

Cockeyed Homilies



1 Cor 9:22b

Words to the Songs And Devotions from The Word

Cockeyed: tilted, eccentric, unconventional.

Homily: A short sermon or speech, typically given after the reading of scripture and intended to relate the scripture to modern life.

Hebrews 4:12 (NIV*)

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Most of the songs I write deal with how I see the word of God “alive and active” in my everyday life. Whether it is my relationships with other people, things I see in nature, principles I see at work in the world, I feel that God is always speaking. Trained both as a musician and a teacher, I feel this is the ministry that I have been given to communicate the truths of God to my fellow man. Since these messages are being filtered through my personality, they may be a little wacky sometimes, but it takes all kinds to reach all kinds! The apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 9:22b (the scripture reference on the cover) “I have become all things to all men that I might save some.”

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Roller Coaster Year

© Rob Carter 2003 (December 31st)

Romans 8:28

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Psalm 34:18+19

¹⁸ The LORD is close to the brokenhearted
and saves those who are crushed in spirit.
¹⁹ The righteous person may have many troubles,
but the LORD delivers him from them all;

John 16:33

³³ "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Psalm 23:4 (RSV)

⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I fear no evil;
for thou art with me;
thy rod and thy staff,
they comfort me.

Devotional

In one week in March of 2003, the year I wrote this song, I experienced several of the most horrific things back to back. On Thursday, March 27, I was informed of the death of a friend with whom I have taught for 7 years. Friday the 28th, someone I loved very much took their own life. On Sunday the 30th, one of my former students, whose family I had become very close to, was murdered. On Monday, several of my friends whom I work with at one of my schools were grilled by Child Services over blatantly false accusations of abuse leveled by a student. Tuesday, my friend's father was kidnapped in Venezuela. Wednesday, a good friend was seriously injured by a fall down a set of stairs in her own home. Through all of this, I can't recall a time when I felt much closer to God. There was a sense of peace and calm through it all that God was still God and in control. By this grace of God, I was able to share that peace and encouragement with many of those hurting along with me. I often say that "life is going to be difficult; it might as well be difficult for a purpose."

Prayer: Father, enable us to see beyond the momentary sufferings of this life to your eternal purposes. Help us be about your agenda and not just our own. May we feel your presence and peace amidst the suffering and be ever mindful of your promise that you use ALL things for the good of those who love you and have been called according to your purpose. AMEN

Roller Coaster Year

(Lyrics)

Chorus

Rollercoaster year
Turned me upside-down and twisted me
Dropped me down and lifted me
To heights I'd never known
I know you, not me, were at the controls.

Verse 1

Never would have chosen to take this ride at all
But you're the operator and it's your call.

When I bought this ticket I promised I would believe.
You know what you're doin' despite what I see.

(to Chorus)

Maybe I was thinking this was the merry-go-round.
I thought I could handle the ups and downs.

All the twists and turns they have trashed my stomach and back.
By your grace I never fell off the track

Bridge

Though at time I felt that I would
I was sure that I would
But again my emotions lie

But hold the plans
The controls in your hands
So I'll go for another ride

(to chorus repeating the last line and changing "I know" to "so glad")

Little White Dog

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Mark 4:4-12

Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. ² He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: ³ "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴ As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵ Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. ⁸ Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times."

⁹ Then Jesus said, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."

¹⁰ When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables.¹¹ He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables ¹² so that, "they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!"

Devotional

When Jesus was speaking to these people, they were living in an agrarian society. Everybody would have understood the concept of spreading seed. He spoke in the language of the people and used illustrations from everyday life so that if they missed the point, it was often because they didn't care to hear the point. I believe that he is still doing this today.

I'm on my second terrier. Anyone who's ever spent time with one can see parallels with our willfulness and stubbornness in relation to our Master. And as much as we love them, the things that they desire and indulge in (think chasing skunks) can cause them to be so offensive to us that they can't get close enough to us to have any real relationship. Though we have the tools and the detergents to wash them after every new offense, there are lasting effects. If an animal we'd never had a relationship with came into our presence soiled and reeking, most of us would send them away for good. To him who has ears...

