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# MIGHTY MAGAZINE MARROWS

Life. God. Truth. For Coptic Youth

## EMOTIONS

“Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth”

Psalm 127:4

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*In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, One God, Amen.*

## My Beloved,

Emotions are most unique to the human experience. God’s great love for us compelled Him to share some of His beautiful features with His special creation—His children. He gave us emotions to help us experience inner peace, reciprocate love and empathy, and combat hate and envy. There are many faces of emotions and many outcomes that can result based on reactions to situations. Some emotions can lead us astray and others can teach us remorse, repentance, and resilience. There are many emotions that steer us to conduct unbecoming of Christians. Rest assured, if you do not lose hope and trust in our Lord Jesus Christ—no matter what your faults may be—God is ready and willing to accept you immediately and teach you His ways. Do not allow negative emotions to dictate your relationship with others and certainly not with God. I pray that you will benefit from the articles shared in this edition of the Mighty Arrows Magazine, which address many different kinds of emotions. Take this opportunity to learn and improve on how to deal with negative influences, tensions, and stressors in our lives, and how to develop strong, spirited, and sound emotions.

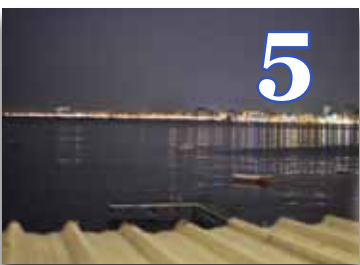
“He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty,  
And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.”  
Proverbs 16:32

God bless you,

Bishop Youssef  
BISHOP, COPTIC ORTHODOX DIOCESE OF THE SOUTHERN UNITED STATES



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**I**vividly remember sitting in a high-school psychology class one day when the teacher told us about a questionnaire that could reveal if one was really in love. He began to share this questionnaire with us. "Does your pulse quicken in the presence of that special someone?" he asked. "Does your skin begin to sweat? Do you get shortness of breath? Does your mind start to drift on clouds?" This dreamy flow came to a halt when he said, "If you experience any of these feelings when the other person is present, then you are not in love."

I was startled! "Love," he continued, "is not a passionate emotion, but rather a steady and consistent attitude." His teaching struck a chord. This idea was a new one to me, yet had a surprising ring of truth. I wondered how I could have been so duped. The relentless and inescapable flood of music and movies and pop culture had conditioned me to think that love really was something essentially dreamy and intoxicating.

His Grace Bishop Youssef once shared, "Love is a function of the will, not of the emotions." This profound statement made me feel it is the purpose-driven, pre-meditating, decision-making will, and not, the shallow, fleeting, and often misguided emotions that give rise to virtue. I would like to argue that love is, indeed, mainly a product of the will, in that it must develop and mature into a disciplined way of life.

To clarify, it is not my intention to condemn the emotions as a defect of human nature we should rid ourselves of, on the contrary, the emotions are our servants, and deserve respect and nurturing. Emotions were given to aid us achieve certain tasks: such as, the rearing of children; making life more pleasant, as in meeting with friends; or motivating us to offer positive expressions, as in buying flowers for my wife on her birthday. The trouble comes when we fail to set proper boundaries to these servants. If no structure is imposed, no limits set, and no clear distinction of "who is boss" is made, emotions can rise up in rebellion against their owner. The master becomes the slave, and the servants become tyrants. (The medical cases of severe hormonal imbalances or psychopathological disorders would require a separate discussion.) Nowhere else has this up-turning of the natural order been more common and more destructive than in the area of "love."

When a man and a woman meet each other and there is an electric "spark" from the first moment, they may meet repeatedly in the future, with each time a certain flutter in the diaphragm tells them that something special is happening. Their thoughts may increasingly become preoccupied with each other, until they think of little else. They realize they are "falling in love." They have

# Love 101

By James Helmy

finally met the one person who can make them happy in life. The whole event is predestined in the stars. They rush into a decision upon marriage; they rush through the preparations; they rush through the honeymoon. They come back to finally settle into that ultimate state of happiness they were looking for all along, and...real life hits. Everyday duties and stresses of normal existence force them to interact together, no longer as a single flame of passionate fire, but as two separate, individual, and flawed human beings. The heat of romantic love inevitably cools, and the earlier delights of physical attraction and personal charm vanish. They fall "out of love." They become disappointed and conclude they have made a ghastly error in marrying each other. The only options available to them now are either to live together unhappily or to divorce and start the search again for the "one true love."

It is precisely at this point of marriage that true love can begin to flourish. Romantic love cannot last

forever, and it was never meant to. If we spent the rest of our lives in a misty reverie about our mate, we would never get anything done. We could never study; we could never pray; we could never exert the immense amounts of energy and concentration required to accomplish great tasks, if we were constantly held by a passionate obsession regarding a member of the opposite sex. Young lovers can be some of the most inefficient people. Romantic love does serve us one great purpose, however: it successfully traps us into marriage. If young single people had any idea about the amount of self-sacrifice, and labor, and discipline, and long-suffering required to conduct a satisfying marriage, the majority would be scared out of the game from the beginning. But the magnetic pull of romanticism is strong enough to catch almost all young men and women in the marital net; and it is there that they first begin to learn what real love is.

To Be Continued . . .

# Envy And Jealousy

By Joseph Ghebrial

**T**he Holy Bible is a Christian's guide in all areas of life, providing instructions for the virtues we lack. It powerfully changes the hearts of the stubborn by providing wisdom and discernment. The Holy Bible can help with envy and jealousy, which are a struggle for many people. In our world, many seek to have what belongs to others. God addresses envy and jealousy, dating back to the days of Moses, with the Ten Commandments. The tenth commandment states "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's."<sup>1</sup> The word "covet" in this verse encompasses both envy and jealousy.

Proverbs addresses the consequences of jealousy and envy in several passages. Proverbs 14:30 says, "A sound heart is life to the body, but envy is rottenness to the bones." What this Proverb is telling us is contentment keeps a person's heart young, while envy makes the heart grow older. Proverbs 27:4 warns, "Wrath is cruel and anger is torrent, but who is able to stand before jealousy?" Jealousy has a powerful hold that overshadows other emotions and can overtake one's being.

St. Paul warns believers that jealousy hinders entrance into heaven. 1 Corinthians 3:3 (RSV) states, "For you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving like ordinary men?" Said another way, when jealous, one is not behaving like a Christian. That person needs to overcome jealousy. Galatians 5:19-21 places jealousy and envy in the same category as sexual sin, labeling it as one of the works of the flesh: "Now the works of the flesh

are evident, which are: adultery, fornication... jealousies... envy... and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."

Envy and jealousy lead to chaos and conflicts. James 3:16 describes a society full of envy and jealousy. "For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there." This verse warns against the devastating consequences of jealousy. In the next chapter, St. James states that envy leads to sins that will harm others. "You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war."<sup>2</sup> Again, this verse uses the word "covet," and again the message communicates the same truth: envy pollutes the soul and has negative consequences.

1 Peter 2:1-2 says it perfectly "Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby." St. Peter tells us that when we are able to overcome our sin, envy being one of them, we may drink the Word of God, and may grow in Him.

<sup>1</sup> Exodus 20:17.

<sup>2</sup> James 4:2.

"A sound heart is life to the body, but envy is rottenness to the bones."

- Proverbs 14:30

"Wrath is cruel and anger is torrent, but who is able to stand before jealousy?"

- Proverbs 27:4

"For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there."

- James 3:16



# Doubt, Perplexity, and Fear

By Boulis Ibrahim



**W**hat a complex creature, man is! And what a terrible world he has made of it!

Exponential population growth, carbon emission levels, irreversible melting of the ice caps, rise of sea levels, and the decreasing salinity of the oceans displays the destructive hand of man. Radiation leaks of nuclear power stations, evil ideologies of entire nations, aggression of the many on the peaceful few, the encircling of evil around the sheepfold, the burning of houses of worship, the intolerance of man to his brother, the apathy of authorities, and terror has permeated our society.

I see politics failing their nations, economies breaking up, and banking systems crashing. I see sickness, war, and destruction. I see children dying, mothers and fathers helpless, diseases and viruses culling communities, poverty suppressing generations, orphans and widows have little to go by, and the poor die of hunger. I see harshness, malice, deceitfulness, and lies. I see men and women consumed by selfishness, self-gain, lust, and hate. I see confusion of the individual and madness of the masses. Justice seems to have escaped the earth, with every man out for himself.

People go to great lengths to find islands of peace, oases of tranquillity, and avenues of escape. They seek temporary solace and illusive comfort in food, sex, work, recreation, leisure, luxury, bodily health, glory, power, sumptuous tables, vestures of silk, costly lands, and splendid and conspicuous houses. Yet, they seem oblivious to the one need that is capable of filling their void, the only water that can quench their thirst, and the only true food that satisfies their hunger. Is it that their eyes cannot see the fulcrum of joy, the purpose in life, the secret of abundance, and the elixir of immortality? Do their ears not hear the voice of truth that is forever calling



to illuminate their way and correct their path? They “keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.”<sup>1</sup> How sad. How very sad indeed, to see millions sleep-walking to their destruction and despair. Why evil surrounds the soul, tightens its grip and stifles the piety of man? “Why do You show me iniquity, and cause me to see trouble? For plundering and violence are before me. There is strife and contention arises. Therefore the law is powerless, and justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; therefore perverse judgement proceeds.”<sup>2</sup> Where do I flee from these stirrings of my inners? Doubt, perplexity, fear, and—dare I say—anger, sometimes even at You, Lord.

