

ON EAGLES' WINGS

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God has called us to be eagle Christians. Even back in the time of Isaiah the eagle symbolized freedom, power, and victory. Isaiah 40:31 is a beloved passage, "...they that wait upon the Lord shall mount up on wings as eagles....(KJV). But how do we soar as an eagle when we live in this world? Let's explore that question.

A Hostile Environment

Some time ago, a friend of mine was working while her office building was being painted. She continued to work in spite of the strong paint fumes. In a very short period of time she was overcome by the strong fumes and had to be hospitalized. As a result of that experience she suffered a long term toxic reaction to chemicals. The environment in which she lived had become hostile to her. For the next two years my friend confined herself to a small room where no chemical fumes could enter. It was as if she had become an alien on earth suffering from the earth's atmosphere.

Both the writer of Hebrews and Peter viewed we Christians in this world in a similar manner. They said that we are "aliens and strangers" in the world. (Heb 11:3 and I Pet 2:11). And they are right! Christians are not and should not be compatible with the world's environment.

The Problem:

But here is our problem: We are born into this world, we are educated in this world, we work in this world, indeed, we live 24 hours a day in this world. Consequently we are trained to think as the world thinks. We learn that we are "controlled" by the laws of the world -- the laws of physics, economics, logic, and so on.

Then one day we hear the good news of Jesus' love and sacrifice for us. We learn that He died for our salvation. With repentance for our sins, we ask Jesus into our hearts and become born again. At that moment we become a "new creation." "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! (2 Cor 5:17 NIV).

As a new creation, we now have access to a new source of power, a new source of information, and a new resource for our daily living. The only problem is that the old training we have received from the world still tenaciously clings to us. It stubbornly refuses to give way to the new.

At this point the mind becomes a battlefield. Every time there is a life problem, the mind immediately draws on its training from the world and says, "No problem, I'll take care of this! I have logic, reason, psychology, and lots of education. I can do anything with my resources." The spiritual man sees the problem from God's view and tries to overrule the mind with spiritual solutions. But the mind tries very hard to not yield to the new spirit within. Here's how Paul describes this battle:

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Cor 2:14 KJV).

As a result of this battle, unbelief, doubts, and fear grip our hearts and minds. We are plagued with such thoughts as "I can't", "God won't"...and the ever-present "what ifs" of life.

As these thoughts drag us down, our newly born spirit is held captive in a "hostile environment." It is an environment in which God never intended us to live. As this process continues one of two things will happen to us:

1. Conformity to the World

One who remains trapped in the world's environment long enough -- not fed with the proper spiritual food -- will eventually become conformed to the environment. Even though one is genuinely born-again he or she will eventually become so conformed to the world that there is no difference between himself and one in the world. This person is not necessarily mired in blatant sin. He or she is just indistinguishable from an unbeliever.

Of course, in conforming to the world the person in this category may fall into deep sin. After all, the enemy's job is to "rob, kill and destroy." (John 10:10). Most tragically this kind of person may eventually destroy himself through sin, deception and/or unbelief.

2. It May Cause A "Toxic Reaction"

The other alternative is that one may become so repulsed by this world and its sin, violence, deception, and so on, that he or she reacts against it. We cry out, "God! Deliver me! Set me free from this toxic world!" Just like my friend I told of earlier we feel forced to withdraw from the vileness of this world. We seek a sanctuary in Christ and under His sheltering wings. We fall in love with His Word. Yes, we do indeed become aliens and strangers in this world.

Let me tell you the story of a hunter on a high mountain who came across an eagle's nest. Near the nest lay the dead mother eagle. She had died from a hunter's wound. In the nest was the mother eagle's egg. The hunter decided to help the dead mother eagle by taking the egg home to be hatched. When he got home, he placed the eagle egg in a chicken's nest along with the chicken's eggs. In time all the eggs hatched and the little baby eagle began to act just like the little chickens.

As the little chicks and eaglet grew, the eaglet continued to imitate the chicks. They walked around, scratching and pecking the ground all day long, day after day. They never flew and it seemed that they never raised their eyes above the ground. Several weeks went by and the little eaglet's wings grew and grew. One day the little eaglet raised his eyes and saw another eagle soaring high above the ground.

A strange desire flooded his little breast! **He** wanted to do that!

