty she had surely become?

These are the thoughts that enter a



mother's mind after years of facing a harsh reality. It can be hard sometimes to recognize true beauty. I have learned to behold beauty in the eyes of a homeless person begging on city streets. I have come to appreciate the delicate beauty found on the faces of those with dementia, alone and forgotten in nursing homes. I've been captivated by the pure radiance of my friends with physical and

cognitive disabilities. Sarah has given me this gift. Through Sarah, God has shown me the absolute brilliance of Himself placed within humanity - His image bearers - for in the image of God has God made man (Genesis 1:27).

This truth was hard for me to embrace at first. I was so indoctrinated to believing that beauty could not transcend age lines, dress sizes or one's genetic make-up. The veil over my eyes made me lose sight of the fact that it's the unfading beauty found well within ourselves that is precious and so valued by God. It's not how we look that determines if we are beautiful. It's the grasping of the deep yet simple truth that we are God's workmanship – His masterpiece! – that assigns value and shouts from the rooftops, "You are beautiful!" As Joni Eareckson Tada explains, the same God who made stunning sunsets and gorgeous mountain meadows made you, and He made you just the way you are. You are exceptional because God is the Artist.

This is the revelation that met me years ago, looking down into my newborn daughter's face as I saw past her diagnosis. It's the same revelation that corrects my own negative self-talk when I find myself reflected in a mirror. I may see wrinkles giving evidence to the title 'weary traveller'. I may have scars, be they in the flesh or be they reminders of hard seasons along life's journey. Regardless, my Father still reaches out His strong hand and invites me into the dance, daring me to see the beauty He has bestowed upon me as His own. "Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, and come with me" (Song of Songs 2:10). Can you hear Him calling you, too? You might only see yourself as worn out and weary from the road, but the Lord your God is enthralled by your beauty. He longs to trade a crown of beauty for your ashes, a joyous dance of blessings for your mourning, and a garment of festive praise for



From the
Editor

It's Time To Invest

"You gave me five thousand coins, sir,' he said. 'Look! Here are another five thousand that I have earned.' 'Well done, you good and faithful servant!' said his master. 'You have been faithful in managing small amounts, so I will put you in charge of large amounts. Come on in and share my happiness!'" (Matthew 25:20b-21)

We are each given a generous amount of gold coins. They are not only our abilities, but also the daily opportunities and even the challenges of life - all the things that provide us individually and uniquely with the potential to contribute to God's Kingdom. How amazing that God wants to reveal His person, His love and His provision through us - through you and me - to the world He created.

So, how can we make the best investment to reap eternal rewards? Firstly, we must accept forgiveness and live under Jesus' Lordship. Having a heart that's fully yielded to God is entirely our decision; God's not going to make it for us. The daily counting of our self as dead to sin and alive in Christ is up to us. Then, we need to be continually relying upon the Holy Spirit if we are to live out His priorities: "... to give up ungodly living and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this world ... a pure people who belong to him alone and are eager to do good." (Titus 2:12-14) And Ephesians 2:10 is even more definitive of our earthly mission: "God has made us what we are. In Christ Jesus, God made us new people so that we would spend our lives doing the good things he had already planned for us to do."

We belong to God; all that we have and all that we are are His. And so we can do no less than constantly respond to Him, and to the needs of His Kingdom, investing our lives into the lives of others through service, through sacrifice, and through being on our knees in prayer. The value of any and all physical wealth is inconsequential compared to the gold coins God gives each of us. We are entrusted with something which can literally change the world. And that of course is Christ in us, the hope of glory, who can and who will accomplish absolutely anything at all if we're available, if we're obedient, if we love our God.

The following paraphrase of 1 Timothy 6:18-19 leaves us in no doubt as to what we are to do, and what we will receive: "Let us do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share with others. In this way we will store up for ourselves a treasure which will be a solid foundation for the future. And then we will be able to win the life which is true life." Amen.

"He is no fool who gives
what he cannot keep
to gain what he
cannot lose."

Jim Elliot

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Beauty, Redefined

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your despair (Isaiah 61:3). Will you let Him? Will you allow Him to take the world's flawed understanding of the word "beauty", and redefine it for you?

Doing so brings with it a fresh perspective on both physical beauty and the beauty that lies within the stories of our lives. Beauty redefined allows us to see purpose in even the most painful parts of our past. It moves us to be more forgiving; more accepting of ourselves and of others. If "one of the tragedies of life is that we keep forgetting who we are," as Henri Nouwen reminds us, then embracing the truth that we are fearfully and wonderfully exquisite works of art, created by the very hand of God, positions us to find true beauty in every one we meet.

