



February 2013

Heart to Heart

*Bringing our hearts to Him,
Receiving His Heart for us!*

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Freedom Weeks

April 8-12
June 10-14

Freedom Weekends

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April 19-21
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Hot off the Press!

Dear,

Grace poured out like gravy. We are given it it overflowing abundance, though it takes eyes of faith and a heart of trust to receive it in anything like the fullness our Lord intends. **What is it?** It is undeserved mercy and love; it is unlooked-for help and assistance. It is forgiveness through Jesus; it is strength through the Holy Spirit; it is life unending. But it is better than that: it IS Jesus raising us; it IS Holy Spirit in action; it IS The Father present with us. So hold up whatever you've got on your plate and let me pour some fresh, hot gravy upon it...

Steve

How Good is God?

You gotta love this...

When asked a harmless (but important) question about how we can inherit eternal life which began as "Good teacher..." Jesus immediately stopped the man and corrected him:

"Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone"
(Luke 18:19 ESV).

We know how important eternal life for us is to Jesus--He gave His life for it! But evidently, God's honor is even more important. When it comes to being good, God *alone* is good: He has no competitors! Jesus wanted to get *that* message across first--and it wasn't even the one the man was asking for. Yet the two ideas are tied together in this

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way: God is ***so good*** that He wants to give eternal life to us as our inheritance. Eternal life for me (and for you) is not about my goodness (which is woefully insufficient to inherit anything but hell); it is entirely about God's goodness (who has made heaven free for the asking).

Reading this exchange the other day also got me thinking: ***How good is God?*** These three wonderful thoughts immediately came to me:

#1 God is the God you have always needed. Maybe you didn't know it when you first started out on the rough road of life, but you have always needed a God who would love you wholeheartedly, forgive you freely, accept you entirely, help you endlessly, lead you into blessings, guide you into wisdom, never forsake you, never reproach you, never fail you--and even bring overwhelming good out of all that goes wrong. Wow! Was I ever in need of a God like the One we have!

#2 God is the Good that you have always desired. Maybe you didn't know it when you started "going for the gold", reaching to gain and enjoy the good things in life, but all that you have ever been looking for or desiring in the way of beauty, goodness and truth; inspiration, motivation and purpose; peace, love and joy has had Him for its source. Your every (good) desire comes from Him and is fulfilled through Him. ***He is the desire of nations!***

#3 God is giving All of His goodness to you. Psalm 84:11 says,

No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly (ESV).

Here's another good one:

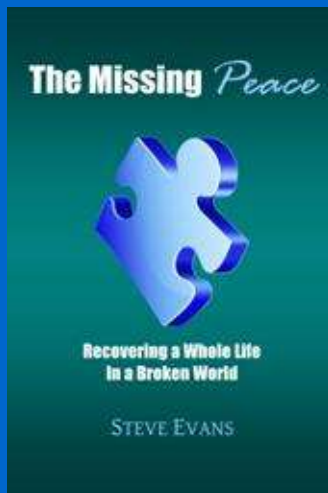
No eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him (1 Cor 2:9 ESV).

But it gets even better: He is actually giving Himself to you! He is actually loving you the way He is asking you to learn to love Him: with His whole heart, soul, mind and strength. I've got to hand it to Him and say: "God, You're Good!"

An Amazing Offer
This is truly "great grace"..

editions.

Hot off the Press!

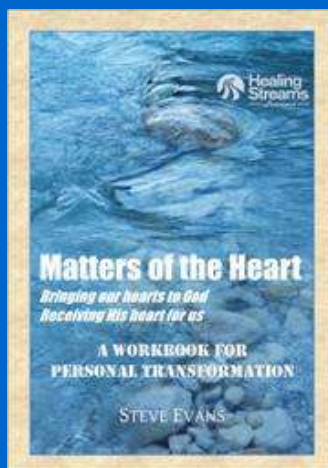


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Matters of the Heart: Workbook for Personal Transformation

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your heart to God and receive

Everything God allows can become a point of personal liberation for you--**if** you are willing to enter into full agreement with Him about it. ***That is a very big IF.*** But it is an obstacle that can be overcome. I know, because I have seen it work for my own inner liberation time and again. I have also learned by this that I am my own worst enemy when it comes to being set free. ***I am the obstacle that needs to be overcome!***

Here is the big picture.

1) God IS love and NEVER instigates evil.

2) Sins against us or sins by us happen because of human free will (people who do the sinning) in some combination with demonic free will (evil spirits who do the tempting).

3) Because God is sovereign and almighty, sin can never happen unless God allows it. This is NOT the same thing as desiring it, willing it, wanting it, or causing it. What He allows is for free will to operate in the real world He created. Though He may over-rule a lot of evil ideas and plans (by us and by the enemy) so that they are never allowed to affect reality, He nevertheless has to allow many sins to happen--otherwise there would be no reality to the freedom He has given us or to the world He has placed us within.

4) If God allows sin and its consequences to happen it is ALWAYS because free will has to be allowed to operate in that instance. That is the immediate reason and it is a hard and painful one, which no doubt grieves the Lord as much as it at times grieves us.