Yet, I seek Thee. I lift up my face, voice my doubts, reveal my fears and anguish, and present my case. I stand my watch, set myself on the rampart, and await His answer and His reply, or my correction and lesson.<sup>3</sup>

Behold! He does

not strike me for my anger, nor banish me for my doubts. Instead, He gently reveals His wisdom and offers me understanding.

“You have appointed them for judgement,” and the Lord replies, “You have marked them for correction.”<sup>4</sup>

“Behold the proud... He transgresses... he enlarges his desire as hell, and he is like death, and cannot be satisfied, he gathers to himself all nations and heaps up for himself all peoples.”<sup>5</sup> The Lord acknowledges my anguish and shares my concerns.

“But woe to him who increases what is not his. His creditors will rise suddenly against him, his oppressors will awake, and he will be their booty, because he has plundered, shed men’s blood, brought violence in the land and the city and all who dwell in it. Woe to him who covets evil gain for his house that he may set his nest on high. He gave shameful counsel to his house, cut off many people, and sinned against his own soul.”<sup>6</sup> Rest assured, his

judgement will come and his day of hardship will hasten.

○ Lord, I have heard your speech and was afraid. Revive your work amidst the years, make it known, and in your wrath remember mercy. Your glory covers the heavens, and the earth is full of Your praise. Indeed, You will stand and measure the earth. You will weigh man’s heart on the scale of truth. You will bring all to judgement, and the sinful man will reap the fruits of his evil ways. When I heard your reply my body trembled. “O Lord, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all.”<sup>7</sup> “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it.”<sup>8</sup> My lips quivered at Your voice and my bones could not hold me. But your answer has rested my soul and comforted my spirit in these days of trouble. You are the true judge, The Almighty and Creator of all things. My doubts have seeped out of me as melting wax off a candle. My anger has fled, Your love drove my fears away, and my faith is restored. Truly, “Your

commanders are like swarming locusts, and Your generals like great grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges on a cold day; when the sun rises they flee away, and the place where they are is not known.”<sup>9</sup> But, Your providence and mercy to those who love you are eternal, and it is there that I rest my mind and soul, and sing: “Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labour of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls— yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer’s feet, and He will make me walk on my high hills.”<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 6:9.

<sup>2</sup> Habakkuk 1:3-4.

<sup>3</sup> Habakkuk 2:1.

<sup>4</sup> Habakkuk 1:12.

<sup>5</sup> Habakkuk 2:4-5.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Habakkuk 2:5-18.

<sup>7</sup> Psalm 104:24.

<sup>8</sup> Psalm 139:6.

<sup>9</sup> Nahum 3:17.

<sup>10</sup> Habakkuk 3:17-19.



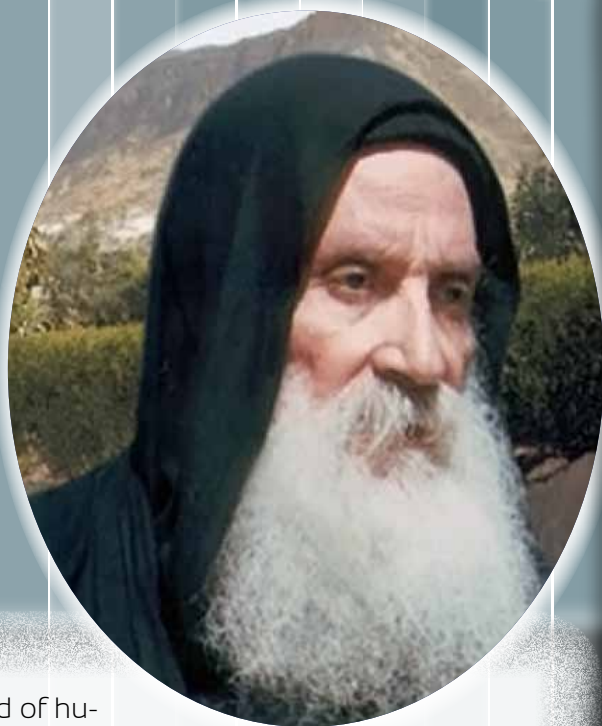
## PILLARS OF OUR TIME:

### Ordinary People Serving in Extraordinary Ways

# MAKING AN IMPACT

Fr. Matthew the Poor  
(1919-2006)

An Article by Myriam Fahim



He has met his country's President<sup>1</sup> and the desert Bedouins.<sup>2</sup> Time Magazine wrote twice about him.<sup>3</sup> He authored over 40 books and pamphlets.<sup>4</sup> Internationally, Catholics, Protestants, and Russian Orthodox follow his teachings and regard him as a religious scholar.<sup>5</sup> Who is he? He is none other than our very own Fr. Matthew the Poor.

He was born Youssef Iskander in Banha, Egypt. Youssef became a very successful pharmacist. At the age of 29, he owned two of everything: pharmacies, cars, houses. Following our Lord's teachings, he decided to renounce his wealth, sell everything, and give it to the poor.<sup>6</sup>

According to Time Magazine, he is purported to have said:

"I went to the monastery with great fear. I wondered how I could fill this heart of mine in the desert alone, be-

cause I am a man fond of human social contact. I enjoyed the company of women, of my sisters and family. I love music and used to attend concerts in Alexandria every week. How could my heart be filled in lonely isolation? But God kept his promise to me. When I retreated to the desert, God gave me mountains of celestial sympathy. Instead of symphony concerts, I heard celestial music."<sup>7</sup>

After a brief stay in the monastery of St. Samuel, where he was renamed "Father Matthew," he chose to live as a hermit. He headed to a wasteland called Wadi El Rayan, where he established himself under a palm tree.<sup>8</sup>

Others joined him and they eventually lived in caves. One night, Fr. Matthew had a vision of an old man telling him that he would give him a mountain. As it turns out, the old man in the vision was a very real Bedouin. This Bedouin

used to search for buried treasure in the Wadi and had stumbled upon a discovery that he thought could very well interest Fr. Matthew and his companions. He showed them a cave housing an ancient Coptic Chapel with icons painted upon its walls. The hermits finally had an ideal meeting place for their worship!<sup>9</sup>

In 1969, Pope Kyrillos VI asked the hermits to leave their hermitage for Wadi El Natroun. The Monastery of St. Macarius the Great, home to some elderly monks, was in disrepair and direly needed work. They obeyed the calling. Under the direction of Fr. Matthew, the monastery was reconstructed, and eventually agriculture and stock farming were implemented.<sup>10</sup>

Fr. Matthew's spiritual legacy is overwhelming. The author cannot do it justice in this short article. Suffice it to say

that his main credo was that of love, unity, and peace.<sup>11</sup> This credo was not only practiced within the confines of the monastery, but overflowed to the outside world. Indeed, the monastery held various projects to help the poor in the slums. When President Sadat visited the monastery, he told Fr. Matthew, "The State with all of its capabilities could not have done what you have done for your monastery and your country."<sup>12</sup>

Despite his growing fame, Fr. Matthew the poor lived a life of silence and prayer.<sup>13</sup> One of his most memorable quotes is the following:

I do not wish now to bother the reader with my affairs. Let it suffice to know that God meant to besiege me with prayer.

Whenever physical hunger turned cruel against me, I found my gratification in prayer. Whenever the biting cold of winter was unkind to me, I found my warmth in prayer. Whenever people were harsh to me (and their harshness was severe indeed) I found my comfort in prayer. In short, prayer became my food and my drink, my outfit and my armor whether by night or by day.

This was all the more true in my case, for I had no spiritual father or friend. I had neither a colleague nor a comrade for my journey. The voice of God was the only answer for all my needs. It was the voice of father, friend, comrade, and guide. No sooner did I feel the need for his voice than I heard it speaking inside me a thou-

sand times stronger than an ear would ever hear. For what the ear hears, the mind forgets. But what the heart hears, time can never erase.<sup>14</sup>

May time never erase the beautiful legacy that you have left us.

<sup>1</sup> El-Keraza Magazine, 34<sup>th</sup> year, Issues 21-22, June 23, 2006, p.6.

<sup>2</sup> WATSON, Rev. Dr. John, Abouna Matta El Meskeen Contemporary Desert Mystic, Coptic Church Review, Vol. 27, n°3, 4, Fall/Winter 2006, p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> The Desert Revival, Time Magazine, Vol. 107, No. 16, April 19, 1976. Saints Among Us: The Work of Mother Teresa, Time Magazine, Vol. 106, No. 26, December 29, 1975.

<sup>4</sup> The Desert Revival, Time Magazine, Vol. 107, No. 16, April 19, 1976.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid note 2, pp. 66-67.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid note 4.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid note 2, p. 68.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid note 2.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid note 2, p. 70 and St. Macarius Monastery Website at <http://www.stmacariusmonastery.org/eabout.htm#a>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid note 2, pp. 86-88. See also Fr. Matthew the Poor, Christian Unity, 1997, Monastery of St. Macarius, Scetis, Cairo.

<sup>12</sup> Fr. Shenouda El Anba Pishoy, Fr. Matthew the Poor, Coptic Church Review, Vol. 27, n°3, 4, Fall/Winter 2006, pp. 97, 98.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid note 2, pp. 79-81.

<sup>14</sup> Fr. Matthew the Poor, Orthodox Prayer Life: The Inner Way, 2003, St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York, p. 10.





