



Cliff Loesch

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BIBLE READING: Romans 8:31-39

If you are sitting in your house with the curtains closed, you cannot see the sun. If you walk over and open the curtain, during the daylight hours, then the sun will come shining through; and depending on how your window is situated, you may be able to look out and actually see the sun. Whether the curtains are open or closed, the sun is still there.

Romans 8 tells us that God's love is just as constant and pervasive as the shining of the sun. But it sure seems like some things can separate us from God's love. It truly does seem that way, I have to say.

We know that the sun is there whether you can see it or not. We are simply never separated from the sun, even when we cannot actually see it. But are we just as confident of God's love for us?

Isn't God's love contingent upon our good behavior? We tend to think so. God will only keep loving us if we fit the program. And there is no lack of people who seem to be willing to proclaim whom God hates, as if our pronouncements about others will bring about transformation.

But we must realize that it is love that transforms. Not fear or condemnation. Love transforms us.

What are the things in life that seem to separate you from God's love? Or what are the things that act like a thick curtain that prevent you from seeing God's love?

SONG: Open the Eyes of My Heart

PRAYER SUGGESTION: God of love, forgive me for distorting the nature of your love. I truly want to be transformed by it, and I long to be an instrument of love toward others.

—Cliff Loesch

BIBLE READING: Acts 10:25-48

I enjoy reading *Cycle World* magazine. Kevin Cameron, the technical editor, recently wrote an article called “Transitions” highlighting several major turning points and how difficult some of those transitions had been.

Cameron makes this great observation that I think applies to me, personally, as much as to anyone else: “From the vantage point of later history, we look upon these transitions as necessary and inevitable. But to those in their midst, unable to see the future, they were a time of confusion, even of fear.” (Cycle World, February, 2014, p. 30)

Psalms 96:1 says, “O sing to the Lord a new song.” A song of hope in the midst of transitions in life, including inward transformations that we still long to see.

I find change hard. I resist it. I think most people do.

I like this story from Acts 10 that shows God easing Peter into this transition—preparing the way. And (after three repetitions) Peter finally got the message. This vision helped prepare him for the amazing experience he had the next day and there is no way Peter could have done it without the Spirit’s help.

As you look at your life, I’ll bet you are standing at the crossroads of a lot of change and transition. There is a lot of uncertainty in life. And there are some changes we should embrace, while there are other changes we should resist. But we don’t always know which is which.

I pray that the Spirit will guide you and me through all of the uncertainty and change we face in life.

SONG: I Will Trust in You (Jeremy Camp)

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Spirit, banish the fear that lies behind my resistance to change. Give me courage and wisdom to make wise choices.

—Cliff Loesch

BIBLE READING: Mark 10:46-52

When it sounded like Jesus must be approaching, blind Bartimaeus started yelling, over and over, “Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me!”

Despite the many voices “sternly warning” him to be quiet, Bartimaeus yelled all the louder. And then, with full attention focused on Bartimaeus, Jesus asks, “What do you want me to do for you?”

When I thought about those stern warnings the man received to be quiet, it brought to mind the many voices in all of our lives. And the lack of unity. We live in a divided world where people can hardly agree on anything. But among the many voices—there are also some who agree. And even more important than that—there are some who listen.

When Jesus said to Bartimaeus, “Call him here,” there were other voices who said to the man, “Take heart; get up, he is calling you.”

For myself, I have to reframe unity. I believe in the idea of unity, but not everyone is able to discern the leading of the Spirit in the same way at the same time. In my view, unity is a goal—but unity is also a process of seeking God’s leading; listening both individually and together. So I believe it is possible to have a sense of deep spiritual unity with people, even though we may have significantly different points of view.

We must listen to the Spirit, especially when reading scripture, be patient with one another, be aware that we are not always right, and remember that often God often uses truth from both sides to bring a solution.

SONG: Voice of Truth (Casting Crowns)

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Thank you, Lord, for the voices that encourage me to listen to you. Help me hear your voice, even above the voices coming from within myself.

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BIBLE READING: 1 Corinthians 3:9-23

When I was in junior high, we built a large shed on our farm, about 50 feet by 150 feet. After it was finished, we could stack a lot of hay on one end and park trucks and tractors in other areas, with room to spare.

As I think back, it seems that I went through it all somewhat mindlessly. I may have helped build that building but in some sense it was building me at the same time. Who I am today was shaped, in part, by my participation in that project.

In some real way, the things we build help shape who we become.

Today's Scripture uses both farming and building metaphors to make the point that you are God's house: God is building you. Paul's point, one that Quakers have always emphasized is: Look not to this human leader or to that one—look within. God is at work within you. And then: Get involved in the work yourself. You have a role to play in your own inward development. Get building.

Building is hard work. It is hard work to build a family. Hard work to build a church. To build a school, a yearly meeting, or an association of many yearly meetings. It is hard work to build a nation.

As I think about myself mindlessly fastening the metal roof to that building in Texas, taking little note of the bigger picture, it brings to mind other, more important building in my life: relationships, the family, the church, the other organizations I'm part of, and our community. How can we be more mindful about the building God has given us to do?

SONG: Step By Step (Chris Tomlin)

PRAYER SUGGESTION: Creator God, you are still building me, and inviting me into your building projects. Keep me focused and show me how to do my work well.

—Cliff Loesch