

## Letters to My Sons and Daughters to the End of History

### *Why I am Writing You these Thoughts*

May 12, 2013

This week I learned something of great value.

I wish I had known it many years ago, when I was young, rather than at the age of 58. How different would my life and yours be now if I had known back then what I only found out about now, and had been able to teach you those things when you were still growing up?

What I understood this week is only one of a growing number of insights that I have gained in the latter part of my life. If only I had known then what I am only beginning to see now.

How much further ahead will you be if I can pass on to you these pieces of knowledge, understanding and wisdom that may take you half a lifetime or more to learn on your own?

I have decided to write a series of letters to you my children. This is not a whim; I have been thinking of doing this for more than a year and it is time now to start. Each letter will contain one thing I have learned that I wish to pass on to you and your descendants and all sons-in-law and daughters-in-law. The thoughts I give you will be important ones, the kind that will make a difference in your individual lives and will help you understand the times.

My fear is that you will not see how valuable they are. I say this, because many of these things were there to be seen when I was young, but I did not see or understand them. I had no idea of their value back then. Please, please take them with the greatest of care and thought. Ask God to help you understand and see the value and importance of each one. Sometimes, it takes wisdom to know that what appears to be of no value is, in fact, of great value.

I urge you to read, carefully consider, and apply each one. Do not forget them; keep these letters in a file so that when the time is right, you can come back to them. Perhaps night is coming and we have less than twenty years left, but if the Lord tarries for another century or more, these will be the kinds of treasures that our descendants will find to be of great value if they are taught and passed on.

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### *The One Thing Above all Others*

June 5, 2013

Cling to God.

I have lived long enough to clearly see that the primary difference between the tragedy of an empty life, and one filled with happiness, joy and eternal value, is whether one clings to God. I have deliberated for a month now on how to adequately communicate the enormous importance of clinging to God and conclude that anything I can think to say falls far short of emphasizing how important this is for every aspect of your life .... and I do mean *every* aspect.

The success of your life depends upon it. The worldly pursuits that seem so exciting when you are young will seem so small and empty when you near the end. Cling to God.

King Hezekiah went through times of great difficulty and severe sickness, but God said ...

After him there was none like him ...  
nor among those who were before him.  
*For he clung to the LORD;*  
he did not depart from following Him ...  
*And the LORD was with him;*  
*wherever he went he prospered.* 2 Kings 18:5-7

God made you; He paid the highest price possible for you,  
He has plans for you that are far more wonderful than yours,  
He will rescue you; He will draw near to you, if you draw near to Him,  
He will work within you and through you if you cling to Him.

He is the Origin of joy, honor, love, justice, beauty, music, and every good thing given and every perfect gift. Delight yourself in the Lord, for the rest of your life, and He will give you the desires of your heart.

Cling to Him and ask Him to hold on to you in those dark nights of the soul when you will be tested.

I now know that everything depends upon it.  
It is the secret of happiness.

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### *Choose Your Battles*

August 26, 2013

Some battles in this life can start very small but end up costing an enormous amount of time and energy. Consider carefully, therefore, before you take that first step. Over the years, I fear that I have gotten myself involved in many battles small and great that, in retrospect, were not meant for me. They were distractions from the things I should have been doing instead and I paid a price for my involvement.

The more you become aware of the relationships, times and events that surround you, the more wrong, injustice, hurt and corruption you will see. You cannot possibly solve every problem. The battles you *must* fight are those that God has destined for you. Discerning which of those are yours requires wisdom and discretion.

To begin with the trivial, do not try to educate other automobile drivers if it looks like they need it. You do not have the authority to deal with them if they decide to take it to the next level. Relax and enjoy your drive. Think long and hard before stepping in to help resolve an interpersonal conflict. You will almost certainly be seen by one or the other, or both, as favouring the other person. You can get mired down in a long and ugly story and accomplish nothing in the end in spite of your good intentions. Of course, you must get involved in some people's lives, but be very sensitive to God as to who.