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you are still speaking to us in ways that we can understand. Remind us to ask you to do so and to keep our eyes and ears open. Remind us to test everything against scripture. May your Spirit remind of these things that you have done and are doing when there is someone else who can be encouraged in their relationship with you by them. AMEN

Little White Dog

(Lyrics)

My little white dog is always excited to see me
Or anyone else who might come to the door
It doesn't really matter who it is
My little dog wants to give 'em kisses
Until something else gets her attention (Spoken: SQUIRREL!)

My little white dog is always very obedient
Until there's something else that she'd rather do
I call her and she's standing in the yard
She's staring at me and it isn't that hard
To imagine that she's grinnin' ...as she runs away

Chorus I

Surely I am not like that; My devotion to the Master never wains!
Surely I am full of it! So use whatever you will to make a change

Like a little white dog, with whom you're always teaching me lessons
Like how un-white she is when she goes out in the snow
Next to purity you see her stains.
Trying to get her that white is in vain.
Regardless of all the scrubbin' (chicka-chickaa)

And that little white dog, if somehow I was able to do it
I know exactly what her inclination would be
She'd go find somethin' stinky down the street
And roll in it till she's repulsive to me.
And when she'd cuddle up beside me I'd send her away!

Chorus II

Surely I am just like that; the only thing to get me clean is in the Master's veins!
I am so thankful for it. I will get so excited when He come's....like a little white dog,
(Spoken: Aww, and I know you love me Lord...even more than I love that little dog.)

Dam Up My Mind

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2 Corinthians 10:5

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Philippians 4:8

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

Devotional

One of the most influential Christian bands in my life has been Petra. They have a song called Computer Brains that reminds us that, like a computer, our minds only spit out what's been put into them. We are surrounded every day by the things of this world. We don't have to do much at all for it to get into our hearts and minds. Things of God, however, are not as prevalent in our society and are becoming less so. We need to intentionally seek out the things of God and fill our minds with them. Then that's what will overflow from us. You've heard it said "you are what you eat." Let's feed our brains with the food that lasts and the water of life.

Prayer

Father, show us what it means to take every thought captive and submit it to you. Thank you for your word and the life of your Son that is our standard. Thank you for your forgiveness when we fall short. Amen

Dam Up My Mind

(Lyrics)

I want to set it all aside
Tenacious little thoughts drifting in with the tide
Poisoning the water I need to refresh me

I've tried to send them back to sea.
But things keep clogging up and it runs back to me
Lord you have the water I need to sustain me...So

Chorus

Dam up my mind
Let it run dry
Clean it up and fill me again with waters of life

Fresh water flowing to the Sound
But salt mixes in as I drift farther down
Straying from the source only makes me more thirsty

I need to strain against the flow
It's easier to float, but where I'll end who knows
Lord I know you do that's the reason I need you...To

Smile For...

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Proverbs 22:6

Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.

James 1:5

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

Devotional

Becoming a parent can be a VERY scary thing. No matter how much you have read and studied and talked to experienced friends and family, you are all of a sudden thrust into a whole new life that you cannot understand until you experience it! The sleep deprivation alone is killer, but then add the SCREAMING and total dependence of this fragile creature. But then there is the amazing joy of holding this incredible little gift that God has given you! It gives you insight into things that the Father must feel towards us. The pride in seeing something created in your own image. The frustration when they willfully choose to disobey. The thrill at every little new accomplishment. The pain we feel when they suffer. The incomparable joy of hearing them recognize you as their parent and seeing them derive joy from your presence! We also bear such an enormous responsibility to help them recognize our heavenly father in the same way. It's a reminder of how much we really need the Lord to guide our every step in this and every endeavor!

