

Wholeness

Quarterly World Digest of Christian Healing

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MIRACULOUSLY CURED OF CEREBRAL PALSY

Based on the writing of Ian Wishart, The Encourager, March 2012

From the moment of her birth in the early 1960s, Marlene Klepees' life was hard, very hard. Weighing little more than a kilo, this tiny child developed cerebral palsy as a result of oxygen deprivation during the birth trauma. This condition afflicts millions of people worldwide to varying degrees, and as they grow older their plight sometimes worsens, with their bodies simply refusing to obey motor commands, and becoming disfigured and twisted. Muscular spasms can set in, and although the person's mental capacity and IQ are usually unaffected, they are increasingly trapped in a body from which communication is very difficult.

It was already hard for Marlene, but it was about to get worse. When she was just a year old her parents were killed in a motorbike crash. Alone, afflicted, and barely conscious of the world around her, the little girl was sent to live with her great-grandparents. When they became too old to care for her she was cared for by foster parents. She remembers her school years as passing without many playmates. Children, especially in the sixties and seventies, didn't understand as much about disabilities as they do now. But she did have some friends who cared, and when, in the early seventies, a Christian youth rally came to her Missouri hometown, those friends took Marlene with them. Disabled and unable to walk, the girl who'd never had the chance to know her own father nonetheless resonated with the message of a Father in Heaven. She made a decision, at the age of 12, to pray the prayer of salvation and commit her life to Jesus Christ. "I was His, and He was my Dad," Marlene told the US Christian TV network CBN earlier this year, "and that was it, forever. I just thought that if I was born with cerebral palsy, I must be born with it because God created me that way. I just thought, 'Well, there's got to be a reason for it. He's smarter than I am.'"

Despite becoming a Christian, however, Marlene's condition worsened. Some of her muscular spasms during her teenage years were severe enough to leave her caregivers with broken bones themselves. Marlene became almost totally paralysed from the neck down with contractures - the formation of fibrous and rigid tissue between her joints and muscles where elastic ligaments should otherwise be, which resulted in permanent, claw-like deformity. To add to her discomfort, Marlene could no longer see without the aid of very heavy corrective lenses. It was very frustrating, being trapped in a body in which she could hear and understand everything, but from which she could communicate very little. With what was left of her endowment money following the deaths of her family, Marlene's

caregivers turned to the world's leading research hospital, the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, as their final hope for Marlene. Perhaps there was some new experimental drug, therapy or surgery that could give the teenager a better quality of life.

In December 1980, Marlene Klepees was wheeled into St Mary's Hospital, part of the Mayo Clinic facility, where a barrage of tests and treatments began. But nothing worked; there was no improvement and after four months the money was running out. The decision was made to discharge Marlene into the care of a Missouri nursing home for the rest of her natural life - she was not yet aged 20. In despair, Marlene remembers crying out to God in tears, thumping the arm of her wheelchair with her clawed hand. And that's when she received a vision. "In the vision," she says, "I first saw a young lady out riding her bike on beautiful green grass, then I saw myself inside a church. I didn't recognize the church, but I was still in my wheelchair. I had on rust-coloured corduroy pants, a striped velour shirt, there's a few people gathered around praying for me and there's one man in particular that God showed me in more detail - he was tall, blond-haired, had on a grey pinstriped suit, and then at the end of the vision in great big bold black letters it gave a date of March 29th, three weeks hence. There was no question. I knew it was from the Lord, but on the 28th of March I was still lying there in a ward in the Mayo Clinic's St Mary's Hospital, and nothing had changed during that period of time."

Three weeks had almost passed with no visible change in Marlene's circumstances, and the church in her vision may as well have been a million miles away. The following day, March 29, was supposed to be the day she would be healed. "I thought that God really wanted to heal me, but there wasn't any way He was going to do it, because I thought that I'd sinned or something. I knew He could heal me but I didn't understand how He was going to get me somewhere when there wasn't anybody to get me there." Again, she cried out in her heart to God, asking Him to deliver the miracle. "God spoke to me, and He said to have the nurse get the Yellow Pages and He would give the name of the church and the person who'd be praying for me. And when morning came, and the nurse looked through the Yellow Pages, there were two lines that glowed off the page: 'Open Bible, Scott Emerson', and a phone number. The nurse called the number and the pastor came down. He went looking for several

hours before he found us. The nurse had given the room number and he didn't get the room number down right and he went looking from room to room until he found us." When the nurse opened the door, standing there was a blond-haired man wearing the grey pinstripe suit Marlene had seen in her vision. He came in, and agreed that the vision was the inside of his church. "But he didn't seem anxious to take us there at all. Finally we started asking questions and he says 'Yes, our church believes in healing, but we've never had any, and you plan on me starting on this one?!'"