Some criteria can be helpful. For the many daily opportunities to challenge or engage someone, especially on the internet, will it be a good use of your time? Will it mean that something with a higher priority or importance, gets shoved to the side? For bigger battles, does it lay within your area of expertise and interest? Is there someone else who is aware of the situation who is more qualified to deal with it? Is the person someone to whom you have a responsibility to take care of or minister to? Do you feel a clear conviction by the Holy Spirit that you should do something? Will you likely make a difference in the end?

As representatives of God on earth, we *must* fight battles, but they must be the ones God desires us to fight and only those. Discretion and an ear for the voice the Holy Spirit and the Word of God are vital.

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### *Quest for a Beautiful Mind*

September 9, 2013

In the song 'Fields of Innocence' by *Evanescence*, there are the following lines,

*I still remember the world from the eyes of a child.  
Slowly those feelings were clouded by what I know now...*

*I still remember the sun always warm on my back,  
Somehow it seems colder now.  
Where has my heart gone?*

The entire song deeply moves me because I, too, remember the world from the eyes of a child. I have many memories starting from the age of three. The sun shone brightly then, and I was innocent of what goes on in this world, playing happily all day long, with no cares at all.

As I completed my teens and entered my twenties, I became increasingly aware of the evil in this world. I saw countless instances of people being cruel to one another, governments grasping always for power, corruption everywhere, wrecked lives all around me, endlessly on and on, day after day, month after month .... with each one I saw, the sun slowly went away in my world. I had done my share of sinning, yes, but it was not just that. I felt that all the evil that I had seen and heard and read about had defiled me somehow even though I was merely a bystander, a watcher of history and of the times. Where had the heart of my childhood gone?

Sometime in my early 40's I began to long for the heart of my childhood, when the sun always shone and I carried no weight on my shoulders. One eventful day, I decided that the last half of my life would be different. I began to ask God for a beautiful mind ... that it would be summer again within me and that the sun would shine again. I have now found joy. It is a way to taste the beauty and happiness of eternity in this life, a preview of things to come. It is the secret of happiness.

You have seen enough evil. It has done enough damage in your heart. Do not wait as long as I did. Now is the time to ask God, daily, for a beautiful mind and heart. If you do, you will find joy much sooner than I did.

## Letters to My Sons and Daughters to the End of History

*Sexual Immorality: The Road that Descends to Death* October 9, 2013

*Her house is a highway to the grave,  
leading down to the chambers of death.*

(Proverbs 7:27)

Two days ago, a man shared with me how the consequences of a single incident of sexual immorality one evening 36 years ago continue to expand and tear apart an increasing number of lives in the present.

Time after time, I have seen how an act of sexual immorality is like a bomb that explodes in slow motion. The immediate consequences that might appear to be temporarily contained, start slowly unfolding into an expanding wave of destruction over decades, as your dreams, your love, your family, your future and your happiness disintegrate around you.

After forty years of witnessing the wreckage of lives and relationships all around me, I must conclude that sex outside of marriage is one of the most destructive acts a human being can engage in. It really does lead to the chambers of death ... the death of love between a man and a woman, the death of marriage, of family bonds, of happiness, of ones faith and, in the end, the second death for eternity as stated in 1 Corinthians 6.

What if you have already crossed the line?

Flee! Now! Everything in your future depends upon it. Ask God to rescue you and to heal you and your loved ones of the damage that has already begun to spread. Never, ever yield to the 'just one more time', for that one last time may be the point of no return. Flee for your life. If you escape, God and time will slowly heal. The road He once desired for you is forever gone, but He can make a new road for you.

If you have not engaged in sexual immorality, earnestly ask God to keep you pure. Married or single, no one is immune. God is a rewarder of those who seek Him and every perfect gift He offers. It is so worth it.

Patti and I were virgins up to the night of our marriage and we have remained faithful to each other in the years since. There is enormous joy in this and a love that is deep and powerful. May you have that too!

