
THE
LAND BETWEEN MINISTRIES™

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THE BEGINNING

Dear Friends,

For many of you, our paths have not crossed for awhile. Thus, a quick update is in order.

God graciously allowed me to attend Dallas Theological Seminary and graduate in 2006. It was a long-term goal to attend seminary, but the Lord led me to first gain years of life, work, and ministry experience overseas and here in the US.

Prior to moving to Dallas in '03, it was a privilege to work with Serving in Mission (SIM) at their US headquarters in Charlotte, NC. SIM is one of the largest church-planting mission agencies in the world. Previous to SIM, the Lord had me serve on various short-term assignments through the years with Trans World Radio doing program management, speaking, and editing work in four different countries. After graduating from Michigan State in '97, I moved to Grand Rapids, MI and worked in the telecommunications industry in various capacities, including hosting an evening

radio program for a large Christian radio station. Also, in Jan. of '01 it was incredible to complete a seminary course in Israel.

We all have different callings, but I always believed it was the Lord's plan for me to work and serve in a variety of capacities in order to be able to have a greater understanding of what others go through. I have a passion to bridge the vast riches of God's Word with every day life issues. Thus, it has been a goal for many years to found a ministry that God could use to further His eternal kingdom.

In a nutshell, this ministry seeks to advance the kingdom of Christ around the world by equipping believers with teaching that is founded on the Word of God. Would you consider praying about supporting this ministry through prayers and/or finances? Whether or not you give, please know that the Board of Directors and I hope you will use this ministry as one of many sources of Biblical encouragement. We look forward to serving you in the future.

— Sincerely, Joel Francis, Th.M.

Joel Francis—Short Profile

Education:

Dallas Theological Seminary — 4 yr. Master of Theology (Th.M.). Concentration: Old Testament studies.
Honors Graduate: May, 2006.

Michigan State University — Bachelor of Arts—Telecommunications (Business).
High Honors Graduate: May, 1997.

Work / Ministry Experience:

- Telecommunications (Business), Marketing/ Management (Internet, wireless, Christian Radio host, etc.).
- Missions: 2 yrs: Overseas missions in Africa, Europe, Antilles. 1.5 yrs: US.
- Local Church: Preaching, teaching, Bible Study leader. Christian Service Brigade leader/ Discipleship, Music.

DID YOU KNOW THAT:

- *More people are coming to Christ, even in heavily persecuted countries, than any other time in history.*
- *More Christians have died for their faith in Christ in the past one hundred years than any other century.*
- *A significant number of scientists at leading universities know that evolution is a flawed theory and that the universe has an Intelligent Designer—God. But in order to keep their jobs they teach the unverifiable, mythical, lie of evolution.*
- *Reliable research reveals the key cause of marital breakups is due to one or both spouses not developing the skills of peacefully working through conflict.*

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HE TOOK THE MIDDLE CROSS

BY JOEL FRANCIS © 2007

“Are you in the middle of something?” is a common question. Many answer, “Well, I’m busy, but...” Hardly anyone is not in the *middle* of something or not busy. That’s life. On a macro level, we are living in the ‘*middle*’ between eternity past and eternity future. Some say our life is just a ‘*blip*’ on the radar screen of eternity. It might be helpful to think of our lives as a ‘*blip*’ in order to motivate us to prioritize things in our life that have eternal significance. Yet, it is dangerous to *only* see our lives as a ‘*blip*’ because it can lead us to believe that how we live for Christ in this ‘land between’ time on earth as really not that important. But, Jesus died on the cross to save us from our sin not only so we could be with Him in heaven, but to abundantly live out His will for our lives here on earth (Jn. 10:10). Although our time here on earth has its share of heartache, loss, and death, the cross impels us to share the Gospel (Mt. 28:18-20) and live as instruments of righteousness (Rom. 6:13). But what about the cross today?

“ARE YOU INTENTIONALLY SEEKING WAYS TO STEP INTO THE LIVES OF OTHERS TO SHOW THEM CHRIST’S LOVE AND TO PRAY FOR THEM?”

