

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY: -SAFETY ZONES ~ *In great crisis, the memory of the word of some wise and gracious teacher often comes to our rescue, and the new and bewildering experience in which we stand assumes a familiar and orderly aspect. We are set free from fear and panic and enabled to act with sanity and wisdom. For those whose memory is full of the words of Christ, there is strength in all life's emergencies.*

THE ROAD OF LIFE

John 8:12 reads, *I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.*

Sitting on the back porch one afternoon seeking God's heart, as I would be speaking the coming Sunday in Yreka, and contemplating life in general, my attention is drawn to the old apple tree that has yielded its fruit for years. Ripe, lush apples peek at me between the foliage; my mouth waters at the thought of a freshly baked apple pie topped with vanilla ice cream. Then as I exam the tree and its surrounding more closely, I see rotten apples intermingled with the good apples; some lying on the ground, some still on the tree; I had my sermon!

Along life's journey we find good apples and bad apples. There are negative people who for many reasons walk the LOW road themselves and they invite us to join them; travel the same path. It brings to mind the old saying, *misery loves company*. Because negative people do not expect clear weather or good road conditions, they never find them. Chuck holes are what they know and chuckholes are what they get. If we walk with them, we travel under the same condition. This road is often seen as a road of despair; filled with unmet dreams, dashed hopes and goals—darkness travels this road and wide it is.

When I first became a believer, my pastor would preach that *doubt goes with darkness as sunshine goes with spring*. He said that nothing is more emotional than doubt coupled with fear and it closes the mind to God's truth, therefore it ushers in negative thinking. God calls His people to be positive thinkers. We are told to renew our mind with the mind of Christ and walk with sure steps in His light. **Romans 12:2** - *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.* (Can't get any clear than that!)

There are also positive people, who for equally varied reasons, have chosen to walk the HIGH road. They mostly get sunny days, straight routes, and interesting experiences along the way that brings maturity into their lives. Positive people don't expect to run into problems they can't handle, so for the most part, they don't; they are prepared. They also invite us to join them upon this path and walking in their company gives us hope, freedom and the right companionship for growth. This road is seen as the road of light—of life—I call it the JESUS ROAD.

Would you agree with me that the quality of your journey is largely defined by your companions? Who you run with influences your life! People will either help build your character or they will help tear it down. The final choice is up to you. No one is forcing you on the LOW or even the HIGH path. You must choose. I love running and hanging out with Jesus. I love hanging out with positive people. Now don't get me wrong, we are human and because we live in a fallen world, there will be times we'll have to fight negative influences—sometimes we lose the battle and make poor choices! BUT, if we keep trying and don't lose heart, we win more battle than we lose when we chose to let the negative go and move forward!

When you realize you are on the LOW road, don't stay there! God provides side roads that lead us back to the HIGH road—all along our journey—they're there! Look for them. Remember, God always knows your circumstance; what you're dealing with and where you are. You are never lost to God. He knows where you're coming from and where you're going. And be assured that nothing touched the lives of His children that He is not aware of. He is only a cry—a call away for help! He'll be there at the side road waiting, and when you pass by and he reaches out—take a hold of his hand. He'll guide you to the HIGH road.

Sadly, we discover that life's road to success is not always straight although we'd like it to be. It can stagger the mind and cause an upset when we can't readily see which way to go. Daily we navigate life's dangerous curves, crazy loops, and speed bumps, which are all designed to slow us down. And don't forget the mountain, the valleys and the flat lands; each has its purpose in our lives. They enemy would love to blind our eyes; to deceive us into seeing only the dark negative side. He would make every believer into a "*Doubting Thomas*" if he could. I don't want that name attached to me—do you? If you find yourself on the LOW road, look to Jesus and remember that the mountains, the high places, the breath of fresh air is just ahead. Don't stop! Don't give up—keep moving forward.

