

**Bicycles,  
Roller Skates,  
& Peanut Butter**

**Contemplative  
Verse #12**

2024 Christmas



# A Journey to Understanding

In a small, peaceful town, there lived three friends: Joe, Constance, and Jessie. Each had their own unique journey into the Christian faith, shaped by different experiences and scriptures.

Joe had always been a diligent student of the Bible. He knew many verses by heart and could recite them with ease. Yet, despite his knowledge, he felt a persistent struggle within him. He often felt that his faith was lacking something crucial, a deeper connection that he couldn't quite grasp.

Constance, on the other hand, was a woman of deep emotion and feeling. Her faith was vibrant and expressive. She would often feel overwhelmed by the presence of God during her prayers. However, these intense experiences left her drained, and she found it hard to sustain her faith in everyday life.

Jessie was practical and down-to-earth. He believed in living out his faith through actions and service. His life was a testament to his dedication to helping others. Yet, he felt that his efforts were sometimes met with frustration, and he struggled to understand the deeper spiritual truths of his faith.

One day, their paths converged at a local church retreat. The pastor, a wise and gentle man named Pastor Luke, spoke to them about Romans 6:6: "Our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be done away with, and we would no longer be enslaved to sin."

Pastor Luke emphasized that while their experiences and scriptures may differ, they are complementary. Any true experience of value to God comes from a new understanding of Jesus and His work on the Cross. He explained that the first step is to seek God's revelation—not about themselves, but about Jesus' finished work.

Inspired by his words, the friends set out on a journey of self-discovery and deeper faith.

Joe, realized that his struggle wasn't about knowing more scriptures but understanding the finished work of Jesus. He started to pray for revelation, asking God to open his heart to the true meaning of the Cross.

Constance understood that her intense emotional experiences, while valuable, needed to be rooted in the knowledge of Jesus' sacrifice. She began to seek a balance between her feelings and the truth of the Cross, finding a more sustainable and profound faith.

Jessie learned that his practical actions needed to be supported by spiritual understanding. He began to meditate on God and the work of Jesus on the Cross, finding strength and purpose in the knowledge that Jesus is the Vine, and he is a branch.

One evening, as the friends gathered under a starlit sky, they shared their experiences. Joe spoke of the peace he felt in understanding that his old self was crucified with Christ. Constance shared how her balanced faith brought her a deeper sense of connection to God. Jessie talked about the newfound purpose in his actions, rooted in the knowledge of Jesus' sacrifice.

Together, they realized that their journeys were not just individual but interwoven by the revelation of God and Christ's work on the Cross. They understood that living the normal Christian life was not about their efforts but about God's revelation, relationship, and grace.

And so, their friendship grew stronger, and their faith deeper, as they continued to walk the path of understanding, united by the knowledge that they were all in Christ as they grew in their relationship with God.

The end.

# Living in Divine Service (poem)

*A great part of the world, so free, with time and fortunes at their decree, yet freedom's gift does not bestow, A life to please mere fancy's glow.*

*No one at work, nor those with time, should live for ends that are not divine. Each action, task, and every plan must serve as worship, hand in hand.*

*Those with no set work to employ, Are not in greater liberty or joy. Instead, their call is higher still, to live for God, in His good will.*

*With freedom comes a sacred weight, to choose and act in ways so great. For they are ones who must aspire, to always do what God requires.*

*Much is given, much required, A higher aim, a heart inspired. To serve with all, in every deed, to meet the call, to fill the need.*

*In living thus, they find the way, To honor God in night and day. For in each choice, each step, each part, they live for God, with all their heart.*

## Explanation of poem:

Each stanza emphasizes the importance of using one's freedom and resources responsibly, aligning actions with God's will, and continuously serving and honoring God in every aspect of life.

### Stanza 1:

*A great part of the world, so free, with time and fortunes at their decree, yet freedom's gift does not bestow, A life to please mere fancy's glow.*

- **Explanation:** Many people have the luxury of free time and resources. However, this freedom should not be used to indulge in personal whims and desires only. It carries a greater responsibility.

## **Stanza 2:**

*No one at work, nor those with time, should live for ends that are not divine. Each action, task, and every plan, must serve as worship, hand in hand.*

- **Explanation:** Whether one is busy with work or has leisure time, all actions should be directed towards divine purposes. Every task and plan should serve as a form of worship to God.

## **Stanza 3:**

*Those with no set work to employ, Are not in greater liberty or joy. Instead, their call is higher still, to live for God, in His good will.*

- **Explanation:** Those without a fixed occupation are not more free or joyful. Instead, they have a higher calling to live with God and align their actions with Gods will.

## **Stanza 4:**

*With freedom comes a sacred weight, to choose and act in ways so great. For they are ones who must aspire, to always do what God requires.*

- **Explanation:** Freedom brings with it a serious responsibility to make wise and virtuous choices. People with freedom must strive to always act according to God's requirements.

