

# The Angel And The Honey

One weekend near the end of 1999 I set aside time to be in the presence of the Lord and pray. On Saturday morning I sat up in bed and began to wait on Him.

Suddenly I heard footsteps walking across the kitchen and coming toward the bedroom door. I knew there was no one else in the house. But the next moment, an angel was sitting on the side of my bed.

He had in his hand a teaspoonful of honey. At first I could only smell it, but then my mouth was filled with the flavor of honey.

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I looked up a few Scriptures about honey to try to understand the meaning of this visitation, but nothing clicked. So I asked the angel, who was still in the room but no longer visible, "What is this with the honey?"

He replied, "Have you never read about Jonathan? When he ate the honey, his eyes were enlightened."

I found the passage the angel referred to in 1 Samuel 14. Saul had forbidden the people to eat, but Jonathan had not heard his command (see vv. 24,27). So when they came through the wood, Jonathan dipped his rod in a honeycomb and ate some honey (see vv. 26-27). When one of the people rebuked him (see v. 28), he said, "See, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey" (v. 29, KJV).

After I read the passage, the presence of the Lord grew stronger and stronger, and for 2-1/2 hours I saw open visions.

Since I had this experience, I have smelled honey many times when I have been praying for people. The honey represents the

enlightenment of the eyes—the revelation of the Spirit.

I share this experience to encourage you to press in for similar revelation. God never does something for one person only; He pours out His Spirit and anointing over the whole body of Christ—to those who will receive. He wants all of us to be able to look into the Spirit realm so that we may see what He sees, including angels.

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## God Is Love

Three little words—*God is love*—cover the whole realm of divine teaching. His love reaches the highest heights. It fathoms the deepest depths and sweeps the circumference of the eternities. God is love!

These three words are the alpha and the omega of the Bible. They cover every judgment that has thundered across its pages, every promise that has soothed the dying pillow and every warning that has arrested an endangered course.

Every efficacy that has blotted out sin, and every refuge that has harbored a wrecked soul have been by virtue of this indestructible truth of the ages: God is love.

His love is higher than everything else. It is higher than His greatness and His justice.

For sweep of influence and magnitude of power, love rivals every other sentiment known in the human family. It is the oil for the grinding wheels of life.

It is the daybreak of every earthly night. It is the star in every human sky. What is money, beauty or fame when compared to love? And this love still remains in the world, and as long

as the solar system swings round upon its axis, it will be with us. There is no earthly love to compare with it.

### **No Greater Love**

Consider the evidence we have had of the powerful love of country. We have seen the long lines of the fairest and best of our land leave friends, family and comforts for this love.

The love of children for parents is a wonderful love. This summer when I asked a young lady—a remarkably gifted musician—why she did not go to the great city and make money and fame, as she could so easily do, she said she could not leave the old folks.

A mother's love is a wonderful thing. How can we describe it? Into what depths of sorrow and suffering will it not plunge for her child? What hardships will it not suffer—what toils of the hands, what toils of the feet and what toils of the head will it not embrace? What long, hard roads will it not travel?

There is nothing more beautiful than a Christian father's love. Yet, human love in comparison to God's love is as a candle to the sun. No, even this does not compare with it. There is no comparison.

Can I compare it to the oceans? No, God can gather these in the hollow of His hand. Can I compare it to the heavens? No, as a scroll the heavens will roll away but God's love will never pass away.

Can I compare it to the space that envelops the worlds? No, because the worlds will burn, and divine love can never burn. Its power is omnipotent. Its life is eternal. The whole plan of redemption was worked on this principle from the beginning to the end: God's love is love that came down. Christ did not come to this poor world of ours through a palatial arch but through a barn door (see Luke 2:1-20).

He began in a horse's trough. He entered through a stable and

ended on the cross. There was none so poor, But He was not poorer. He starved in the wilderness with a stone for His pillow.

Oh the depth into which he plunged that He might lift us up.

### **Love Is the Cure**

He bottles our tears and catches our sighs. He is our shelter. To the orphan He will be a father, and to the widow, a husband. To the outcast He will be a home, and to the worst, loathsome wretch who today crawls out of the ditch of his abominations, crying to Him for mercy, He will be an all-pardoning redeemer.

