



Shiloh Messenger

August 2008

Acquainted With All My Ways

“O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up. You understand my thoughts afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways” (Psalm 139: 1-3).

We are continuing with this installment in our fictional series about the life of Cecil. If you would like a copy of the earlier installments, please ask us or visit our website at www.shilohmensministries.com to view newsletter archives.

Here I am on this Shiloh Shuttle Bus again with the group of my “Shiloh Brothers.” I am in route for 23 miles to another Sunday morning Church service. This going back and forth to Church over and over is getting to me. I never developed the discipline of going to Church. My parents love the Lord now, but they did not routinely take me to Church when I lived in their home. This Shiloh group goes every time the doors are open, and I am required to go whether I feel like it or not. It just seems like there must be something more productive I could be doing with my time. This borders on the ridiculous. Getting little sleep last night does not help matters. Every night, I contend with loud snoring, guys getting up to go to the bathroom, the top bunkers turning over and shaking the bottom bunks, and Ruth the resident dog barking at every rabbit, toad, and anything else that hops by! When I did finally sleep, I was haunted by awful dreams of my drug use. How long will this continue? And now on this bus ride to Church, I have to deal with the zippadedodah morning guys. They go to sleep talking and then awake talking again - going full tilt. I am suffocating! I need space! I need quiet time to process! I am not a morning guy. I wish they would just BE QUIET! Is it too much to ask for? I am in one bad mood! SILENCE!!

We always arrive thirty minutes before it actually starts. What is the big hurry? Inside the Church, people are coming up to us and greeting us. The Golden Glow, Senior Citizen Ladies, always make us feel wanted. They bring back fond memories of my Grandmother. I actually delight in seeing them. They are so gentle and sincere. I have a sense of serenity as I think about their commitment to God and their unconditional acceptance of us. They have seen so many years of life with all of its blessings and heartaches. They know we are broken struggling men, and yet they purposely reach out to share God’s love with us. Brother Jason herds us all into the Sanctuary where we all sit together. Praise and Worship begins and people all around me are singing loudly. I look about and watch others and see how they are responding. I am so distracted observing the various expressions of others. I decide to close out the distractions by closing my eyes. The music bids me into the Lord’s Presence. God uses his tool of music over and over to calm me and give me peace. I find His Presence when I purposely choose to focus on Him. Of all the songs being played today, there is one that God must have whispered into the Praise and Worship Leader’s mind and said, “Play this song just to entreat Cecil Armstrong to connect directly with Me.” “Better is one day in your courts, better is one day in your house, better is one day in your courts than thousands elsewhere.”

The Sermon begins. I take notes as my Shiloh Leaders have taught me. Note taking helps me to better catch and retain the information. I refer to my notes during my quiet times each day. By taking notes, I really have no excuse for not applying what I heard from God’s Word as I go through the next week. Whoa, God must have told the Pastor what was in my head! He has us turn to **Hebrews 10:23-25**. He reads it aloud as we follow along. “*Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching.*” The sermon is on the importance of Church attendance. The Pastor tells us we are to attend Church as an act of obedience to God and as an expression of our love for God. To reject Church attendance is to reject one of the sacred duties of a believer according to our opening scripture in Hebrews 10:23-25. Church attendance builds up our spiritual strength. “*Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God*” (Romans 10:17). Church attendance brings a special visitation into the Lord’s Presence. “*For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, I am there in the midst of them*” (Matthew 18:20). Church attendance links us in fellowship with other Christians. It is not possible to love God and refuse to love the brethren. One of the most important reasons we go to Church is to practice love for the brethren through fellowship. Keeping ourselves in love and harmony with other believers keeps us humble before God. “*But if we walk in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin*” (1 John 1:7). We come together to motivate and encourage one another. Church attendance enables a group of believers to combine our spiritual strength in prayer, in giving, and in serving. The Body of Christ is called to function together and we need each other to make God known in this world. When the people of the world see our love for each other, this is how they know we are children of God (John 13:35). We impart to one another our experiences and knowledge of God and what is needed in order that we may each learn and mature so that we can go out and share the Gospel with the lost.

