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# GOOD NEWS *Unlimited*

## For the Greater Glory of God

By Bruce Burgess

*“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God—Even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good, but the good of many, so that they may be saved”  
(1 Corinthians 10:31-33).*

I have referred to the acronym WWJD—What Would Jesus Do? I have confessed in the past that I have trouble with the concept because it assumes we are able to predict what Jesus would do in any given situation. When I observe Jesus’ behavior it seems more often than not that he acts in ways contrary to what people would imagine. To be sure, we have the advantage of the biblical witness to Jesus’ actions and choices, and so we may have a better idea of how Jesus might act. But there seems to be some potential arrogance in the contention that ‘we know what Jesus would do.’

I have discovered another acronym: AMDG, which stands for Ad Majoram Dei Gloriam—For the Greater Glory of God; a key notion of Jesuit spirituality. The phrase is connected to the passage in 1 Corinthians 10:31-33. It is a radical way of thinking because it does not limit one’s faith to what happens on the Sabbath, but sees all of life as sacred.

The Jesuits, for example, believed that everything they did

was done as an offering to God. If they were engaged in menial chores, they did them as an offering of gratitude to God. This concept has biblical support in Paul’s letter to the Romans, chapter 12. *“Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. This is true worship.”* The principle is that everything we do—the choices we make, the actions we take—all our relationships are opportunities to bring glory to God.

To attempt to do this requires a reorientation of our thinking; being ‘transformed by the renewing of our minds.’ The prospect of living your life for someone or something outside yourself is not exactly normal. The only reason we would consider it is because that is how Jesus lived—he lived for others. Everything he did was for the father so his life was truly sacrificial.

We might look at a group like the Jesuits and conclude: “That’s easy for you. You lock yourself up behind closed doors; you shut yourself off from the world while we deal with all kinds of temptations out here. It’s much easier for you to offer your lives as a fragrant offering.” Some of that is probably true—except for the temptation part. Everyone is fodder for temptation.

What might it look like to live for the greater glory of God? How is it different from following the directive, ‘What would Jesus do?’ Well, to quote someone wiser than myself, “Living according to the greater glory of God is not necessarily understood as more works, projects or undertakings but rather as whatever will produce a greater dividend for the advancement and deepening of God’s kingdom in us and in the world. It’s not about how much I can accomplish for God, but how God can increasingly live and take initiative in and through me”.

In the context of our passage, we are trying to do two things: To refrain from causing people to stumble and, to please others. The latter, we need to unpack for it sounds little unhealthy on the surface. The background is in the previous chapter vv19-23.

*“Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone to win as many as possible. To*

*Continued on next page*



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# EDITORIAL . . .



Pastor Ron Allen

*“If my falsehood enhances God’s truthfulness, and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?” (Romans 3:7).*

In Romans 3, Paul addresses his own people, the Jews, who have been immensely favored. God showed himself to them in ways that he did not for other nations. To be made wardens of such advanced apprehensions of deity was a rich blessing. In all its features, this privilege was not composed of inherent Jewish qualities. That is why not even Israel’s unfaithfulness could destroy it. The recidivism of the chosen nation, only served to make the faithfulness of God more pronounced (Romans 3:3, 4). Paul’s emphasis on this point provokes the objection voiced in the verse quoted above.

Even though God initiated and supplied Israel’s advantages, many had come to think that they were theirs by right. They did not view their relationship with God in terms of who God is, what God does, God’s action, God’s faithfulness, God’s truthfulness and greatness. After generations in covenant with God, one thing stood out—God’s faithfulness compared to Jewish unfaithfulness. The appropriate response to such a lopsided reality should have been contrition. Instead, there is this: ‘If our unfaithfulness enhances God’s glory, why are we condemned? We are helping God.’


Such are the musings of religious folk who make far too much of their part in the divine-human encounter. The worshiper is magnified against worship’s rightful object. He/she becomes a center of value which God is called upon to recognize, treasure and reward. In response to this spiritual corruption, Paul says: “Let God be true, and every man a liar.”

Think of a postman who thinks he should be treated with

more deference because he delivers the mail. What of a lawyer who assumes his expertise at law means he is worthy of more privilege before the law than his clients? Think of a rich man who supposes he is a wiser and better person than his poor neighbors—because he is wealthy.

These examples are the contemporary equivalent of Paul’s countrymen whom he addresses in Romans chapter three. They are today’s thought leaders and culture shapers. They possess real advantages. Yet the greater part of their achievement is attributable to things which required no input from them, no effort on their part. Genetic good fortune, favorable family circumstance, economic advantage, fertile historical setting—and a host of other factors outside their control, conspired to bring about their success.