When we stand in the Father's light, His Will to be revealed, we'll recognize the "*Pitfalls*", the "*Upsets*": encountered along our way. We'll quickly give God praise and we'll continue through them, as we enter a bright, new day. God's not in heaven saying, "*Let's make a deal!*" His word is truth—He changes not—we can't make deals with God. The Bible is a straightforward book. It gives you simple guidelines to follow. It lays out the truth that you can understand and follow. God doesn't try and trick you to see how smart you are. No! All he asks is that you be willing to renew your mind and conform to His word, not to the world's way of living. *You can't follow the devil and serve God!*

John 14:23-24 says, *...If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love Me, does not keep my words, and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me.*

Romans 8:9 says, *But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.*

There are times when we can't go forward until we say *goodbye* to what is behind us. And until you leave "*what was*" behind you, you will keep reliving it. Procrastination is a trap that catches and holds many Christians in its grip—like being in a "full Nelson" that you can't break free from. BUT, the good news is—it can be broken in your life! You can break it in the power and authority of Jesus; keep moving forward!

To travel down the positive road I'd like to share a few bondage that we need to let go of:

Assumptions – if we take other people's mistakes or honest disagreements as a personal affront, we turn our spiritual path into a mine field and Satan has a heyday at our expense. *We need to think twice before we assume once!*

Bitterness – **Ephesians 4:31** says, *Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.* Unresolved anger, especially of the long-lasting kind, can breed terrible bitterness. Bitter resentments fixate on the negative (not the road we want to travel). A wound cannot heal if we keep picking at it.

Living with bitterness is like eating the peel and throwing away the orange. Let's instead, with God's help, throw away the bitterness.

Hatred – hate is a deadly hook. What we tend to hate, on some level, we may later become. The trouble with hatred is that it doesn't recognize boundaries and healthy boundaries spell freedom in your life.

Bad Experiences – we get caught up in the lies of the enemy: life is just one bad experience after another—why doesn't anything ever work for me—you shouldn't expect good things to happen. We learn to shortchange ourselves—the plot never changes. We become crybabies! God doesn't want us to be: crybabies, hot heads, or fanatics, but rather He would encourage us to work on building a balanced life which takes a “*cool head*.” Strive for the balance of God in your life. Make changes and be blessed. Satan says, “*Live with it!*” God says, “*Change it!*” Good judgment is built, brick by brick, from painful lessons learned. Our purpose—grow daily in Christ. Pursue positive relationship with healthy people. Continue making positive life changes.

Guarantees in life – Most of us find great security in guarantees. If “*it*” doesn't work-whatever “*it*” is—we want to know we can get our money back. But hey, there are no guarantees in life. We are all different. We grow at our own pace. Spiritual experiences of breakthrough happen at different times for different people. Often it is faith alone that keeps beckoning us on into new waters. To keep on going, we have to keep on believing and walking in that faith. My husband Joe, was an alcoholic for years, and when he gave his heart to the Lord, **Philippians 4:13** was the scripture he hung on to and God delivered him; totally set him free from that destructive lifestyle. Joe shared that scripture with people every chance he got. No matter what would happen, he would quote and walk in the power of **Philippians 4:13** – *I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me*. He believed it. He spoke it, he walked it and he moved strongly in the gift of faith.

When all is said and done, we are responsible for what happens to our lives. Other people may give us our start, they may input in our lives, but our finish is up to us and Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to be our helper in times of need, in times of trouble. Some days we may be trudging down that road of life, and it isn't thrilling, but it's the only known road to lasting change. No one gets a steady diet of “*peak*” experiences, nor would we want to, as nothing of value happens without the stretching of God; then character is developed. A thoroughly mapped-out predictable life might be desired at times, but it isn't practical.

I love this story sent to me by my Irish brother from Portadown, Ireland called *The Potato Garden*.

An old Irish man now lived alone. He wanted to plant his annul potato garden, but it was difficult work as the ground was hard. His only son, Vincent, who used to help him, was in prison. The old man wrote a letter to his son and described his predicament:

Dear Vincent, I am feeling pretty sad, because it looks like I won't be able to plant my potato garden this year. I'm just getting too old to be digging up a garden plot. I know if you were here my troubles would be over. I know you would be happy to dig the plot for me, like in the old days.

A few days later he received a letter from his son. *Dear Pop, don't dig up that garden. That's where the bodies are buried. Love, Vinnie*

At 4 a.m. the next morning CID and local police arrived and dug up the entire area without finding any bodies. They apologized to the old man and left. That same day the old man received another letter from his son.

Dear Pop, go ahead and plant the potatoes now. That's the best I could do under the circumstances. Love you, Vinnie. God works in mysterious ways does He not!

In God, desire and discipline can overcome impossible odds. **Matthew 19:26** says, *But with God everything is possible.* Let God inspire your heart today and CHOOSE to walk the path of light and not darkness.