



NightLight

A NEWSLETTER OF McLEAN MINISTRIES

"take heed....as to a light that shines in a dark place." II Peter 1:19

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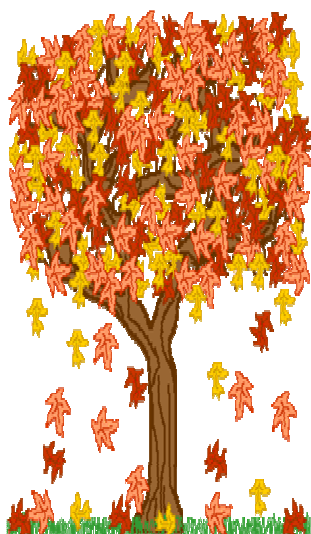
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Dear Friends,



"Good Sabbaths make good Christians..."
An early Puritan saying



Lauren Winner is an Orthodox Jew who has come to know Jesus as her Messiah. She has written a little book called Mudhouse Sabbath, essays on various topics which are worth their weight in gold. Just her few pages on the subject of the Sabbath itself would be worth your investment (as is her essay on grieving.) She says that of all the things she misses about her Orthodox Jewish life it is the Sabbath she misses the most. As a student of the New Testament now, she fully understands and embraces Paul's explanation that the shadows of the previous covenant are fulfilled in the new one and we are not to be held under anyone's judgment concerning things like keeping the Sabbath. She then goes on to explain why she misses a Jewish Sabbath, but I didn't need her to explain. I resonated with her every word when she says, "... but there is something in the Jewish Sabbath that is absent from most Christian

Sunday; a true cessation from the rhythms of work and world, a time wholly set apart, and, perhaps above all, a sense that the point of Shabbat, the orientation of Shabbat, is **toward God**. " (Emphasis mine)

It is God who is missing in so much of what we do in Christian culture! I am not trying to be snide or critical. When a person is crying out for nourishment to avoid starvation, his cry is not a criticism of the kitchen, but just a primal scream for rescue - a desperate expression of felt immediate need. When I 'go to church' I more often than not, leave starving. And I am starving for God. And it is not enough for me to go home to my own private kitchen. This kind of starvation is a corporate thing. See, because I am not merely an individual, but a part of a corporate body, I am only one small tiny cell that is starving. I need the whole body to become as engaged in the longing for the meal as I am. So it is not enough for me to go home and feed myself. No, I

need the whole body to awaken to the hunger and to cry out with me. The corporate keeping of some form of Sabbath principle, no matter how slight, helps feed this longing. Reverent awe before the holiness of God expressed in corporate unified worship instead of the individualized pop culture versions of 'worship' helps sooth the hunger too. But I cannot find it anywhere I go. No, I cannot find Him, only references to or about Him. That we speak of Him in our public gatherings so much in the abstract seems to underscore the absence of His Real Presence.

It was the breaking of the Sabbath which always initiated a sign of Israel's slow incremental departure away from God. Why? Because the keeping of the Sabbath proclaimed by its very nature, that nothing in all of time and space, nothing in all of business and commerce, nothing in all of relationships or society, was more important than God Himself, and keeping the Sabbath was referred to as a day offered unto the Lord. It wasn't kept in order to be fresh and rested for the coming week! That may have been a side effect. But if that is the main purpose, it is not a real Sabbath but merely a day off. And it might give a bit of renewed incentive for the flesh, but it will not be what was intended: the weekly tabernacle pitched in time and space where the Eternal visits for a day, and all worldly vapor is replaced for a set time with the solid invisible real, with us in our earthly home. There we acknowledge to God, ourselves, and to each other that God alone is our life from Whom we draw our very being. Claiming to be no longer 'under the law' of Sabbath has not manifested any superior spiritual Christian culture that I can see. On the contrary, all I

do see is the very opposite: a driven, frantic, worldly minded and exhausted people wondering where the joy is!

So I cried a little as I read Lauren's description of her newly formed "Christian" weekends. She describes it all as being nothing more than the end of seven days with no distinctive time set apart for the holy or the eternal. She is wise to note that we are not commanded by law to keep any certain day. But the fact is, we Christians who claim to be 'free from the law' and have the fullness with no need of the shadow, have managed to lose both, to have neither. We just live the Babylonian lifestyle seven days a week. Lauren has joined a Bible study that meets at 5 p.m. on Sunday and she refuses now to do any real shopping on Sunday. And sometimes she may end up after lunch at the Mudhouse coffee shop where she can sip a latte and read quietly; trying to eek out some small morsel of a Mudhouse Sabbath hoping to there recall at least the faint aroma of what was once her Jewish Sabbath. She states, "Not much, when compared to the dramatic cessations of the Orthodox Sabbaths, but maybe the first arcs of a return to the Sabbath."

On Sundays, our children and grandchildren gather at our home round an ever increasingly crowded table. There is love, laughter, and many layers of conversations. Every level of the developmental English language is activated in full gear from cooing to crying, to toddler messages in tongues known only to God and themselves, or, when they do become more articulate, decrees like "gimme it, I neeeeds it now" then to the more prosaic "I did eat my peas! They are not under the table." Sometimes even grownups get to talk, even to

each other. It is the pinnacle of human closeness. But no matter how thankful I am for every ear shattering, hilarious, warm, and chaotic moment, I long for Something More. I know if we build it He will come. "Lord, gimme it, I neeeeds it now."

In a month or so we will be heading into the so called 'holiday season.' I will watch, as I have for years, the cultural scramble to find the perfect combination of gifts, decorations, food items, and celebrations that will fill that cavernous inner longing for the magical mixture that comes to us from the unseen Real via fellowship with God and loved ones. It will evade most people. They will come to the new year as empty and frustrated and disappointed as they were last year and the years before. For we

have turned a House of Prayer into a den of thieves. But for those weary enough from the Babylonian pandemonium, there is a quiet invitation, offered not just at year's end, but at the end of every single week. "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come in and we will dine together." If you get quiet enough you will be able to hear it, and maybe even respond.

For more on this subject please consider our twelve hour audio study with guest teacher Dwight Pryor called "The Spirit of the Sabbath." I also recommend Lauren's book, Mudhouse Sabbath by Lauren Winner (Paraclete Press) and the book, The Sabbath by Abraham Joshua Heschel.



New Teaching Series

Power to Change

How I see God, how I see me

Deeper revelations of Father God imparted to our heart empower us to put to death our wrong views of God as well as put to death our wrong views of self, thereby freeing us to become true sons and daughters. Recorded live at the Miami FL Conference, June 2011. 10-hour set \$50.00 S&H included.

Some Closing Thoughts...



Current research has suggested that with all our electronic means of communication people are more lonely than ever. That should not surprise anyone. We were not made for simulated humanity. We were made for love: eyes looking back at ours and hearts shining through the eyes, hands holding hands, embraces by arms, kisses, and meals shared. This was one of the purposes of the Sabbath, to keep us connected to the Invisible Real on the very human practical level of home, family, and meals. Knowing that, even if one is single, can help move us in the right direction towards being human. Ask the Lord to help you find ways to begin or improve ways of being more human. It's funny how God keeps turning out to be right over and over, huh!?!



With Love, Clay & Mary



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