



# Abundant Living Ministries

*Encouraging Christian Living since 1978*

October 2020

I didn't always feel competent, as a parent, through the goo-goo gah-gah stage... with all the baby-talk. But, the older they got, the more I enjoyed talking with our children. Now we're totally enjoying conversation with our 12 grandchildren, ranging in age from six to 16. Just last week, one of them was teaching me to do algebra... the NEW way. "No, Grandpa... that's not how you do it. It's like this!" You know what? I kind of liked it. And I think the "new math approach" made it easier for my grandchild to learn the algebra lesson.

But we want our conversation to go beyond "small talk." Given today's current events and cultural changes, Sharon and I want to be alert to opportunities to talk about Scriptural life concepts. We ask the Lord for wisdom as we remain alert to "teachable moments" in their lives.

Here's a recent example. An after-school conversation a few days ago described a 3<sup>rd</sup>-grade discussion... the difference between *rights* and *responsibilities*. That's a pretty substantive and important concept! One of the first *rights* mentioned was the *right to protest*. And then followed the *right of freedom of speech*.

A lot of curriculum at school provides *teachable moments* for us at home, to further explain how we, in our family, may interpret certain subjects differently **because** we are Christians... disciples of Christ.

In this particular conversation, we had fun with the *freedom of speech* idea. The grandchild seemed to like the idea of their right to *freedom of speech*. The grandchild also readily recognized they have a *responsibility* to obey their parent. So I asked, "What if several children are ALL wanting to talk (freedom of speech) at the same time? Now, imagine that the parent focuses on ONE of the children and instructs all the others to be silent." There immediately results a tension between the *right* to talk and the *responsibility* to obey the parent. Even in very simple daily matters, this can get a little complicated.

And this subject of "**my rights**" goes far beyond a parent instructing a child to "wait quietly and not interrupt their brother." Most frequently, when we use the words "it is my **right**," we are already recognizing the tension. We already recognize that **me** exercising **my** "right" will be viewed as inconvenient, uncomfortable, or even *wrong* by somebody else. At such times... as a follower of Christ... is my response significantly different than the response of a person who does *not* know Christ?

Do texts such as the following provide guidance on this matter?

***Be tenderly affectioned one to another; in honor preferring one another; Romans 12:10 (ASV)***

***"All things are lawful," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful," but not all things build up. Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor. 1 Corinthians 10:23-24 (ESV)***

***To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded? 1 Corinthians 6:7 (ESV)***

***You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."***

***But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil.***

***But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.***

***And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.***

***And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.***

***Give to the one who begs from you, and***

***do not refuse the one who would borrow from you. Matthew 5:38-42 (ESV)***

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*For you were called to freedom, brothers.  
Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh,  
but through love serve one another. Galatians 5:13 (ESV)*

*But I have made no use of any of these rights,  
nor am I writing these things to secure any such provision. 1 Corinthians 9:15 (ESV)*

In writing this letter, I remembered a book that impacted me when I was in Bible College, titled *Have We No Right*, by Mabel Williamson, a former missionary to China. Yup... I still had the book. Written over 60 years ago, I am amazed at how much of the book could have been written during our current times. Interesting chapter titles include:

- ✿ The Right to Live With the People of My Choice
- ✿ The Right to My Own Time
- ✿ The Right to the Ordinary Safeguards of Good Health
- ✿ The Right to Feel Superior
- ✿ The Right to Run Things

Missionary Mabel concluded with the chapter, **He** (meaning Jesus) **Had No Rights**. She mentions that Jesus had no right to a soft bed and a well-laid table; no right to shrink away from filth and sin, to pull His garments closer around Him and turn aside to walk in cleaner paths; no right to be understood and appreciated.

I think I say the same thing just a little differently than author Mabel. I'm inclined to say that JESUS... the GOD-MAN truly DID have right to all that is good and pleasant. But, **He considered it nothing to give it all up... assuming the role of a servant.** (See Phillipians 2:1-9)

Jesus, who truly *deserved* all that is good... gave up His rights. Meanwhile, we who do not deserve the good... tend to grasp, struggle and fight for what we consider our rights.

Jesus endured shame, spitting, and blows. Which reminds me of a text I'll reference in closing this letter. It is from 1 Peter 2. You will want to read the entire chapter but I'll cite a few very-pertinent statements, beginning with verse 19.

*For it is commendable if someone bears up under the **pain of unjust suffering**  
because they are conscious of God.*

*But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it?  
But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.*

***To this you were called,** because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example,  
that you should follow in his steps.*

*He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.*

*When they hurled their insults at Him, **He did not retaliate;** when He suffered, **He made no threats.**  
**Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly.** (NIV)*

Seriously? As a follower of Christ, I am "**called**" to the "**pain of unjust suffering?**" Yes. I am. Such a calling to suffer is definitely a counter-cultural attitude which we Christians can model. I simply "entrust myself to HIM who judges justly?" How very different from mankind's focus on justice, fairness, equality, and demanding that **you** respect **MY** boundaries.