Many churches today no longer have crosses at the front of their sanctuaries because it might be ‘offensive’ to seekers. We tend to shy away from the cross in our sermons and conversations, other than while sharing the Gospel. Why is this? One reason is that we equate the ‘cross’ with a ‘loss’ and our culture rejects ‘losers.’ The ‘cross’ was a form of execution used for hundreds of years in the ancient Near East and Roman regions. The Pharisee’s knew that other

Jews would consider Jesus to be “cursed” because He was hung on a tree/cross (Deut. 21:22-23). They surmised that if they could get the Roman government to kill Jesus on a cross, then no Jew or Gentile would believe Jesus to be the true Messiah because He would be “cursed” according to their law. Their plan failed. Jesus carried His horizontal cross to its vertical stake and died as the sinless sacrifice for a sinful world of dying people.

We may not know the location of Jesus’ *crucifixion* around Jerusalem, but we do know the location of Jesus’ *cross*: It was in the *middle*, between two guilty criminals. But, is Jesus’ cross, the middle one, significant?

After a busy week of work in Charlotte, NC, I headed over to the Blue Ridge mountains. After many weeks of constantly being on the go, I forced myself to sit down and have time alone with God in His creation. While enjoying the view from a hillside, I noticed three large trees right next to each other. The longer I looked at the trees, the

more the middle one stood out. Although I had known it for years, it struck me again how Jesus took the *middle* cross...He came to earth *between* eternity past and future to *intercede* on our behalf. But, the story doesn’t end there.

The cross is still significant. What are some lessons from the cross we can apply to our lives as believers today?

1. *We are commanded to sacrifice our bodies for Christ (Rom. 12:1).* What does that mean? Part of what it means is to always be asking, “Would this behavior of mine be pleasing to the Holy Spirit?” (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Billy Graham said that when he talks with people, he’s always asking the Lord to show him how to interact with the other person. It also means wanting to study Scripture in order to find out how to no longer live the way we want to live, but how God’s Word tells us. How many people do you know like that? You can be one of them. But, it’s rare. Sacrifice is not something that is valued in our “health and wealth” culture. Yet, Rom. 12:1-2 is not a suggestion, it’s a command that if obeyed will bring you deep joy, even in the midst of difficulty.
2. *We are to intercede for others.* Jesus stepped into the middle of a sinful world, died in the middle of two guilty criminals, and rose again in order to fill the chasm between heaven and hell (Lk. 16:26) for those who trust in Christ as their Savior (Jn. 10:9). Jesus still intercedes for us (Rm. 8:34). Likewise, are you purposefully seeking ways to step into the lives of others to show them Christ’s love and to pray for them?
3. *We do not always get what we ask for...we get more.* It seems wrong that sometimes when we pray for God to intercede for us, “things” get even worse (i.e. circumstances). Jesus prayed that He would not have to go to the cross (Mt. 26:39), but “things” (circumstances) got worse for Him. Yet, even on the cross, Jesus was not focused on His circumstances. The criminal who refused to criticize Jesus, asked Jesus to remember him in His kingdom (Lk. 23:40-42). The criminal wanted to be remembered sometime in the future. How did Jesus respond? He gave him *more* than he asked. He said, “...today you will be *with me* in paradise.” Not purgatory: Paradise...on that day. The focus of Jesus was the criminal *being with Him*, not eradicating his immediate suffering. Likewise, we’re not to judge God’s goodness based on the good or bad “things” we go through. But, you will experience within more *love, peace, and rest* when *obeying and relating with God* are priorities in your life today (1 Sam. 15:22).

HE HAS (NO) POWER! BY JOEL FRANCIS © 2007

Power. It's something we know about from childhood. Power can be used for good or evil. A wealthy businessman once told a Bible teacher, "Giving away my money is not a problem, but I will not give up my power." We have a desire for power that needs to be put in a right perspective if we are to be the type of disciples that Jesus expects.