Prayer

Lord God, thank you for the precious gift of children. Help us learn from them what it means to have faith in you, how you love us, and how we are utterly dependent on you! AMEN

Smile For

(Lyrics)

Now I lay you down to sleep
I pray the Lord that He will keep
My heart from breaking as you cry

'Cause when you cry I'm saddened too
It's frightening to know that you
Could have this power over me
But

Chorus

When you smile for your daddy
it's a little bit easier to get through the day
And when you smile for your mama
All the little things that mean so little fade away
When your eyes begin to shine
And the corner of your mouth curls it's a brighter world
Little One

God has placed you in my care
And he hears our every prayer
The same as I can hear your cries

He feels our joys and sorrows too
And he knows when to comfort you
And when to let you cry it out

And I know He'll give me wisdom so that I can do the same

Aroma

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2 Corinthians 2:15

¹⁴ But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. ¹⁵ For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.¹⁶ To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life.

Devotional

I swear that I teach on the line of demarcation between Yankees territory and Red Sox territory. Regardless of who is leading the American League East at any given time, there is the inevitable comments from the Red Sox kids when I show up to school sporting my interlocking N Y; "Yankees stink!" My usual reply is "be careful not to confuse your opinions with cold hard fact." Much more important than which baseball teams t-shirt you choose to don is the stance you decide take on the deity of Jesus. One of the most controversial statements Jesus made was recorded in John 14:6 "I am the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Many would look at that statement and say "That's so closed minded and judgmental! That kind of attitude just stinks!" Well, Jesus sinless life, his miracles, his resurrection from the dead, his impact on the world, the testimony of God the Father himself, and multitudes of other things back up his claims. Can you smell what I'm cookin'?

Prayer

*Thank you Jesus for leaving no room for question about whether or not you are really claiming to be the only way to God the Father. Thank you that by your grace we might share in the sweet smell of the victory you have won over sin and death. You are the Rose of Sharon.
AMEN*

Aroma

(lyrics)

When the tide comes in and the waters rise I am carried by waves of your love
When the tide goes out and the marsh is exposed I'll tell you what I think of

I grew up in a tidal town so the smell it reminds me of home
But my friends who came from far away walked away holding their nose

Bridge 1

We can be like that; we don't want to deal with anything that offends us at first.

Chorus

We're the aroma of Christ to this world, to believers and to the non
To one of them the sweet aroma of life and death to the other one

When the incense burned in the House of God all the people remembered the smell
'Cause it filled the air and got into your clothes so all those who met you could tell

That you'd spent time in the Father's presence, for nowhere else was it allowed.
Now his Spirit is the essence, how will they perceive it now?

Bridge 2

Will we exude it from all of our being or faintly so no one can tell?

Even Wazungu!
2008 Rob Carter

Mark 10:17-27

¹⁷ As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”¹⁸ “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.’”²⁰ “Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.”²¹ Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”²² At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.²³ Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!”²⁴ The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”²⁶ The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?”²⁷ Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.”

Devotional

In 2008 I went to visit missionary friends in Naivasha, Kenya. Had you asked me before if I was rich I would have emphatically denied it. By U.S. standards, I’m certainly not. But by world standards, I’m FILTHY rich! The average person in Kenya, I was told, earned \$2000 dollars a year. I also learned that Kenya is one of the richest countries in Africa at that rate. As such, I was to learn that many Africans perceive Westerners (mazungu singular or wazungu plural in Kiswahili) as having no need for God since our daily needs are met. I learned this when I played one of the new worship songs I had written for a Kenyan pastor and his wife. His wife was so moved that she was weeping! When asked what was wrong, she replied “I can’t believe it! Jesus can save even white people!” Having so much really does have us at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to relying on God. It’s something we have to consciously make an effort to cultivate. Just as an ironic aside, when I was in Kenya I really did have a camel ride scheduled, but it was cancelled.