As I move on from this space, I will be looking for beauty in unexpected places. I encourage you to do the same. Whether it's in the face of someone with Down syndrome, or someone who's simply down and out. Be it the person who sits across from you at the dinner table, or the one staring back at you in the mirror, stop for a moment, fix your gaze upon the beautiful image of Christ within, and let Him take your breath away.

Shauna Amick, M.Ed., serves as the director of Joni and Friends New England, upholding the vision of accelerating Christian ministry in the disability community. She lives in New Hampshire with her husband and three beautiful children.

"God does not love us because we are valuable. We are valuable because God loves us."

Fulton Sheen

The Kingdom in Action

Adapted from "Many Voices, One Voice" by Eddie Askew

"Whether we think of or speak to God, whether we act or suffer for Him, all is prayer when we have no other object than His love and the desire of pleasing Him. All that a Christian does, even in eating and sleeping, is

prayer when it is done in simplicity according to the order of God ... In souls filled with love the desire to please God is a continual prayer." (John Wesley, "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection")

As members of the Body of Christ there should be a natural body language, a presence about us, which communicates our values and convictions to others. It's not the things we consciously do and say, but the attitudes we show without being aware of them that communicate our real message. This is true of groups as well as of individuals. There's the natural, warm and loving group which welcomes others. Then there's the cool clique that goes busily about its own affairs, assuming a newcomer will find their own ways of fitting in. Attitudes can surely be felt; they convey genuineness far better than words do.

Love in the Church

Margie Willers (co-founder of the Elevate Ministry), *The Encourager* Nov. 2015

Some years ago I met an unforgettable pastor by the name of Bill Haythornwaite. Bill had had a long association with Kathryn Kuhlman's ministry, and over three decades had himself been a minister at several large churches. One day, as we worked together, he shared the following story.

I was once in a team of pastors who attended to the needs of several thousand church members consisting of upper class, influential people. Also within this church was one little black lady. No one knew how she came to be a part of this particular congregation; it was definitely not an obvious match for her. Anyway, she desperately hankered to adopt a child. Sadly, her husband had been killed in the Watts race riots in Los Angeles some years before. Apparently because she was a widow, and because she was black, the authorities refused permission for her to adopt. As she battled to come to terms with their decision, there remained an emptiness, a lack of fulfilment deep within her life. Finally, reaching the end of her emotional rope, she plucked up the courage to share her grief, inner conflict and general lack of self-worth with the leadership of the church. This took considerable courage. She had absolutely no idea how the Pastoral Team would receive her, or if they'd even listen. She knew she didn't fit in, and so her decision to talk with the church leadership was 'risky faith'.

To her surprise, they did receive her and they heard her through. And, to her real amazement, the outcome was the gift of a vehicle - a van which the church approved for ministry to the derelicts of the city. However, there were stipulations. She was forbidden to bring anyone within the church doors who might bring discomfort or embarrassment to others. She agreed to respect their boundaries. There shouldn't be any problems - after all, it was only the rejects of society she was working with. What could possibly become an issue?

Six weeks passed without incident. Then, one Sunday morning the inevitable happened. The side door of the church flew open, and in she



marched with a vanload of severely disabled black children, some of whom had grotesque physical deformities. They were the kind of people with whom nobody knew what to do, the kind regarded as human flotsam. They had absolutely no expression, no smiles, and no tears - just total vacancy. But what would you expect when there had never been any love?

Horror of horrors, she positioned those children, of varying ages and varying disabilities, along the front row directly beneath the pastor's gaze. Not surprisingly, they squirmed, fidgeted and wriggled uncomfortably, as was their way. On one side was a little girl with cerebral palsy. She couldn't sit at all without support, and even with an assistant worker on each side propping her body up she continually flopped from side to side. Her face showed no expression, only despair - total nothingness.

As the scene was replayed week after week, Bill expressed amazement at the tolerance from the church leadership. Then, one Sunday, the lady responsible for it all walked in with what seemed to be something totally indescribable. At a casual glance, few features appeared to be even vaguely human. Bill took a long, hard look to decide if it was indeed a torso with a head attached. His eyes welled up as he searched for appropriate words, "Margie, I couldn't sit up on the platform and do nothing - not any longer." He turned to his ministry colleague seated alongside him and suggested, "What say we go down, lay hands on these people, and pray?"