In 1999 I served in Swaziland southern Africa, as a radio missionary. Long days of work in the studio were followed by a soccer ministry I began on Saturday mornings in the scenic countryside. After a session where a large group of guys came to play, I noticed a young man standing off to the side of the field. I motioned him to come and learn. He was hesitant at first, but then he came, with no shoes, as money is scarce there. He began kicking the ball, and one of the North American boys whispered to me, "He has no power" as a put down. I looked back at him, standing there proudly in his \$80.00 Nike's, and said, "I wouldn't have any power either if I didn't have any shoes." Instead of letting him stop me from helping the Swazi boy, I knelt down and began teaching him how to kick without shoes. Eventually, he began kicking so well that I had the North American retrieve the ball for us. I'll always appreciate the Swazi boy's big smile of gratitude as he was glad to have my help in learning how to kick better. All of us learned a little more that day that the truly powerful are not those who put down the weak, but those who seek to serve others (Mt. 20:26).

Holocaust victims were weakened and killed by their powerful Nazi captors. A key lesson can be learned from Corrie ten Boom's sister Betsie.

While atrociously tortured in a concentration camp, Betsie said to her Nazi captor that he could force her to do a lot of horrible things, but he could not force her to hate him. Betsie's testimony speaks to the decision we can all make to never let the enemy's power cause us to internally become hateful, bitter people. Does this mean that we are to succumb to evil and not flee it when we can? No. Unlike Holocaust prisoners, there are times when we have the freedom to flee the power of evil oppression. There were times Jesus' enemies tried to seize and kill Him, but He "...eluded their grasp" (Jn. 10:39). Jesus had all the power of the universe to 'get revenge' against His enemies, yet He sometimes chose to flee evil rather than stay and put up a fight.

There is an immense amount of wisdom we can learn from Jesus and how He used power and authority while on earth. But not many in Jesus' time here, were convinced of His wisdom in the use of His power and authority.

What was the attitude of the criminal on the cross who rejected Christ? He was angry at Jesus because He would not intervene and save them from imminent death on their crosses (Lk. 23:39). When we're in a bind, we can choose to be frustrated and ask, "Lord, why don't you help me?" But this only exacerbates the problem. Becoming angry with God, like the criminal who rejected Christ, will not help us get out of a bind. Jesus warned us we would have trouble while on earth (Jn. 16:33), but does that mean we're to 'roll over' and 'take it' when others come against us? No. Jesus illustrates for us in Mark's Gospel various ways in which He handled powerful attacks from others. At times He would say very little, and move on to minister elsewhere (Mk. 8:11-13), but there were other times he would give a long and firm rebuke to those who attacked His teaching and authority (Mk. 7:1-23).

Jesus did not cower away from adversity, thinking that if He just ignored the problem it would go away. Many Christians in our culture think that if we just give the forces of evil what they want, then things will be okay. In other words, "You do your thing, I'll do mine, and we'll be fine" type of thinking is not how Jesus lived. We should not equate "turning the other cheek" to enemies of Christ as meaning we just go silent and hope for the best. Jesus only went silent in the face of his adversaries when it was His appointed time to go to the cross (Mk. 15:5).

Some may ask, "What about the verse that says, 'when we're weak, then we're strong' (2 Cor. 12:10), and then another verse says we don't have a 'spirit of timidity, but of power...' (2 Tim. 1:7)? Are these verses contradictory?" No. Being "weak" means not being self-sufficient, as we are given the *unmatched power* of the Holy Spirit to guide us through life if we humbly obey Him (Jn. 14:26). So, when Satan, (which means, 'Adversary'), tempts you to think, "Jesus has no power" remember Matthew 28:18 and that all authority in heaven *and* on earth belong to Christ. The power of Jesus is infinitely greater than any of the evil powers of the Adversary, and Christ *will* avenge evil (Deut. 32:35; Heb. 10:30). But why doesn't Jesus use His power to stop the wars, famines, and pain? A short answer is that if Jesus were to immediately eradicate all evil and judge the world, no longer would an opportunity exist for the lost to find eternal life in Him; God's heart desire is that people repent from sin, not perish, but have eternal peace in heaven (2 Pet. 3:9). Trust in Jesus' power. *He has it forever.*



Victoria Falls

**"WHEN
SATAN...
TEMPTS YOU
TO THINK,
'JESUS HAS NO
POWER,'
REMEMBER
MATTHEW
28:18..."**

THE SILENT EPIDEMIC BY JOEL FRANCIS © 2007

From the minute you were born, you were being put down. Not exactly an encouraging thought! There is a constant truth for us who know Christ as our Savior: Satan still accuses us and attempts to abuse, discourage, and destroy the “abundant life” Jesus offers (John 10:10b). Satan’s abuse leaves people lost and hurt (John 10:10a).

