

Sisters for Yah

Simon's World

(By Sister Debbie Reed)

He arrived somewhat portentously during a full moon on Friday the 13th with the umbilical cord wrapped around his neck. The skillful ministrations of the four midwives in attendance made short work of the problem and a beautiful auburn-haired baby boy made his entrance into this life as we know it. Simon was ecstatically welcomed with armfuls of love and visions of hope for his future.

Over the next several days, I watched and listened as Simon's mother rocked him, sang songs and softly whispered to him of the discoveries and joys he would experience in his life ahead. She told him of books he would read, foods he would relish, bicycles he would ride and rivers upon which he would canoe. Simon's mother spoke of people he would love, animals he would cherish, sunsets he would behold and laughter that would light up the wonderful world he had entered.

As Simon's grandmother, I experienced gladness, pride and fulfillment along with the relief that I could enjoy my grandson without the parental dilemma of sleep deprivation. I look forward to the delightful duties of introducing Simon to our farm: gathering eggs, milking cows, and harvesting honey from the beehives. I dream of taking long hikes in the forest to identify birds and trees while foraging for edible plants. I have blissful thoughts of baking Simon his first pumpkin pie and tucking him into bed on overnight visits. I imagine sitting in the bleachers at his little league games and cheering each and every time he catches or hits a baseball. So much happiness to come!

And yet ... what will our world be like as Simon grows? He is off to a good start. Blessed with good health, Simon has two parents who are educated, financially secure, married to each other and committed to loving, nurturing and protecting their young son. In addition, Simon has two sets of doting grandparents, two older brothers and several aunts, uncles, and cousins to round out his familial fortress. Many children do not possess such blessings.

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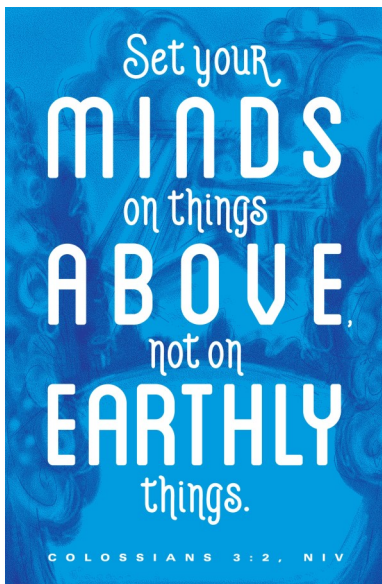
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But, beyond the security of food, shelter, clothing, and family, what else will Simon need to give peace and purpose to his life? I see the challenges ahead and know how trying they will be. He will experience scrapes and bruises to his knees as well as to his heart. He will face problems and be required to make choices. He will also make mistakes and endure guilt. There will be disappointments he will encounter and grief he will suffer.

Will Simon primarily seek entertainment and pleasure or will he find productive and virtuous activity to fill his days? Will he spend most of his time cloistered and gazing at screens in a virtual world or will he find knowledge and satisfaction in the natural world around him? Will he follow the whims of the ever changing popular culture or hearken to a universal truth? Will he grow to be a man of integrity, compassion and faith?

I want Simon one day to find life's meaning. I want his zest for life to remain undiminished as he matures and encounters the emptiness that will eventually come. I want Simon to know Yahweh. And, knowing Him, he will heed His call. And, heeding His call, he will not let the world turn him away. And, by not turning away, not be lost in the world.

But, these are the musings and fears of a grandmother who forgets at times to trust in Yahweh and His purposes. In prayer I will give my worries and trepidations to Him while I joyfully watch this precious boy grow.



Yahweh's High Standards

“Who may ascend into the hill of Yahweh? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart,” (Psa. 24:3-4a).

Yahweh has rigid requirements for those who want to enjoy intimate fellowship with Him. There is no easy access to Him for those with unclean hands or an impure heart. It is an affront to Him if we think we can indulge in our sin and blatantly disobey His Word. In Old Testament times, one's hands represented one's activities. The priests wash their hands before serving in the temple to symbolize that only those who were cleansed could serve Yahweh.

The moment you accept Yahshua's sacrifice and are baptized in His Name, you begin a relationship with Yahweh. However, we must begin a new life of overcoming. We cannot persist on doing things our own way. Sin does indeed separate us

from Yahweh, especially unrepentant sin. Actively practicing sin can keep us from enjoying close fellowship with Him. The closer we get to Yahweh, the more obvious our smallest sins become. We must be like the Psalmist (most likely King David) and understand the set-apartness of Yahweh. We will adjust our lives to His standards and respond to His prompting so that we may draw nearer to Him. Let us all wash our hands and purify our hearts!