# The Joy of Working

**“Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise.”<sup>1</sup>**

“THERE IS NO WAY!” SAID UNCLE SAAD TO HIMSELF, sitting down to his desk in his office feeling discouraged, to say the least. All doors seemed to slam shut, and there was nothing left for him to do, except to come to terms with reality. It seemed to him, that was what God wanted. With no beam of hope anywhere, what would be another logical explanation, other than it was the will of God?

Uncle Saad was about to set his mind to accept his logic, when suddenly, out of nowhere, he heard a voice, “Do you think God will allow your labor to go in vain?”

This story began six years ago. Uncle Saad was a member of a small Coptic community in the Diocese of the Southern United States. Like many other Coptic communities in the diocese, they had liturgical services twice a month, conducted in a rented building for this purpose. One of the priests in the diocese would come to their town Friday evening to pray Vespers. Saturday morning they would have the liturgical service, and then the priest had to travel back to his own church to conduct the service on Sunday. Although the congregation was grateful for the blessing of having services every other week, they were deprived of many others, such as holding regular prayer meetings, a Bible study, Kiahk praises, and the services of the Passion Week. For church feasts, members of the congregation had to travel to the nearest Coptic Orthodox church to attend these special services.

## with the Lord Part 1

By Mariam Guirgis

This particular congregation had purchased a piece of property some years earlier. So they started thinking of building a church on that property. They drew plans of their vision of the building and contacted a construction contractor. Uncle Saad was a member of the church’s board and so he had followed this story from its inception. There were extensive discussions about the details of the construction project: decisions about the roof, the walls, the type of floor to be installed, the light fixtures, the windows, the landscaping and

plumbing, and so on. The plans went back and forth between the church and the contractor. When all was agreed upon, the vision was submitted to a professional architect for site engineering plans and price quote.

The congregation was excited about their new dream. They longed for a place to call their own; a house of prayer, a house of purity, and a house of blessings they prayed would be granted to them. However, when the price quotes for the construction project were introduced to them, they realized they were facing a financial

challenge. They did not have enough money to embark on the project. They then started to think of alternatives: contact other contractors for different quotes, contact banks and ask for a construction loan, and look in the real estate market for

ready buildings they could use as a church. Board members started moving in all of these directions. They submitted their plans to several construction companies and waited for quotes. They even contacted a company that specialized in building churches. This

particular company viewed their job as a calling: building houses of the Lord, and thus charged less than normal construction companies did. However, all the new quotes from all the companies were much higher than the first quote they received! So that door was shut.

The parish began to contact the church’s bank. They filled out the application for the loan and collected the information needed. After all the paperwork was done, they waited for the bank’s decision. To their dismay, the bank rejected their application due to the amount of the loan applied for, versus the revenue the church generates. Uncle Saad was not happy with the bank’s decision, but he had strong faith and told them, “We will have a church despite your rejection of our application.” He

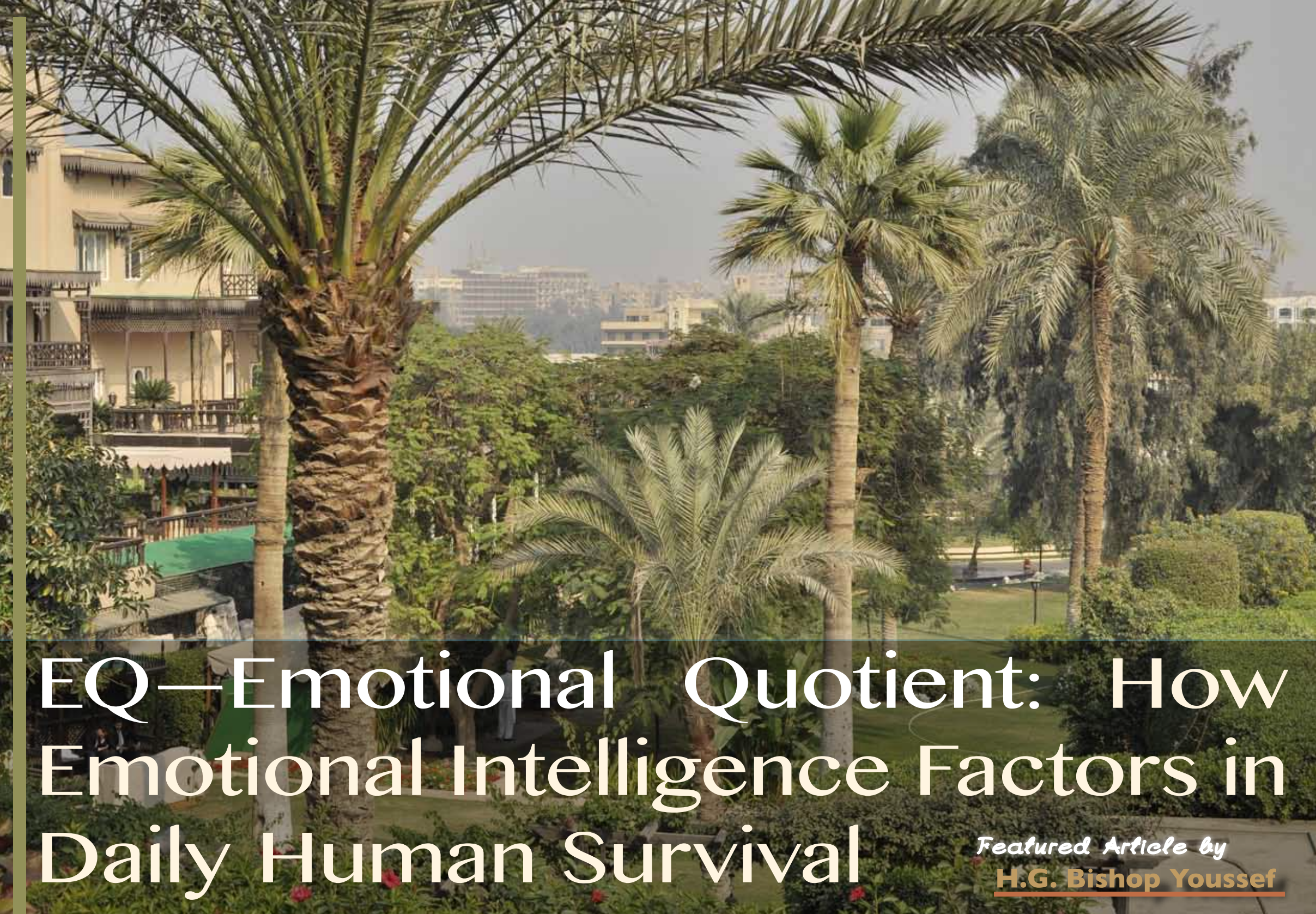
believed it.

The church went to another bank, put together another application and waited. Another rejection, for the same reason. They tried a third bank, and a fourth, and all failed. The last bank doors they knocked agreed to give them a loan. However, the amount approved was less than what was needed. The board decided to ask for donations from people all over the diocese to compensate for the difference. They sent out thousands of letters, but only little money came back, still not enough to cover the cost of the construction project. At this point the board realized that their dream of building a church was not financially feasible. And this door, too, was shut.

To Be Continued . . .

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 10:35-36





# EQ—Emotional Quotient: How Emotional Intelligence Factors in Daily Human Survival

*Featured Article by*  
**H.G. Bishop Youssef**

People often brag about their academic status, grade point average, and scholastic achievements. Rarely do we consider the emotional intelligence variable and how that figures into real life successes at multi-levels of contentment—academic, emotional, social, and even spiritual. How do people deal with accomplishments and how do the same people deal with setbacks and everything in between the two ends? EQ—Emotional Quotient—is the defining engine of human psycho-emotional stability. Many disciplines, including psychology and medicine, have attempted to present EQ assessment instruments. Yet, no standard specific numerical assessment tool to measure emotional intelligence is commonly regarded or utilized as a comprehensive reliable

instrument comparable to the IQ Test (IQ—Intelligence Quotient), as the renowned Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale—WAIS,<sup>1</sup> or the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children—WISC.<sup>2</sup> Emotional intelligence is a vital component in answering questions pertaining to one's self and having the ability to identify attributes that can fortify one's reactions to life's many convoluted situations. If behavior is dictated by

emotional intelligence, then it is critical that this factor is functioning at its best so that reactions to situations are appropriate and constructive.

Some may wonder if EQ emotional intelligence is biological, as is believed to be IQ intellectual abilities. Genetic make-up is not the only influencing variable—the environment also plays a role. Human nature is complex and consists of a combination of nature and nurture. God, our Great Creator, has equipped us with a specific biological map; yet, He also supplied us with inner tools designed to offset life's fragile moments. These internal mechanisms are the forces of emotional intelligence, which can be used to protect the individual from self-pity as well as from arrogance—two unproductive emotions that furnish the stage for sin. Real life examples of emotional intelligence can be learned from some key biblical figures, as well as from the biographies of many saints. Thus, we can appreciate God's mercy and justice in all circumstances. Every phase in life has its own set of challenges. Some individuals seem to struggle more than others, but God will not place more burdens upon anyone than

they are emotionally equipped to handle.

The lack of heeding to the basic skills required for emotional intelligence has strong precautions. What happens when you don't get your way? How do you deal with daily challenges? Many people suffer from or experience serious physical illnesses and/or mental health conditions as a result. These ailments can be caused by or increase the probability of illnesses from unmanaged elevation of stress, and are sometimes related to insomnia, hypertension, diabetes, cancer, autoimmune diseases, gastrointestinal diseases, and other infirmities, and may even cause death. Low emotional intelligence may also exasperate mental health conditions, such as depression, psychotic disorders, eating disorders, suicidal thoughts, abuse/aggression, apathy, and many other dysfunctional behaviors and disorders.