## Letters to My Sons and Daughters to the End of History

### *Never Give Up Meeting Together*

December 14, 2013

About six months ago I was struck by the final phrase of a verse I had known for more than thirty-five years. Here is what it says ...

*Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:25)*

The first part of the verse refers to the meeting of the early Believers on the first day of the week to worship God together. As a result of this command, Christians have continued to assemble together each Sunday to worship God and encourage one another in the faith. The final phrase, however, states that this will be especially important in the last days.

Unfortunately, the opposite is happening. More than 85% of Christian young people stop attending church once they finish high school. The horror of this can be seen in the verses immediately following ...

*If we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.*

Sobering. How could giving up the encouragement of worshiping with fellow Christians each Sunday possibly result in the death of ones faith and spending eternity in Hell? The connection is given earlier ...

*Take care brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart in falling away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called 'today', lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end. (Hebrews 3:12-14)*

The greatest danger in this life is the death of faith that comes through the 'deceitfulness of sin'. The safeguard is the encouragement we receive by worshiping God together. Even if the only church you will find has no great speaker, no band, and only a few old people because no young are left in the faith. You will need that church.

## Letters to My Sons and Daughters to the End of History

*The Secret of Joy*

January 1, 2014

In *Surprised by Joy*, C.S. Lewis wrote of

... an unsatisfied desire which itself is more desirable than any other satisfaction. I call it joy, which ... must be sharply distinguished from both Happiness and from Pleasure. Joy, (in my sense) has indeed one characteristic, and one only, in common with them; the fact that anyone who has experienced it will want it again. Apart from that, and considered only in its quality, it might almost equally well be called a particular kind of unhappiness or grief. But then it is a kind we want. I doubt whether anyone who has tasted it would ever, if both were in his power, exchange it for all the pleasures in the world.

As the years passed, Lewis searched for what it was that caused those moments of Joy. Eventually he made a discovery.

There was no doubt that Joy was a desire. ... But a desire turned not to itself but to its object ... it owes all its character to its object ... I was now approaching the source from which those arrows of Joy had been shot at me ever since childhood ... I found it to be a Person.

I have experienced those moments of Joy but, like C.S. Lewis, I found that the cause did not seem to be the situation or the place within which I had experienced Joy. Rather, those moments of Joy were 'a pointer' to the Person Who is the Origin of Joy and every good thing given and every perfect gift.

If I tried to pursue Joy by attempting to re-create the situation, or by focusing on the object that was present when that moment of Joy occurred, nothing happened. But then I made a discovery. In those moments of Joy, if I looked past the moment at the One who had made that moment possible, and responded in thanksgiving and adoration of Him, then a more powerful and sustained experience of Joy resulted.

Joy is the experience of the presence of God. Thanksgiving and adoration of Him is the key that opens that door. In those moments of extreme Joy you are tasting His presence. Turn to Him, thank Him, adore Him and those moments of Joy will grow more frequent and deep.

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### *Dealing with Injustice*

February 11, 2014

I was at Tiananmen Square in Beijing a few days before the army moved in on June 4, 1989. It will be difficult to forget the sight of thousands of Chinese university students who had been occupying the square for weeks in a peaceful protest for democratic reform. A little over a week later, as my plane returned to Beijing from an area of the world cut off from the media, I was told by a fellow passenger about the event that is now known as the Tiananmen Massacre. It was chaotic at the airport and I had to find my own way to the hotel I had paid for. It was empty except for a German family, as most westerners had left the country. Estimates of the number of students killed range from a few hundred to a few thousand and as I sat alone in my hotel I must confess that I was very angry at the enormity of the injustice that had just taken place.

Injustices surround us, large and small. It may be a politician who made election promises and dishonestly misrepresented his opponent, or an unfair mark on a test that is never corrected, or a bad decision by the Supreme Court. As a young man, I found myself becoming increasingly cynical. Everywhere there were people who did wrong and got away with it. Then I realized that each person who has ever lived has one last court appearance.

