

What Lies Beneath

by Sam Dilbeck

On 24 March 2015, Andreas Lubitz took control of Germanwings Flight 9525 and crashed the Airbus A320 into the side of a mountain in French Alps. Killed were 124 passengers and six crew members. Investigations into this catastrophe have revealed that Lubitz, a co-pilot on the flight, had a history severe depression and suicidal tendencies – characteristics that might have kept him out of the cockpit. So why didn't it? We may never know the full story, but it seems to have been a combination of privacy laws and inattention from the industry, as well as a certain level of secrecy from the pilot himself (though he did reveal some of his history to his employers).

This tragic event causes me to wonder how many children of God are carrying with them secrets of deep spiritual struggle that few, if any, know about. How many fellow-Christians sit in the same worship assembly with me week after week battling weaknesses, temptations, and sins that will eventually cost them their souls if they don't get help? How many are on a flight path to spiritual death because of secrecy and/or inattention?

What's more, what can be done about it? May I offer two suggestions?

We need to be more open with each other. James wrote of confessing our sins to each other and praying for each other that we might find healing (James 5:16). How many of us really confess our sins to others? I understand that this practice has been abused in the past and that not every private transgression needs to be brought publicly before the church. But could we not find a Christian in whom we have the highest confidence and trust to whom

we could open up about our personal struggles, weaknesses, and sins? Could we not benefit not only from that person's sympathetic ear but from his/her diligent prayers? Many of our relationships in the body of Christ are far too superficial and we are hurting ourselves by not deepening them.

We need to be more proactive in our encouragement of each other. Our periods of worship and Bible study on Sundays and Wednesdays are wonderful opportunities not only to express our praise to God and deepen our knowledge of him, but they offer unique occasions to inspire and encourage each other to deeper faith. But are those two times each week enough? Hebrews 3:13 reads, "But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." There is an urgency in those words. The original recipients of Hebrews were struggling to stay faithful to their commitment to Jesus. They were in desperate need of the ability to persevere through those hard times (Heb. 10:36). The remedy offered by the inspired writer included daily encouragement. Are we daily encouragers of others? With so many means of easy communication at our disposal (email, phones, social media), could we not be more encouraging to each other?

Each individual soul is more valuable than the entire accumulated wealth of the world (Mark 8:36-37). Does my level of concern for myself and others day after day show that I really believe that? Or am I too consumed with lesser things? Perhaps being more diligent to "consider how to stir up one another to love and good works" (Heb. 10:24) could "save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins" (James 5:20).

When God Says “No”

by Clint Brown

One of the greatest blessings of Christianity is the privilege of prayer. Jesus clearly taught his disciples to pray (Lk. 11:1). He stressed the importance of persistence in prayer (Lk. 18:1-8). And he promised his disciples that they would have the petitions they asked of God as long as they prayed in his name (Jn. 16:23). Christians throughout the centuries have believed and taken courage in these and many other promises of God.

It seems however that because we believe these promises, it is even harder to accept the times when God says, “No.” It’s not that we refuse to believe his promises of prayer when he says no. After all, contrary to some people’s ideas, answered prayer is not a proof of God’s faithfulness nor a proof of His existence. Christians don’t believe in God because he answers our prayers, we believe our prayers are answered because we believe he’s there and that he hears our prayers as his word teaches. This perhaps is what makes “unanswered” prayers so difficult to accept. We know what we want, and when God refuses to grant our request we believe that God is essentially telling us that we don’t need what it is we are wanting. And yet, because of the apostle Paul’s discussion of this subject, we believe God is actually granting us something far better!

“And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me... Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And he said to me, ‘my grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I rather take pleasure in my infirmities... for when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

In Paul’s experience there is first an instinctive desire to plead with God concerning the affliction. Then there is an experience of God’s strength to endure. Finally, there is the peace of abiding in Christ, and Christ abiding in him—an acceptance of God’s will and a delayed gratification which is a much greater blessing than the one asked for. Notice this progression in Paul’s story of his “thorn in the flesh.”

“Concerning this thing, I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me.” There is certainly nothing wrong with praying that God would lift our burdens. The Bible says this is a natural and acceptable response to pain (Phil. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:6-7). The important work of faith, however, is the willingness to accept God’s will in the matter (James 4:15). A child of God on his knees is a child showing trust in his heavenly Father. Just as we shouldn’t expect our earthly fathers to give us our every request, we understand that our heavenly Father will give us only good things. “If you (earthly fathers) know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!” (Mt. 7:11).

Although our Father already knows what we need, he still instructs us to ask anyway (Mt. 6:11, 32). Perhaps we’re told to pray anyway because we need to clearly understand what it is we are asking for, so that when we get what God gives we can clearly see that it is better! Often we don’t ask for that which is best for us. Often we don’t ask for what is best for the kingdom. We should be thankful that God sees the end from the beginning and is able to tailor his answer for the profit of all.

And he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you.” The Lord answered Paul’s prayer. But the answer was “No.” The request was to remove the painful infirmity. The answer was something better—an experience of God’s grace that could come in no other way but in the midst of a painful infirmity. In this way God’s grace is magnified. Paul’s infirmity goes from being a debilitating nuisance to an avenue of glorious blessing.

The more Paul recognized his inability to overcome the thorn, the more he saw Jesus’ readiness to work his power in him. For Paul, it was time to break all ties with pride and self-will and instead let God turn his trial into triumph—for God’s strength is made perfect in our weakness. We think that prayer is asking God to do our will, but Paul learned that our prayer is an avenue for God to accomplish his will through us. Blessed is the man who understands the significance of this, and who willingly accepts it.

