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## Simple is the way

by Rhonda Ison

"I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me; I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful. The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. For thou has delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living." Psalm 116:1-9

I raised my children in the late 70's and early 80's and times were hard. I was a single mom most of the time, and it seemed like every day was a struggle to survive. We lived a simple life; it was hard at times, but we were happy. One year I did not have enough money for a Christmas tree. I had volunteered in my daughter's class at school, and her teacher was cleaning the classroom, tossing away lots of construction paper and craft supplies, so I asked to take them home. I taped two big sheets of card stock together and drew a Christmas tree and hung it on the wall of our living room. That Friday night, I remember we had tomato soup and hot dogs for dinner; and after dinner I hauled out all the construction paper, tape, glitter, sequins and buttons and whatever else I could find and we all sat at the kitchen table (with a big bowl of popcorn and hot chocolate, of course) and made decorations for our "paper" Christmas tree. I had some Christmas music playing and we laughed and stayed up late decorating our tree. My children are now in their 20's and 30's, and whenever I ask them about their favorite Christmas, they all talk about that year we made our own tree! Simple memories.

My daughter took dance lessons, and one summer she gathered all the neighborhood kids together and gave them free dance lessons. She worked very hard with these children. The end of summer we prepared for a recital. We had each child bring an old used white t-shirt and we tie-dyed them

## Darkness or light

By Al Wezeman

Most of us would choose light over darkness if we were given a choice. In the Gospel of John, Jesus is giving us an option. Jesus says in John 8:12, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." We all know that Jesus came from Heaven to bring salvation (light) to the world. The star of Bethlehem was a symbol of that light. The angels spoke to the shepherds about that light. Now Jesus is grown up and preaching the Kingdom of God. The words that Jesus preached are found in the four Gospels of the Holy Bible's New Testament. When we follow Jesus, we are saying we believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord and desire to follow all His teachings. This requires diligent study of the Holy Bible, and daily dedication to wanting to obey and do all that Jesus says. Jesus said in Luke 9:23, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." Verses 24 to 26 of Luke 9 speak of the consequences of not following Jesus. With Jesus we are always in the light, now and forever. Without Jesus, we are always in the darkness, now and forever.

This may sound like an impossible task, but Jesus knows our every situation and weaknesses. Jesus went back to be with His Father and has "all authority in Heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18), but He sent the Holy Spirit to live in us to teach and strengthen us.

Jesus promised to be with us always. That promise encourages us to follow Jesus. 1 Peter 2:21 says, "To this you were called because Christ suffered for you leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps." Every day we stand up for Jesus to obey His commands. Every day we stand against the works of darkness, we stand up for the right.

The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 15:5, "May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus." Again, we get the sense that Jesus is always with us, helping us in our time of need as we trust in Him. We do not have to be afraid of the darkness when we follow Jesus because we will always be in the light as He promised. Yes, we will suffer as we take up our cross daily, but we follow the One who has all control and authority. We believe in faith and trust and so have confidence in Him.

Again, we read from Romans 15:4, "For everything that was written in the past (Old Testament) was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Romans 15:13)

As you follow and serve Jesus, this is what He is telling you: "Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me." What more can we ask for? •

for costumes. We made our own invitations and asked the parents of the dance students to bring their own lawn chairs, and after the sun went down, we set up the driveway for the performance. We taped an old sheet to the garage door to set the stage. The neighborhood children had a blast and the parents were thrilled watching their children perform. Cameras were flashing and one parent even had a video camera. Even the older neighbors who didn't have any children at home came to watch. A couple of neighbors donated cookies and we had lemonade. The recital was a success. It kept the children occupied all summer, too. I had tears in my eyes when the parents presented my daughter with a gift certificate for all her efforts. It really helped out with getting new school clothes. Simple memories.

There was time when things were so bad we thought we would lose our home. I got out my aunt's old linen tablecloth — borrowed my sister's fine china — brought out the glass water goblets and cloth napkins I had purchased at a garage sale, and had candles on the table. I don't remember what we ate for dinner...it was probably tuna sandwiches, but I do remember that I tried my best to tell my children that although we were poor (without money) we were rich with the Lord's love and tender mercies. The kids were thrilled with the candlelight dinner (no matter what the food was) and we spent a lovely dinner talking and praying and reading scriptures together. We did not lose our home. Simple memories.

My children camped out every Friday night...all year long. Every Friday night, the kids would take blankets, sheets and towels, and make tents in our living room. I always limited the TV to two hours a night (our TV was NEVER on in the daytime — especially before the kids went to school) but on Friday nights they could watch movies until 11 p.m.! The only rule was that the living room had to be spotless by noon on Saturday.

On long, grey, cold February days, we would have picnics in the basement. The kids would go all through the house, looking for things that resembled summer...plants, beach balls, etc. and we would eat bologna sandwiches and chips on a blanket on the basement floor with the Beach Boys' cassette playing in the background. We would tack a sheet to the walls and play volleyball. Those "winter" picnics sure helped keep the depression of winter away. I was so touched the other day when I went to my daughter's house and her little two-year old called out to me..."Grandma...come have a picnic with us!" Tears stung my eyes as I walked into the kitchen and there they sat on the floor on a blanket eating peanut butter sandwiches and drinking lemonade! Sweet, simple memories.

Dear friends, I share these precious memories with you because even though it is many years after I have raised my children, times are still tough. Many people are unemployed and struggling. It is my prayer that you will look around you and use the resources that you have (your family) and make a little happiness...a little joy...a little fun even during your darkest days. Happiness is a choice! We can choose to be happy even in times of sorrow. The Lord is gracious and merciful and He will hear your voice and supplications. He will deliver you. He will preserve your sweet, simple memories! My home is quiet now and sometimes lonely, but my sweet, simple memories fill the hallways of my heart with joy and peace, laughter and comfort. He delivers me! The winters of our lives are sometimes long and hard. Maybe it's time to forget it all and just go camping or on a picnic. Camp Grandma's House always has openings! •

## The result of sin

By Walter Soderstrom

In the last issue, I wrote about how King David conspired with his military leader (Joab) to have Uriah, the Hittite, killed, so that he could have Bathsheba (Uriah's wife) for himself. After the child conceived from the adulterous relationship was born, David was approached by the prophet Nathan, who was sent by the Lord. When Nathan used a parable to illustrate David's sin, David, thinking that it was an actual occurrence, flew into a rage, saying that the rich man in Nathan's story should surely die, and what he had taken from the poor man should be restored fourfold (II Samuel 12:1-6).

I am sure that David was stunned when Nathan replied, "Thou art the man." Is this not like the person referred to or addressed in Matthew 7:1-5 where Jesus said, "You hypocrite, first cast the beam out of your own eye, then you can see clearly to cast out the mote (a very small particle or speck) from someone else's eye."?

What is extremely significant is that, even though the Lord, in mercy, did not order David to be killed (which was the prescribed penalty for adultery as seen in Deuteronomy 22:22, which says, "If a man be found lying with a woman married to a husband, then both of them shall die"), there were very serious consequences in store for David. Sooner or later, sin always produces negative consequences.

In future issues, I hope to show the manifestation of the things that Nathan, the prophet, warned would come. In Samuel 12:10, Nathan, speaking the words of the Lord, said that the sword would never depart from David's house, or descendants, and that because of what David had done with Uriah's wife, that the Lord would cause those from David's own household to rise up against him, and others would take his wives from him, and lie intimately with them with public knowledge of it. He also told that the illegitimate child born to David and Bathsheba would die. •