

LINKing

Countryside near Lismore, Northern New South Wales



FIRST THINGS FIRST

by Margaret Carver

Reading from *Matthew 6:19-34*

From His teaching on what we call the *Sermon on the Mount*, Jesus places before us the decision to choose **proper priorities** for this life. He teaches us about *two masters*; then *how to establish our priorities*; and then the key to success: *Trusting God*.



1. Two Masters Matt 6:24

This verse can be read as *no man can be a slave to two owners*. In the ancient world, the slave had absolutely no rights of his own. Every moment belonged to his owner. A priority for our life is to realise our relationship to God is to be viewed as the Lord being all important in our lives. There is no 'time off' from being a Christian, there is no 'off duty'! We are not our own, but bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). A priority to choose then is to ask "what would the Lord want me to do"?

The last part of verse 24 talks of Mammon. This word means "wealth or riches". If wealth is our master then it will enslave the heart, the mind, and the will and we cannot serve both the Lord and the desire for wealth. However Jesus is **not** saying we must choose either God or wealth. But in our lives we must choose to place God before all else. The man who tries to serve God and also serve the demands in material goods, will have no success. While trying to serve mammon his conscience bothers him and the result is misery. Matt 6:21 *For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

2. Establish priorities. Matt 6:33

Our three main aspects of life are listed from verses 31-32: food, drink and clothing. Jesus did not say they were **not** necessary to life. He is pointing out priorities. If we put Him first in our lives He promises to supply these. He is able to supply for the sparrow and for the lilies. How much more so, those who voluntarily follow Him. Even King David knew the secret: *Pss 37:25*

3. Trust God Matt 6:25-34

We must understand what Jesus is forbidding and what He is wanting. He is forbidding worry and wanting us to trust. *Take no thought for tomorrow* can be worded *Do not worry anxiously*

about life. He is not suggesting an irresponsible, reckless, thoughtless attitude to life. Jesus expects us to take a responsible attitude towards our family and obligations on a day to day level. But the key to His lesson is, that we can trust God to provide these necessities. If we put God's will and His righteousness first in our lives, He promises to take care of our everyday needs. What a testimony it is to the world when a Christian dares to put this into practice.

In verse 26, Jesus gives the example of the birds. They make no attempt to pile up goods for an unforeseen future. Jesus is not saying the birds do not work, for the average sparrow works very hard. But He is saying they do not worry.

Jesus then gives a second example of the flowers. These scarlet poppies bloom on the hillside but they were used in clay ovens to raise the temperature of the fire quickly. The flowers had but one day of life, yet God clothes them with a beauty beyond mans ability. If God gives care to a short lived flower, how much more will He care for man - the crown of His creation!

Jesus is telling us that worry is something the unbeliever does. Worry can be damaging to health; it wears out the mind and body, affects a man's judgment and it lessens his powers of decision.

Jesus gives us the answer: *Seek first the kingdom of God*. That means each of us need to do the will of God in our lives and in so doing concentrating on and serving the Lord with heart, mind and soul, He promises to add all these things to us.

It is right to plan for the future and even save for the future (2 Corinthians 12:14; 1 Tim 5:8). But it is a sin to worry about the future and allow tomorrow to rob today of its blessings.

We refuse to learn the lessons of life itself yet we are still alive today. If some one told us all we have to go through to come to this point, we would say "it is impossible." The lesson of life is that somehow we have been able to bear the unbearable and pass the breaking point. The lesson of life is that *worry* is unnecessary.

Jesus then tells us worry can be defeated when we *live one day at a time* (verse 34). We should handle the demands of each day as it comes, without worrying about the unknown future and things which may never happen.

Welcome!

I know most of you will think I had given up sending these letters! I am very sorry for such a delay. Many people have written or called me and told me they missed receiving this newsletter. So I will do my best to keep up with sending one out. Perhaps it will be bi-monthly as I cannot keep up with the demands of other work I have. The past 6 months have been busy ones with a lot of travel. I am working hard to produce Sunday School material for Papua New Guinea, as well as putting some of my studies into booklets. There is a great need for printed materials in some of the island nations. I do trust these newsletters will continue to encourage you. I know many of you are far from a church or fellowship. That was one of my main thoughts in starting this newsletter.