But he thought, "I can't do that...I'm a chicken. Chickens don't soar like that." The little eagle watched the soaring eagle day after day. The desire to soar grew stronger and stronger until one day, by faith, he spread his wings and leaped into the air. Flapping his wings vigorously, over and over again, much to his amazement, he lifted into the air and began to rise into the blue sky! On and on he flew until the chicken pen that had held him captive became very small. "This is where I belong!" he thought. "This is where I shall remain. I'll never again return to that chicken pen -- scratching in the dirt with those chickens... **I am an eagle!**" Note that the eagle was still in the world. He didn't somehow totally escape from the world. He just found his rightful place in it!

Through our new birth in Christ we are made to be eagles. Jesus has prepared a new dwelling for us. The Apostle Paul described it:

And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. (Eph 2:6-7 NIV).

This is our home. This Christ centered world becomes our **natural** environment. This is the place our Father has ordained for us.

Most unfortunately, many of us continue to look at ourselves as if we were still chickens. Even after rebirth we remain in the chicken pen of this world. We continue to allow its philosophies, values, ideals, and morality to keep us scratching in the dirt with the rest of the world's "chickens."

Scripture Is the Way We Soar With the Eagles

Once we see the spiritual truth of what Jesus has done for us and our true place in Christ, we ask, "**How** do I get there from here?" I have a simple answer to this question. Note I said a simple answer, not necessarily an easy answer!

Commit To Apply Scripture To Your Situation

We must apply Scripture to our own life on a daily basis, in every circumstance of life. (Of course, I assume here you are among those who do believe that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God. If you are among those who don't believe that, you are earth bound!) In your heart make a solemn declaration before God, the devil and yourself. Say, "God, as best as I know how from this day onward I hereby commit to apply your Word -- what the Bible says -- to my circumstances. I shall no longer remain captive to this hostile environment...I'm tired of scratching with the chickens! I want to soar to my rightful home -- seated with Christ in the heavenlies!"

But How Is This Done?

Once that declaration is made, the questions immediately arise, "How does this happen? What do I do now?" I have outlined below a four-step plan that works. These four steps will blow the rushing wind of the Holy Spirit

into your spread wings. He will lift you to your rightful habitat as you implement these four steps as a new lifestyle.

Remember, it **must** be a lifestyle, not a "trial run" to see if it works. One must embody these four steps as part of one's life...permanently.

1. Immerse Yourself In the Bible

By this I mean you are to firmly set apart a special time **every day** for prayer and Bible reading. Every believer must set aside a period of time (a half-hour is an absolute minimum!) in which there are no disturbances and devote this time to God and His Word.

Don't expect lightening bolts. In fact, don't expect anything. Just do it. But, as you continue to have this quiet time with the Lord, a gradual change takes place in your human spirit. Daily, your spirit begins to grow and strengthen. Daily God's Word is being written in your mind and spirit. It is here that the Holy Spirit can show you Scripture that He wants to use on your behalf. If you are not spending time reading Scripture, then the Holy Spirit has nothing from which to draw.

2. Memorize Scripture As the Holy Spirit Illuminates It

The most effective means available of getting Scripture into your heart and mind is to memorize it. I don't care if you are 85 years old, you can memorize!

As you begin to daily read the Bible, the Holy Spirit will illuminate certain verses to you from time to time. These are the verses you are to memorize. You may memorize more if you wish, but always commit to memory those He shows you. When God speaks, listen! Faith comes by hearing God speak to you. (Rom 10:17).

I find that the best time to do this is early in the morning. My mind is fresh. The world is still asleep and it is quiet. "But I can't get up any earlier. I'll be too tired." If that's true, then go to bed earlier! Yes, I do mean turn off the TV or cut short your evening activities. After all, the only way these principles are going to work is if they are implemented through a real change of lifestyle.

3. Daily Repeat and Pray Scripture Back To God

In the early stages of your study and memorizing Scripture, it is a good practice to repeat the verses back to God every day. Do this orally, aloud -- don't just "think" the verses in your mind. God wants to hear words.

Take words with you
and return to the LORD.
Say to him:

"Forgive all our sins
and receive us graciously,
that we may offer the fruit of our lips...."
(Hos 14:2 NIV).

My wife, Carolyn, has developed a very effective way of "praying God's Word" back to Him. Here is how she would pray if she were troubled with "wrong thoughts" concerning a situation.