Little wonder that Emerson was sceptical. As he looked at the racked and paralysed body facing him, he found it hard to believe that his prayer and his church could truly change Marlene's life, especially as he believed no one had ever been miraculously healed of cerebral palsy. But Marlene knew she would be. "The nurse had already got a pass from the doctor and they loaded me in his car and took me to the church. They pushed me up to the front, anointed me with oil and started to pray. I really didn't feel anything. They asked if I wanted to stand up on faith and I didn't know what that really meant. But when they stood me up the contractures fell out of my body, my feet hit the floor and I felt the floor for the first time in my life. Now I didn't walk pretty, it was ugly, but every lap we made the better it got. I don't know if there was anything going through my mind except 'God is so good!' Everything worked. There wasn't anything that didn't move. I started off pigeon-toed, but we just kept on making laps. The people praying for me were screaming and yelling and jumping. It was non-stop."

Scott Emerson, the pastor who prayed for her that day, in a little church with only seven worshippers, remembers the event as if it were yesterday. "Her knees and her toes pointed together, and everything was pointed in," he told the CBN network, "but with each step that she took, they started to straighten out. And as her toes and her knees straightened out she got stronger and stronger.

She took a few steps on her own, and then was literally running around the church." And in case anyone is thinking 'coincidence', or the power of suggestion, there's still the issue of Marlene's near blindness. She testified, "My eyesight was healed, totally, instantly. Prior to that I wore glasses, they were thick, they were prisms. My eyes got really warm and I took off the glasses, and instantaneously I could see. There wasn't anything I even had to do to get that to work. That was Sunday night. On Monday Mayo ran all kinds of tests on me, and on Tuesday I spoke in front of a whole bunch of doctors in this conference room. And they actually applauded when I walked in. They asked me questions and I started answering them, and I went home that afternoon. All of them admitted it was something greater than them. They knew it had been some form of miracle."

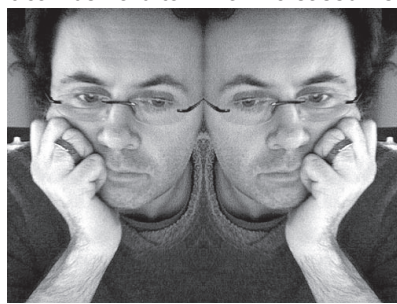
Today, 25 years later, Marlene Klepees bears no signs of the cerebral palsy that kidnapped her childhood. She rides her bike through green fields, she runs a floral business called "Heaven's Scent" in Republic, Missouri, and she tells little churches throughout America about the day God healed a cripple and let the blind see.



ARE YOUR THOUGHTS WORKING FOR YOU, or AGAINST YOU?

Pastor Cindy Hyde, Sharing, Jan. 2012.

Thoughts come in all shapes and sizes: good ones, bad ones, wanted ones, unwanted ones. They can be revolutionary, random, rapid, or annoyingly revolving! Sometimes it can be hard to think at all. Very likely you'll have experienced all of these states of consciousness in just a single 24-hour period. Our minds are often the battleground between good and evil, between should I and shouldn't I, between I will and I won't. All sin starts with one thought. Sin is considered as anything that misses the mark, anything that falls short of God's very best for your life, something that is harmful to yourself or to others. Looking at your thoughts can give you a good roadmap of your heart. If you are what you think, then what do your thoughts say about you? Take a quick inventory. Do you always have thoughts about yourself and others that are positive and full of hope and leave you stress-free? If the answer is No, then read on.



The spiritual law of reaping and sowing is applicable to every thought, with just a single fearful one being able to usher in the physiological symptoms of increased heart rate, increased respiration, and the overproduction of adrenaline and other chemicals. Long-term exposure to these conditions produces high blood pressure, strokes, and many other diseases, all emanating from fear, stress and anxiety. There is no doubt that thoughts can make you sick - mentally, emotionally and physically. One negative thought is all it takes to produce toxicity, while the act of rejecting it and replacing it with a positive perspective is the road to well-being. Consciously redirecting one thought at a time is all it takes to start and to maintain a new mental life; one that will bring health, improved relationships, success, provision and a bright future. Your thoughts can make you sick. Or your thoughts can make you healthy.