Prayer

Lord we understand that everything we have is from you and belongs to you. We are just stewards. Enable us to be generous and obedient with what you have entrusted us with. Help us remember that to us whom much is given, much is expected. AMEN

Even Wazungu

(Lyrics)

My camel ride has been cancelled
But that's alright
I have no needle
Through which to ride.
I hear that it's easier, as rich as I am,
Than getting into heaven.

She was sincerely amazed that
We who need not
Wanted to praise and
honor you God
We were all speechless when
This sweet African
Woman said with great delight...

Chorus

Jesus can save even white people.
Who would've thought?
Lord my heart is full of
praise for you
Even wazungu can be saved!
That's amazing grace!

When I was planning to come here
I was hopin'
That maybe the curtain
Would be opened
Now that I've seen behind
It's burned in my mind
and I will not forget it.

Lord, show me how you intended
Me to live as
Your hand extended
And your witness
Depending on you to grease
That needle for me
And to shrink that camel down

The angels rejoice with them
The sweet African's
As they learn what you're about!

What Are You Doin'?

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1 John 5:16a

If you see any brother or sister commit a sin that does not lead to death, you should pray and God will give them life.

James 5:19-20

¹⁹ My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, ²⁰ remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

Matthew 18:15-17

¹⁵ "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. ¹⁶ But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' ¹⁷ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

Devotional

It really bothers me when someone has a problem with me and, rather than coming to me with it, they go immediately to someone in authority over me. But I understand that conflict is something that is very difficult for most people. It's my least favorite thing to deal with myself because I find it difficult to keep my emotions in check. Asking someone else to deal with it is the easy thing, but it is clearly not what we are called to according to Matthew 18:15-17. This passage does refer to people in the church, but I think verses 15 and 16 (as well as 17 as a general reference to authority) are just a great way to try to live among coworkers, family members, etc. At very least, we need to give people the benefit of being able to work things out with you before going over their head.

There are unique concerns when we see a pattern of behavior from someone with whom we have a relationship and who is a brother or sister in Christ. We want to see right relationship with God and his people restored. In truth, if we claim to believe, and if we genuinely care about someone it becomes clear from these passages that it is our responsibility to lovingly and gently bring it to their attention. Just like in evangelism, we need to go to God in prayer about them, before we go to them about God.

Prayer

Dear Father, it is so hard in our culture to tell someone they are wrong. But your word commands us to lovingly call your children back to you. If you command it, your Spirit with empower us. Please enable us to obey you. AMEN

What Are You Doin'?

(Lyrics)

I couldn't love you more were you my own flesh and blood, bro
That being said, I need to ask you...
What are you doin'?

You told me to ignore what I would see, but I saw, bro
You're treading dangerous ground. Boy,
What are you doin'?!

Chorus

And I have been worried about you
And I know you'd tell me now to
But I will keep prayin' for you
As long as the Lord keeps laying you on my heart.

I didn't want to be the one who said all these things, bro
But when I've tried to walk away He said;
"What are you doing?"

I know you think no one is being hurt by your fun, bro
But you're growing calloused to the Call!

Chorus

And I'm getting worried about you
And I know you'd tell me now to
But I will keep prayin' for you
As long as the Lord keeps laying you on my heart.

I Love the Way You

© 2010 Rob Carter

For Mindy on our wedding day.

Proverbs 31:10-12

¹⁰ A wife of noble character who can find?

She is worth far more than rubies.

¹¹ Her husband has full confidence in her
and lacks nothing of value.

¹² She brings him good, not harm,
all the days of her life.

Song of Songs 4:9

⁹ You have stolen my heart, my sister, my bride;

you have stolen my heart
with one glance of your eyes,
with one jewel of your necklace.

