

# Time at the Master's Feet



The best part of the Christian life, the one thing that is truly needful, is time spent with God.

If you were to ask me to name the most important principle of Christian living I've ever learned, I would answer you without hesitation. It is the secret of daily communion with God. That is, without question, the No. 1 priority of the Christian life. It is the key that opens every door.

Yet it is the one thing many Christians can't seem to find time for.

When you think about it, that's astonishing. No other group of people since Adam and Eve has had the opportunity to fellowship with God the way we can. The Creator and Ruler of the entire universe has made Himself available to meet with us as believers every day. He sent Jesus to the cross to shed His blood so that we could enter into the holy of holies and draw near to Him any time we desire.

God Himself has flung open to us the door of fellowship and said, "I'm here for you. Just draw near to Me and I'll draw near to you. Spend time

with Me and

I'll give you the wisdom you need. I'll strengthen you and equip you and help you in every area of your life."

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## **Indonesian Muslims Call for Halt to 'Christianization'**

Muslim organizations in Bekasi, West Java, last week declared their intention to establish paramilitary units in local mosques and a "mission center" to oppose "ongoing attempts to convert people to Christianity," according to the national Antara news agency.

At a gathering at the large Al Azhar mosque June 27, the leaders of nine organizations announced the results of a Bekasi Islamic Congress meeting on June 20, where they agreed to establish a mission center to halt "Christianization," form a Laskar Pemuda youth army and push for implementation of sharia (Islamic law) in the region, The Jakarta Post reported.

"If the Muslims in the city can unite, there will be no more story about us being openly insulted by other religions," Ahmad Salimin Dani, head of the Bekasi Islamic Missionary Council, announced at the gathering. "The center will ensure that Christians do not act out of order."

Observing an increasing number of house churches, Muslim organizations have accused Bekasi Christians of aggressive

proselytizing. The Rev. Simon Timorason of the West Java Christian Communication Forum (FKKB), however, told Compass that most Christians in the area do not proselytize and meet only in small home fellowships due to the lack of officially recognized worship venues.

Many Christian seminary graduates prefer to remain on Java rather than relocate to distant islands, Timorason added, making West Java the ideal place to launch new home-based fellowships for different denominations. But neighbors see only the multiplication of churches, he said, and therefore suspect Muslims are converting to the Christian faith.

“The ideal solution is to have one building with a permit to be used by different denominations in each housing complex,” Timorason said. “If every denomination wants their own church in the same area, it’s a problem.”

#### Declaration of Intent

Kanti Prajogo, chairman of the Congress committee, had hoped to present a written declaration of intent to city officials at the mosque gathering, but officials did not respond to his invitation, according to The Jakarta Post.

Around 200 people attended the June 20 Congress, representing local organizations such as the Bekasi Interfaith Dialogue Forum, the Bekasi Movement Against Apostasy, the local chapters of Muhammadiyah and the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) — two of Indonesia’s largest Muslim organizations — and the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), well known for its aggressive opposition to Christians and other non-Muslim groups.

Government officials on June 28 called for the FPI to be declared a forbidden organization, claiming that FPI members were implicated in “too many” violent incidents.

“We are not concerned about their mission,” legislator Eva

Kusuma Sundari reportedly said at a press conference in Jakarta, "but we are concerned about the way they implement their goals."

A spokesman for another large organization, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), said July 28 that despite one member being present at the congress in an unofficial capacity, NU had not approved the joint declaration, contradicting a statement made the previous day by Bekasi NU official Abul Mutholib Jaelani, who told The Jakarta Post that he had asked all 56 NU branches in the city to contribute at least 10 members to the youth army.

## **Contributing to Religious Conflict**

Rapid residential and industrial development has created huge social problems in Bekasi. Sociologist Andi Sopandi of Bekasi Islamic University told The Jakarta Post that the call for sharia was a warning signal, and that local officials should urgently pursue dialogue between Muslim and Christian leaders.

Locals and newcomers will get along well only if they share similar basic values, particularly religious ones, Sopandi reportedly said, pointing to sharp disputes over the Filadelfia Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP) church in Jejalen Jaya sub-district earlier this year as an example.

A neighbor of the church confessed to The Jakarta Post that local clerics had asked him and other residents to sign a petition against constructing the HKBP church building and threatened not to pray at their funerals if they failed to cooperate; the majority of his neighbors signed the document under duress.

Under a 2006 Joint Ministerial Decree (SKB), at least 60 local residents must approve the establishment of a house of worship, whether a mosque or a church. The congregation must also have at least 90 members and obtain letters of recommendation from the local interfaith communication forum (FKUB) and religious affairs office before gaining final

approval from district officials.

