

# Mustard Seed

## Choose To Be Free

*Josh Lundberg*

*If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

*Colossians 3:1-4*

I recently heard Elizabeth Smart tell her heart wrenching story of being kidnapped as a 14 year old and living in captivity for 9 months. She told the horrors of having to wear a metal cord around ankle so she could not escape. She shared the details of how she was treated and what was done to her. 13 years later she still appreciates her freedom from her heinousness kidnappers. She chooses to live in that freedom by choosing happiness in spite of the atrocities that occurred. She will not live in mental or emotional captivity to the past actions done to her. She is now free and she chooses to be free.

At beginning of chapter 3 in the book of Colossians Paul transitions from theology to practice. He moves from the good news of what Christ has done for us to the Christian's response to that grace gift. It is here that Paul makes a powerful contrast that relates to the one who lives in captivity compared to the one who lives in freedom. In verse 2 Paul says, "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth". He then goes on to explain what it means to live with your mind set on earthly things and what it means to set your mind on heavenly things. Those who live with their minds below are consumed with sexual immorality, impure passions, evil desires, idolatry, malice and strife, envy, abusive language and lies. These things will display themselves in the life that is consumed with earthly things. However, the follower of Christ, who has placed his/her hope and trust in Jesus Christ, has been set free from the slavery of sin. The believer should display an entirely different set of passions and character.

(Cont. on Page 2)



### Inside this issue

- Choose To Be Free cont. 2
- In Pursuit ..... 2
- In Pursuit cont. .... 3
- What's Happening..... 4
- Congratulations ..... 5

### Special points of interest

- It is when we submit ourselves to these characteristics that we breathe life into our very souls and walk in weightless freedom.
- God was letting me know that no matter what changes are happening to me and around me He is here.

(Choose To Be Free Cont. from page 1)

The follower of Christ has been freed to display the very image of God (v.10). The ones who identify with Him will display compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. They will bear with other followers and be quick to forgive. They will be filled with love, peace and thankfulness. When our attitudes, motives, thoughts, actions and words are set on things above we will bear the very image of our Creator in these characteristics. It is when we submit ourselves to these characteristics that we breathe life into our very souls and walk in weightless freedom.

We live in a world obsessed with the very sins that Paul provides as evidence of earthliness, of living below, of living in that way that God hates. People love to live below. And yes, there are times that even Christians love to live below, to continue on

in those old patterns of sin.

In that contrast of below and above, we see that sin feels like freedom but is actually captivity. What feels like joyful self-expression is actually harmful wallowing. Sin proclaims its own authority, its own freedom to choose and its independence. But in reality those who continue with their minds set on earthly things are not free at all. They place themselves in captivity to the very sins they are meant to hate. True freedom is not found in pursuing sin but in rejecting sin. We are truly free when we are humble, thankful, gentle, forgiving, patient and compassionate. Choose to be free!

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## In Pursuit

*Dawn Wyse*

There has been a lot of change going on in my life lately. Now I am not the type of person who hates change, but I must admit that I prefer changes that I have chosen over changes that have been forced into my life. In fact, when change is forced on me, my immediate reaction is to dig my heels in and protest vehemently. Unfortunately, for me, most of the changes in my life right now are not ones that I chose. Let's just say that my heels are sore from digging in. This has caused my brain to work overtime and migraines to steal a couple more days of my life. It is a cycle of stress that I would recommend to absolutely no one.

I find myself in this situation often and every time I tell myself that I will never allow myself to take this path of dysfunction and stress again. Yet here I am once again. However, this time I feel like God tapped me on the shoulder (or more likely hit my incredibly hard head with a mallet), got my attention and taught me something useful in growing closer to Him and in not allowing this level of stress in my life.

One day I was reading Exodus during my devotion time. Exodus 3:13-14 stuck out to me: Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

The part of these verses that stuck out to me was that Moses wanted to know how God wanted to be shown to the Israelites. Egypt was a land with many different gods, each for a different purpose. Moses wanted to clarify how God wanted him to share God to the people. It made me think because I have never asked God to describe for me how He wants to be shared with a particular person.

(Cont. on page 3)



(In Pursuit, cont. from page 2)

Each person is unique and God has unique plan for each one. It is definitely something to consider, but this isn't what helped me in my stress.

I started to think about I AM. I read and reread the passage and considered this particular name for God and every time I thought of the words "I AM" I could almost hear the word "here" follow quietly after it. I AM here. That is what God wanted me to take away from that day's time of devotions and it has stayed with me. God is here. I AM here.

I wasn't sure exactly what God wanted me to see but the next day He added another piece to my lesson He was leading me through. Some of you may have guessed this already, but I have to admit I really enjoy reading. Recently, I have discovered an author that has challenged me in good ways. His name is Donald S. Whitney. In his book "Ten Questions to Diagnose Your Spiritual Health" he explains an intriguing exercise. *"Take a look around for a moment and notice everything in your sight that is blue. Go ahead. When you do, you develop "blue eyes," that is, eyes sensitive to the things around you that are blue. We need to develop "God eyes." We need to develop the sensitivity to see evidence of what we know to be true, namely, that God is with us. Look for God everywhere and in everything. Say to yourself often, "The Lord is here," especially in the ordinary places of life."* I realized then and there that I needed to start looking for God in all areas of my life. Then "I AM here" clicked nicely into place for me. God was letting me know that no matter what changes are happening to me and around me He is here. I only need to look in order to see Him.