Ephesians 5:28-33

²⁸ In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— ³⁰ for we are members of his body. ³¹ “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” ³² This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. ³³ However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Devotional

I'm crazy about my wife. There's no one I'd rather talk to, spend time with, raise my children with, pray with, and live my life with. Statistically speaking, the “in love” emotions diminish over time. That is why we need to do everything in our power to intentionally cultivate the relationship. Discover the things that please one another and go out of your way to do them. Schedule time to be together, just the two of you with no smart phones ;-)! There's no wonder that Paul uses this “profound mystery” of a love relationship to emphasize the parallels between our relationships with our spouse and that with our heavenly father. When we first make the commitment, there is for many a sense of euphoria. We need to intentionally cultivate that relationship too through spending time one on one, reading his word, spending time with others who have his Spirit living inside them, finding out what pleases him and doing it. It's clear from scripture as well that prioritizing this relationship above all others will enable us to thrive in our earthly relationships.

Prayer

Holy God, I love you. I need you. I want to do your will not out of a sense of obligation but because I want to please you. Thank you that through the cross, our sins are cleansed so that we may be in this love relationship with you! AMEN

I Love the Way You

(Lyrics)

I love the way you look at me
I love the way you make me smile
I love that fact that you're content just pray with me for a while.

I love the way you touch my hair
I love how you express surprise
I love the way your eyes enhance the beauty of candlelight.

Chorus

And I love that I feel like a wanted man
Because you're in my life
I can't tell you how that feels!
And love that I feel like I'm truly loved by a woman for who I am
Can't believe this dream is real!

I love the way you flirt with me
I love the way you kiss me too
I love the fact that every day I fall more in love with you.

I love that you are standing here
I love that you are dressed in white
I love that you will still be near when we kiss goodnight

Tonight and every night
For the rest of our lives
'Cause today you're my wife!

Semper Fi (Bill He)

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Matthew 10:34

“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.”

Ephesians 6:10-18

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

2 Corinthians 10:5

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Jude 1:9

⁹ But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not himself dare to condemn him for slander but said, “The Lord rebuke you!”

John 14:27

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

Devotional

I think that in many ways, being a Christian is harder than not. There are constant battles to be fought; with our own flesh and sinful desires, with our own attitudes, with those things that are sinful but have become socially acceptable, with our own and others unbiblical theological perspectives, etc., etc. etc. Sometimes it would be a whole lot easier to not care. But that's not what we are called to. We need to keep in mind at all times that our battle is not with people, but ideas and the spirits behind those ideas. We need to always be humble and gentle when approaching another person's perspectives. We need to NEVER rely on our own strength or taunt the enemy. The battle belongs to the Lord. The peace of Christ is not the absence of conflict. It is peace amidst the conflict.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, show us the battles that you have chosen for us to fight. Remind us that frustration from having to fight against our own flesh is evidence that we care enough to fight as you've commanded. Grant us your peace that passes understanding. AMEN

Semper Fi

(Lyrics)

Bill, he never backed down from a fight
Bill, he wasn't afraid to start it.
Bill, he'd take a left to deliver a right
Bill, he fell in love with carnage

Bill, he took a bullet 'fore he carried a gun
Just to entertain his brother
Parris Island taught him to shoot and to run
So he wouldn't take another

Bridge(Rapped)

In a bar in Okinawa; took a mug to the head
12 staples what it cost him and the blood that he bled
He's the kind of guy that's what it would take to take him down
So if we('re) ever in a fight...I want him on my side!
Semper Fi!!!

Chorus

Always Faithful!
Learned obedience through what he suffered
Got his orders from above.
I am grateful!
For the service that he offered
Would lay it all down for those he loves.

Jesus never backed down from a fight
And he wasn't afraid to start it.
Gladly humbled those who believed they were right
But they would respond with carnage.

Bridge II (Rapped)

On a hill outside the city; you should see what they did
3 spikes are what it cost him and the blood that he bled
And his blood would wash away the sins of those-oo (who) know it's true
So when I stand before the throne...I'm glad he's on my side
Semper Fi!

Between Us

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For Mindy

Jeremiah 17:9

The heart is deceitful above all things
and beyond cure.

Who can understand it?