The retort: "You can't do that. They're black, and we're white!" Bill was totally flabbergasted at the man's heartlessness. But that was the way that it was. After a silence, that wasn't the way that it was. Bill rose to his feet. "I don't care what you think, I'm going down to minister Jesus to these kids!"

He went first to the girl with cerebral palsy, and after taking her face in his hands he began to pray, "Precious Jesus..." A smile spread from ear to ear on the little girl's face. Bill immediately sensed that he stood on the holiest of Holy Ground as the presence of God descended like a blanket. He moved along the row laying his hands upon each child, praying in a manner he'd never experienced in his life. That day there was miraculous evidence of something positive happening with each precious soul: a smile, tears, alertness, improvement with co-ordination. That mightn't sound like much, but compared to their presentation just minutes before, these were truly staggering changes.

Week after week Bill persisted in prayer, laying on his hands and speaking life, health and wholeness into these children. Some months passed and Bill's contract with the congregation ended. At the time of his departure there had been a marked and heartwarming improvement in the condition of many of the children, even the severely challenged one. But the most striking change was to the condition of the little girl who'd once flopped from side to side, and who had been totally dependent upon carers. She was now to be seen on her feet, her body perfectly coordinated, dancing!

How I'd love to plant that little black lady in churches throughout this nation, every nation, to provoke people to love. Love is a fruit of the Spirit. God wants spiritual fruit - He chokes on spiritual nuts! Truly the key to Jesus' miracle ministry was, and is, compassion. "... and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing." (1 Cor. 13.2b)



The message of love and acceptance we preach can be killed stone-dead if our demeanour contradicts it. Consciously or subconsciously the hearer picks up this other message and sets it alongside our words to see if they match. If they don't, then we are failing as disciples. So how do we modify the signals? Firstly, by identifying them. Secondly, by facing up to our failings and not by hiding behind the rest of the group. "If one member suffers, all suffer together ..." (1 Cor. 12:26a) Thirdly, by resisting the inclination to simply present a new set of attitudes. The only answer is to deepen our commitment to Christ, from which will come a deeper commitment to others. God is the only source of real love.

Let us ask God to show us who we truly are in Christ. We are people who are loved and accepted and healed; and we are people who are given the privilege of loving, accepting and bringing healing to others. That is the Kingdom in action.

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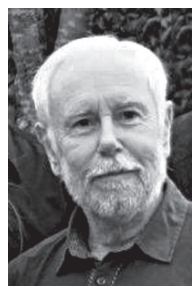
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Have you ever noticed how much we are creatures of habit? We sit in the same seat at home and in church, we drive the same route to go shopping, and we also tend to pray in the same way.

We use the same phrases, we refer to God in the same way, and we pray using the same routine of topics. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but it can be rather limiting for our prayer life, particularly when we are petitioning for the needs of others.

During the past year two people have impacted on the way I pray. One of these was Father John Rea, who rekindled the idea that short prayers are quite OK as far as God is concerned. The other was a member of our home group, who prayed very directly, and asked for specific results within a specified time frame. Then, a few Sundays ago, when all this was very much in my mind, an elderly member of our church approached me with the problems he was having with his eyes and with the hospital. It looked like he wouldn't be able to renew his driving licence, and he was very worried about losing his independence. I offered to pray with him; but what to pray for? We handed the whole situation over to Jesus, and then I felt led to pray a very specific prayer: for the whole situation to be resolved in the coming week.



Rev. Bill Sim

The next Sunday he came rushing over to tell me that during that week everything had indeed been sorted out, and he now had his licence again. Praise to God! So what have I learnt through this, and through other answers to prayer? A number of things:

1. Comfortable habits in prayer can be counterproductive.
2. Habits can inhibit listening to the Holy Spirit for guidance.
3. Short prayers are as effective as long prayers.
4. Specific prayers may be disquieting, but they work!

I certainly need to keep learning about praying, to stop reverting to comfortable prayer habits, to keep listening to the Holy Spirit, and to step out in faith and pray specifically for what God indicates that I should pray for. After all, what better source for our prayers than the still, small voice of the Holy Spirit?

(Rev) Bill Sim

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OUR LIGHT

Intercessors for New Zealand

"Let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in Heaven." (Matthew 5:16)



If followers of Christ appear no different from the rest of the world, then why should anyone be inspired to become a Christian? It's not that we are better than anyone else, it's just that we have received the mercy and grace of God. And as a result of that there are a number of ways in which people who are not Christians ought to be able to see the difference between their lives and ours; differences made solely by the transforming power of God.