You Are What You Think

You are fearfully and wonderfully made. You are created in God's very image, in His likeness. Everything about you pleases Him. He has known you since before you were created in your mother's womb. When He looked upon you the day you were born He rejoiced. He loves you with an unconditional love and wants only the best for you. Through the Bible He provides guidelines for your life, and through the Holy Spirit He provides guidance for your day. As well, He gave you a mind that can run faster than the speed of sound, that can reason, plan, process, store data and retain information in a way that still baffles scientists. What are you doing with that wonderful mind? What you think about all day determines your health, your relationships, your success, your financial state, the quality of your life, and your future. When you have knowledge about how to think, and consciously change your thought patterns, you can change your life.

Think On These Things

Scripture gives us some specific instructions about the mental state we should aspire to, "Finally, brothers and sisters, keep your thoughts on whatever is right or deserves praise: things that are true, honorable, fair, pure, acceptable or commendable." (Philippians 4.8 GWT)

The King James version reads, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

1. Whatsoever things are true.

Christ is The Truth. His followers must reflect truth itself, cherishing it in word, action and thought.

2. Honest or honorable.

The Greek word is *revere*. Dwell upon whatever is worthy of reverence.

3. Just.

Apply justice in all dealings; lead an upright life.

4. Pure.

Lead chaste lives, accepting nothing less than a clean heart and godly thoughts.

5. Lovely.

Perform such deeds as spring from love, and inspire love in others.

6. Of good report.

Live a life of which no evil thing can be truthfully said.

7. If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise.

The writer adds these words in case he may have omitted something of excellence. If there is anything else which is virtuous or praiseworthy, let these be the things to which you give your minds. Meditate upon these things, esteem them highly, practise them fervently and recommend them heartily.

Be Renewed in the Spirit of Your Mind

Matthew 12.25 says any kingdom that is divided against itself cannot stand, it will fall. Think of yourself as a kingdom. Are you fortified and strong? Are you able to stand and prosper in body, soul, mind and spirit? Or are you vulnerable and weak - physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually, unable to stand because you are divided against yourself through your thoughts? God wants you to take every thought captive (2 Corinthians 10.5), and think on the things that will strengthen and edify you (Philippians 4.8). God says He wants you to prosper and be in health even as your soul prospers (3 John 2). He says He knows the plans He has for you, plans to bring about the future you hope for (Jeremiah 29.11). God says He is working all things out for your good, because you love Him (Romans 8.28). He wants you to be healthy in your body, mind and spirit. He sent His Word to heal you and to deliver you out of any negativity (Psalm 107.19,20).

Decide today to respond to the wonderful call of liberation in Ephesians 4.23 "... be renewed in the spirit of your mind ..." Be renewed!

A PEOPLE WHO WILL WORSHIP

Andrew Norton, NZ Presbyterian Church Moderator Designate Shortened version, printed with permission.

*I lift up my eyes to the hills;
where does my help come from?
My help comes from the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.*

(Psalm 121.1,2)

*The earth has been shaken
The wind of change is blowing
The church is being called to navigate the
unknown seas.*

The church of 2012 is facing the shock waves of enormous change, and to lead in this context will require prophetic courage, poetic insight, professional ability and practical love.

Prophetic courage

We have a heritage of biblical prophecy that needs to be rediscovered in our day. Prophetic courage speaks with brutal honesty into our present, and at the same time casts a clear vision of a preferred future. Like Amos, we need to declare the sin of our present age and of our church: our self-centred consumerism, our spirituality of self-interest, our rampant individualism and our neglect of the poor and marginalised. Will we, as the church, have the courage to name our sinfulness?

Like Isaiah, we need to be arrested by a vision of the glory and holiness of God, so much so that all we can do is say, "Here I am, send me." We desperately need a vision of a church touched by the burning coals of God's grace, and sent into the world as a servant people. If the church is not a sent church then it is not a church at all.



Andrew Norton

Poetic insight

The language of life and faith cannot be contained in dogma, regulations or pronouncements. God cannot be reduced to the small-mindedness of liberalism, conservatism, post modernism, fundamentalism or any other "ism" with which we identify. In an age of rapid change, uncertainty, paradox and ambiguity we need more than ever poets, song writers and artists who have an ability to enter into that mystery, messiness, and experience of life, who will read between the lines to discern and magnify the anointed message of faith and hope, offering a beacon in these most uncertain of times.