We could do without rest, peace, comfort and care, but how could we ever do without pardon? What other escape is there for our sins? And what an abundance of measures men have tried in order to flee them.

But given the swift feet of the hind, can we outrun them? When given the waters of the oceans, can we overflow them? Add sea to sea, river to river, lake to lake, and in one great, measureless, fathomless volume of water, can we drown them?

Every day we learn of desperate attempts men make to rid their consciences, their memories, their souls of sins. They leap from the parapet of a bridge. They leave home and country. They change their name and appearance.

They deny their guilt by every word and means they can marshal to their dilemma—all to escape their sins. But do they succeed? "Oh," you say, "is there nothing to cover sin? Is there no power to save the soul from going down into the pit? Is there no ransom?"

Your sins rise up and answer, "Thy ways and thy doings have procured these things unto thee" (see Ezek. 24:14). You must die.

Those whom you have harmed and hurt cry out: "His own iniquities entrap the wicked man, and he is caught in the cords of his sin" (Prov. 5:22). You must die.

Justice cries out: "Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Gal. 6:7). You must die. Judgment thunders: "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). You must die.

But breaking through the ranks of heaven and hell there comes one with garments dyed crimson-red. His brow drops blood. His side is torn. His hands have nail prints, and His feet are bruised.

His heart is bleeding, and He throws His emaciated body across the gaping chasm between justice and mercy, and cries, "Stand back, ye lawful accusers. I die a ransom!"

I turn aside the blood-soaked mantle, and I see five bleeding wounds He bears. And I say, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29). God's love will sing while the archangel's trumpet peals amid the crash of toppling sepulchers and the rush of the wings of the rising dead (see 1 Thess. 4:16-17).

His love shall kindle new suns after all other lights have gone out. It will be an over-billowing sea after all other oceans have swept themselves away.

The rocks will turn grey with age, and the forests will be unmoored in the hurricane. The sun will shut its fiery eyelid, and the stars will drop like burnt-out coals.

The sea will heave its last groan and lash itself into expiring agony. The continents will drop like anchors in the deep and the world will wrap itself in a sheet of flame. But God's love will never die!

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**Evangeline Cory Booth** (1865-1950) was the seventh child of

*Salvation Army founders William and Catherine Booth. She spent much of her time in the slums of London—often in the disguise of a ragged flower seller or a match girl. She became principal of the International Training College at Clapton, which trained young women and men for missionary work. In 1904, Evangeline’s father gave her responsibility for all the work of the Salvation Army in the United States. She served in this capacity for 30 years.*

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## **The Twilight Saga: Calling Evil Good**



It’s time someone offered a long overdue reality check regarding the current vampire pop culture craze.

Hollywood is influencing and promoting the latest vampire craze while many Christians are indifferent about the seductive powers of the books, movies and TV shows that have become a cult. While some in the church are clueless, others are engaging in all the hype. Is this innocent “fictitious” entertainment or the latest cult following? A cult has to do with “*extreme or excessive admiration*” and the entertainment industry is feeding us an excessive amount of “vampirism”. For example, there is the popular HBO *True Blood* series and the prime time TV series *The Vampire Diaries*. The most popular by far is Stephanie Meyers’ *The Twilight Saga* that has sold over 85 million books not to mention movie sales. What does all this mean? It is a

growing obsession with the supernatural ... the dark side.

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# Learn to Steer Clear of Religious Traps!

The Bible warns believers to be careful that the light in them does not become darkness (Luke 11:35). Darkness descends when the light of the gospel is overshadowed by traditions handed down by men. In such cases, the Word of God is set aside, deprived of its authority and power.

How can we avoid letting our light become darkness? By steering clear of religious traps! The Greek word for “darkness” is *skotos*, which means shadiness or obscurity. The bondage of tradition is part of the shadiness that shuts out the light of the gospel within us.

Understand, tradition in itself is not a bad thing. The problem arises when church people attempt to make their generational rules and regulations equal to the Word of God. When they pass down their religious traditions, social customs, and belief systems by mouth or by practice, without validating their origin or explaining their purpose, they breed shadiness and darkness.