Acquiring emotional intelligence is a developmental process that can be surmised in the attainment of some fundamental basic skills throughout life:

- Seeking God
- Possessing a positive outlook



- Monitoring emotions
- Recovering from setbacks
- Coping with pressure, stress, and demands
- Making adjustments
- Maintaining sensibility and flexibility
- Controlling thoughts and actions
- Achieving contentment without strife
- Collaborating in interpersonal relationships

Modern counseling strategies focus on solutions, rather than on dwelling on the past as in former therapeutic practices of reliving and re-experiencing the past. Other counseling techniques teach the counselee how to ascribe new meanings to unresolved situations or how to encounter new outcomes to defective patterns in interpersonal relationships. On the level of Christian counseling, the past is only relevant for the sake of repentance, but the penitent must be determined to live in the present. Remorsefulness over past ills is different from remaining stuck in the past. Thus, it is of spiritual necessity to repent with tears—vowing to strive for freedom from the former bondage of sin, as it is to rejoice with hope—confident in God’s mercies, which are more than the sand of the sea. Though challenges and afflictions are

inevitable experiences that all people will endure at some juncture in their lives—and this is especially the case for Christians who have always suffered many forms of persecution, St. Paul encourages the readers to not weaken in the face of adversities. *“Therefore we do not lose heart.”*<sup>3</sup> Emotional intelligence is the ingredient that stimulates resilience. The Holy Spirit empowers emotional intelligence and helps the believers to remember God’s promises, His love, and His presence—culminating in a higher, more expedient, and godly form of resilience to overcome all challenges—even if adversities encounter injustice, poverty, or martyrdom. *“We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life*

*of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.”*<sup>4</sup> Those who stray also have hope. Here, we must note the importance of children and youth attending Sunday school. Even if the parents are not religious, it is incumbent upon us—as stewards, to urge them to allow their children to be equipped with spiritual stability. It is that seed of faith embedded in the heart of the child that will resonate in the mind and endow the growing child with emotional intelligence through spiritual knowledge. What compelled the *prodigal son* or *St. Augustine* to repent and return? Though they initially chose to surrender to flagrant practices of deteriorating morality to a maximum, they were finally able to recognize the gross void in their lives. Thus, they did not succumb to their new warped realities, but rather than think or feel it would be a risk to admit their wrongs and repent, their emotional intelligence exercised

godly reasoning and they repented, returned, and were restored.

Late have I loved you, O Beauty ever ancient, ever new, late have I loved you! You were within me, but I was outside, and it was there that I searched for you. In my unloveliness I plunged into the lovely things which you created. You were with me, but I was not with you. Created things kept me from you; yet if they had not been in you they would not have been at all. You called, you shouted, and you broke through my deafness. You flashed, you shone, and you dispelled my blindness. You breathed your fragrance on me; I drew in breath and now I pant for you. I have tasted you, now I hunger and thirst for more. You touched me, and I burned for your peace.<sup>5</sup>

—St. Augustine of Hippo

David the prophet, the meek shepherd who became king, desired to build the house of God and was dubbed, *“a man after God’s own heart”*<sup>6</sup> —attested by God Himself. However, David also became a man of war and shed much blood. Thus, God did not allow him to build

His temple.<sup>7</sup> Though he obeyed God completely, David earnestly labored with boundless love and contentment to provide all the furnishings for the building of the house of the Lord and exercised his leadership and authority to summon masons and craftsmen to assist in the building of the temple.<sup>8</sup> When people seek God with all their hearts, He reveals Himself plainly to them and satisfies every void in their empty lives. True emotional intelligence can rest upon seeking God, His goodness, His mercy, His joy, and His blessings, and drawing emotional fortitude from His presence in one’s life.

We live in an era of economic uncertainty saturated with unemployment, religious persecution, immigration, corruption, rise in divorce, and deviant lifestyles. Patience is not only a virtue, but it is rapidly becoming a rare breed of virtues. With a mere tap on a key of a computer, a phone, or most devices, instantaneous information awaits. Thus, when everything slows down and the credit card is no longer the solution to one’s needs, individuals and families will sometimes collapse as a result. Where is emotional intelligence? If you are unemployed today, then volunteer somewhere

or take a class from which you may benefit. At least you will keep your mind stimulated by new knowledge, meet new people, and stay productive. Strive to keep your family together, for the days of hardships can tear the family apart, or bring them closer together if Christ is kept in the midst of the family unit. Marriage requires work—every day. Marriage is not a movie expounding on emotions. Marriage relies upon emotional intelligence to set pride aside, resolve conflicts, and forgive often. Teaching children and youth responsibility and accountability prepares the good ground for emotional intelligence to sprout, mature, and bring forth good fruit. In essence, living and sharing a life filled with Christ is the underpinning of emotional intelligence.

To God be the glory, forever, Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Intelligence assessment instrument and scale for adults and older adolescents.  
<sup>2</sup> Intelligence assessment instrument and scale for children and younger adolescents between the ages of 6-16.  
<sup>3</sup> 2 Corinthians 2:16.  
<sup>4</sup> 2 Corinthians 2:8-10.  
<sup>5</sup> Confessions of St. Augustine. Book 10, Chapter 27.  
<sup>6</sup> 1 Samuel 13:13-14; Acts 13:22.  
<sup>7</sup> 1 Chronicles 22:7-12.  
<sup>8</sup> 1 Chronicles 22.

“Emotional intelligence is the ingredient that stimulates resilience. The Holy Spirit empowers emotional intelligence and helps the believers to remember God’s promises, His love, and His presence.”

“Patience is not only a virtue, but it is rapidly becoming a rare breed of virtues.”







“The desert fathers remind us “purity transforms an adulteress into a virgin.”

# Amma Sarah of the Desert

**T**alk of the virtues of love and purity is common; however, do we truly understand how to love and how to be pure? Are they simply two virtues addressed in youth group meetings, then forgotten when we reach our homes? Or, are they taken seriously and worked on, so that we can reach a higher state in our spiritual life? A life of purity is not something easy, and many saints struggled with this virtue. However, without Love no one can reach purity. This was actually seen through a less prominently known saint named Amma Sarah.

Not much is known about this great saint, and little is written about her. She was only discovered from the paradise of the desert fathers books. All that is known about Amma Sarah is that she was a desert mother and a hermit. Her estimated birth year was 290 AD, and she died at the age of 80 in the year 370. For thirteen years, Amma Sarah waged warfare against the demon of fornication. The most amazing thing about her life is that she never prayed that the warfare should cease or be removed, but rather she prayed, “Oh God, give me strength.”<sup>1</sup> At the end of her battle, the spirit of fornication came to her and said “Sarah, you have overcome me,” but Sarah replied, “It is not I who have overcome you, but my master, Christ.”<sup>2</sup>

Where did this great mother of the desert get this patience and endurance to fight for purity? What made her continue to struggle for thirteen years? The answer is simply love. One cannot attain purity without learning how to love. Think about it, if you do not love someone, why would you be concerned with pleasing that person by your actions? Amma Sarah loved God with all her heart, mind, and strength, such that struggling for purity seemed so minor, compared to the Love she had for Christ. She held God so dear to her heart and decided to follow Him only, and no one else. She wanted her heart to be a home for Christ, following His command: “My son, give Me your heart.”<sup>3</sup> Amma Sarah put so much trust in God that she ceased to be afraid of the visitation of temptations, relying on God to protect her. Not only did her love for Christ make her endure her struggle against lust for thirteen years, but also it helped her not deviate from her monastic observances and prayers to God, who provided for her in the midst of all her struggles.

So, the question that comes up now is: how can I then love God like Amma Sarah? Simply ask Him to teach you. Stand up in prayer and ask God to teach you how to love. He will be more than willing to guide you through gaining this virtue. God loves us so much that He is waiting for us to come running to Him; if we put in one mile, He will come the rest of the way. He just wants to see us willing to love Him and dedicate our heart to Him only. Only then will Christ come, cleanse our hearts, fight our battles, and give us support through all the temptations that surround us.



Amma Sarah is a great legend, yet few know of her. However, her story moved many youthful hearts who saw how females also struggle with lust, and can still turn into beautiful saints. The desert fathers remind us “purity transforms an adulteress into a virgin.” Never let the devil deceive you, making you accept that you can never attain purity or be able to fall in love with Christ after battling with the sin of lust. Also, never be deceived into thinking that the monastic life is for those who are “saintly.” The monastic life is a life of repentance. If you feel you are called to the monastic life and desire it, yet feel, because you are struggling with lust, that you should not follow your heart’s desire, then you are being deceived by the evil one. Monasticism is not for those who already think they are saintly; it is for those who seek their salvation through living a life of prayer, meditation, and being married to the true Bridegroom.

<sup>1</sup> “Sarah” The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection. (1975). (B. Ward, Trans.) Mowbray: Cistercian Publications. 229.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Proverb 23:26.



**I**n some places, the New Testament and other early Christian writings condemn the emotion of anger, while in others it is allowed—sometimes even considered godly. This article examines the writings of the earliest Christians on the subject, to see if they can be harmonized or, whether Jesus’ first followers contradicted themselves and each other.