5) But the deeper and lovelier reasons why specific sins (and adverse consequences which trace back to sin like death, disease, destruction, persecution, etc.) are allowed has to do with God's redemptive purposes. Take it as ***a Life-Saving Principle*** that the Lord *only* allows that which He can fully redeem. He therefore stands ready, willing and able to bring a greater good out of every evil He is "forced" to allow (by His own freely-given commitment to our free will). Romans 8:28--the Magnificent Promise--rules over all things!

I have seen these truths proved out in my life time without number in both tiny instances and gigantic troubles. You can take it to the bank that in absolutely *everything* your heavenly Father allows to happen (or not happen) in your life, He is working through it for your greater good (think growth in love, growth in freedom, growth in intimacy with Him and in Christlikeness).

His Heart for you.

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Featured Video

Agree with Him that what He just allowed (that you didn't want allowed) actually had to be allowed...

- a) because of free will and
- b) for the sake of those lovely redemptive purposes

...and you will quickly discover that you have nothing to complain about! EVERYTHING is being made to work for your good, NOTHING is being held against you (of your own bad attitudes about His leadership), He is still loving you full throttle and still working all things in your life for your own greater good (by greater good I mean a good that is far greater than any present evils, problems or pains).

Realizing this and releasing myself into fully believing this, allows me to be a little child at His side even in the face of great adversities ("humble yourself under the mighty Hand of God..." 1 Peter 5:6-7). My **only** desire is that He lead and guide me in the steps through it all that He is asking me to take. ***I want to be fully submitted to His leadership!*** Whenever this happens I find myself flowing in a river of peace that springs out of every fresh instance of surrender and submission.

Did I mention that this doesn't work if you want to try to remain in charge of your life, seeking your own will and way? In that case you (and I) will inevitably name all kinds of things as bad or evil things that "shouldn't be allowed to happen" (which the Lord nevertheless allowed for the sake of our growth), get stressed over problems, adversity and difficult people which stand in our way and find it very hard to trust God to manage our life as we would prefer! ***Far better to let God be God--and trust to His goodness in and through All things!***

A Quick Return

We have plenty of opportunities to practice..

Some years ago I realized that instead of wasting time by beating myself up for getting disconnected from the Lord (by faltering at faith or falling into sin), I simply needed to focus all of my efforts on becoming reconnected to Him as quickly as possible. So whenever the peace, joy or confidence He gives us starts to slip away, I take ***the elevator of instant access!*** Here is His stunning invitation, command and promise:



Mercy of the Son with stream

Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16 NKJV).

This is a very gracious invitation: He actually wants us to come! When? Whenever we are "slimed" by our sins or sense of sinfulness! That's why He tells us to come boldly--because when our hearts condemn us we usually begin to lose our confidence in drawing near to Him. But that is when He *most desires* us to come closer so He can cleanse us! He already knows that we are going to need His mercy upon arrival, so He tells us to come boldly and get it first! Then, whatever else we may need of His grace can also be received. **First**, I ask for mercy and cleansing, *then* I ask for grace to believe in His endless mercy and His perfect love. This greatly restores my confidence in Him! Now, I am ready to talk over further issues raised by what I have been going through. And ask for more grace to help!

His invitation is also a command: "Come!" This gives me the confidence I need to approach Him when I am feeling like a moral failure and bedeviled by scruples or a spirit of condemnation. I say, "Well, You have commanded me to come in this messed up condition, so here I am once again!" My confidence is in His Word: "I am so glad that You went on record in extending this invitation--otherwise I would fear You wouldn't want to see me showing up so often in this wretched condition!" My confidence is also in His perfect love (John 4:18) and the Blood of Jesus (which covers *all* my sins) and the Holy Spirit (who takes me instantaneously into the Father's presence): the Word says that we have access to His presence by "the Blood", by "His Spirit" and by "His grace" (check the scriptures if you have a concordance).

If you are like me, you have an enemy who seems to work overtime at producing points of disconnect (tempting you to stop trusting or cease obeying) and then making you feel too crummy about it to draw close to God. Do what I do! Take the Hebrews 4:16 "elevator" instantly to the throne of grace as many times as you need to throughout the day. ***You will never wear out that heavenly welcome mat! That's grace poured out like gravy...***

From We to Thee

On the sawdust trail...



I am very happy to report that the Lord is still a carpenter at heart! How do I know this? Long years ago (BC in my life), I was a carpenter too. And a furniture maker. Although I hung up my hammer to follow Jesus into the mission field and later to seminary and parish ministry, I have "kept my hand in the game" doing projects around the house. Some are more challenging than others.

New Year's Day saw me buying oak to make a dresser for Eunice to match an antique piece my mother had passed on to me. This took me almost entirely out of my comfort zone! What do you do when you feel in over your head? I have been praying and seeking the Lord like crazy over every cut and design. That's how I KNOW that the Lord still loves carpentry--because He has been guiding me like a... well, a Master Carpenter, every step of the way! I hope you too are finding Him guiding you step by step in the things you love to do!

Steve and Eunice

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addictions. Even so, our goal for people is not just escape from emotional stress and its consequences, but full entry into true Kingdom living--plunging into the river of Peace that flows all around us from the throne of Grace.

Let's all jump in!

Sincerely,

Steve and Eunice Evans

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