Professional ability

During the Benedictine era society looked to the church as the preferred training institution for the skills they needed for their day. Graduation marked both the completion of practical and academic disciplines, and included a profession of faith; that's why they were called "professionals". Today we need to personify the true sense of being professionals, in both the church and in the business community. We need to break down the false divide between secular and sacred work. Christian leaders need to elevate their professional management abilities and leadership skills, and earn the right to speak at any, including the highest, decision-making bodies in the land.

Practical love

One of my greatest sorrows over the years has been the way in which we, the church, have defined ourselves by our debates, and have been defined by their declarations. What if the church stopped debating and started truly loving one another? And what if that love was not in words but was lived out in relationship with one another? What if we loved our neighbours as much as we loved ourselves, our heritage and our precious buildings? We have a sign outside our church at the moment saying, "Compassion isn't compassion until it crosses the road." Will we dare to do so in the name of love, or will we remain within the safe definitions of who's right and who's wrong? Jesus gave little time to such debates, but rather demonstrated the good news, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." (Luke 4.18,19)

There is, and only ever has been, one clarion call to the church, "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13.34,35)

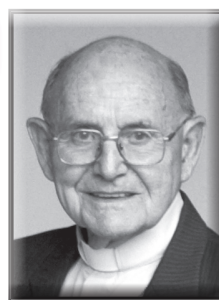
*May the fire of God lead the way,
May the cloud of God be our presence,
May the love of God send us into the world,
In the name of Jesus, Amen.*



ORDER OF ST. LUKE



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Rev. Brian Flower

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." (Phil 4.4-7)

I write this the week before Christmas Eve, and the verses above were read as the Epistle for yesterday, the Third Sunday in Advent. Even as we are preparing for the festival of the birth of Jesus, the most important festival in the church calendar alongside Easter Day, Christmas is for so many a time of tremendous anxiety. Of course there are families alive with the anticipation of the younger ones (and many grown-ups) regarding the presents they expect to receive. Such children receive gifts that are sophisticated, up-market and technologically state of the art, and the family dines in style. But there are also so many households in this country, and far more in others, where there is little income, and where too often the breadwinner has frittered away what there is on alcohol and living it up. Christmas dinner for such a family can be a tin of baked beans, or, in places where there are social services and local churches, perhaps a food parcel. Sadly, the irresponsibility of such a breadwinner can be a recipe for disaster and violence; the result too often being a man in the cells and

a woman nursing injuries. Not to mention a family of distraught children.

Where then does God, our provider, fit into this world of contrasts between those who have plenty and those who have nothing? Did God send Jesus to be born into luxury, or into the deprivation of a stable? Did God send Jesus to a world where he was safe from all harm, or did he send him to a world where, as an infant, he had to be whisked from his native country to a foreign land to escape the death being dealt out to so many innocent children? God shares our concerns, our griefs, our pains, just as he shares our joys. He heals the sick, he comforts the grieving, but each day He Himself grieves anew for those who are subject to violence, starvation and torture. We cannot begin to grasp the enormity of God's suffering as he contemplates the world. He had to turn his back as Jesus hung on the Cross. The suffering of the world today, through the inhumanity of man to man, remains incomprehensible. Yet, as Paul wrote to the church at Philippi, we can only present our requests to God with thanksgiving, and receive from Him his peace.

May God's peace rest upon each one of you and on your loved ones, and may your prayers bring peace to those who so desperately need it.
Brian Flower



From the
Editor

"People everywhere will come to you on account of their sins."

(Psalm 65.2, 3 GNT)

Sin, a small word describing horrendous consequences. An atheist might despise the concept of iniquity, but they would still accept that man, at his worst, is avaricious, inhumane, cruel ... There is no shortage of words to describe the evil baggage carried by mankind. Without recourse to God's grace, irredeemable corruption is the permanent state of the world in which we live, and incurable selfishness is the natural condition in which every human being lives their life. God may have described King David as a man after His own heart (Acts 13.22), yet even he, David, confessed in Psalm 51.5, "I have been evil from the day I was born; from the time I was conceived, I have been sinful." Wow! So, what hope do we have? None, if we were an atheist.

But we, through experience, know that an awareness of sin can be positive. It can become a yearning for freedom from bondage to the base elements of our human existence. Such yearning is a divinely ordained hunger; it is our heart seeking a relationship with the living God, the fulfillment of which comes when we respond to the Holy Spirit's call to rebirth. He and He alone can reveal God's grace. He and He alone can make real to us, on a personal level, the efficacy of Jesus' sacrificial death and resurrection. He and He alone can grant our reconciliation with God through our own death and resurrection.