Their doctrines and traditions become like cement that has settled. The church is bound, with no room for any person, place or thing that doesn't fit with what's already there.

The Pharisees were bound by their customs and traditions. Jesus called them hypocrites! In Matthew 23:13, He told them, “You shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are

entering to go in" (NKJV).

Two verses later He said, "You travel land and sea to win one proselyte [or convert], and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves" (v. 15, NKJV).

Apparently, there is a demonic double portion that operates through this religious, anti-evangelistic spirit!

As the return of Jesus draws closer, you would think that the hearts of God's people would grow closer to Him. The apostle Paul knew differently. In 2 Timothy 3:1-7, Paul spoke about the apostasy, or the falling away from the truth. He listed numerous spirits that would be operating in church people in the last days.

These people, Paul said, would have a "form of godliness" (v. 5, NKJ). The Greek word for "form" is morphosis, which means "an appearance." There are fashions in the church world today that put pressure on Christians to present a certain appearance, to be religiously "in vogue." In many churches, if a ministry gift isn't wrapped in the right package, it's not considered religiously correct.

But Romans 12:1 shows us how we must present ourselves as believers. We must not have a "form of godliness" that is worldly in nature. We must not be conformed to the world but transformed!

The Greek word for "transformed" is related to our English word metamorphosis, which means "to change appearance." Only as we are changed in appearance will people see the light of the gospel in us and "come in."

Religious spirits of tradition work to keep a church from being transformed. They block the light necessary to draw in new converts. When we finally deal with the frivolous church customs and traditions, great evangelism will begin to take place!

Thankfully, there is hope. First Peter 1:18 tells us that we have been " [the] aimless conduct received by "tradition" (NKJV) from our forefathers." We have been redeemed! Through the power of God's Spirit we can reject dark, aimless, and harmful traditions that are based on man-made doctrines and not on the Word of God.

Will it be easy? No, but the reward will be great. It was for me!

My prayer is that God will anoint and empower you to see the religious spirits of tradition standing in the doorway of your calling. Don't let your light become darkness! Reject these religious spirits, and make a path for the next generation to see the light and come in.

Adapted from the book *From Our Hearts to Yours*, a compilation of articles written by powerful women of God, copyright 2008, published by Charisma House.

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## God's Eternal Purpose

Sometimes, in order to trust God, we must be reminded who He is, what He's capable of doing, what He's done in the past, and what He's currently doing on our behalf.

One of the greatest problems in our generation is the diminishment of our perspective of God—we have lost the biblical perspective of His majestic greatness. We read of His greatness in Genesis, His majesty in Exodus and His miraculous power in the Acts of the Apostles, but we fail to see Him the "same yesterday, today and forever" (Heb. 13:8, NKJV).

To understand the sovereignty of God is to acknowledge that

nothing began with us—and it probably won't end with us. We are simply a part of the successive, progressive work of God, and by His greatness we occupy a moment of time in a generation.

We live in Him. We move in Him. We breathe in Him. And we do His will as long as He gives us life.

When our mission is complete, and our time is over, He raises up another generation and continues to do what He has been doing from the foundation of the world. Nothing stops God in His eternal purpose.

Nations rise and fall and are reborn under the banner of a new hope. A church grows and is celebrated, then dies a terrible death because of a split or moral failure in the leadership. But these things don't stop the work of the kingdom of God.

The eternal purpose of God is greater than a nation, a church or a generation. But sometimes it is hard to see God's greatness because our image blocks the Son. The key is not in making God larger, but in making ourselves smaller in our own eyes.

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## **Focus on What You Have, Not on What's Missing**

Don't ignore the very things that brought you and your spouse together.

When a couple are ready to give up on their marriage, they'll often say there is nothing positive going on between them anymore; it's all bad. Researcher John Gottman at the University of Washington found that in a healthy, growing marriage, positive behaviors outnumber negative behaviors by a ratio of at least 5-to-1. This means that every negative behavior directed toward one's spouse requires at least five good behaviors to offset it.