1. They should know we are Christians by our love, evidenced by our self-sacrifice for the sake of others. Love also involves forgiving one another, supporting and encouraging one another, giving to each other, protecting each other, all without limit. "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another." (John 13:35)
2. They should know we are Christians by our unity. This doesn't mean we are all to think and act the same way; after all God made each of us as a one-off. We don't all worship God exactly the same way, or believe the same theology; but unity does require that we recognise that we are all one in Christ, brothers and sisters in Him. We are saved by the same blood, have the same Saviour, the same Father and the same Holy Spirit. We are each a child of God, already owning the eternal life to which He has called us. We will always have differences, but our common love for God and for each other should be the defining evidence of our faith.
3. They should know we are Christians by our purity. We are living in an increasingly Godless, immoral, materialistic, self-centred society. In the midst of all that, Christians should stand out as people who demonstrate victory over sin through God's power; the same power which raised His Son from death. Because of the redeeming work of God's Spirit, our life and the collective life of the Church should shine as bright lights in an increasingly dark world.
4. They should know we are Christians by our forsaking of worldliness. Like everyone else we are still living here on earth, but unlike others we are also citizens of God's Kingdom, and so our transcendent joy should be evident. Hallelujah! When we pray, "Your Kingdom come; your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven", we are asking for this to be realised now, in our own life. God's Kingdom is to rule in our hearts and lives now, with His will being done in our hearts and lives now. Now! Our aims and goals are not to be those of the world; they need to be those of God. Riches, fame, and human glory are false gods; we must seek to honour, glorify and please the One who made us and who has saved us. Our eyes must be on Him only, our hearts belonging to Him only, and our lives spent following, worshipping and serving Him and Him alone.
5. They should know we are Christians by the sincerity of our deep compassion and love for those who are still unsaved; by our fervent desire for their salvation and for their incorporation into the Body of Christ. People should be responding to us just as Peter responded to Jesus: "You have the words of eternal life." (John 6:68b)

Letting God's Vision be Your Vision

The following is based on an extract from Dr. Virkler's most enlightening and inspiring book "Dialogue with God", the theme of which certainly needs to be the key theme of our life: cultivating a relationship with God. There is a wealth of invaluable ministry offered through Dr. Virkler's "Communion with God Ministries", all of which can be read about at www.CWGMinistries.org

You cannot create anything if you do not first have a picture, a vision of it. Long before a skyscraper rises from the ground there is an architect who envisions it in every detail. When Michelangelo looked at the formless piece of marble he didn't see the rough quarry stone that everyone else saw; he saw within it the beautiful figure of a young man. As he chiselled away he did not create that figure, but rather released the magnificent statue of David which he had already seen within the rock.



God has placed within all men a spirit, which is what distinguishes us from the animal kingdom. To one degree or another, all of us have the capacity to create by the spirit within us. But far beyond that, we were designed by God to lend Him our spirit's creative potential so that the Holy Spirit can fill it. Rather than simply creating through any ability of our own, we are to be the vessels through which God moves and does His divine work; as we yield our will to Almighty God so that He can flow through us to reach and to restore His creation.

Even humanists recognize that there is creative power in man's spirit. As Christians, however, we are privileged to experience the truth that man's spirit was made to be a womb in which the creative ideas and energies of the Holy Spirit can be planted, incubated, and in the fullness of time, birthed into His world. I believe that every person who begins to regularly dialogue with God will find a surge of

creativity in his spirit in a way he has never experienced before. And I am further convinced that as conversation with God is restored to the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, She will become the most creative force in the world, with absolutely nothing being able to match Her. Creative solutions to the world's most difficult problems will be released through the Body of Christ, and the world will be healed in a way it has not experienced since the Son of God walked in the land of Palestine.

I can personally testify to the fact that since dialogue and communion with God were restored to my life, I have certainly experienced my most creative and productive years. God wants to share His limitless imagination and power with us, for our benefit, for the benefit of a needy world, and for the glorification of His Son. For we know that any honor and glory that come from our accomplishments belong only to Jesus. "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." (Ephesians 3:21)

"There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every person which cannot be filled by any other created thing, but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ."
(Blaise Pascal)

You did it for One

The Encourager Nov. 2015

Research, not to mention common sense, tells us that when people feel an issue is too big to tackle they are less likely to try to meet it through giving or by volunteering. It shouldn't be a surprise that Jesus knew this, and that he had an answer. "Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' And the King will answer them, 'I tell you the truth. Just as you did it for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it for me.'" (Matthew 25:37-40)

Notice that Jesus uses the word "one". It's a small word, but it can make a big difference to our perspective on service and sacrifice. Here is what I think Jesus is saying in this verse: "Look, what matters to me is not that



you go and try to change the world. How about you just love one person. Start there!" By focusing on a single person you begin to humanise the problem. You are not helping single mums, you are helping Amanda. You are not helping kids at risk, you're helping

Dash. It's no longer all those people with disabilities, it's Jenny next door.