“Therefore, most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” Paul’s prayers which seemed for a while unanswered, were really answered by the best of all responses. No prayer can be considered unanswered if it denies what we want in order to give us what we need.

From Paul’s experience we can be thankful for several things. We can thank God for “unanswered” prayer (when God says “no”). We can thank God for the waiting periods that teach us patience in the face of despair. We can thank God that he knows what is best for us all and for the progress of his church. We can thank God that he gives us the promises of prayer and we can take advantage of those promises with a better understanding of how God chooses to answer them. We can pray once and thank God a thousand times.

I grieve for those who seek to determine God’s presence by whether or not he answers prayers affirmatively. I grieve for those whose trust in God is based on his positive response to their self-centered, and often self-destructive, requests. A better route to confidence is in trusting his gracious promises to supply what we actually need, and not what we think we need! Paul couldn’t have the confidence that Christ’s power rested upon him without an unwavering confidence in the what the Lord said about His answer to prayer. We know that God has said he will answer our prayers. We know that God has said we will have the things we ask of him. Now we know that some of the things we receive are far more valuable than what we thought we needed.

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Mission Works

Westhill Works

Benevolence Program

Local Works

Cherokee Children's Home - www.chc4kids.org
House to House, Heart to Heart
In Search of the Lord's Way
Preaching Students - Southwest School of Bible Studies
The Truth in Love - www.ttil.tv
WVBS Online School - school.wvbs.org

Prison Works

La Poynor Prison Ministry - Steve & Carrie Handley

Foreign Works

New Zealand Harvest Missions - James & Emily Cammock

Leadership

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David Shastid - 903.257.6464
Brent Stewart - 903.641.9052
Justin Williams - 903.875.8288

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Cory Myers - 512.627.6672 (Youth & Family)
Tim Cooke - 903.641.5515 (Seniors)

Prayer List

Gayle Garner was in the ER last week for an infection. It is treatable and he is back home.

Cory Myers is in Singapore this week on a mission trip. Please, pray for his safe travel and return and for the success of his efforts to evangelize.

Paula Spillyards' surgery went well and she is recovering.

Keith Weaver, Charlotte Weaver's father-in-law, had nerve surgery last week in preparation for a shoulder surgery he will have soon.

Our Love and Sympathy are extended to Connie Winters' family at her passing last week. Her service was held yesterday. Please, keep Caleb & Ann Jackson and Phil & Darlene Judson and all of their family in your prayers at this time.

Continue to Remember: Don Bowen, Melba Bower, Bobby Compton, Buster Hayes, Marjorie King, Robert Lee, Velma McDougald, Bud Moore, Darlyn Olsen, Henry & Eula Parrish, Kathi Pruitt, Dianne Stewart, Cooper Webster, Meagan Gould, Jayme Schafer.

Service Men: Clay Bayes, Jason Book, Alston Compton, Robert Johnson, Ryan Payne, Douglas Ramsey, Ryan Stewart, Morgan Weaver, and Payton Weaver

Announcements

"Thank you, Westhill, for your love and concern for me during my "shingles" illness. After thirty plus days I am much improved. For all the prayers on my behalf, the phone calls, the encouraging cards and offers of food, John and I will always be grateful. And this week I am loving the birthday cards. All of you are wonderful!" - Marcia Lou Braly

Welcome, Larry Rowden! We are excited that Larry placed membership with us last week. His address is: 387 SWCR 2350, Streetman, TX 75859

No Open Door Thursday This Week.

Granbury St. Church of Christ invites you to their Spring Gospel this week. B.J. Clarke will speak on "How to Live an Abundant Life - Here and Hereafter." **We are taking the bus tomorrow.** Please sign up in the foyer if you'd like to go.

Howe Men's Day is Saturday, March 26 at 9:00 AM. Brant Stubblefield will address "Getting Crossfit." Lunch will be provided.

Colleyville Ladies' Day Saturday, April 2 at 8:30 AM. Lunch will be provided. Evelyn Bonner will speak on "Recipe for Peace: Lessons from Philipians."

Spring Seminar hosted by the Young at Heart Group on Friday, April 8 at 6:30 PM. Jay Lockhart will speak on the theme "Press On." Everyone is invited!

Birthdays This Week

- February 28 - Nate Haden, Paul Loosier
- March 1 - Ericka Kinkade, Gertrude Walker
- March 2 - Macie Bearden, Jim Bess
- March 3 - Amy Parrish
- March 4 - Anita Hawkins

Next Week's Adult Class

Inquiry by John's Disciples/Feast at Matthew's House (Mt 9:10-13; 11:2-3; Mk 2:15-17; Lk 5:29-32; 7:18-23)

Records for February 21, 2016

Bible Class	189
AM Worship.....	250
PM Worship	151
Wednesday	177
Contribution	\$8,956.48

Privileged to Serve

Song Leader	Mark Blaylock
Opening Prayer	Zach Drain
Communion Leader	Brody Owens
Communion Servers	
Luke Baumgartner	Tyler Baumgartner
Tanner Bearden	Wade Braly
Millard Dowdle	Joe Glass
Ken Green	Jim Haden
Wade Hall	Andy Parrish
Thomas Saunders	Brent Stewart
Bronny Watson	
Closing Prayer	Kyle Slaughter
Nursery	Tina Roughton & Colton Stewart
Security	Terry Barrett, Mark Blaylock, Buck Murphy
PM Song Leader	Joshua Haden
PM Opening Prayer	Justin Williams
PM Closing Prayer	Billy Roughton
Wed. Song Leader	Jimmy Horn
Wed. Devotional	David Shastid
March Contact Elder	Paul Slaughter - 903.872.1228