As members of God's kingdom, the relationship we are to have with unbelievers is clear - to accept them, and love them, and tell them that there is a way, and there is a truth, and there is a life. Otherwise, "... how can they call to him for help if they have not believed? And how can they believe if they have not heard the message? And how can they hear if the message is not proclaimed?" (Romans 10.14) Peter described Jesus as being the one with the words of eternal life. But now we, you and me, are the ones with those words; and we, you and me, have the commission to faithfully share them. "Be ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have in you," (1 Peter 3.15) and as we do so, let us not marvel that people will open their hearts to us. They will naturally, and indeed supernaturally, be drawn by God's gift of mercy residing within us, in fulfillment of the words, "People everywhere will come to you [to God, to God in us] on account of their sins." Do we fully appreciate where people find God? "For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, 'I will live in them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.'" (2 Cor. 6.16)

How wonderful when a person meets their Heavenly Father in this life, rather than their first acknowledgement of God being at a later time, on that great and terrible day when the secrets of men's hearts are judged. (1 Cor. 4.5) No wonder Jesus spoke of the joy in heaven over one sinner who repents. Let us pray fervently for destiny-changing opportunities to share the Good News today. Amen.

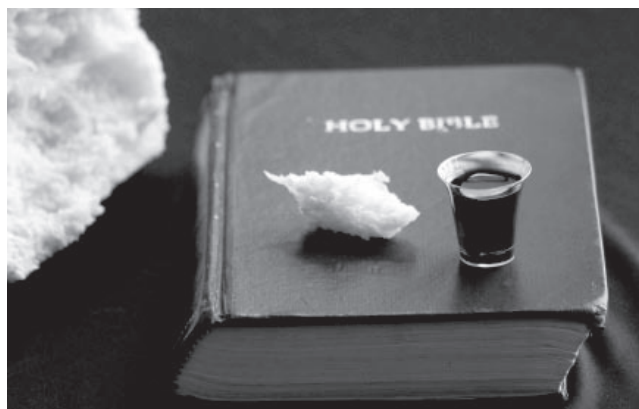
HEALING THROUGH HOLY COMMUNION

Rev'd Derek Pryde, *The Exciting Spiritual Tool Kit - Healing for You.*

A man with lung cancer was in the final stages of the disease. While he had been a practising Christian in earlier days, he had not been so for some time, and he now realised that he needed to put his life right with God. I went and saw him, and he told me of his past life and his failings and his feelings. So we asked the Lord for forgiveness of his sins. He asked Jesus to renew his life, and he accepted Jesus afresh as Lord and Saviour. Then he asked for, and received, the Sacrament of the Breaking of Bread, Holy Communion. From God's Word I showed the man that Jesus said, "I will do whatever you ask for in my Name, so that the Father's glory is shown through the Son. If you ask me for anything in my Name, I will do it." Claiming this

promise from St. John's Gospel 14.13,14 we asked the Lord for a healing.

When I gave him communion he was sitting on a couch, unable to move on his feet. He would be carried out during the day and put in a chair, and carried back to bed. The next week when I again took him Holy Communion he told me his health had improved so much that he was walking round the house.



The next week he came to church unaided. He then improved to the point that he could walk up and down hills and even go dancing!

The Lord healed him physically for three months, giving him that extra time to put his life right with God and man, before healing him totally and accepting him into glory.

Though noone can go back and make a brand new start, anyone can start now and make a brand new ending.

Carl Bard

Are You Busy?

Intercessors for NZ

Many people's experience is that all our modern time-savers enable us to do is more of the same, and yet we have even less time than ever for what is really important. And what is really important? We need to be asking God that question. We need to be asking what the Lord wants us to be doing, as opposed to our sleepwalking through the multitude of things that are there in front of us. Jesus' words from Matthew 6.33 are a good starting point for a meditation on what to do, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness."

We need to take time out to hear from God, and that would be one reason that He gave us the Sabbath as a day of rest (see Exodus 20.8-11). Jesus reminded us that "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2.27). We are to work six days and keep the seventh day "holy" – separate, special, reserved for rest. It is so important that we learn to rest and relax in an ever busier world. Pray that as Christians we will be committed to taking one day a week as a day of relaxation and enjoyment; to spend time only on those things which are really important:

- God and His children
- Family and friends
- People whom the Lord is calling us to love, serve, minister to and help
- Rest, relaxation and enjoyment of life; a life as God intended it to be

Pray for God's wisdom as to how to use our time in ways which are pleasing to Him, for only then will our lives be pleasing to us. Jesus didn't come so that we might have life more busily; He came so that we might have life more abundantly.