In this passage Jesus is taking away the excuse of saying that the problem is too big, or that our contribution would only be a drop in the bucket. He's saying, "Just focus on one person. Find your one. Inspire and encourage your fellow church members to find their one. Find the one group, the one family, the one individual to invest your time in, and make a difference for them now. By doing so you are also making a difference for yourself in eternity."

Do You Know God?

The Encourager, November 2014

If you have never experienced real inner peace, then perhaps you have never met God's Son. Jesus came into the world to reconcile you to God by dying on the cross, to bring you into a right relationship with the Father. If you will accept Jesus as your own Saviour, all your sins will be forgiven, and He will give you His perfect peace. To enter a relationship with God, you can simply pray: "Lord Jesus, I believe you are truly God's Son, who died on the cross to pay the debt for my sins. I confess that I have sinned against you in thoughts, words and deeds. Please forgive all my wrongdoing, and let me live in communion with you from this time on. I receive you as my personal Saviour. I thank you Jesus for saving me from myself, from sin and from separation from God. Help me to live a life that's pleasing to you. I believe that you will. AMEN."

Do know, though, that it's not the saying of such a prayer that brings you into a relationship with God; rather, God's response will be to the cry of your heart. And respond He will.

The Great Company of God

Based on the writings of John Borman, Faith for Daily Living

"Then you will discover the glorious blessings that will be yours together with all God's people." (Ephesians 1:18b)

It's been said by some that they could go for Christianity if only it were not for the people in the church. And indeed, some do attempt to be solitary Christians, following a life of devotional discipline while having as little to do with the community of believers as possible. But few survive for long without corporate worship and without the fellowship, encouragement and advice of other men and women of faith.

Christianity never was and never will be a solitary faith. Christ called not just Peter, but Peter, James, John et al. They related to Him and learnt of Him while they lived together in the community



of disciples. Jesus still intends for it to be like that. He calls us, not only to be with Himself, but to support each other on our journey together. Learning to love God is meaningless if we are not also learning to love each other, with all the foibles, quirks and failings owned by everyone (except us).

"...for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen." (1 John 4:20b)

In writing to the church at Ephesus, Paul was urging the Christian community to be reconciled to each other because they were all one in Christ. In fact, most of the letter to the Ephesians has "unity in Christ" as its underlying theme. The inheritance God promises is something no one can enter into in solitary isolation. It can only be known "together with all God's people".

So don't disdain the company of God's elect, not even in the most trivial of ways. Whether you like it or not, you will be part of a family when you enter your inheritance in glory. Know it. Cherish it. Grow in it. And, at the last, pass into the next life in it. The company of God's people is the only place you truly belong.

"WHOLENESS"

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What is Self-Denial?

The Vine Today

"Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.'" (Matthew 16:24)

There is no way to fail more spectacularly than in one's efforts at self-denial. That is because very few seem to have the slightest idea of what this cardinal calling is all about. To deny our self a treat, or even to give up something entirely, may lead us to feel that we have accomplished much. However, that's the very problem; there's no merit or virtue in giving up anything, of making any sacrifice, of suffering any loss or enduring any pain merely for its own sake. It's a paradox that nothing which is done from a motivation to deny one's self is true self-denial. Real self-denial, like all other traits of Christ-likeness, is unconscious of itself and is simply deference to the Spirit of Christ within us. His life, not ours. "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)



True self-denial is renouncing yourself and yielding your whole life to the will of God. It is submitting yourself to Christ and acknowledging His reign over every aspect of your being. It is living always not to please yourself, nor to advance your own personal interests, but to please your Lord and to do His work. It is not only being ready to forsake anything that is sinful in His sight, but even those things which aren't of themselves sinful, but about which God convicts us that He has a better way. It is gladly making any sacrifice that our dedication to Him requires. It is happily responding to His still, small voice, and giving up any pleasure or comfort for the higher good of others. Christ reigns in His Kingdom, and "the Kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21b)

We deny ourselves not by embracing an ascetic lifestyle, but by joyfully following Christ. "I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength." (Philippians 4:12b, 13)

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