The Altar call is given. I can hardly contain myself. I walk to the altar, kneel, and pray. Father God, please forgive me of my selfishness this morning. Please help me to love others in Your Family, and give me love for attending your Church. I can see clearly in Your Word that it is an act of obedience to come to the Church and worship with other believers. I do love you Lord and I desire to please you in every way. Thank you for being omniscient and knowing my every thought yet loving me and tenderly drawing me to you. I do not know why you continue to love me as you do, yet I receive your love Lord. I receive your forgiveness toward me. I have read for myself in the Bible that it is “*your kindness that leads men to repentance*” (Romans 2:4). Thank you Sir for your kindness extended again unto me. My spirit is changed as I get back on the bus to return to Shiloh.

On Monday, a UPS package arrives for me. Staff calls me in to deliver it to me and watch me open it. They check the contents of all of our mail. I am so excited!! I open it. It is from Renee and her Sunday School Class. They have sent me a box of homemade cookies, chocolates, and a pound of good coffee. There is a picture of Renee and the kids with their arms outstretched toward me and a note signed by each of them that reads, “We love you and we are praying for you.” Each of the Class members, whom I have never met, wrote and enclosed a note as well telling me their individual prayers for me. One of them told me how they are standing in the gap for me acting as the Lord’s network of support for Renee and the children while I am at Shiloh seeking God’s healing in my life. This miracle comes only in God’s perfect timing. I would not have received this package the way I do today had it come before now. I am humbled and broken. It has been so long since I left Oregon on that cold hopeless day I boarded that plane. I stepped out on the Lord’s strong leading and my weak faith, not really knowing if I would have anyone or anything to return to. I am not yet whole, but I know God is not finished with me yet and He has been working overtime with my family back in Oregon.

Student Testimony

My name is Michael Ray. I am 25 years old and from Cleveland, TN. I was blessed with parents who love and serve God. My Father is a Minister for a full Gospel denomination. Although I was raised in a Godly home and in Church, as I grew older I found myself “playing church.” I became more concerned with looking the part than I was with my relationship with my Heavenly Father. I began to develop a void inside of me as a result of the lacking of an intimate love with God. I soon started numbing that pain in my spirit with things the world and man told me were what life was really about. I sought success, money, and eventually, when all else failed, I turned to prescription drugs. I soon found I was desperate, and thanks to the help of my parents and others, I came to Shiloh. God has transformed my life and according to Psalms 103:12 “cast my sins as far as the east is from the west.” I think John Eldridge said it best when he wrote, “For above all else, the Christian life is a love affair of the heart.” Today I have a love affair with God and He has placed in my heart a call to give back what has been given to me by serving Him in His Ministry. In First Peter 2:9, the Bible says, “but you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.” Today, God is revealing His plan for my life one step at a time. I give Him all the Glory and Honor.



Michael Ray

Shiloh Ministries gives the LORD honor and praise for lives that have been delivered from a life of slavery. We celebrate Kingdom Life here at Shiloh. All of our supporters make a tremendous contribution towards lives that forever are destined for eternity with God. We ask and encourage everyone to give financially to help with the cost of restoring lives. It cost approximately \$500.00 a month to house one man. The LORDS Ministry at Shiloh is free to the men who seek restoration. It is a walk of faith for our financial needs to be met every month. Would you please consider being a monthly supporter? God always speaks to those He has asked to give. We believe that His people will respond out of a heart of gratitude for what He has done & continues to do for them. Thank you, for your generosity in giving & co-laboring with us in the LORDS Ministry at Shiloh. (Shiloh Ministries is recognized by the IRS as a 501C3 Charitable Organization)

Please be in prayer with us for the following:

CD Audio Recording device to be used for recording all classroom teaching.
Commercial Blower for yard maintenance. Small Commercial Ice Maker.

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