Do not be frustrated. There is a Judgment Day coming.

We are told that the dead will be judged according to their deeds, down to the smallest detail of their entire lives. 'Every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment.'<sup>1</sup> There will be no loopholes, their own thoughts and conscience will testify for or against them.<sup>2</sup>

When you see injustice that you are powerless to rectify, just remember that *no one* gets away with *anything*. Every lie they ever told, every thought they ever had, every back room deed they ever committed will be laid bare before the eyes of the One on the Great White Throne.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 12:36

<sup>2</sup> Romans 2:15,16



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### *The Proper Basis for Your Decisions*

March 13, 2014

Abraham Lincoln once stated, 'Freedom is not the right to do what we *want*, but what we *ought*.'

I write this letter, which may be one of the most important letters I ever write to my descendants, within the context of seeing all around me a society obsessed with the freedom to do, even fight for, what they want. Few are asking what we, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and we, as individuals, *ought* to be doing.

This is not merely a question of what we do with our lives; it is a question we must ask ourselves on a daily basis every time we are faced with a choice of how we will spend the next few minutes or the next few dollars or what we will do this Friday evening ... or Sunday morning.

Our lives are spent one hour at a time. One of the most profitable influences perpetrated upon us by the enemy is the thought that you can do what you want this hour, and do what you *ought* the hour after. That very decision tells you that your priority is on what you *want* to do versus what you *ought* to do. It *ought* to be *ought* first, *want* second.

Hours turn into days ... into weeks ... into years. The end result is a life that was spent largely on oneself rather than on what one ought to have done. I cannot imagine a greater sense of loss than to reach the end of the *one* life you had to spend before eternity, and realize that you spent it mostly on yourself.

There is what I call *The Golden Question*, which can be of enormous help in assisting us in doing what we *ought* to do rather than what we *want* to do. I pray that each of you will brand The Golden Question inside your forehead for what few fleeting years remain to you before eternity.

The Golden Question is this ...

*Exactly what is it that I ought to be doing right now?*

Begin by asking yourself this question before you go to sleep tonight. Ask it again at least three times tomorrow. Make it a daily discipline.

## Letters to My Sons and Daughters to the End of History

### *Telling a Lie*

May 20, 2014

When I was seven years old I told a lie to my mother about how I had gotten the cuffs of my pants wet while walking in a water puddle slightly deeper than my boot tops. The lie haunted me until I finally confessed it at the age of seventeen. By then, it seemed like such a trivial thing, yet for countless nights over the years I had lain in bed tormented by guilt.

A lie is an interesting thing. In the moment that it is told it often seems to be the best course of action for avoiding an immediate problem, but it has a price that lingers and grows. In the act of telling a lie, one creates a false reality, a contradiction of true reality. A mental schism begins to grow; the memory of the real world and the need to remember the false, especially when anything arises that might expose the lie. Often, one lie requires that more be told and the false reality grows.

Another interesting thing that I have learned about a lie is that the one that you are lying to often knows you are lying, far more often that you would like to think. Older people are especially good at seeing a lie leaving the lips of a younger person. They may not say a thing but they will be hurt because you have not been respected and loved them enough to be honest with them.

A third fascinating price for lying is what it does to your soul. There is a wonderful feeling of cleanness and purity when you are right with God, but a lie takes that away and soils you inside. There are only two ways to deal with this. You can confess it to God and the person you lied to, and be pure again inside, or you can keep telling lies until your conscience no longer bothers you. The latter is a terrible price to pay. You forget what it was like to be pure inside, living a life that becomes increasingly complicated by false realities, until you become a lie.

*Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord,  
But those who deal faithfully are His delight*  
Proverbs 12:22

Please don't lie. If you tell a lie, or exaggerate, or misrepresent, confess it immediately in the very next sentence. The longer you wait, the harder it will get. Better still if you think before you speak.