Slip-sliding Away

(By Sister Debbie Reed)

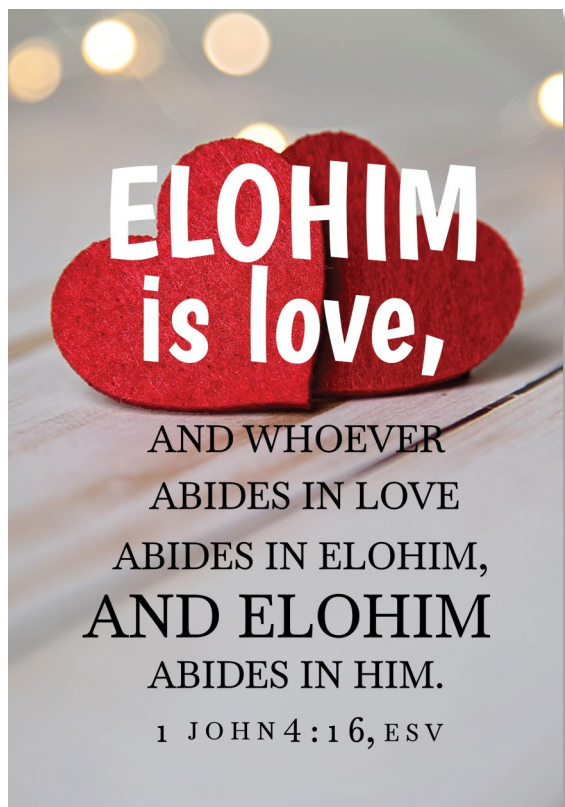
Generations come and generations go, but the earth remains forever, Ecclesiastes 1:4.

It is a gorgeous day in late May. My parents are here from Florida for a week, school is out and summer vacation has begun, freeing me from my teaching duties. My son is mowing the lawn and my daughter is playing with our two dogs, Chestnut and Annie. I, as usual, am in the kitchen adjusting the herbs and spices in the large amount of potato salad that I'm preparing for the barbeque we have for family and friends each year. My mother has been undergoing treatment for a rare autoimmune disease, but is responding well and we are hopeful that she will be cured. Basking in the love, smiles and sunshine, I savor these moments and imagine that life will continue on this way forever.

That was fifteen years ago ... This afternoon, among the falling leaves of autumn, I walked down to the pond to visit my parents' graves under the large hickory tree. Gazing at their gravestones, I remember my mom's happy chatter as we washed the dishes together and my dad's dry humor as he chided me for missing a crumb while wiping off the dinner table. I also recall their last days and wish I had been able to ease their suffering. I miss them so much.

Earlier this morning I talked to my daughter in upstate New York. Both she and our son are now married and living in other cities. We see them occasionally and speak to them over the phone often. On this overcast October day, as I walk home from the pond through the pasture, I can still hear children laughingly calling the dogs to come play. It isn't the same now. Those days are gone forever.

As we see the progression and changes in our lives, we all at some point question the purpose of our existence. In the short term, purpose can be found in our relationships with friends, family, community or work. But, friends leave; children grow up; parents die; communities change, and careers end. All that is left is the same question that has haunted and driven mankind since the beginning of time: "What is the meaning of it all?"



In Ecclesiastes 9:9, Solomon said, "Live joyfully with the wife who thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which He hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity ..." We are commanded to live joyfully. This excludes living with guilt, fear, avarice, jealousy, and hate. These emotions are all expressions of the ego ... that is, the self, and do not lead to joy. Are all of the desires and conflicts we experience worth the regrets and losses that we must later suffer? Is there a way we can change our attitudes, and ourselves in the process, to live joyfully and give joy to others?

This same verse also reminds us that our days are "vanity." Life passes quickly for each of us and nothing we can of ourselves do will insure that we, and those we love, will live forever. To think otherwise, is prideful delusion. King Solomon, in his great wisdom, concluded that the whole duty of man is to fear (love and respect) Yahweh and keep His commandments (Eccl. 12:13). When we do this, we will live with gratitude, gladness and hope — despite our troubles — and, by our example, encourage those around us. We will also inherit His promise — a promise we can hold onto: *He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away,* Revelation 21:4.

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Amazing slow-cooker Potatoes

- 1 bag diced potatoes (32 ounces)
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 can cream of chicken
- 1 t. garlic salt
- 2 cups shredded cheddar Jack cheese



Spray your slow-cooker with nonstick spray. Put in all the ingredients and stir to combine. Cook on high for 4 hours, or low for 8 hours. Stir a few times during the cooking process.

Mexican-style Pasta

- 16 ounces dry pasta, any shape
- 4 cups vegetable or chicken broth
- 1 can black beans (15 ounce), drained
- 1 can (14 ounce) diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1 yellow bell pepper, chopped.
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped
- 1 can corn, drained
- 1 can (10 ounce) enchilada sauce
- 2 T. taco seasoning



Optional toppings: Shredded cheese, cherry tomatoes, lime wedges, cilantro leaves, sour cream

Cook and drain the pasta. Sauté the peppers in oil till crisp tender. Mix all the rest of the ingredients. Bring to a boil and simmer about 12 minutes until slightly thickened.