Proverbs 16:25

²⁵ There is a way that appears to be right,
but in the end it leads to death.

2 Corinthians 6:14-15

¹⁴ Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? ¹⁵ What is there between Christ and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?

1 Kings 11:1-6

1 King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter—Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. 2 They were from nations about which the LORD had told the Israelites, "You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods." Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. 3 He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. 4 As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been. 5 He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molek the detestable god of the Ammonites. 6 So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD completely, as David his father had done.

Psalm 37:4 (ESV)

Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Devotional

This devotional will undoubtedly raise some feathers. I pray the Lord will enable you to prayerfully consider these words and sort out what is of Him and what is of me.

The pull of emotional love between two people is incredibly strong. I'm sure you can name a few crazy things that you've done while dating just to let someone know you are head over heels for them. There is a pull that makes us want to find everything in common that we can with them so we can spend as much time as we can together and please one another. We make a lot of decisions based on our emotions/heart, for better or for worse.

That is why it is so essential that the most important thing that we can look for in a relationship with another person is a mutual love for Jesus. Relationships are complex and difficult enough even when both of you are accountable to the same God. The analogy of being unequally yoked refers to oxen of different sizes or strengths being held together by the necks with a wooden beam. They do not pull at the same rates and can stumble and be seriously injured. Even if you think you are the stronger one and are hoping to pull the other in your direction, it will trip you up and you will not be able to work anywhere near as effectively as if you were equally matched. You will hear people say that mixed marriages can work. In most cases, for one or both of them it's not a big part of their everyday life. Both will have to compromise and neither will experience the intimacy of worshiping

the same God together. Delighting yourself in the Lord means that he IS the desire of your heart. When that is the case, someone in whom He is not living will never be able to satisfy you completely and may, as was the case with Solomon (a man credited with being wiser than anyone who ever lived other than Jesus), be led away from God altogether.

Prayer

Dear Lord, only you know if "evangelical dating" can work for someone. You know how many it has not worked for. I pray that we would trust you with this incredibly important area of our lives and be patient for the woman or man of God you intend for us. AMEN

Between Us

(Lyrics)

I have always been a really sensitive guy
I've always made decisions with my heart
But the heart's deceptive so it's led me astray
So I swore this time I'd be on my guard.

I know you see through me but I think it's okay
I trust you 'cause you're walking in his light
I have been so blessed to see the Jesus in you.
It makes me feel like something here's right!

Chorus

When I look into your eyes and I'm melted by your smile
Stay with me a while, we'll talk to Jesus
Place your precious hand in my own
Close those pretty eyes
Breathe contented sighs
He is between us

I am who I am but I'm not who I will be
On the day that I see Him face to face.
While I'm stranded here I'll strain for glimpses of Him.
It's not hard when we are in the same place.

For when we're together He is there with us too
'Cause we always seek to honor his name.
But there is this bonus; you are beautiful too
And the heart that beats inside you's the same

And I feel so blessed of God!

Not the Girl

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Proverbs 18:24b

...there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

Psalm 139:1-18, 23-24

¹You have searched me, LORD, and you know me. ²You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. ³You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. ⁴Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely. ⁵You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. ⁶Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. ⁷Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? ⁸If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. ⁹If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, ¹⁰even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. ¹¹If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," ¹²even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you. ¹³For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. ¹⁵My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. ¹⁶Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. ¹⁷How precious to me are your thoughts, God!

How vast is the sum of them! ¹⁸Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand— when I awake, I am still with you. ²³Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. ²⁴See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

James 4:7-8a

⁷Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸Come near to God and he will come near to you.