## **Stanza 5:**

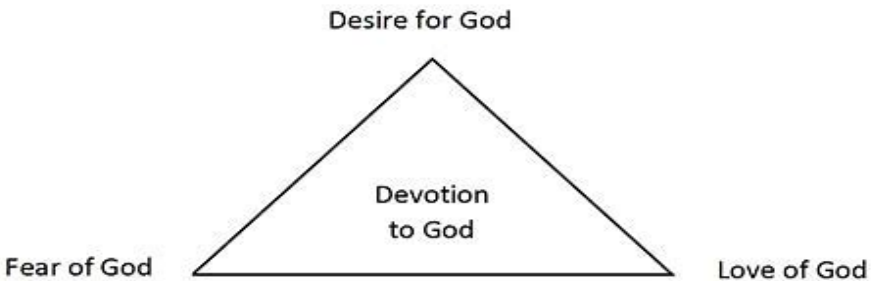
*Much is given, much required, A higher aim, a heart inspired. To serve with all, in every deed, to meet the call, to fill the need.*

- **Explanation:** Those who have been given much (in terms of time, resources, or talents) have a greater obligation to use these gifts responsibly. They should be inspired to serve God and others in all their actions.

**Stanza 6:**

*In living thus, they find the way, To honor God in night and day. For in each choice, each step, each part, they live for God, with all their heart.*

- **Explanation:** By living according to these principles, individuals honor God in every moment of their lives. Every choice and action reflect their devotion and love for God.



# The Veil of Innocence (poem)

*Gross sins are clear, easy to see, Avoided by those in piety. But lawful things, in their disguise, can lead to folly, often unwise.*

*A gentleman in sports indulged, A woman in adornment plunged, both can't perceive the subtle snare, of lives that lack religion's care.*

*They praise the faith, they speak it well, but in their hearts, it cannot dwell. For actions bound in worldly cheer, leave little room for God's own sphere.*

*A life of dress, adorned with gold, draws countless follies uncontrolled. Each taste and pleasure, fear and hope, entangled in a worldly scope.*

*Religion's laws must guide the way, In every act, in every day. To free the heart from vanity and live a life of sanctity.*

In summary, the poem emphasizes the importance of letting religious principles guide all aspects of life, rather than being distracted by lawful but ultimately superficial and worldly pursuits.

## Stanza 1:

*Gross sins are clear, easy to see, Avoided by those in piety. But lawful things, in their disguise, can lead to folly, often unwise.*

- **Meaning:** Major sins are obvious and easy for religious people to avoid. However, lawful or innocent things can be deceptive and lead to foolishness if not used wisely.

## Stanza 2:

*A gentleman in sports indulged, A woman in adornment plunged, both can't perceive the subtle snare, of lives that lack religion's care.*

- **Meaning:** A man who spends all his money on sports and a woman who spends excessively on



personal adornment fail to recognize that their lifestyles are lacking in religious and moral direction.

**Stanza 3:**

*They praise the faith, they speak it well, but in their hearts, it cannot dwell. for actions bound in worldly cheer, leave little room for God's own sphere.*

- **Meaning:** Although they speak highly of religion and faith, it doesn't truly guide their hearts or actions because they are too focused on worldly pleasures.

**Stanza 4:**

*A life of dress, adorned with gold, Draws countless follies uncontrolled. Each taste and pleasure, fear and hope, Entangled in a worldly scope.*

- **Meaning:** A life focused on superficial things like fashion leads to many other foolish behaviors. Their desires, fears, and pleasures become entangled in worldly concerns rather than spiritual ones.

**Stanza 5:**

*Religion's laws must guide the way, In every act, in every day. To free the heart from vanity, And live a life of sanctity.*

- **Meaning:** To live a truly religious and moral life, one must let religious principles guide all actions and decisions. This helps free the heart from vanity and leads to a life of holiness.



# The Master's Touch

*Joy, not found in words alone, its depth in life, its meaning shown. Not qualities from books we glean, but through a life lived pure and keen.*

*Apprenticeship in faith's true art, where master's wisdom shapes the heart. Through years of discipline, we see, what true devotion comes to be.*

*Verbal lessons will impart, but subtler ways train the heart. In daily walks and close embrace, we learn the rhythm, find the grace.*

*Timing, touch, so softly taught, in master's life, each moment caught. Through shared days and intimate sight, The Christian walk, a guiding light.*

*For skill in spirit, not just lore, Is learned by living, loving more. In master's steps, our hearts grow strong, in their example, we belong.*

*Thus, joy and faith, not cold and bare, are taught by those who truly care. Through daily love and constant touch, we learn to walk in grace, so much.*

*So let us seek the master's way, In every moment, every day. To live and learn, with hearts aligned, To find the joy in love divine.*

*For in their wisdom, deeply sown, we find the seeds of faith well grown. In every gesture, every word, the master's teachings are transferred.*

*Together in this sacred bond, we journey to the world beyond. With joy and faith our guiding light, we'll walk in grace, in pure delight.*

In essence, the poem emphasizes the importance of learning faith and devotion through close mentorship, daily interactions, and living examples, rather than just through books or verbal instruction. It highlights the deep, personal growth that comes from this intimate and consistent guidance.