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Heart symbol 's and Hands

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AUSTRALIA

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The Valley of Baca (*weeping*)

By Audrene Scism

“Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also fills the pools” Psalm 86:6

This scripture has long intrigued me. It has a beautiful ring to it; a truth almost hidden. I wonder what the valley of Baca looked like? Was it beautiful, green and lush or was it barren and lonely? Was it an actual place or was it symbolic as the valley of the shadow of death in Psalm 23? Can you picture it in your mind? For whatever reason, this valley is a place of weeping. It is a place of sorrow. Perhaps the traveller has been on the mountain top and has seen the grandeur of the peaks in all their glory. He has been able to breathe the fresh mountain air. Everything is beautiful. It seems his heart would almost touch the sky. Then as he descends the hillside to the valley, he finds it is a valley of weeping. Circumstances have changed. He doesn't see the clear view or feel the thrill of the mountain top. He is closed in, but instead of it being a difficult trial, as indeed it may be, he turns it into a blessing by making those tears a well, a spring of strength, a place in the valley where travellers can be sustained. But it didn't just happen. He had to make the tears a well of strength. He had to decide to do that, but he was able to do it in the strength of the Lord.

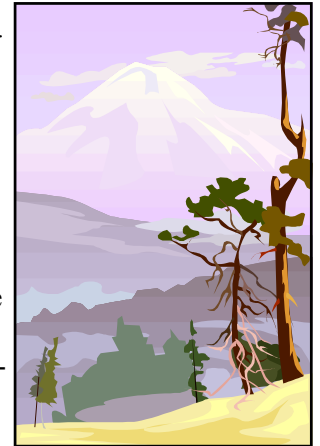
The preceding scripture in verse 5 says *“Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee, whose heart are the ways of them”*. In another version it reads *“In whose heart are the highways to Zion Passing through the valley of weeping they make it a place of springs. Yes, the early rain covereth it with blessings”* Can you picture it now? A valley, yes, but in the midst is a well, a spring of life-giving water. The early rains also fall in the valley and produce a lush green harvest of many fruits.

God can work in any circumstance if we will let Him and if we decide to use the valley for His glory. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12:10 *“When I am weak, then am I strong”*. In the roll call of the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11:34 there are listed those who out of weakness were made strong. There are many examples in the Bible. Calvary was a place of weeping. After Jesus had ascended the Mount of Transfiguration where His disciples saw Him in all His wonder and glory, He went through Gethsemane and then Calvary. But look what is left in its place – a wonderful well springing up into everlasting life!

But just how does one go about making a well in the valley of weeping? The traveller must dig down in his heart. He must make a place for the well. He has to be willing. He calls on the Master Builder to help him because he depends on Him. The Master Builder completes the work and the well is ready to be filled with strength and beauty that only God can give. The traveller passes on through the valley. Perhaps he never went that way again, but the valley will never be the same. He has left in the valley a well of life, a spring by which others can be helped and strengthened. After he leaves the valley, does he go into a meadow or a field or over another mountain? He does go from strength to strength and some day he will pass on those highways to Zion.

“For the Lord God is a sun and a shield; the Lord will give grace and glory: No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusts in Thee” Psalms 84:10-12

I have had this article for many years. It was sent to me by our former Foreign Missions director's first wife, Sister Audrene Scism. Sister Scism was a very sweet person. We once stayed in their home and it was a lovely, gracious home. Many of you will know that Sister Scism died of cancer in October 1989 at age 54.



Recipe

My sister in law gave me this slice recipe.

Sour Cream and Apple Slice

You need:

1 packet of Vanilla Cake mix

4 tablespoons of butter

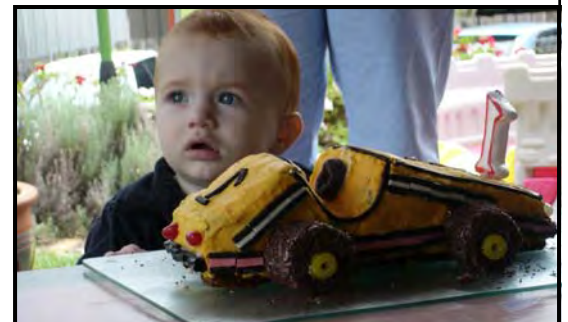
1 small carton of sour cream

1 cup of shredded coconut

1 tin of apples (mash the apples if they are sliced)

Combine the cake mix, melted butter and coconut together. Press into a shallow cake pan (such as a slice or lamington tin) and cook for 10 mins in a moderate oven. Then spread the apple on top. Stir the sour cream and spread it over the apples and sprinkle with cinnamon and then cook a further 15-20 mins.

This makes a good dessert with ice cream or custard. But it can equally be eaten as a slice. It should be kept in the refrigerator .



Our youngest grandson, Timothy Carver had his first birthday in March. Soon after this photo was taken the cake was demolished! Our son, Richard jnr., made the cake! He and his sister are good at making children's birthday cakes! When they were young we always tried to make a fancy cake for them. We lived in Papua New Guinea at the time so we were inventive!