What is the source of much of the pain? At times it is self-inflicted through sinful choices. Other times, it is from sources we do not choose. As long as we’re on earth, we cannot be completely immune from Satan’s attacks, which includes abuse from others and spiritual oppression. What can we do about it? Is there hope in these challenging days? Before looking at some answers, we need to review key Biblical examples of Satan accusing and abusing.

What was a strategy of the Serpent’s attack on Adam and Eve in Genesis 3? He tempted Adam and Eve to believe God was a liar who enjoyed withholding life, knowledge, and goodness from them. It’s the same today. If the Enemy can lure us into believing God is not completely good and honest, you will open yourself to having deep, long-lasting pain in your life. How is this? First, would you be inclined to take your problems to someone you thought was a liar? Not hardly. Without fully trusting in God and His perfect character, we will not take our challenges and problems to Him. As a result, we will suffer from carrying internal burdens we were never designed to carry. Without taking the burden of sin to Christ and having His forgiveness, the lost face eternity in hell. As for believers, we will suffer greatly if we choose to not cast all of our pain, abuse, and worries on Christ (1 Pet. 5:7). He *does* care. Another example of attack is recorded in Genesis 4. Cain was

“PEOPLE WHO HARBOR FALSE GUILT (TAKING THE BLAME FOR SOMETHING THEY DID NOT CAUSE) LIVE IN UNNECESSARY PAIN AND LOSS.”

truly guilty of sin by not bringing his best to God. Abel was living righteously, and God was at peace with him. As a result of Cain’s sinful choices he was downcast in guilt and he allowed jealousy and anger to well up in his life. Instead of humbly repenting, and finding healing from God, he chose to isolate Abel and kill him. As a result, Cain became a “restless wanderer” due to his sin (Gen. 4:12). There are many people today who might not geographically move often, but are “restless wanderers” inside and are looking for a way to take out on you the anger and guilt they refuse to turn away from and give to Christ. A point from Cain’s story is that when we are trying to minister to a “Cain” type of person, it is sometimes best to flee from their persecution rather than to ‘tough it out’ on our own (Matt. 23:10).

In contrast to Cain’s truly being guilty of sin, Mary was not guilty for becoming pregnant out of wedlock. When Mary discovered she was pregnant with Jesus, she knew she would face abuse and blame from Satan and society for something she did not cause. Mary could have been angry with God for His plan for her, but instead she said, “I am the Lord’s servant” (Lk. 1:38) and obeyed God by giving birth to the Savior. Yet, people who harbor false guilt (taking the blame for something they did not cause) live in unnecessary pain and loss. Finally, Satan’s tempting attacks on Jesus (Lk. 4) have the same core themes as his lies about God to Adam and Eve: God’s commands are restricting, God is robbing us of what should be ours, and other lies. Thus, when attacked, we should:

- 1) Resist the Enemy and obey the Holy Spirit’s counsel (Jn 4:7; Jn 14:26) and walk as we know how we ought.
- 2) Proclaim the promises of Scripture that God is good, loving, caring, and that no attack can break you from Him (Jn. 10:1-21, 28). Stand firm in the knowledge of the truth found only in Jesus Christ and the Scriptures.
- 3) Let other believers minister to you (Mt. 4:11). You did not come into this world on your own and God has designed you to live in fellowship with believers. Practice now what you will be doing for eternity!

We will be attacked by the Enemy of our souls until we are in heaven. Yet, during each assault God gives us a choice to resist evil and rely on the counsel of the Holy Spirit to be honorable sons and daughters of our *loving* Heavenly Father.

Upcoming Topics:

- † *Meditation — Is it about Candles & Dark Rooms?*
- † *Ignorance & Immaturity — Are They the Same?*
- † *Lessons from the Land of the Bible — Part I*

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