

Spiritual Growth Lessons from Christian Ambassadors

Lesson 4, November, 1998

“Putting Our Trust in the Light”

by Sharon K. Griffiee

Dedicated to Chaplain Mick Pugsley, who was murdered in his home on October 18, 1998. Mick dedicated his life in service to Jesus Christ. He ministered to youth in and out of the youth offender system in the state of Colorado. Two teens, known by Mick through his ministry, are accused of the crime. We love you Mick, and we grieve for the youth who have lost a valued witness of Christ's love.

John 12:35-36 (NIV) - Then Jesus told them, “You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light.”

When Jesus told the Jews, “Put your trust in the light while you have it,” He was appealing to them to believe in Him, before He went to the cross and was taken from them. Just as quickly as light can be given, light can also be withdrawn (taken away) when it is refused. Every day our merciful God sends His “messengers of light” into prisons all over the world, with His appeal, “come to the light!”

Matthew 11:28-29 (NIV) - “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me...”

There are prisoners who come to the light, finding peace and rest for their souls, and there are other prisoners who walk away from the light with their life still in turmoil. The decision to follow the light of Christ is the most important decision to be made in this life, and it must be made in time. In time for what? In time to become a child of God. In time to become a light to someone else. If we choose not to come to the light of Christ when it shines on us, we are in danger of having the darkness overtake us.

Do you know what it is like to be in total darkness? When Alan and I were in Australia last month, we went on one of the tours at Jenolan Caves. It was there, inside the darkness of one of the caves, that I started to come to terms with what it means to be “overtaken” by darkness.

Everyone waited in anticipation outside the opening of the cave, while our tour guide went into the cave ahead of us. The first thing he did was turn on a string of lights in the section we were to enter, then he waited for his group to gather inside the lighted pathway. Once inside the lighted area, our guide used a small flashlight to point out the magnificent beauty of the natural formations that occurred over the years. After showing us everything of interest in that section, our tour guide moved farther into the darkness of the cave, turning on another string of lights. Once again, the group moved inside the lighted area, listening intently for the guide to reveal important mysteries about the cave.

Since we put our trust in the light our tour guide provided, even though we walked farther and farther into the cave, we walked without fear. Walking in the light we could see where we were going. People were taking pictures, talking, joking, and generally having a good time.

Then all of a sudden the lights went out! The inside of the cave turned pitch black in an instant. Our tour guide had turned the lights out on purpose to give us an impression of what it feels like to be in complete darkness. Standing perfectly still, I could hear the low gasps of the people standing all around me. No one was moving. We couldn't. We were immersed in “total darkness.”

As I stood there “overtaken” by this eerie blanket of darkness, the thought occurred to me. “What good are my physical eyes, at this point? I've got my eyes wide open, but I still can't see.” All I could see was black! Darkness like this is not even to be found on the darkest of nights. At least when you're standing outside on a dark night, you have the ambient lights from the moon and the

stars to see by. Absorbed in my thoughts, the lights came on as suddenly as they had gone out. It was a blessing to be able to see clearly once again.

Jesus said, "Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you." The light in which He is asking us to put our trust, is God's Word.

***Psalm 119:130 (KJV)** - The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.*

***Psalm 119:105 (KJV)** - Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*

The Word of God is filled with such pure light that even the most simple person can understand its meaning. But understanding isn't an automatic thing. Enlightenment comes *only* if we open our heart to God's Spirit when we study and meditate upon His Word. Any person who will allow God's Word to enter His heart is allowing the very life of God Himself to enter in. Christ's life truly comes into an individual heart when that person's whole being is ruled by love. When we put into practice God's love, it is the most natural thing in the world for us to love our neighbor.

***1 John 2:10 (NIV)** - Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble.*

With God's love ruling our heart, we will value out relationship with our neighbor more than physical things. To do this, our love must never be self-seeking. We seek to reach out and bless others with His love.

I remember the time Alan and I loaned a step-ladder to our Christian neighbor, Mike, so he could paint his house. While he was painting one day, he accidentally broke our ladder. I will never forget Mike's gesture of love. While we were eating dinner one night, Mike came knocking at our door. When we opened the door there he stood with a brand new ladder under his arms. Surprised, we said, "Mike, you didn't have to buy us a new ladder!" His answer was, "Your ladder was in good condition when I borrowed it, that means it should be returned in good condition." One thing we knew for sure, Mike loved us more than mere possessions.

When we compare our neighbor Mike's loving attitude toward giving, with those teenagers who participated in Chaplain Mick Pugsley's death, we understand more of what it means for people to walk in the light or to walk in darkness. Sin has a way of catching up.

***1 John 2:11 (NIV)** - But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.*

The 19 year old teenager who confessed to the murder of Mick Pugsley could be faced with a life sentence in prison. Was his attitude toward the physical things of this world worth it? The life of a righteous man was taken. For what? For a few material possessions - a car, petty cash, some credit cards? "Things!"

Early one morning, during my prayer time, God allowed me to feel His deep sorrow and pain for these teenagers. I can tell you, it grieves the heart of our Heavenly Father when people value things more than the blessings of His Kingdom. Jesus was willing to give them all these "things" if only they had sought His Kingdom and His righteousness first, because their life is of far more value than all the "things" in the world.

***Matthew 6:33 (NIV)** - "...seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."*

As an ambassador for Christ, I am asking all those who have been overtaken by the darkness of sin, to "put your trust in the light while you have it."

His pure light is shining on you right now brothers and sisters. Nothing you have done can stop God's love for you. **Accept His love.** Jesus is faithful and just to forgive you. Repent and find peace and rest for your souls.

***1 John 1:8-9 (NIV)** - If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*