

HUGS

Heartfelt, Uplifting, Guest Stories

DEVOTIONS FROM OUR CHURCH FAMILY

MARCH 19, 2020



Finished Before It Was Started

On page 646 in our song book, Praise for the Lord, there is a hymn entitled, "The Love of God." It was written by Frederick Martin Lehman in 1917. You will notice that the third stanza was written in 1050, by a Jewish Rabbi, Isaac Nehorai. The circumstances of the writing of the first two stanzas of this hymn and how they were connected to the third, make up "the rest of the story".

Lehman penned the first two verses of this song after being inspired by a sermon delivered the night before at a local camp meeting. It was the general belief that all good hymns should have at least three stanzas and he could not come up with a third. He did, however, remember a story of the words of a beautiful poem found over 200 years earlier on a cell wall that had been copied and preserved by a painter prior to painting the cell. Who wrote them on the prison wall will forever remain a mystery. They were added as the lyrics of the third verse to Lehman's hymn. The words were later traced back to a poem written by Nehorai.

Here are the beautiful words of verse 3:

*"Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made;
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of God above
Would drain the oceans dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole
Tho' stretched from sky to sky."*

-Kerry Brandon

Contentment

Contentment is described as a disposition of mind undisturbed by anxiety or envy.

I have observed that those who have much, worry about losing it, but those who have little more than the necessities of life are more content and have less anxiety. When I was a child during the Great Depression, my family had very little. Being born to Christian parents was such a blessing. We had love and contentment but very little income. At times my father became stressed out, feeling he was a failure because he was unemployed. He worked on the WPA, a government project for those who needed work. Even in this situation, we had a measure of contentment because of God's word. Ten miles was considered a long way to go back then, but we always drove the ten miles to the nearest Church of Christ on Sunday morning and night, taking a widow lady with us. As the depression improved, my father got his good job back.

Living in unison with those around you contributes to your contentment. Surround yourself with people who are making an effort to please God. God's word advises us, "But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content" (1 Timothy 6:8). The Bible also says, "Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you'" (Hebrews 13:5). How wonderful to know that God will never leave us! We must be sure we never leave him!

I leave you with this thought: "But godliness with contentment is great gain" (1Timothy 6:6).
--Imogene Hulsey

Oh, Be Careful Little Mouth, What You Say!

"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer" (Psalm 19:14).

One of my favorite quotes is "Live in such a way that if anyone were to speak badly of you, no one would believe it." Sometimes it is hard for us to not be concerned with what others say or think about us. It's human nature to want people to like us and say nice things. Not being consumed with others' thoughtless words is a life lesson we all have to learn. After all, I can only control myself, my thoughts, my actions, and my words. Let's face it, there are gossips, liars, and jealous individuals out there that will try and tear you down to make themselves feel better. I don't think it actually makes them feel better, but it happens, and we all know people like this. Therefore, the best thing I can do is to live the best Christian life I can, to try to please the one person who matters, God.

On the flip side, H Jackson Brown, Jr. said, "Let the refining and improving of your own life keep you so busy that you have little time to criticize others." Let's strive to never let our words cause grief and discouragement in the lives of others. We never want to be *that* person that doesn't think about the consequences of their words before they speak. You will never be able to control the thoughts, words, and actions of others so don't concern yourself with those things. Concern yourself with you.

--Diana Hunt

Reflections

The year was 1946. I had just had my eighth birthday a few weeks before and was starting third grade. Things were going to be different that year, because my mother was going to be a teacher. There was a new male teacher in the high school, who would also become the principal of the school.

There were only two men who were teachers then, so they kind of stood out from everyone else. This new man was a big guy, and he was kind of intimidating to little guys who were always wrestling and scuffling. This big man would just put his big hand on top of your head and squeeze gently, turn your eyes right up to his and softly say you shouldn't be doing that. If he thought you didn't agree with him, he would squeeze some more, and the pressure would increase until you were persuaded to see his point of view. Every

kid in school learned quickly to respect this man.

Two years later, this man became the basketball coach. I also saw him in church every Sunday. He was a good song leader, and when I got to be a teenager, he was my Sunday school teacher.

In the summer, all the boys in town met at the schoolhouse to play baseball. We would go to the school building to get water and this principal-teacher-coach would be painting or doing other maintenance chores that needed doing while school was out. You could hear him singing, "*Above the Bright Blue*" all over the building. He always opened the building for us so that we could get a drink.

"Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

--Robert Hall

Listen and Do

Growing up as kids, we are told to listen, which is usually followed with instructions of something to do. Now that I have kids, I understand the potential for parents to get frustrated with their children. There are things we tell them to do, but they don't listen; or, they listen, but they don't do. Lately I've been trying to teach my kids to listen, pay attention to what I'm instructing, and then do what I have said. Most of the time "the doing" is the hard part.

As Christians, we struggle with the same thing. We go to Bible class, worship service and read the Bible often, yet we neglect to do what God commands. We hear but overlook the "doing." Many of us have been in Bible class since we could sit up on our own. We know the stories word for word and have heard them over and over. Nonetheless, we fail to put into action what we are supposed to do.

I can only imagine how God feels—sitting there, watching us listen, but not doing. Luke 6:46 reads: "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" I see frustration in this passage just as parents get frustrated with their kids when they don't do as asked. Yes, we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), but we can't use that as an excuse. We need to strive to listen, but not just listen, we need to "do" what God utters.

--Kevin Hunt