Jesus condemned “whoever is angry with his brother without a cause.”<sup>1</sup> In Ephesians 4:31, Colossians 3:8, and 2 Corinthians 12:20, Saint Paul classified anger with slander, malice, jealousy, and selfishness. Galatians 5:19-21 categorizes it, not only with jealousy and selfishness, but also with sexual immorality, idolatry, drunkenness, orgies, and hatred. James 1:20 states “the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” Saint Athanasius or other church fathers recommended two ancient Christian books, The First Letter of Clement and The Pastor of Hermas, as edifying spiritual reading. Both indicate that the Scriptural sentiments on anger penetrated into the day-to-day lives of believers. Christian literature before 250 A.D. contains about one hundred disapprovals of anger, including wrath and rage.

Yet anger is a naturally-occurring emotion. It comes upon a person suddenly and unplanned. It is often unavoidable, and was experienced by the best and most exemplary of Bible personages. In the Acts of the Apostles, Saint Paul appears to have been angered by Jewish and pagan opponents on his missionary journeys, while his epistles indicate the same emotion towards some of his congregations. Hebrews 3:10, 11, and 17 depict God Himself as angry, as does much of the Old Testament. Mark 3:5 states point-blank that Christ was angry. He was probably angry also when casting the money-changers out of the Temple.<sup>2</sup> The Egyptian church scholar Origen, the leading Scripture commentator and teacher of the first half of the third century, conceded that even “the perfect” among us experience anger without forethought on our part. He even saw it as beneficial and necessary when it leads to restraining sin, restoring righteousness, and reproaching, correcting, and disciplining sinners. In the same era, Tertullian, a prominent north African clergyman, wrote that being unjustly angry and allowing the sun to set on one’s anger were daily and usually unavoidable occurrences.

The earliest Christians recognized not so much an outright ban on anger, but restrictions and limits, so that it would not harm anyone. James 1:19 counsels Christians to be “slow to wrath”; it does not forbid it entirely. The New

By David  
W.T. Brattston

# Be Angry, and Do Not Sin

International Version of 1 Corinthians 13:5 states that love “is not easily angered”, not that love is never angered. Ephesians 4:26 is particularly informative: (1) “Be angry, and do not sin” indicates that anger itself is not a sin but may bring a person closer towards sin, and (2) “do not let the sun go down on your wrath” called forth comments from early authors. Origen instructed Christians to abandon anger before it causes the sunlight of faith to set upon us and brings spiritual darkness to our souls. A few years earlier, his teacher, Clement of Alexandria in Egypt, praised this verse as a prime example of the apostles’ wholesome teaching.

The use of adjectives by early post-biblical Christian writers suggests that what was condemned was not the involuntary emotion itself, but anger that has become unjust, furious (both Tertullian), boiling, unmanageable (both Clement of Alexandria), uncontrolled, flaming, irrational or brutal (all Origen). Origen also opposed being drunk with anger or enslaved by it. In the New Testament itself, Titus 1:7 indicates that a bishop in particular is not to be quick-tempered.

The fact that some early authors imposed parameters and limits indicate that, while not approving of anger, they nevertheless did not regard it as an automatic sin. It is like state control of alcohol and tobacco in our time: the existence of government strictures implies that the government tolerates them,

although disapproving of them.

We are to avoid acting under the influence of anger because it may impair our judgment and self-control. Origen counseled Christians to conquer anger in ourselves, remove incentives to it, and soften it—say by moderation and meditation.

The consensus among Christian writers before 250 A.D. appears to be that, while we might be unable to avoid becoming angry, we should make efforts to damp it down and control it. If this does not work, we should avoid acting under its influence. We must not be prone to anger or quick-tempered.<sup>3</sup> Still less should we provoke it in other people,<sup>4</sup> or pray under its influence.<sup>5</sup>

Jesus’ actions while driving the money-changers from the Temple are a model of behavior when angry. His calmness and deliberation show He was not controlled or enslaved by anger. Nor did He prolong the emotion or allow it to interfere with His relationships with other people. In Matthew 21:12-14, He immediately returned to His usual healing ministry; while in John 2:14-16, He at once engaged in peaceful conversation and teaching.

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 5:22.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 21:12-14, John 2:14-16, and parallels.

<sup>3</sup> Titus 1:7.

<sup>4</sup> Ephesians 6:4.5

<sup>5</sup> 1 Timothy 2:8.





*In the Name of the Father,  
the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
One God. Amen.*

To Fr. Anastasi's great shock, he awoke feeling a veil-like object on his face. As he lifted his hand to remove it, something fell out of his hand. As he felt for it, he realized that it was a cross. The place was shrouded in darkness, which puzzled Fr. Anastasi greatly since he remembered that the window to his cell was open when he lay down to sleep, and that the moonlight had exuded the place, beaming

light into the room. Also, what was this strange scent that he smelled? He tried to discover its source but was unable; it resembled the stench of death. With time his eyes began to adapt, so he tried to peer in the darkness, perhaps he could see. His hair stood on end in fear and shock, and his whole body trembled. He placed his palms over his eyes to block out the image, but when he removed them he found the same scene: piles of bones lay in the corners, and corpses laid out on the floor around him. Each one was dressed in a white tunic

with a veil on his face and a cross in his hand. No doubt he was in the monastery catacombs!

An eerie notion seized him, which he unsuccessfully tried to dismiss. In a spontaneous motion, he looked at himself and found that he also was dressed in a white tunic, and as far as he could see his beard was all white. There had only been three or four white hairs before. He realized the shocking reality: he was in the monastery catacombs. But what happened to him? Did he really die and God raised him from the dead? Did the

monks wrongly assume him to be dead and bury him? Is there a third explanation? He did not know. The compelling reality before him was that, at least as far as people were concerned, he was dead. He also knew another truth: he could not come out of this condition. How could people see before them a dead person whom they buried with their own hands? Their nerves could not handle it, neither could their minds. Therefore, he must spend the rest of his life as a dead person inside the tomb. This was a new trial for him in life.

How will he live this way?

On the first day, he was greatly afflicted. The terrible putrefying stench was unbearable, but he told himself, "I am supposed to have left the luxuries of the world, and I must live this way." He remembered the story of St. Arsenius, who did not replace the water used for soaking his palms until it stank, claiming that its stench was in exchange for the sweet scents with which he had indulged in the imperial palace. Soon, Fr. Anastasi grew accustomed to this condition of living among the

bones and bearing with that stench.

There remained before him the issue of food. How will he eat? There was no food with him in the tomb, and he was unable to bring food from the monastery and preserve it. Rather, he left each night in the dark, about midnight, and ate some fruits or vegetables from the monastery garden, or some leftover food in a plate that the cook had forgotten to wash. Perhaps a loaf and a little salt, this sufficed. He remained fasting all day until midnight arrived once again. Thus, he spent many years with the sun never seeing him eating. In fact, the sun did not see him at all.

In the tomb, he had no kitchenware or plates. Here Fr. Anastasi remembered how he had kept in his cell tens of kitchen utensils and various plates and dishes. Now he had none of these and was surviving without them, just as St. Pijimi the anchorite who lived with absolutely no utensils in his cave. Here Fr. Anastasi felt shame over his former life.

His conscience began to rebuke him. How did he, being a monk, own many such utensils which had seemed necessary to him at that time and which he had now practically proven that he could live without? He remembered the tens of other tools that he kept in his cell at that time: desk supplies, furnishings, pictures, clothing, covers, and many miscellaneous items. His conscience chastened him greatly over this. What was the meaning of the poverty to which he had vowed on the day of his ordination? Where was the virtue of detachment? He explored within himself the issue of necessities and luxuries. Doubtless, it was an issue of percentage, depending

“But what happened to him? Did he really die and God raised him from the dead? Did the monks wrongly assume him to be dead and bury him?”

on an individual's level of detachment and valuation of necessities.

As for now, Fr. Anastasi was able to live in the monastery, owning absolutely nothing at all, living a life of complete detachment.

Even the cell (his personal dwelling), now he lived in the tomb which he could not consider as his own personal cell. He was a stranger, even in this place. Formerly, he had a cell with an inner room that no one could enter without his permission. He could lock or unlock his cell as he pleased with a key which he kept on his person. As for now, he had no control over his dwelling place. If they interred a new person, he could not object or open his mouth. Rather, as soon as he heard the sad chimes of the monastery bells, he rushed to assume his former position as a corpse and covered his face with his veil, so that when the monks opened the catacomb to place the new corpse, they would find everything as they had left it.

Fr. Anastasi could not even own books. How then did he spend his time? Here he began to feel his former mistake. In that time, his objective was to fill his mind with information. He would read tens of books and became an encyclopedia, but perhaps he had no time to meditate on what he read. Now, having no

books, he began to ruminate on the information stored in his memory, and meditate. Sometimes, he would dwell on one verse for some days, diving into its depth, the Spirit revealing to him amazing mysteries, to the point that he would cry out in joy with David the Prophet, "I have seen the consummation of all perfection, but Your commandments are exceedingly broad." He realized that he had formerly lived on the shallow and superficial level of knowledge. Now when he had a craving to read, he would go in the darkness to the church, read shortly in calmness, and then return to the catacombs.

Fr. Anastasi lived a life of complete isolation and silence. Naturally, he visited no one and no one visited him. He lived in complete silence, conversing with no one. Once, some monks were talking outside the catacombs. He heard their voices but did not comment as to whether the information they said was true or false, complete or partial. It was not for him to intervene. How would this concern him, he was dead! Another time, he heard monks outside the catacombs speaking of the forefathers and his name came up; some had good memories of him, while others criticized him. As for him, he remained silent, not thanking the one who

# FATHER ANASTASI

By His Holiness Pope Shenouda III



praised him, nor arguing with the one who criticized him; he was dead.