As a couple's marriage begins to unravel, the number of positives compared to negatives begins to drop below 5-to-1. Even in a good marriage, negative behaviors have more impact on us, but they really take on more power when they no longer are being offset by positive behaviors.

Here's an interesting point: By the time two people are ready to divorce, the positive behaviors are actually about equal to the number of negative behaviors. The positives are not absent or even outnumbered—except in the minds of the divorcing couple. But they are overpowered by the negative behavior, which has a way of blocking our vision of the positive.

This feeds on our natural human tendency to focus on the negative. Even the optimist can get caught up in seeing the glass as half empty when it comes to marriage behavior. We seem to take the positive behavior for granted, but we can't let go of the negative very easily.

When a couple focus on what they believe is missing in their relationship, they are looking at what isn't there. They are also ignoring the very things that brought them together.

When I can get them to remember the good things they saw in each other at the start of their relationship, they begin to look again at what they have that is positive. Often a man's or woman's positive feelings for their spouse will last beyond the counseling session and prepare them to take the next step together.

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# Unforgiveness Can Create Chronic Pain

I have often wondered, Why do we see much more rheumatoid arthritis occurring in women than in men? I began to pay close attention to the studies showing that men are usually able to express their anger, whereas women tend to hold it in and become depressed. I recalled the scripture, “A broken spirit drieth the bones” (Prov. 17:22, KJV).

Could it be that a “broken spirit” in some women is causing rheumatoid arthritis? Is it causing the joints and bones to be inflamed and weakened?

The person who continues to seethe over some unresolved issue is not only destroying a personal relationship and harming his or her own body but also blocking communication with God. A bitter person no longer has the desire to read the Word of God or pray. Bitterness is costly.

What should your plan of action be? At the first sign of anger or bitterness, go immediately to the person involved and deal with it—regardless of who is at fault. You will feel a wave of freedom sweep over you as you forgive.

On more than one occasion I have seen an individual healed of arthritis when he or she released bitterness and anger through total repentance. The person was first set free spiritually, then emotionally and physically. Don't let deadly emotions rob you of life and health; forgive and be healed.

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## **How Do You Treat People With Problems?**

Often people with problems are made to feel sub-Christian. We view them as an inconvenience because they require more time than we want to give.

Talking with them about anything other than the weather might

get us entangled in their struggles, so we pass a few pleasantries and quickly find our seats. We rush out after the sermon, more concerned with the football game on television than the person next to us in the pew whose life is shattered.

How can we say, "I love God" when our interaction with the needy is governed by such self-serving, don't-disrupt-my-routine snobbery?

Have we deceived ourselves about the love of God? "Dear friends," pleads John, "since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4:11, NIV).

So, how does one actually love another? Ask yourself: "Am I the sort of Christian with whom someone would feel comfortable sharing? Or am I intimidating?"

"Does my demeanor say, 'Yes, I want to help; Yes, I care?' Or do I communicate, 'Stay away; you're a disgrace?'"

Then ask God to make you a minister of His compassion and acceptance. Allow Him to use your life to heal the brokenhearted.

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## **Step Into Effective Ministry**

Just as a great sculptor gives complete attention to detail, God shapes every aspect of our character. With precision, He moves in rhythm with us through every turn of events in our lives, molding us into useful vessels.

God will place men and women in our lives who have walked this

way ahead of us. They understand the refining process and will be able to encourage us so that we get the most out of the lessons.

For all of us, life gains rather than loses meaning as we relinquish our supposed power as independent women. In dying to ourselves in the midst of adversity, the very power that raised Christ from the dead moves into our lives!

It is very valuable to be aware of where we are in the stages of personal and spiritual growth. If we are in a particularly difficult stage, it is encouraging to know that it will not last forever.

On the other hand, if we are in a rich place of deep service to others, seeing where God has taken us and where we are going increases our gratitude and prepares us for the next adventure.

As Christ's character grows within us, others will begin asking us to lead them! Our gifting and yieldedness to the Holy Spirit will qualify us. With His life and power within, effective ministry is finally possible.

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**Joyce Strong** *is an author and international speaker. Visit her website for more information about her ministry.*