Instinctively we sense the inappropriateness of a lawyer who assumes justice should work exceptionally in his case. We are bewildered when a man of religion seems to think he should not be called to account when he breaks the law. What we really believe to be appropriate, is that ministers of religion or educated professionals, should respond to their franchise by being more—not less—accountable than others.

In Israel’s history, the law (the summation of that nation’s privilege) functioned—not to show what beautiful people they were—but to show that they were not! As stewards of the oracles of God, Abraham’s children made the mistake of thinking that their religious heritage was *their* badge of honor instead of God’s. In the end they believed a lie. They believed they weren’t sinners; they were above the condemnation deserved by others. Their religion became a curse, not a blessing. 

*Continued from previous page*

*the Jews I became like a Jew to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (although I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law) so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak to win the weak. I have become all things to all people. So that, by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the*

*sake of the gospel that I may share in its blessings.”*

Paul is not suggesting that we compromise our integrity in order to influence others. He is talking about empathy—seeking to understand where others are coming from; relating to them on their level. In other words, we are to ask ourselves: Is the next action I take more likely to advance God’s kingdom or hinder it? Are my actions more likely to draw someone toward God or hinder their spiritual potential?

**I know that there are Christ followers who believe that it is their job to convince unbelievers that they are horrible, —>**

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Editor

Pastor Ron Allen

Graphic Designer

Debbie O’Brien

Proofreader

Philip Rhodes

Molly Clayton

AFFILIATE ADDRESSES:

Canadian office:  
222 Olive Avenue  
Willowdale, ON M2N 4P6  
Canada

# Lady Poverty

By Richard Rohr

In 313A.D., Constantine made Christianity the established religion. He tried to do Roman civilization a favor. Today we're not sure he did us a favor at all, because for seventeen hundred years Christianity has largely looked at history and at itself, not from the bottom but from the top, from the position of the privileged rather than the oppressed.

At times we've moved toward the poor. Look at all of our founders, foundresses and saints: It's hard to find one who didn't dis-establish himself or herself and move toward the poor; and yet the church, by and large, canonized these people after their deaths, idealizing the good things they had done but retaining its position of establishment, its position of looking at history from a position of power and wealth.

This doesn't mean the Spirit was not in the church, but a great gift was lost to the church, a great freedom, a great insight. The love of poverty is one of the deepest and most profound blessings of the gospel. Francis saw it. He was able to call that scary thing, poverty, a lady. Until we can call her a lady, I don't think we've made the discovery so apparent to those at the bottom and those on the edges.

**All things considered, poverty has a better chance of getting at the truth. The poor woman, the poor man, has nothing to protect. The richer we are, the more we have to**

**protect and the less free we are to hear anything new or to understand the old.**

How much do I have to protect? How much public image, self-image, possessions, security, comforts, future? These tell me how rich and how poor I am.

-Richard Rohr: RADICAL GRACE, p. 350. 



**no-good, very bad sinners, destined for the eternal 'elevator down' unless they repent. Not long ago, one of the 'successful' methods of evangelism was to show up at someone's door and pose the question: "If you should die tonight, will you go to heaven?" That may have worked back then, but that method does not work now. Are we trying to scare, or to love people into the kingdom? The only people Jesus mentioned heaven and hell to were the religious authorities. Paul adds: "Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ."**

Any time we gossip or slander or demean someone, we work against the kingdom of God. Anytime we judge someone or condemn them or vent our anger toward them, we are likely causing them to stumble.


If our perspective is one in which every single event of each day is an opportunity to glorify God, then our days might look much different to what they do at present. But how do we change our perspective to create a different sensitivity to the world we live in? There is no easy answer, because faith is not about easy answers. We might wish it was. We are always searching for a simple formula to guarantee our success. In the larger world there is a plethora of books written mostly to guarantee financial success. With faith it is so much more ambiguous. How do we know which options will lead to God's greater glory on earth?

It's not as if we have no guidance. Scripture is replete with directives and commands that help guide our choices and thoughts. Some of it even has to do with paying attention to ourselves. Actions that wound us are actions we should take pains not to repeat to others. Though some of us know the pain involved when we are treated unfairly, we treat others unfairly. When we are ridiculed, we ridicule others. What is it with that?