Once, Fr. Anastasi fell sick, and naturally, no doctor visited him. He took no medicine or any type of treatment, nutrition, or supplement. He endured in stillness and silence. Not even a kind word reached him, since no one visited him. And if he sensed anyone outside the tomb, he did not even permit a groan. He remained thus until he recovered.

Once, as he walked at night, two monks saw him. One shrieked and fled, while the other—assuming him an anchorite or one of the old saints—approached him and knelt down, asking his blessing. He did not argue, but obeyed, and placed his hand on him and blessed him, then quickly raced toward the tomb. Thus, it was rumored in the monastery that a saint had appeared to some of the monks. Fr. Anastasi secluded himself for several days thereafter (not leaving his tomb at all); he remained without food or drink.

Fr. Anastasi lived completely remote to the world. In that former time, he would write letters to many and receive replies. Now that he was dead, he was cut off from the letters, the magazines, the newspapers, and all news altogether. No world news, church news, or even monastery news reached him. With time, he even began to forget the old news as well. Formerly, he felt that the monastery needed him, and that he was one of the pillars of the monastery, an important person who held many responsibilities. Now, he learned that the monastery continues without him. Likewise, sometimes positions and responsibilities were vacated in the church, but no one nominated him for them; he was dead. He

likewise did not think of these issues, nor was he aware of them.

Since he had nothing to occupy him except God, he lived a life of unceasing prayer. In that time, before his death, he had spent many nights in reading, writing, translating, composing, transcribing, and many issues outside himself, but now, he was unable to read or write at night since there are no books or lighting. Therefore, he spent the entire night in prayer, remembering St. Isaac's saying, "The night is set apart to engage in prayer." He also used the night to perform his necessary functions in the monastery.

He progressed in prayer greatly, until his entire life turned into prayer. Nothing remained in his mind except God. With time, he forgot the old memories. As no new worldly thing was added to it, his unconscious was being purified of all that remained in it of world news, its memories, and its preoccupations. Thus, distraction vanished from his prayers and he began to reach purity of heart and purity of thought; release from all is bondage to the One.

He was purified of the sinful thoughts, but one thought continued to war against him. He told himself, "Behold, now I have learned true monasticism, and engaged in complete death to the world and full unity with God, so what prevents me from appearing to the monastery and living thus?"

What urged him on this thought was the long time he had spent in the tomb, so that people had forgotten him. Many of his old friends were buried alongside him in the tomb. Most of the monks now in the monastery were new ones who had not known him. His friends who remained were few, and they would not expect to see him.

Also, if they did see him, they would not recognize him, because his appearance had changed due to his aging and asceticism.

Fr. Anastasi tried to expel this thought. He told himself, "What benefit is it for people to see me? In that time, I longed to live alone and away from people, set apart for God alone, and now I have reached what I wanted, so why would I think of changing my condition?" Then the thoughts would return to war against him saying, "You did this by compulsion, but how wonderful for you to do it willfully." A long time passed in battling these thoughts.

Finally, a very critical night in his life came. On that night, the thoughts became overbearing, so Fr. Anastasi knelt down and poured himself out before God in intense fervor, saying, "Blessed are You God in all Your goodness to me. Lord, You are very tender and compassionate towards me. You have treated me better than I deserve to be treated, and have given me this isolated life. You have released me from all and have allowed me to bond with You. I only feel that I have lived this life by compulsion. I want to live it willfully, out of my love for You. Is it a thought, or is it a desire? Is it good, or is it bad? In all cases, I pose it before You, because I am unable to hide anything from You. May Your will be done." Fr. Anastasi lowered his head and cried. No one heard him, but heaven heard. One of the twenty-four priests seated around the throne of God came forward and took this prayer in his golden censer and ascended above with it. Fr. Anastasi fell asleep, and the tears wet his white beard.

He did not know how much time passed as he slept. Was it an hour or an age? All he knew was that he heard

a bell ring sharply; it was the midnight bell he heard every night in the tomb. Fr. Anastasi opened his eyes in great shock, asking, "What is this that I see?" He turned his head and fell asleep. He awoke on the sound of another bell, perhaps the Prime bell. He opened his eyes, and behold, to his shocking amazement, he was before the first scene. He found before him an open window with the moonlight exuding the entire place. He looked to himself and found that he was dressed in black. He looked around, and found that it resembled that cell he had lived in, in that time, so he placed his hand on his head and began to think. Finally, he understood the mystery... Was what had happened to him a dream, a vision, or a lesson in monasticism? He did not know, but he understood the lesson intended.

From that moment, his life changed completely. He began the life of isolation and asceticism which he had learned during those tens of years. He took to the unceasing prayer as he had practiced it in the tomb. When he was compelled to leave his cell for a service to the community, he walked calmly, not looking to the left or to the right. The monks recognized him by his silence and his emaciated body, his considerable demeanor and humility, and by his head bowed down to the ground. From time to time, he would slightly lift his head, shaking it slightly to shake off drops of tears preventing him from looking ahead ...

*Glory be to God forever.  
Amen.*



JESUS LED HIS DISCIPLES INTO THE STORM. He seemed absent while the war was being waged against their boat in the form of waves. They cried out to Him from lack of faith, when it should have been a cry of hope. He came to the rescue as He had planned all along (Mt 8:23-26). He intentionally slept in the boat; the whole purpose of the ride was for Him to reveal His divinity to them. This is a Master teaching His disciples, in seclusion, the mysteries of His presence, in a beautiful way, using His natural surroundings. He is training us; He allows the temptations. Actually, when the boat was filling with fish so that it began to sink they did not cry out – same circumstances, different reaction! Different emotions; one of elation, one of fear, solely dependent on our interpretation of the situation. They also had other boats with them in both situations. Lord, why is it that we think we can handle the smaller situations, the joyful ones—but we panic with the big ones, the fearful ones? We should joyfully accept all situations with faith that You are the One in control, the One who allows the turmoil, the One who offers the gifts. Lord, why do I accept the thoughts that the gifts are because of me and the turmoils are because of You? How do I expel this thought so that it has place in me no more?

If Your mother was so humble and so unmoved by abasement or exaltation, how could I not emulate her, saying with St. Paul, "I have learned in whatever state I am to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound" (Phil 4:11-12). Lord, everything comes from You; if You exalt me, then it is Your doing, and if You abase me, then it is Your doing... how dare I take credit for Your work! If You allow me to fail, it is Your work (and I know You are holding me by a string, for which I am forever grateful). Lord, I know You won't leave me, so please forgive my lack of faith as You forgave Your apostles. Lord, I thank You because I am Yours, and because I know this. Lord, You said to follow You; I'm following You blindfolded, because I don't know where I'm going and I don't know the way, and I don't know what is right, but I trust that You will use me for the glory of Your holy name, and unite me with You forever.

At the beginning of his discipleship St. Peter was in the boat (supported by worldly means), at the peak of his discipleship he walked on the water (supported by and trusting God), and when he plummeted spiritually out of weakness, he plunged into the water (John 21:7). Even after he had been so strong, so empowered spiritually to walk on the water,

he became weak; yet through his weakness, even as the Lord said, when he returned, he strengthened his brethren (Cf Lk 22:32). Do not lose hope, even if you feel like there is no use in you, or if you feel like you've plummeted to the pit of emptiness, like He might have abandoned you because there is nothing in you that pleases Him. There is still hope that you will return and strengthen your brethren. Do not think that someone who's been walking this far with Him should not plummet like this. Be inspired, encouraged by St. Peter's story. Remember that He is ever-compassionate and desires not the death of a sinner but that you should return and live, that He loves you and wants nothing more than to save you and spend eternity with you. He loves you.

Faith leads to peace, and tribulation. Only when the disciples understood and believed in Him was it possible for them to be scattered to have tribulations, and to have peace in Him (Jn 16:29-33). Up until that point in the Last Supper they were not properly equipped with faith to endure the tribulations and keep their peace in Him. Lord, You are the great Economist. You do not give us beyond our tolerance. My peace is in You, in being with You, and I know You will not move me unless or until You have firmly planted Your tree of peace within me so that nothing could ever separate me from You.

In the first training session, Jesus slept in the boat while the winds were boisterous. In the second session, He was on the shore while the boat was in the middle of the sea tossed by the wind. He is teaching gradual withdrawal and maturity. He is gradually teaching them how to walk with and trust Him. By the third session, He was on the shore and they were in the boat in the calm sea.



# Do Not Fear, For I Am With You

By Theopeste Kerelos



**A** Hebrew youth killing a Philistine giant. Sound familiar? Yes, the story of David and Goliath, which most people have known by heart since childhood. What attracts young children to this particular story? No doubt, one of the factors is David's courage as he faced Goliath. A child of any age can marvel at where David got this courage, and ponder on how the average

Christian can attain this same courage. In what manner can courage be properly used in the Christian life? Are there consequences for deficient or excessive courage? Indeed, courage may seem to be a simple concept, but it is in fact a very complex emotion.

So, where did David, a weaponless youth and the youngest of his brothers, get the courage to face Goliath? If David had been relying solely on himself and on his own abilities, he would never have dared to stand up to Goliath. The source of David's courage was his reliance on God, which is obvious in his words. In response to Goliath's arrogant words, David said, "You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts."<sup>1</sup>

David's confidence in God was not a matter of taking for granted that God would do the job for him. Rather, he fully comprehended that God was stronger than any human force, and that God would not disappoint anyone who trusted in Him with all his heart. Therefore, the secret behind David's courage was his faith that God would strengthen him as long as he trusted in His power.