These terms make it virtually impossible for churches in Bekasi to obtain building permits. Bekasi regency has a population of 1.9 million, of which 98.2 percent are Muslim, according to 2006 data from the Bekasi Regency Religious Affairs office. Protestants, who form percent of the population (approximately 12,700 people), and Catholics who make up percent, are served by only 16 officially recognized churches in seven of the 23 sub-districts.

Sudarno Soemodimedjo, deputy chief of the Bekasi FKUB, told The Jakarta Post in February that even if a church construction committee gained the approval of 60 local residents, the FKUB would not issue a letter of recommendation if there were any public objections.

“The SKB orders us to maintain public order, which means we have to refuse the establishment of a house of worship we believe may trigger a conflict in the future,” he said.

As a result, many Christians meet in unrecognized worship venues, giving Muslim groups legal grounds to oppose church gatherings. “If the SKB was applied consistently, many mosques that were built without permits would have to close,” Timorason told Compass.

The government wants each new settlement to have a place of worship, he added, “but it’s always a mosque. There should be one of each to be fair.”

“Violations against freedom of religion remain rampant [in Indonesia],” confirmed the chairman of the Setara Institute for Democracy and Peace, who goes by the single name of Hendardi, at a press conference announcing the release of its January 2010 “Report on the Condition of Religious and Faith Freedom in Indonesia.”

“This is mostly because the government is half-hearted in its

upholding of the right to worship," he said.

Of 139 violations recorded by the institute last year, West Java took first place with 57 incidents, followed closely by Jakarta at 38.

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## 23 Questions About Hell

 Bill Wiese | Charisma House

Bill Wiese follows up his *New York Times* best-selling *23 Minutes in Hell* with *23 Questions About Hell: Everything You Want—And Need—To Know!* The author says he was once sent to the place of the damned for 23 minutes, and he offers lessons learned from that experience on a companion DVD.

In *23 Questions*, he addresses common and not so common concerns, one per chapter, using the Scriptures to explain why God created such a place, what it's like and who goes there.

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## Back on Murder



J. Mark Bertrand | Bethany House

*Back on Murder* is an engaging crime novel taking readers on assignment with Houston's best homicide detective, Roland March.

Detective March believes he is on his way out of the force because his peers trivialize his accomplishments—until he observes evidence of a missing female victim at a major crime scene.

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## Compel Them to Come

We must be prepared to compel men and women to come to **Christ**, not with our words only but also by our **love** and **peace**. The degree to which we are stirred and **motivated by God** is the degree to which we will go out and **win others** to Him. This happens through our relationships with Him.

When we come in the name of the Lord—not in our own names—people who reject us are rejecting the **peace of the kingdom**. Our hearts should weep over this.

God extends to the world His hand of **mercy, forgiveness** and **reconciliation** through the cross of Jesus Christ. If people refuse His gift, eventually judgment and condemnation will come upon them (Luke 10:16).

When we are sent by God, we become Christ's voice, hands and feet. We are His **ambassadors**, His representatives. This is why we must be filled with His praises, His peace, His wisdom and His strength.

Wherever you go, speak the very words of God. Speak as if God Himself were speaking through you. As you develop a deeply intimate relationship with the Lord, His Word will flow out from your relationship with Him to the world.

It's not just the words you speak that will turn people to the Lord. It will be the power of the Holy Spirit that flows from your innermost being through your words that will bring life to others.

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# Quote: John Quincy Adams



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## Florida School District Sued for Barring Bible Distribution

A Christian legal firm is suing a southwest Florida school district that prohibited Bible distribution on public school campuses.

Liberty Counsel filed a lawsuit Thursday on behalf of World Changers of Florida challenging the Collier County school district's decision to prohibit the Naples, Florida-based ministry from passing out free Bibles on Religious Freedom Day, which is recognized Jan. 16.

The Bibles were distributed for two years without incident to interested students outside school hours. The group included a disclaimer stating that the school neither sponsored nor endorsed the Bible giveaway.

But in 2008, the district revised its policy to require nonprofit organizations to obtain approval of the superintendent and a Community Request Committee appointed by the superintendent in order to distribute literature on school campuses.

The policy also states that requests must be “carefully reviewed to ensure that such activities promote student interests, provide educational benefit to the students, and do not exploit the school system, its employees, students or parents,” according to the lawsuit.

Liberty Counsel said other nonprofit groups have been allowed to distribute literature on campuses, including military recruiters, a Little League organization, and local Humane Society, 4H and YMCA groups. The lawsuit claims World Changers was denied its distribution request because the district wants to censor its message.