May we be known by the trait JESUS prescribed in John 13:34, 35, **A new command I give you: 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.** (PHILLIPS)

Be blessed... and Be a Blessing!

John (for Sharon and the rest here at ALM)





## Question:

I am a Christian and I say that I believe the Bible is God's Word. But to be honest, I've never read all of it and I don't think I understand much of what I do read. Any suggestions for sparking a greater interest in Scripture?

## Response:

The Bible is, in fact, God's written communication with mankind. When an individual desires to draw closer to God, they will inevitably gravitate to the Bible. It is also true that those who purpose to delve into the Bible, are likely to experience an ever-deepening desire for close relationship with God.

Consider the following excerpt from the writings of Watchman Nee, a Chinese Christian leader who was imprisoned for his faith in 1952, and died 20 years later while in confinement...

*"We cannot too highly value and appreciate heart-hunger for the Word. It is the Spirit of Truth. We may have been born again without knowing much of the Bible, but we certainly are not going to grow to any extent apart from a careful and persistent study of the Word of God. Yes, the maturing believer is a Spirit-dependent student of the Scriptures, 'whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature.' (2 Peter 1:4 KJV)*

*"Christian progress is not attaining to some abstract standard, or of pressing through to some far-off goal. It is wholly a question of seeing God's standard in God's Word. You advance spiritually by finding out what you really are (in Christ), not by trying to become what you hope to be. That goal you will never reach, however earnestly you may strive.*

*"It is when you see you are dead unto sin that you die to it (daily); it is when you see you are risen that you arise; it is when you see you are a 'new creature' in Him that you (progressively) grow. Seeing the accomplished fact in the Word determines the pathway to the realizing of that fact. The end is reached by seeing, not by desiring or working. The only possibility of spiritual progress lies in our discover-*

*ing the truth as God sees it; the truth concerning Christ, the truth concerning ourselves in Christ."*

It is always a good idea to open God's book and start reading whether you feel like it or not... you may soon find your love for both your Savior and His Word expanding.

Try reading a different translation. Familiar texts may take on new meaning, when worded a little differently. Many of us grew up on the King James Version, which is great (consider watching the movie, *The King James Version* for a new appreciation of this time-honored translation). But there are other excellent translations: The New American Standard Version, The NIV, The English Standard Version, The New King James Version. For a text that flows easily in modern language, try The New Living Translation.

You might enjoy a *chronological* reading plan, which guides you in reading through the Bible, as the events happened chronologically. This really helps the reader feel more connected with the Biblical events and characters. Such plans can be found on-line.

Maybe you are more of an auditory learner... in which case, listening to an audio version of Scripture might be just what you want. First thing in the morning; last thing at night; while driving; whenever you have a little break in your schedule... even a few minutes of Scripture is better than none.



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Reading out loud can also make God's Word seem more alive and relevant. There is something powerful about hearing one's own voice speaking Truth. You may find you retain the content better, simply due to having spoken it.

Invite a friend or family member to accept a Bible-reading challenge. Accountability is a great help for keeping readers motivated and up-to-date with their reading.

There is no magic wand for producing a love for God's Word. However, from personal experience, I can tell you that the more I read the Bible, the more I come to love it and the more deeply I love its Author. There is a consistency and continuity in the Scriptures that is impossible to appreciate when we read only occasionally or hop around haphazardly from text to text.

So, pick up a copy and start reading, asking God to reveal Himself to you in a fresh way through the pages you hold in your hand. You will find it to be the most life-giving volume you possess!

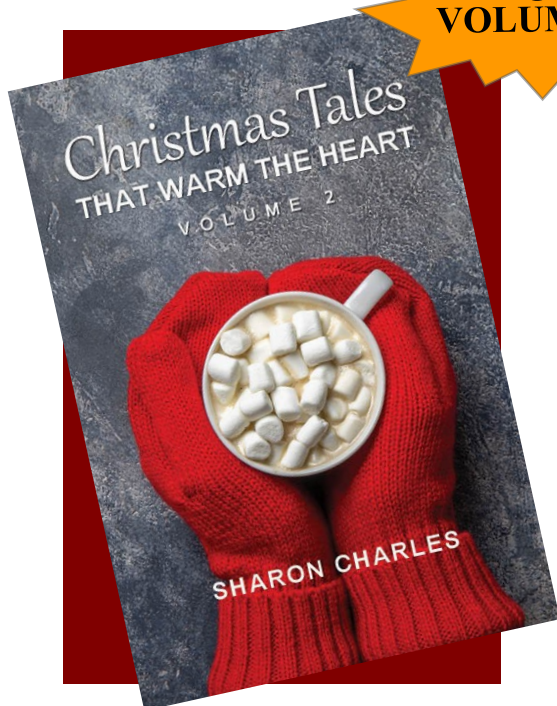
When it comes to the Holy Scriptures, may each of us be able to echo these words of John Wesley...

*"I want to know one thing, the way to heaven: how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach the way; for this very end he came from heaven. He has written it down in a book! Oh, give me that book! At any price, give me the book of God! I have it; here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be: 'a man of one book.'"*

Written by  
Sharon Charles



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