Clearly, as David's courage arose from his reliance on God, any other person can get the same courage by following in David's footsteps. Where

there is reliance on God, there is no fear, only courage. Any person can attain courage because God "who shows no partiality"<sup>2</sup> offers His strength and support to anyone willing to fully accept it. To bravely proclaim God's strength and support, St. Paul states, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."<sup>3</sup> If the power of God's aide was not so strong, the martyrs would not have been able to declare their faith openly in front of the pagan authorities, knowing that they would be tortured and executed as a result. Likewise the desert fathers, such as St. Antony, St. Paul, St. Samuel the Confessor, and St. John the Short, to name a few, had the courage to wander through the wilderness because they trusted in God's promises that He will provide for them just as He provides for "the birds of the air, [which] neither sow nor reap."<sup>4</sup> When attacked by the devils, these saints would have turned back from their righteous paths, if they did not have the courage implied by the Psalmist's words, "Though an army may encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war may rise against me, in this I will be confident."<sup>5</sup> Courage is purely a matter of relying on God, believing His promises, and holding

onto Him for support at all times.

Courage applies to various aspects of the Christian life, and can be employed in several ways. There is outward courage, whereby people would be willing to preach the faith or suffer for the sake of Christ. St. Peter, initially fearing to admit his association with Christ in front of a slave girl at the time of crucifixion, later had the courage to preach the word of God in the New Testament in front of a multitude of 3,000 people, after receiving the Holy Spirit. The martyrs and the desert fathers, as mentioned above, underwent countless hardships for God's sake. But still, in some cases, courage can be expressed only inwardly. It can just be a matter of conquering one's fears or other emotions in order to obey God's commandments. Abraham, for example, is praised in St. Paul's epistle to the Hebrews for his faith in agreeing to sacrifice his son. Along with his faith came the courage to overcome his love for his son, as well as his doubts about God's covenant with him that "in Isaac your seed shall be called."<sup>6</sup> However, courage in most people's daily lives is not that extreme. Rather, it might be a matter of gathering up courage to reveal one's sins to the

father of confession, or it could be to reconcile with someone and admit one's faults. These are just a few examples of how the average Christian can encounter courage during the course of his or her life.

Since courage is such a prominent emotion, it is essential that one know the limits of courage. Obviously, lack of courage indicates misgivings about and disbelief in God's promises, as well as a shortage in one's reliance on God: all of this entails fear and hesitation. Simply put, without enough courage, one would not be able to face and overcome the challenges which are set along the way to eternal life. On the other hand, extreme courage could lead to pride. One would forget that God is the source of all power and strength and start to boast about his or her achievements, as if they

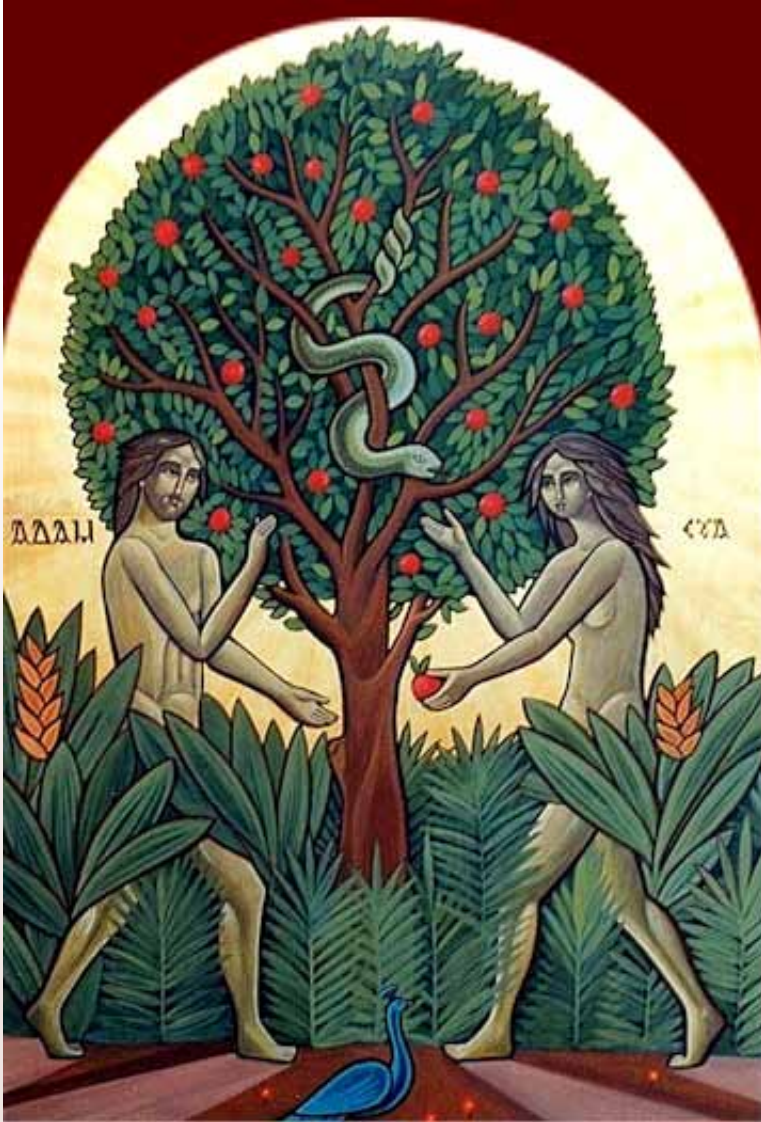
had been accomplished without God's help. To those people St. Paul would say, "What do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?"<sup>7</sup> Thus, while it is necessary to have courage, one must know the appropriate limits for this emotion and stay within them in order to truly benefit.

May every Christian live with the words, "I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts"<sup>8</sup> in mind, in order to have full reliance on God and, consequently, the courage needed to pass the earthly test so as to gain the ticket into heaven.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Samuel 17:45.  
<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy 10:17.  
<sup>3</sup> Philippians 4:13.  
<sup>4</sup> Matthew 6:26.  
<sup>5</sup> Psalm 27:3.  
<sup>6</sup> Genesis 21:13.  
<sup>7</sup> 1 Corinthians 4:7.  
<sup>8</sup> 1 Samuel 17:45.







By Christine Massoud

# The Still Raging Battle

strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.”<sup>1</sup>

We also walked through several myths we believed and the Truth that defied them. Our Truth and shield is the Word of God, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”<sup>2</sup> Notice this “every good work.” We are given all that we need, to question every thought, to run it through the Gospel filter, so to speak, and to act in wisdom. We also looked at how building better boundaries, the four R’s, can give us practical ways to battle and nip temptations at the bud.

Today, I would like to speak to you about a far more fundamental truth. A reader contacted me with a very sincere

question. “Are you really saying that these ‘natural’ physical desires God created in me can be controlled? I’ve been told all my life that God will fill every need but I don’t feel that way when it comes to intimacy, physical touch, or even companionship.”

My answer is yes and no. Yes, He does supply all our needs. No, because He gave us this desire for one another and for relationships, godly relationships. Just as God desires that relationship with you, He wants you to have the desire for your future husband. He wants you to be fully engaged and invested in your marriage. So, if you did not have that desire now, you would have no need for a husband. Or, maybe He called you to a life of singleness, and that relational desire is sustaining for other relationships.

We were created by a relational God. A triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit—all God, all in a relationship with one another. When all three made man (“Let US make man”<sup>3</sup>), we see the

first time in scripture that God says His creation was not good. He said it was not good for man to be alone. We are made to commune with one another. It was not good before the fall, and it sure isn’t after. King Solomon tells us about the value of close friends and companions: “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion... Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”<sup>4</sup> That’s why I encourage you to find a trusted friend or two and become each other’s accountability. Walk together, love each other, and pray for one another.

Secondly, God created this body, this being, this emotional clay, this temporal dust, this daughter of his. We look to Him in our time of doubts and temptations, and He provides a way of escape. As it is written, “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man [and woman]; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”<sup>5</sup>

Who is this faithful God? The first thing we

have to ask ourselves is “Do we know God”? Say you meet a person for the first time, introduced to you by a friend. His demeanor is confident, his eyes are gentle, and his smile is kind. Shortly after the introduction, the friend says, “I have to go. Would you please keep him company? He’s very trustworthy, a good friend, a great companion...” And so on. Would you sit there in silence? Stare at your phone? Call someone? Would you talk to him? Would you try to find out more about him, before you too can say that he’s a friend to you?

Here we have God saying, “I am with you, I am mighty to save. I take great delight in you, I will quiet you with my love, I will rejoice over you with my singing...”<sup>6</sup> And He says again, “I want to bless you. I want to give you benefits. I forgive all your sins. I heal all your diseases. I redeem your life from destruction. I want to crown you with My love, kindness, and tender mercies. I want to satisfy you, feed you good things. I am merciful and gracious. I am slow to anger. I will not strive with you. I will not deal with you according to your sin. I will not punish you based on what you deserve. For as high as the heavens are from the earth, so great is My mercy towards you. As far as the east is from the west, so far have I forgotten your sin against Me. I pity you

as a father to a child. I know your frame, I know you are dust so my mercy is yours, I will treat you rightly as a loving father... Trust in me, I love you.”<sup>7</sup>

Lots of good claims if you ask me, but how do you truly know Him? Quite simply ASK HIM. You will not be disciplined or punished for it, no thunders from heaven will come after your soul, and you will not regret it either. In fact, He’s looking forward to it.