# Connecting with God

When you stand still from the thinking of Self, and the willing of Self; when both your intellect and will are quiet, and passive to the Expressions of the Eternal Word and Spirit; and when your Soul is winged up, and above that which is temporal, the outward Senses, and the Imagination being locked up by holy abstraction, then the Eternal Hearing, Seeing, and Speaking will be revealed in you; and so, God hears and sees through you, being now the Organ of God's Spirit; and so, God speaks in you, and whispers to your Spirit, and your *Spirit hears God's Voice*.

Blessed are you therefore if you can stand still from *Self*-thinking and *Self*-willing and can stop the prevailing of your Imagination and Senses; for thus you may arrive at length to see the great Salvation of God being and be in earnest. What is there required of you, but to stand still, and see the Salvation of your God? And could you want anything less? For God knows what is best; and if you can but trust, God will most certainly do better for you, than if you were left to your own Choice”.

Connecting with God for God's guidance involves cultivating a deep, personal relationship with Him through various practices. Here are some ways to deepen that connection:

## 1. Prayer and Meditation

- **Regular Prayer:** Set aside time each day to talk to God. Share your thoughts, concerns, and thankfulness with Him.
- **Meditation:** Spend quiet time reflecting on God's presence and listening for His voice. This helps clear your mind and open your heart to His guidance.

## 2. Reading Scripture

- **Bible Study:** Read and study the Bible regularly. God's Word provides wisdom, encouragement, and direction for your life.

- **Reflection:** Meditate on specific verses and ask God to reveal their meaning and how they apply to your life.

### 3. Worship and Praise

- **Worship Services:** Attend church services to worship God with others and hear His Word preached.
- **Personal Worship:** Spend time in personal worship, singing praises and expressing your love for God.

### 4. Fellowship with Other Believers

- **Community:** Engage in fellowship with other Christians. Share experiences, pray for each other, and support one another in your faith journeys.
- **Small Groups:** Join a Bible study group or prayer group to deepen your understanding of God's Word and build meaningful relationships.

### 5. Obedience and Service

- **Obeying God's Word:** Follow the teachings of the Bible and live according to God's principles.
- **Serving Others:** Serve others in love and humility. Through acts of service, you can experience God's presence and guidance.

### 6. Seeking the Holy Spirit

- **Guidance of the Holy Spirit:** Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in your decisions and actions. Be attentive to the promptings and convictions that come from the Spirit.
- **Spiritual Gifts:** Discover and use your spiritual gifts to serve God and others.

### 7. Reflection and Journaling

- **Reflect on Your Journey:** Take time to reflect on your spiritual journey and how God has worked in your life.
- **Journaling:** Keep a journal to document your prayers, insights, and experiences with God. This can help you see patterns and growth in your faith.

## 8. Trust and Surrender

- **Trusting God:** Trust that God has a plan for your life and that He is always with you.
- **Surrendering Control:** Surrender your worries and desires to God, allowing Him to lead you according to His will.

By incorporating these practices into your daily life, you can cultivate a deeper connection with God and be more attuned to His guidance.



# The Christmas Miracle in Carmel

In the charming town of Carmel, nestled by the ocean, the Christmas season always brought a magical warmth that contrasted with the chilly winter air. This year, 2024, the town was buzzing with even more excitement, as a new government had just been established, promising a future filled with hope and prosperity.

The town square, adorned with twinkling lights and festive decorations, was the heart of the celebrations. The enormous Christmas tree stood tall, its branches heavy with ornaments, each one reflecting the hopes and dreams of the townspeople. At the base of the tree, a nativity scene reminded everyone of the true meaning of Christmas.

To celebrate both the Christmas season and the new government, the church team organized a grand Festival of Unity. The festival was set to take place in the town square and promised an array of activities, from carol singing to food stalls offering delicious holiday treats as the festival day approached, families decorated their homes with lights and wreaths, while local businesses contributed to the festivities with special offers and decorations. The sense of community was palpable, and it seemed as if everyone in Carmel was united in their excitement.

The Christmas season in Carmel that year was unforgettable. It was a time when the community came together to celebrate not only the birth of Christ but also the dawn of a new era. The lights, the music, the laughter—all were symbols of hope, love, and a united future. God bless our city, God bless our country and God bless each reader.





2024 Christmas