Psalms 130:7-10 confirms this.

"Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?  
If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!  
If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,  
even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me."

So I thought my lesson was done. God was here and I only needed to remember this and look for Him.

Silly me. God had more for me to consider. As I was walking this morning and listening to a podcast (it's title was "Change or Die" so I should have known more was coming) the next piece was shown to me.

During this podcast they talked about how often we place our issues (or in my case my stresses) between ourselves and God. But we really need to place God between ourselves and our issues. I thought great. This matches up with everything else I was learning. Then the shoe dropped. There have been studies done on people with major heart trouble. When told by a doctor they need to change their lifestyle or they will die, only 10% of them have made the changes 2 years later. Ninety per cent continue to live the same way they did.

So I had to think. From God's perspective, how's my heart? I have to admit I have heart trouble. I focus on the changes and stresses in my life rather than remember that I AM is here. I haven't developed "God eyes", but I have developed "stress eyes." So what am I going to do? Will I be in the 10% that makes changes or will I hang out with the 90% that doesn't want to make the effort?

I am not sure of my answers. This will take hard core retraining of a major bad habit in my life. I pray I will allow God to make this change in my heart, because I know I cannot do it under my own power and will. It must be time for this renovation of my heart otherwise God wouldn't have brought it to my attention. That is an encouraging thought for me. Another encouragement is that I know that I AM is here and that never changes. Praise God! So I am choosing to learn to focus on God and not the stresses I have.

How about you? Do you have "God eyes?" Can you see I AM here? I pray you do, but if you are like me and need help in this area I am praying you will allow God to do a mighty work in you. Can't you see what an amazing thing it would be to have a body of believers overflowing with people with "God eyes"? Even the thought of it leaves me breathless in awe of our mighty God, the Great I AM.  
As always, in pursuit....

# WHAT'S HAPPENING!!!

*Ed V & Carol Miller*

Well, school is back in session and all the students and teachers are back in their classrooms. The summer has been great and August has given us lots of garden vegetables and plenty of work if you're in to "canning"! The "sharing table" at church has been full with cucumbers, squash, tomatoes, and more. The Summer Olympics have been entertaining with lots of human interest stories. OK, now for the news from the congregation.

Mary Fern Chupp got her picture in The Kalona News along with her pineapple plant. More than 10 years ago she bought a pineapple at a farmers market in Southern Texas. She brought it home ate it, and then planted the top in her garden. Finally after 10+ years of moving this plant in and out of the house to keep it from freezing, this pineapple plant finally produced its first pineapple. Good things come to those who wait!



Kendra Graber was married to Calvin Grosvenor on August 6, 2016. It was an outdoor wedding at the Wooden Wheel Vineyards. The newlyweds live in Wellman and Calvin works at Gingerich Well. Congratulations to the newlyweds and also Brent & Karla!

This year our church brought enough school supplies to make a total of 218 school kits. These kits will be sent to children by way of MCC to coun-

tries all over the world. Thanks to all of you who shared in this giving event!

Cal & Shirley Hochstedler celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary in August. Their entire family came home: Kristen's came from Indiana, Susan's came from Pennsylvania and Tim's came from Oregon. They all had a great time together and got to see lots of old photos as well. Congratulations!

There is a new hitching rail at the north side of the parking lot. Thanks to Larry Pickard, Dennis Chittick, Doug Slaubaugh, Justin Slaubaugh and Dean Schrock for installing the rail. Good job fellows!

Larry Pickard went to a family reunion this summer & in talking with his cousins, learned that they are related to the Milhous Family. Some of you may remember the name Milhous, because it was the middle name of the 34<sup>th</sup> president of the U.S. So it turns out that Larry's 4<sup>th</sup> cousin once removed is Richard Milhous Nixon. And they (Larry & Richard) both grew up in the Quaker Church! How about that!

Rachel Yoder & Carolyn Yoder, two sister-in-laws, rode in RAGBRAI this year. They rode their bikes from the Missouri River across Southern Iowa to the Mississippi River, a total distance of 420 miles. It was Rachel's 2<sup>nd</sup> time and Carolyn's 1<sup>st</sup> time. Congratulations for sticking with it for all 7 days!

So that's it for now. Enjoy the last days of summer as the Monarch Butterflies head south and oh yes, have a good September.

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## **Congratulations!**

*These people have reached a milestone,  
50 or more years of marriage, or 80 or more years of life  
Don't forget to send a card! The addresses are in your church directory.*

### **Wedding Anniversary:**

Owen & Ruby Miller ~ 60 years ~ September 9

John & Julie Gingerich ~ 51 years ~ September 11

Mahlon & Delores Leichty ~ 62 years ~ September 12

### **Birthday:**

John Wallerich ~ September 1

Owen Miller ~ September 12

Mary Ellen Miller ~ September 13

John Snyder ~ September 16

Emil Ropp ~ September 18