BEWARE
the barrenness
of a busy life.

SOCRATES

It wasn't God, and it wasn't the Devil

Dave Whitehead, Senior Pastor, GraceNYC.org

"When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed." (James 1.13,14)

There used to be a comic saying, "The devil made me do it," but, according to the Scripture, temptation begins with our own hidden agendas. Some of us blame Satan for our moral failures,

others even blame God, but in either case we are failing to address our own heart condition. That's why Jesus gave us the gift of repentance; for when we recognize the great love that God has for us, and his infinite forgiveness, we can bring our darkest motives to the light. Jesus came to deliver us from temptation. We just need to admit where that temptation comes from. The verse above tells us plainly that it comes from our own corrupted heart. But there is a way to overcome, praise God, "if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live." (Romans 8.13)

HOW TO ORDER

"Wholeness" is supported entirely by love offerings: mainly from individual readers and especially those who regularly send a "birthday present in reverse". Some churches and groups allocate a special offering to this Ministry.

Cheques in your currency are acceptable, but not Postal Notes. For donations to our KiwiBank account number 3890050310586-00 please include your name in the details space. For N.Z. receipts (tax deductible) a stamped and addressed envelope is appreciated. God bless you all and thank you.

We love to hear from you: testimonies, news, donations, and requests for prayer. Please address all such letters to our editorial office. We also hope that you will interest others in our paper.

God's love trumps our rebellion.
(Dave Whitehead)

"WHOLENESS"

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A Fresh Start

Based on the writing of Bob Glass

"I'll make a clean breast of my failures to God" (Psalm 32.5 The Message)

Hidden among the sand dunes on Bird Island, North Carolina, is a post-box marked 'Kindred Spirits'. Inside are notebooks and pencils visitors can use to record their thoughts and prayers in anonymity. Author Zoë Elmore says, 'I'm amazed what people have written: heart wrenching confessions, their deepest and darkest secrets, prayers of desperation. People have been willing to put down things they'd never share with family or friends and place them in a mailbox on a secluded island.' These writings are an indication of everyone's need to be heard in a safe environment, to get things off their chest without interruption or condemnation.

I have great news - it's possible to experience real freedom without having to visit Bird Island! As



a child of God we have a true Kindred Spirit to whom we can pour out our hearts. His name is Jesus, and you just have to call on Him. He's waiting to listen to your innermost fears and private thoughts. Perhaps you have things you're longing to share, secrets you've kept far too long. Call on the Name of Jesus; pour out your heart

with confident abandon. He's present, and He's listening. When you do that, David said, you get a fresh start; your slate's wiped clean! You're holding nothing back from God, and He has nothing against you. "When I kept it all inside the pressure never let up. Then I let it all out. I said, 'I'll make a clean breast of my failures to God.' Suddenly the pressure was gone - my guilt dissolved, my sin disappeared." (Psalm 32.1-5) This is repentance. This is freedom. This is a fresh start.

Lift Your Vision

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

"We shall become mature people, reaching to the very height of Christ's full stature." (Ephesians 4.13 GNB)

There is a Chinese proverb which goes something like this: "If you reach for the stars and only get as high as the rooftops you will be higher than you were before." Few of us really reach for the stars; we only look up as high as the houses, and probably get no higher than the windows. It's time to raise our vision!

Paul had always had high standards, but he had learned that his unswerving dedication to the Jewish law was not up to the task of making him pleasing to God. He had tried and failed. But now, as a Christian leader and teacher,



he set the standard even higher, he set it as high as anyone could ever imagine. The fullness of Jesus Christ was the only level of Christian maturity Paul would allow. Many disciples, through the Holy Spirit working in them to put their base selves to death, were looking at

that level of maturity. This is not a standard that Christians can attain by dint of spiritual discipline and effort. It is something which God alone, through His Holy Spirit's work, can grant. Humans cannot climb the dizzy heights. It is like a mountain towering above, whose summit you cannot reach. But there is a cable car powered by unseen energy that can lift you to the top. There is a divine power released through Christ's death and resurrection that can defeat all foes, even our self.

Do not be satisfied with the foothills of Christian holiness. Don't aspire to reach the levels of those around you. Look to Jesus, the pinnacle of spiritual stature, and ask his Holy Spirit to create Christ in you, to blot out your failures and to eliminate your weaknesses. Only he can do it, and he will, for God's word tells us it will happen, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (Eph. 4.13 KJV)

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