



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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Dear Friends,



*...Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid...
for the Lord your God goes with you;
He will never leave you nor forsake you.
(Deuteronomy 31:6)*

*The Lord Himself goes before you and will be with you;
He will never leave you nor forsake you.
Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.
(Deuteronomy 31:8)*

*...I am in my Father, and you are in Me, and I am in you.
(John 14:20)*



Reading an article designed to help motivate us to pursue silence and solitude is a good thing, unless it becomes a useless practice of mere reading. It is like reading the menu but never eating the meal. So let's examine where we are. We briefly delved into the issue of *silence*, then we added *solitude*. If these writings have been able to move us towards some degree of regular practice in which our inner life with God is enjoying an increased awareness, then that is what we were aiming for. We don't want it to become just another newsletter article that gets laid aside with the vague sense that "I've read it. I've got it. Okay, what's next?" We don't want to fall into that category of folks who live in their heads, so to speak. They believe that information received by their intellect is information that has been fully digested enough to elicit change. But what we long for is information that seeps down into our deep heart – the core of us. And this is exactly the place that the practice of silence and solitude reaches: our home within, where we meet with God. This is an **invitation** for us to make a regular time and place for a deeper and continuing relationship with God. It is an **invitation** for us to not only receive His love for us, but to allow that love to change us more and more into His image. We are then strengthened by the Holy Spirit to humbly abandon our wrong views and beliefs as we

we grow closer to our loving Father and Lord Jesus Christ. We come to want what He wants, not what we want. We come to want to participate in what the Lord is blessing, not just asking Him to bless us. It is in silence and solitude with God that we learn to hear His voice.

I want to be careful how I phrase this. We all tend to use terms which are biblically accurate, yet which can become, in themselves, less than helpful. For example, the phrase *we are seeking God*. But He is not lost; we are! And we talk of *pursuing God*. Yet He is not running from us. What about *drawing near to God*? Yet He is always with us and in us; He has never withdrawn from us. The Lord is a very present help, not only in times of trouble, but in all moments. So often we have taken up well-meaning phrases like these, picked up from our church language experience, that can communicate wrong concepts of the true nature of God. The amazing truth is that He never leaves us and He never backs away from us! It is we who allow ourselves to become distracted, and then we end up using phrases like “I’m far from God” or worse, “He is far from me.” No, neither phrase is true. God is never far from you nor you from Him. Sin and evil blind you to His abiding presence. It is your conscious mind that has become so filled with distractions that it becomes full of ever increasing empty, even godless chatter. And a willful turning aside with a heart focus towards Him awakens the awareness that **Christ is in me/us, my/our hope of glory**. It is a glorious restoration – NOT of His Presence, for He never left – but of our conscious awareness of that abiding Presence.

The beauty of all the spiritual disciplines is that they aid us in following Jesus. The holy gifts of silence and solitude help us begin/continue this journey. We come to know that God loves us, longs for us, and is always there waiting for our willful attention to be turned towards Him. It is not, “Oh! I haven’t been with God in a while and I feel so bad. I’m so ashamed when I forget Him.” No. Rather it becomes, “Oh! I’m so happy now that I remember Him! I’m so thankful I can always turn to Him.” Silence is embracing the reality of His Presence that has been patiently waiting. Solitude is not withdrawing from people, but turning **to** Him. Remember that there is nothing essentially wrong with human interaction or self entertainment, per se. We are called to live in community with each other. Yet the disciplines of silence and solitude are the foundation for not only our relationship with God, but also our relationships with each other. It is with Him that we truly learn how to love each other.

We may find that as we begin to address our lack of spiritual focus, we are woefully weak in our new efforts. That is not bad. It just means that beginning a quiet morning turns out to be only a quiet small portion of the morning. (Or whatever part of the day you set aside.) That’s okay. Ten quiet minutes truly focused on Him is a really great START. I promise you, it will increase. You will find that ten minutes become thirty, and your silence grows into a need for solitude, and all the other disciplines crowd in vying for their place in line as contributors to a whole new way of living. Just think of where this is heading...joy along the journey Home, for the glory of God.



Movie Review

Unsung Hero

It is not often that we do movie reviews anymore. Thankfully there are now several films coming out that are worth our time. This is certainly one of those. If I told you it is the biographical story of Rebecca St. James and her family (which includes her brothers who are known to us as *King & Country*), we might miss the point. This film is that true story, but so much more! If the movie was only telling the story of a struggling young Australian couple and their young children going through the impossible tasks of coming to a new country with little means of support, then it would certainly be a story worth your time. But, again, it is so much more! It shows the fruit of godly parenting through the overwhelming setbacks and struggles this family encounters. It is a picture of godly living without being religious or stilted. These are folks that LIVE the gospel day in and day out. This story of their family spiritual heritage shines strong, a truly inspirational and meaningful investment of your time. Be sure and watch the special features. There are even more wonderful surprises to discover!





Closing Thoughts...



We are in the throws of the hustle and bustle of the holidays. Only we can choose to not be carried along on that wave of culture. It is the time of celebration of the Incarnation of the Son of God. It is the time when we remember that Love shown down upon mankind. Will you accept the *invitation*? It is a good time to engage in silence and solitude as we contemplate these incredible truths. Emmanuel. God with us. May your holidays be holy-days, filled with the wonder of God's love, as He became Someone with skin on, the Son of Man, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Merry Christmas!

Clay and Mary



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