

Challenge

April 2004

PRAYER LETTER OF CHALLENGE LITERATURE FELLOWSHIP (AUST.) INC.

Have you ever wondered if you would come to the place in your life where you have enough possessions in your life? Is their a cut off mark where you reach a goal of obtaining certain things like a car or a house of a certain standard, or updating your wardrobe, or acquiring that new sound system for your home or your car? Then there is that diet you want to go on because you feel it will make you more acceptable to the opposite sex, or it will boost your self esteem. Is their a point that one reaches where we can say that we are satisfied? The truthful answer is that in and of ourselves we will never have enough. If only I can get that job promotion I know I will be happier or if I can get that pay rise I can live the sort of lifestyle that will give me happiness.

When you don't have Jesus Christ in your life as your shepherd then you find yourself on the treadmill of want. We find ourselves drinking from the water of this world that simply does not satisfy. Jesus spoke directly to this issue in John 4 when he met up with a Samaritan woman at a well at midday. "Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." John 4: verse 10

The idea of living water was something right out of left field for this needy woman, and she was curious to know if she could have this water because it would deliver her from the daily task of getting water and having to lug it back to her house in the heat of the day. Jesus picks up on her interest and says in verses 13 and 14, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

What Jesus was saying was that the water of this world will never satisfy. All the possessions that you can muster, all the extreme activities you can do, and all the job promotions that you can achieve will never give lasting satisfaction and happiness. In Psalm 23 David is saying the same thing, and that what is needed is a relationship with Jehovah God as our shepherd.

The reality is that if you do not have Jesus as your shepherd you will want on a continuous basis, simply because we are unable to enjoy the things that we acquire. If we look to things for satisfaction then we are setting ourselves up for disappointment. Things get old, cars get scratched, clothes get torn and we find expectations are not met. What we have to realise is that our relationship with God is far greater, far more important than what we have in terms of possessions.

If we know Jesus as our shepherd then we will realise that what we acquire in this life is temporary, and to invest a lifetime in accruing something that we cannot take with us is not only sad, but foolish. What is important is that we recognize that what we have is not our own, but a gift from God. Unfortunately many people, including Christians, fall into the trap of thinking what they have, is what makes them as a person. What we must see is that if Jesus is number one in our lives then we don't have to worry about what we have or don't have because we shall not want for anything. What we must do is make our relationship with Jesus our number one priority, not the acquisition of possessions or position.

We need to learn from Paul when he said in the book of Philippians 4: 11-12; "Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content; I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." In Max Lucado's book *Travelling Light* he shares this story.

Doug McKnight at the age of 32 was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis. Over the next 16 years it would cost him his career, his mobility, and eventually his life. Because of MS, he couldn't feed himself or walk; he battled depression and fear. But through it all, Doug never lost his sense of gratitude. Evidence of this was seen in his prayer list. Friends in his congregation asked him to compile a list of requests so they could pray for him.

His response included 18 blessings for which to be grateful and then 6 concerns for which to be prayerful. His blessings outweighed his concerns three to one because Doug McKnight had learned to be content despite his obvious difficulties.

Again Lucado shares about a leper on the island of Tobago. A short-term missionary met her on a mission trip. On the final day, he was leading worship in a leper colony. He asked if anyone had a favourite song. When he did, a woman turned around, and he saw the most disfigured face he had ever seen. She had no ears, nose or lips. She raised a fingerless hand and asked, "Could we sing 'Count your Many Blessings'?"

(Please turn over)

The missionary started the song but couldn't finish. Someone later commented that he would not be able to sing that song again. The missionary responded by saying; "No I will sing it again, just not in the same way." When you are focused on your situation or on your things you will always be characterised by wanting, because your priorities are wrong. Knowing Jesus in a daily growing love relationship enables us to be content. In fact the closer we get to God the more we realise that we don't need all the things that we thought were so important after all. Life can become so much simpler because we are not driven trying to acquire things that we don't need, and can so often become a distraction to our walk with God. The fact that we shall not want has as much to do with the realisation that our relationship with God takes away false needs or wants, as much as it has to do with God meeting our genuine needs.



— Carl Carmody, Editor of Challenge

Praise

1. We praise the Lord for the wonderful opportunity Carl and Carolyn Carmody had to visit the USA on behalf of Challenge and for the generosity shown to them by the folk at Liberty Heights Baptist Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. They attended a Global Missions Celebration where the church pledged to support 20 missions throughout the world, Challenge being one of them.
2. Praise the Lord for the continuing production of the newspapers for Australia, New Zealand and southern Africa. They are being joyfully received especially in Africa and many people in the prisons have committed their lives to Jesus Christ, so much so that the follow up material is being stretched to the limit.
3. Praise the Lord for the folk who are giving generously so that the above work can continue. It is an ongoing need and we are very thankful to the Lord and His people.
4. Praise the Lord for the interest shown in the front-page article of the March edition regarding the movie "The Passion of the Christ."

Prayer

1. The heat of the summer months has really taken its toll and our old second hand air conditioner has given up. Please pray with us for finances to cover the cost of installing a new system.
2. Pray for wisdom for all of our writers as they prepare articles for each edition of the Challenge. We do endeavour to have a paper which is relevant to the community at large, with the good news which is so needed today in Australia, New Zealand, Africa and in fact all over the world.
3. Please pray for Carl and Carolyn as they settle back into the routine here, especially after the very long journey, over 30 hours each way. Pray too for Carolyn as she organises the Impact Africa short-term mission trip for this year.
4. Please pray for some key people to help us promote the paper in Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales.
5. We are always in need of testimonies. Pray that the Lord will prompt folk to be willing to share their testimony of how they became Christians with us for the paper.



*Send your testimony to **Challenge** – Your conversion to Jesus Christ is a miracle, and is a wonderful means of witnessing to a lost world – Ring or write to Challenge for a testimony outline sheet.*

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