Genesis 2:18a

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. "

Devotion

In 1985, Julie Gold wrote a song that was popularized by Bette Midler called "From a Distance." The song is about how the world looks very idyllic from far away. It insists that God is watching us, but from a distance. The truth is, God is everywhere. I used to think of that in terms of "Uh oh! I better be on my best behavior!" But in light of the whole Gospel message we see a love and desire for intimacy with us from God himself. He is the essence of purity and holiness. When Adam sinned, we were separated from God because he cannot tolerate impurity in his presence. He made the law to show us good from evil. After generations of it being painfully obvious that no one had ever fulfilled it, he sent his only begotten son to be the only one to ever fulfill it. Even still, he was killed to pay for our sins. Now, through his substitutionary atonement, we are made clean so that we can experience close relationship with God. We try to find it in human relationships, but we need to put God first. He is a jealous God and has designed us to have him as the center of our lives.

Prayer

Lord, we do love you but want to love you more and more. You have a plan for our lives which we can only see clearly when we keep you as our most intimate relationship. AMEN

Not the Girl

(Lyrics)

I was so in love with her
At least I thought I was
I thought she was the woman of my dreams
And every time I thought of her, which was most of the time
I vacillated between 2 extremes

I wanted to sing with her about your perfect love
And help her on her path toward things divine
But every time I looked at her, though I fought, my mind would long
To hold her perfect body next to mine

So Michael placed a sign above my bed based on a song
But now that I look back on it, the lyrics were all wrong.

Chorus

From a distance is not true
He is right here and he loves you (*2nd x: You are right here and I love you.*)
When I've thought of that I've thought of my behavior
But the part that I had missed
Your desire for relationship
Now my heart's on intimacy with my Savior
Not the Girl

The truth is that I live by my emotions most of the time
It's hard for me to live what I don't feel
And even though the chorus of this song's where I want to be
(it is) The "often unattainable ideal."

Like the night I was alone with her and she looked into my eyes
She spoke and I could taste your bitter sorrow.
She said: tonight I feel like I could be in love with you forever.
But I can't promise how I'll feel tomorrow.

And for the night I had the love I was always longing for
But in the morning she was distant...
I don't want to do that to you anymore!

All of the Above

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To Mindy on our First Anniversary and to our unborn daughter

Joshua 24:15

But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

Exodus 20:6

... but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

Phillipians 4:19

And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

2 Peter 1:3

His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

Philippians 4:9

Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Galatians 5:22

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Devotional

I've heard it said many times that our idea of God as Father is inextricably linked to our experience with our own earthly father. I want to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to demonstrate to my daughters a life characterized by the fruit of the Spirit. I take very seriously the necessity of passing on this faith to the next generation. I have to choose moment by moment to lead by example. I have blown it from time to time and I'm sure I will continue to do so. That too is an opportunity to demonstrate humility, confession, repentance, and ultimately, my daily need for a savior!

Prayer

Father God, in the name of your son Jesus I implore you to use my wife and I to demonstrate for our children a life of faith in you. We know that we can only plant and water the seeds. It is your responsibility to make it grow. May we foster an environment where your word and your Spirit have more sway over them than the things of this world. AMEN

All of the Above

(Lyrics)

Little girl, I am sitting in your room; outside the wind's blowing softly through the trees
Like the wind, just the simple thought of you
It move's me

Little girl, sitting in this rocking chair where very soon I'll be rocking you to sleep
Whispered thought, telling me it's time for prayer
And it moves me
To pray for you

Bridge

So Father God I come to You
In the name of Christ your Son
And I lift to You our little girl
Even now before she comes

Chorus

I...Pray that she will love you more than
We have ever been able
I...Pray that you will keep her clothed and
Food upon her table
And I pray that she will never question whether she is loved
And I pray that You will use her mother and I to answer
All of the above

Little girl, as I'm singing you this song I'm sure that there will be many more to come.
What a thought! Maybe you are singing too!
'Cause you're moving inside your mama

Bridge

As the Father God is knitting you
Together in her womb
I will make this promise little girl
I will always pray for you
And I...

Chorus

Pray that you will love God more than

We have ever been able

And I...Pray that He will keep you clothed and

Food upon your table

And I pray that you will never question whether you are loved

And I pray that He will use your mother and I to answer

All of the above