The school district “denied World Changers access for no other reason than the religious content and viewpoint of the literature it wishes to distribute, specifically Bibles,” the lawsuit states. “This unequal treatment, based upon the religious nature of the literature World Changers wishes to distribute, is unconstitutional content-based discrimination, because World Changers’ materials otherwise fit within the parameters [the district] set for the forum.”

Liberty Counsel argues that the First Amendment prohibits government religious speech, not private religious speech or literature.

“How sad that on the eve of Independence Day, when we celebrate the religious and political freedom our forefathers won for us at the cost of much blood and great sacrifice, we are compelled to sue to protect the right simply to make free Bibles available to students in public schools,” said Mathew D. Staver, founder of Liberty Counsel and dean of Liberty University School of Law. “Many of our Founding Fathers were taught to read using the Bible. If it had no educational value, then many of them would have been illiterate.”

World Changers is seeking permission to distribute Bibles and nominal damages, which include attorneys’ fees.

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# Cancer Prevention

It is not difficult to understand that the easiest and best way to beat cancer in your own body is through prevention. This offensive strategy against disease requires a lifestyle that should be pursued by everyone living in today's polluted environment. If you have had cancer or are in remission, if you have cancer now or are in a particularly high-risk group, or even if you feel it will not touch you, developing a cancer-free lifestyle is the only insurance policy available for good health.

One key in developing a cancer-free lifestyle is ongoing, moderate exercise. Research indicates that those who use up 2,000 calories or more in physical activity each week have a third less risk of getting all types of cancer as compared to sedentary individuals. One study found that women who exercise an average of four hours per week reduced their risk of breast cancer by 50 percent compared to that of age-matched inactive women. Exercise may also help boost the immune system and even help promote such healthy habits as getting a good night's sleep.

And the best exercise may not be as strenuous as you think. Brisk walking, not jogging or pumping iron, may well prove to be the perfect exercise. This form of exercise provides the ideal opportunity for worship and prayer as well. Just take along a tape player loaded with your favorite worship music, and you're off to a healthier physical and spiritual life!

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## Give Each Other Grace

I've seen couples who supposedly still love each other but nonetheless attribute some negative motivation to what their

spouse is doing or saying to them. It becomes an automatic response for them and usually follows a pattern that was set in motion in childhood, when self-protection required them to prepare for the worst from a parent.

When this protective pattern is carried over into marriage, the spouse will have no rational reason for assuming the worst. It just seems to come naturally.

Few things put a bigger damper on expressing love than for your spouse to misunderstand your motivation for what you are doing or saying. By contrast, few things are more powerful in keeping love alive than showing grace and forgiveness to your spouse.

The Balswicks write: "As agents of grace, each spouse participates in ... talking and listening, giving and receiving, honoring differences and affirming giftedness, forgiving and being forgiven. The far-reaching effects of [this] culminate in a deeply satisfying relationship."

When a couple assign negative motivations to each other, the complaint often follows that the two spouses aren't compatible. Whenever a husband and wife say this to me, I always agree—but add that every couple is incompatible. The incompatibility is universal simply because one spouse is male and one is female.

The differences between male and female are enough to make every marriage an incompatible relationship. When you add to it personality and family differences and the couple's differing expectations, you wonder sometimes how any marital relationship succeeds.

When we don't give each other grace, especially for our incompatibilities, we eventually make those things even greater. When both spouses accept each other's differences with loving grace, their marriage experience is better.

In our marriage, we've developed compatibility where there had been incompatibility. When we embraced each other's differences, we experienced grace and love that has fueled our desire to keep our love for each other alive.

Grace is a gift we give each other. It is never earned. I can't say, "I would give you more grace if only you would ... ." Giving grace to your spouse includes the ability to forgive when he or she has failed you in some way.

As followers of Christ, we are encouraged to "forgive one another, even as God in Christ forgave you" (Eph. 4:32, NKJV). How did God forgive us? He did so freely without any expectation of us except that we accept His forgiveness. We can't earn or buy God's forgiveness. Like grace, it is His gift to us.

Think what will happen in a marriage when the partners freely offer forgiveness to each other, and act and believe that their spouse's motives and intentions are for the best, even when it doesn't seem that way.

That's what it means to give each other the gift of grace.

These principles are the essential ingredients of a healthy and fulfilling relationship. They are foundational to keeping love alive in marriage. We trust you will be able to apply them to your unique circumstances and that they will enrich your lives as you and your spouse journey together.

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**David Stoop, Ph.D., and Jan Stoop, Ph.D., lead seminars and marriage retreats nationally and internationally. More tips to keeping the love fires burning in marriage are available in their book *Better Than Ever: Seven Secrets to a Great Marriage*. Or visit them online at .**

Click [here](#) to read two other principles to help fix your marriage before it's too late.