Why are we so easily offended when we know we have been accepted by God? The divine acceptance is supposed to set us free from the opinions and judgments of others, and yet, so often, it is the opinions and judgments of others that seem to carry more weight in our lives. We can do better! We do not have the excuse of ignorance for we know very well what hurts and what does not.

**It is a mistake to assume that our impact on the world is minimal. Every encounter leaves an impression. If we saw each encounter as a change to glorify God it would help change our relationships. We know that we can't sustain it 24/7 but I'll bet each of us could improve some. And when we mess-up, which we will, we must be quick to make amends. That's the beauty of confession. It can create a new opportunity to glorify God out of a situation where we did the opposite. God can use that mistake to help create a divine moment in which we more than make up for the mess we made.**

It's part of God's grace that he creates opportunities for us to respond to others in ways that reveal more of his grace—even when we make mistakes. If we practice the presence of God; if we are sensitive to God in all our connections; if we pray without ceasing—it's not easy. It takes a whole lifetime—it will transform our living in all our relationships. We will see the world with new eyes, and discover new priorities and goals.

We are not trying to be perfect, but faithful. Through our faithfulness, our concern for others and our passion for God, it will speak volumes, and it will draw people to the One who is the embodiment of surrender. What can we do for the greater glory of God? Only we can determine that by the surrender of ourselves as living sacrifices to God. 

## Real Freedom

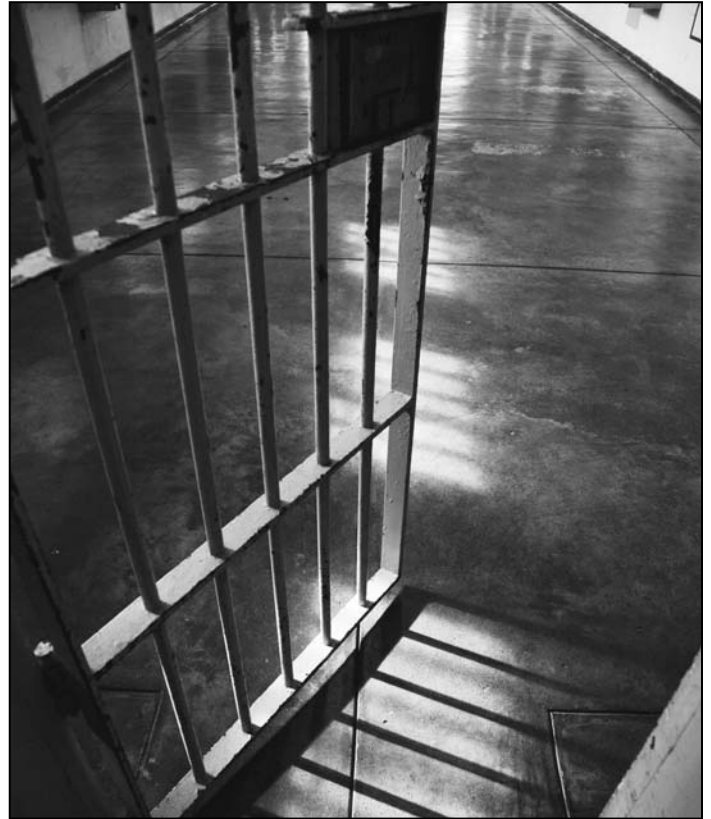
By Tony Campolo

When Bill Clinton met Nelson Mandela for the first time, there was an incredible conversation. Bill Clinton asked Nelson Mandela, “When they released you from prison, I got Chelsea up at three in the morning because I wanted to have her see this. I knew it was an historic moment, and I got her out of bed to see you released from prison”.

“As you walked across the courtyard from the cell block to the gate of the prison, the television cameras focused on your face. I have never seen such anger, such animosity, and such hatred. I mean, you usually can’t see that so clearly revealed. It was all over you. It was intense hatred, intense resentment. President Mandela, that is not the Nelson Mandela that I know today. Could you explain what was going on?”

Nelson Mandela says: “You’re the first one that brought that to my attention. I didn’t know that anybody noticed that; but as they released me from the prison block, and as I walked across the courtyard to the gate, I thought to myself, *They’ve taken everything away from me, my family is destroyed, my cause has been crushed, my friends are dead—anything, anybody that meant anything to me, they’ve destroyed it all*, and I hated them with a fiery hatred. Then, God spoke to me and said, ‘Nelson, for twenty-seven years you were their prisoner, but you were always a free man. Don’t let them make you into a free man, only to turn you into their prisoner.’

-Tony Campolo: THE GREATEST SERMONS EVER PREACHED, pp. 9, 10.



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