Here’s a quick questionnaire from Shannon Eldridge. I also encourage you to honestly answer the following questions:

+ Have I really invested much time getting to know God personally and intimately?

+ Do I read the Bible searching for clues as to God’s character and plan for my life?

+ Have I given God as many chances as I have given other men? As fantasy? As Internet chat rooms?

+ Have I ever made the choice to pray or [worship] or go for a walk with God instead of picking up the phone to call a guy when I’m lonely?

+ Are there moments spent alone (masturbating, fantasizing, reading or looking at inappropriate materials, and so on) that I ignore God’s presence in an attempt

to satisfy myself?

+ Do I believe God can satisfy every single need I have?

+ Am I willing to test this belief by letting go of all things, people, and thoughts that I use to medicate my pain, fear, or loneliness, and become totally dependent upon God?

So, spend time with him. He does not despise you for your past sins, or your current struggles, or even your future sins. He died for those sins; He paid the ultimate price to free you from their control. He says, “Come now, let us reason together... Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.”<sup>8</sup> So go to Him and “may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 2 Corinthians 10:3-5.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 1:26.

<sup>4</sup> Ecclesiastes 4:9-12.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:13.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Zephaniah 3:17.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Psalm 103.

<sup>8</sup> Isaiah 1:18.

<sup>9</sup> Romans 15:13.



# QUESTION & ANSWER

New WINTER 2014 Edition  
GENERAL QUESTION  
And its Answer

**Q:** What is Christianity's viewpoint on racial discrimination?

**A:** Christianity condemns racial or any other sort of discrimination. Christianity is the religion of love "He who does not love does not know God, for God is love" (1 John 4:8). The Bible teaches us to love not only our brothers but also our enemies "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).

Love and discrimination cannot go together; you cannot discriminate against the person you love.

Our Lord Jesus Christ dealt with people from different cultural and racial backgrounds. According to his human nature, our Lord was a Jew. Jewish people did not have any tolerance toward, nor dealt with non-Jewish people; because they considered them unclean. However, our Lord initiated a dialogue with the Samaritan woman in order to lead her and all the people of her town to believe in Him (John 4:5-42). He healed the Roman centurion's servant (Matthew 8:5-13) and the daughter of the Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:21-28). Our Lord's last message to His disciples was "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations" (Matthew 28:19).

All the churches founded in the early years of Christianity were local, and included all the Christians of a specific town or a specific region, without racial distinction. Those churches were usually named after the town or the country, not after any ethnic group. The Church of Jerusalem consisted of Jews and proselytes from various nations. The Churches of Alexandria, Antioch, Ephesus, Rome and all the others were composed of Jews but mainly of Gentiles. There is no basis for racism in Christianity.

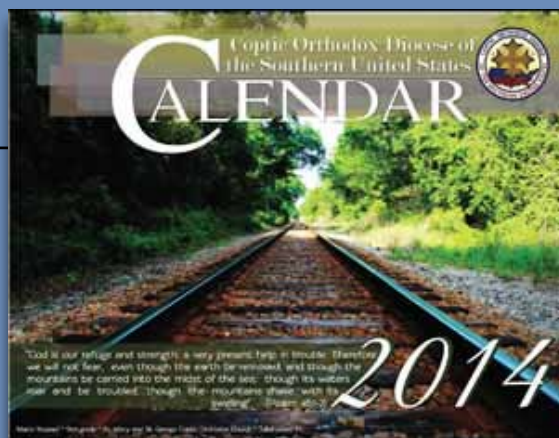
New WINTER 2014 Edition  
BIBLE QUESTION  
And its Answer

FROM THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS CHAPTER 4

**Q:** Why did Abraham receive the sign of circumcision even though he was not circumcised?

**A:** It was a sign of the righteousness of faith and it was done so that he may be the father to both the circumcised and the uncircumcised.

## 2014 SUS Diocese Calendar



Dear Brethren,

The Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States is proud to present its 2014 calendar. This is a special calendar because it is a product of our talented high school youth throughout the Diocese. All the photos submitted were taken by them through the 2013 High School Teen Photography Contest. The judging panel included one of our beloved fathers, two servants, a layman, and two youth. The calendar formatting was created by one of our high school youth as well. The calendar theme is "God is my Strength" focusing on the verses:

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling" (Psalm 46:1-3).

Each month depicts a photo taken by one of the high school youth along with a verse related to the calendar theme. All the participants in this project did a wonderful job. Yet, there are only 12 months in a year which made it very challenging to select which photos would be including in this calendar.

The first, second, and third place winners are:

**First Place:** Mario Youssef  
St Mary and St George-Tallahassee, FL - Grade 12

**Second Place:** Emily Moussa  
St. Philopateer-Dallas, TX - Grade 10

**Third Place:** Alex Georgy  
St. Mary-Atlanta, GA - Grade 11

Through the grace of God, we thank all the high school youth who participated for taking the time and effort in submitting their photos for this competition. We hope you enjoy the 2014 Diocese calendar which is an acknowledgement of our high school youth's talents. Have a wonderful and blessed year in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ who strengthens us throughout our daily lives.

God bless you,

Bishop Youssef  
Bishop, Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

If you would like to order your copy, please visit the St. Moses Bookstore: <http://stmosesbookstore.org/index.php/gifts/2014-calendar-detail>

# Events & Activities

## DIOCESE PROGRAMS

### St. Verena Resource Ministry (SVRM)

(SVRM) Professionals networking together to make a difference and provide resources to our Coptic community. To make a request or to volunteer as a consultant. [www.suscpts.org/svrm/](http://www.suscpts.org/svrm/)

**Family Ministry Program** [fmp.suscpts.org](http://fmp.suscpts.org)  
(FMP) Summer Registration deadline: Apr 20, 2014

**Theological Seminary Program** [tsp.suscpts.org](http://tsp.suscpts.org)  
Program Registration deadline: March 15, 2014

**Theological Seminary Program - Nashville**  
An Arabic theological program located in Nashville.

### St. Clement Christian Academy

This is a learning community dedicated to meeting the needs of each learner within its walls.

### H.O.P.E Social Services

[hope.suscpts.org](http://hope.suscpts.org)  
A social services program designed to help those in need.

### St. Mark Festival Program

This is a spiritual competition among the Coptic Churches doing the same activity world wide.

### Archangel Raphael Ministry (ARM)

A program designed specifically for individuals with special needs. [www.copticanangel.org](http://www.copticanangel.org)

✝ Your generous donations will go directly into the program and convention. To help sponsor a child, family, or an activity at the annual Special Needs Convention, please contact: [father\\_joachim@yahoo.com](mailto:father_joachim@yahoo.com)

### Lead Program

A program for learning Christian leadership principles.

## DIOCESE EVENTS

**CPAR Convention** Feb 27-Mar 2, 2014

**S.V.R.M. & H.O.P.E. 2nd Annual Conference & Banquet** May 2-3, 2014—Atlanta, GA

**Extreme Family Makeover Coptic Edition**  
May 9-11, 2014—St. Stephen Retreat Center

**Archangel Raphael Ministry A.R.M. Fourth Annual Special Needs Convention**  
July 24-28, 2014—St. Stephen Retreat Center

**Sudan Mission Experience Trip 2014** June 9-21, 2014

**Evangelism & Apologetics Conference** Aug 1-3, 2014

**FOR MORE - See [suscpts.org](http://suscpts.org)**

\* Dates are subject to change. Please check [www.suscpts.org](http://www.suscpts.org)



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Thank you for your continued support of this ministry. If you no longer wish to subscribe, please inform us.

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## New Program-Boarding Seminary Press Release

COLLEYVILLE, TX. December 12, 2013 --

It is with the grace of God that the Boarding Theological Seminary in the Coptic Orthodox Church of the southern United States will open its doors on September 2, 2014 for male Coptic students with a Bachelors degree who wish to assimilate, study, and strengthen their discipleship in the Coptic Orthodox faith.

### School Location

Lectures and dialogue with top Coptic Orthodox clergy/teachers will be conducted at the St. Mary and St. Moses Abbey, Corpus Christi, Texas, U.S.A. Students will be able to participate in the liturgical life and have access to the extensive Abbey library and facilities.

### Admission Requirements

- Three letters of Recommendation (one of the letters must be from the father of confession, applicants outside the Southern Diocese are required to have the approval of their Bishop)
- Summary of related service in the last 5 years
- College Transcript
- Personal statement showing the intention for joining the school
- Interview with the Admission Committee
- Written admission exam

### Tuition

Tuition will be based on merit and financial need. It can be as low as \$500 per Semester.

### Study Plan

The duration of the study is two years. The curriculum consists of both classroom and experiential learning. Seminarians will complete 24 courses, and a service internship in a Coptic Orthodox church over the two years.

Courses will include Old Testament, New Testament, Greek, Coptic, Hymns, Dogma, Rites, History, Patristic Studies, Canons, Pastoral Care, Leadership, Apologetics, and Evangelism. Courses are delivered sequentially in an intensive, week-long format, with students completing one course after two such week-long sessions spread over one or two year rather than several courses simultaneously for the length of the semester.

### Exams and Graduation

Written exams will be conducted at the end of each year, including an oral exam at the end of the second year for successful graduation.

### Applications and Acceptance Dates

Applications for the first class will be accepted January 15 until May 15, 2014.

Admission letters and notifications will be mailed by July 1, 2014.

Contact: [Boardingadmin@suscpts.org](mailto:Boardingadmin@suscpts.org)