



REFLECTIONS

January 19, 2020

"Be still, and know that I am God;"

Psalms 46:10

Be Still and Know

Memories of my hometown school years include a couple of our classroom clowns. In elementary school, Richie consistently found ways to interrupt our teachers with an endless array of antics that drew attention from the teacher's lesson. His hilarious conduct even found the teachers unable to conceal their laughter while still frantically trying to regain classroom order.

Eugene added equally clownish antics to our middle school classrooms when he moved to town. He had a knack for disrupting class with untimely requests for restroom breaks followed by some comical exit that left us unable to suppress our laughter. Of course, an orderly environment is important for students to concentrate attention on the teacher's lessons. Much to our teachers' chagrin, both Richie and Eugene masterfully diverted ours.

Jesus faced similar issues with his disciples. Remember when Jesus took Peter, James, and John to pray in Gethsemane only to find them sleeping? He asked Peter, "*Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?*" (Matthew 26:40)

Scripture tells of Jesus' long nights in prayer; so like most of us, the disciples were challenged to maintain their attention. Perhaps one of his long prayer sessions had once prompted one of his disciples to say, "*Lord, teach us to pray,*" (Luke 11:1) In response, Jesus taught them the beautiful prayer we know as The Lord's Prayer. But to pray all night, or to *pray without ceasing* as Paul encouraged the Thessalonians,¹ even Jesus must have engaged with God in something more than a list of requests. Perhaps most of that time Jesus simply directed his attention on being present with the Father.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30) Note that Jesus placed no requirement to utter a word—only, "*Come to me and [connect] with me.*"

Be still, and know that I am God. Sometimes, I find it helpful to enter prayer like a private tutoring session. With no one with me except the Teacher, I speak about anything I want him to hear. Then in the stillness, listen for his wisdom. Sometimes I hear him speak in the quiet of my mind. Sometimes I hear him through scripture, or what someone wrote or said. And sometimes in stillness, I simply feel his presence.

A classical definition of prayer is "lifting mind and heart to God." Prayer is communion with God. Communion forms a bond. A bond establishes oneness.

And Jesus was one with God.

You are the light of the world,

Richard +

www.reflectingthesavior.org

¹ 1 Thessalonians 5:17 NKJV

Permission is hereby granted for reproduction and redistribution of this edition of *Reflections* provided all applicable copyright laws are properly observed.

Your comments are welcomed and encouraged. Richard may be reached at richard@reflectingthesavior.org.



REFLECTIONS

January 12, 2020

**Train up a child in the way he should go,
And when he is old he will not depart from it.**

Proverbs 22:6

Train Up a Child

There's an adage that says, "It has been said that there are two things parents should give their children. The first is roots; and the other is wings" What a heavy responsibility! Parents hold delicate human lives in their hands; and most parents seem imbued with love for each child to do their very best to prepare them with roots and wings to face the life ahead. But as I think of this familiar adage, I find myself as a beneficiary of those roots and wings my parents worked so tirelessly to provide.

Through the years, *Reflections* have often noted the blessing my parents were in my life. But alongside them during those nurturing years stood my grandparents behind them and close friends encircling them. Collectively they taught principles to live by through the stories they told and set examples by the way they lived them out. Looking back, those lessons shaped my perspective of life and instilled the values for how I have chosen to pattern my life.

At no time during those years did I sense any intentionality or duty from any of them to train up a child. They just did it. All of them gave me their attention willingly and freely. Without their attention, it seems unlikely I would have given much attention to them. From Mema reading me Bible stories, or Millie challenging me to competitive card games, or J.P. teaching me hit, throw, and catch a baseball, I learned about life and how to live it.

I watched Mema live what she taught as a Sunday school teacher until she was 90 years old. Millie's games instilled my competitive spirt; and my hand-eye coordination from J.P.'s training proved to open more doors for me than I can count.

Train up a child in the way he should go, the proverb says. But parents don't have to go it alone. Mom and Dad were blessed with a team to help—my grandparents who had trained them well, and a circle of friends who served the Lord and lived principled lives. Perhaps this child of theirs fell short of everyone's hopes; but today he looks back in thanksgiving for all those whose love and training helped give him grow roots and wings to become me.

And it seems now the proverb ascribes responsibility for more children than our own. We are all God's children. And we should feel blessed when God chooses us to help give roots and wings to some of them not our own. He assigned such a team to Mom and Dad.

And I have been blessed by it.

You are the light of the world,

Richard +

www.reflectingthesavior.org



REFLECTIONS

January 5, 2020

**The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not want.**

Psalms 23:1 NKJV

The Shepherd

Through the passenger car window, it's impossible to remove my eyes from the kaleidoscope of color passing by. Restful meadows, serene waters, powerful ocean waves, and mountains' majesty reveal God's inspiring presence in every scene. No person in the world can create such magnificence. Strange, though, that no other passenger sees the world passing by as I see it. Even those seated nearby experience it differently. We ride the train of time together, but everyone aboard travels on a track unique to themselves alone.

The Lord is our shepherd, yours and mine. He is a *lamp to [our] feet and a light for [our] path[s]*² leading each of us down our unique tracks of life. We pause with him from time to time to find comfortable places to rest our minds, relax our bodies, and restore our spirits. But our journeys are never without its trials

Many times our lives pass through desolate places—starkly barren places, blanketed with suffocating sand and lifeless seas. And evil in its many forms rears its ugly head—pride seeking to confuse God's provision *through us* with attainments *we claim*; gluttony's insatiable appetite for more, and greed caressing possessions, position, and power. But we have no fear of them. The Shepherd is always there with his protective shields and comforting presence.

Then one day, toward journey's end, we look back at it all to discover that every place along the way prepared us for the place we were going next. And, standing in awe of God's ineffable love poured upon us, we drop to our knees, overflowing with thanksgiving, to see:

The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not want.

2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures;

He leads me beside the still waters.

3 He restores my soul;

He leads me in the paths of righteousness
For His name's sake.

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil;

For You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

You anoint my head with oil;

My cup runs over.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

All the days of my life;

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord

Forever. (Psalms 23 NKJV)

You are the light of the world,

Richard +

www.reflectingthesavior.org

² Psalms 119:105

Permission is hereby granted for reproduction and redistribution of this edition of *Reflections* provided all applicable copyright laws are properly observed.

Your comments are welcomed and encouraged. Richard may be reached at richard@reflectingthesavior.org.