After memorizing 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, Carolyn personalizes it as follows:

"For though **I** live in the world, **I** do not wage war as the world does. The weapons **I** fight with are not the weapons of this world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. **I** demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and **I** take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." (NIV)

Carolyn continues to pray each part of the above Scripture something like this:

"Lord, I do live in this world, but I declare that I do not need to wage war as the world does. I have weapons that are much more powerful than anything this world has to fight with. My weapons have divine power. With these weapons of divine power, I do this day demolish every stronghold of darkness that comes at my mind and my emotions. I do demolish every argument that comes into my mind that tries to defeat the true knowledge of God within me. No pretension that sets itself up to rob me of the true knowledge of God will have any power over me, over my mind, my body, or my emotions. And I declare, by the power and authority I have in Christ, that I will take every thought captive and I will make it obedient to Christ Jesus. I will not allow any thought to rob me of my faith in Christ, my peace in Christ, or my power in Christ. I declare this to be so to every power of darkness which tries to send fiery darts into my mind. I will not be defeated. I will have victory in every thought this day and forevermore, in Christ Jesus, Amen."

Once you have memorized the Scripture the Holy Spirit quickens to you, learn to use it as a very effective prayer tool. God's Word is life. When you pray Scripture, you are praying life into every situation.

To assist in this process I have chosen some common problems and listed selected Scripture often used to overcome the problems.

Trials

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice in that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. (1 Pet 4:12-13 NIV).

Spiritual Warfare Over Our Minds and Thoughts

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons

we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Cor 10:3-5 NIV).

Anxiety and Worry

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me--put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. (Phil 4:6-9 NIV).

Provision

And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:19 NIV).

Of course, these are just a few of the better known Scriptures. There are dozens if not hundreds of wonderful passages from which to choose. Ask the Lord by His Spirit to show you which Scriptures you need and when. He will be faithful to answer.

4. Do What The Scripture Says

Jesus said, "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and **puts them into practice** is like a wise man who built his house on the rock." (Matt 7:24 NIV, emphasis added).

I cannot overemphasize this point. It is absolutely vital that we do whatever the Scripture says. In order for the Holy Spirit's wind to give lift to our spiritual wings, we must be doers of the Word.

Here's How: After you have memorized the relevant Scripture, analyze it. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you the meaning of the passage. Then analyze your problem or circumstances. Finally apply the principles and directives in the Scripture to the situation.

Let me use three illustrations to show you how to put scripture into practice.

a. Problem With Fear

Fear is a common problem. I have counselled numerous people who are plagued by fear: fear of finances, fear of sickness, fear of flying, fear of death...the list is almost endless. The enemy uses fear as a very effective tool to defeat us or neutralize us in God's kingdom.

Let's suppose you have a fear of flying. Here is the first Scripture anyone with fear should memorize:

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of sound mind. (2 Tim 1:7 KJV).

After you have memorized this verse, you must pray it over and over again into the heavenlies. You must affirm both to God and to the demonic world that you will not have a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power in Christ! You boldly declare that the power of Christ in you is more than enough to overcome your fear of flying. Then, you must go to the travel agent's office and buy a ticket on an airplane. And then you must fly as the Lord has directed you! I'm not saying it will be easy, but it is the way to be a doer of the Word, not just a hearer.

b. Lack of Provision

Let us suppose you have no job and your money is running out. Of course, you have already memorized Philippians 4:19, "And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus." (NIV). As you repeatedly pray this verse you look for a job with great diligence and with the confidence of the Scripture verse you have memorized. You are free to remind the Lord that His Word says He will meet all your needs. Thus, as you do everything you can to get a job, you pray with confidence the living and powerful Word of God.

c. Problem With Temptation

All of us have problems with temptation. It's very strange that every time we find ourselves being tempted we feel as if we are the only one with this problem. Here's the first temptation verse to commit to memory:

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. (1 Cor 10:13 NIV).

After praying and quoting this verse back to God as often as you need to, ask God to show you the way out. He will always be faithful to show you what you must do in order

to overcome the temptation. I'll tell you now the "way out" probably won't be easy...but it is the only way out! As the Lord shows you what you must do, DO IT! And do it with all the diligence you can find within you.

Remember, "I can do **everything** through him who gives me strength." (Phil 4:13 NIV, emphasis added). The process of obedience is simply doing what one knows to be right...one step at a time.

God's Command

I cannot overemphasize the reality of the living and all powerful Word of God as a powerful vehicle by which we can begin to soar as the eagle into the heavenlies. Here is how important God says Scripture should be to us:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. (Deut 6:4-9 NIV).

God, grant that Your Spirit direct our minds and thoughts each day of our lives. Thank You for Your living Word. Grant that we learn to love Your Word and the time spent with You each day. Give us the ability to not only memorize Your Word, but to put it into practice in our lives. Thank You, Lord, that You have given us a new home -- seated in the heavenlies with Christ Jesus. Thank You that You have made a way for us. Help us to soar on eagles' wings into our natural habitat. In the name of Jesus our Lord we pray.

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