

Excerpts for contemplation, discussion and application from this week's issue of THE LOOKOUT.

Hidden Love: God's Quiet Gift (pages 3-5)

"How many times in my life had God loved me in important and monumental ways, and I had ignored them?"

- What keeps you from seeing God's work in your life?
- Do you believe God has been faithful to you? In what ways?

"We know it was in love that God sent his Son to die for us, and we didn't deserve that. But somehow we often think that to receive his love today, we need to earn it."

- Think of a time when you tried to earn God's love. What happened?
- Why is it so hard to receive a "grace gift"?

"A beautiful sunset is a gift of love, as is a sumptuous meal. A child coming home safe from school. An hour of peace and quiet when we need it the most The medicine that takes away our pain is a gift of love. So is a hug from a friend."

- Name three gifts of love you've experienced this week.

God Is Good All the Time (pages 6 & 7)

"Maligned by friends and family, hunted by King Saul, hiding in caves and fearing for his life, David poured out his anguish to God."

- Do you fear that God will reject you if you pour out the pain in your heart to him? Why, or why not?

"Our circumstances are not an accurate reflection of God's goodness. Whether life is good or bad, God's goodness, rooted in his character, is the same."

- God's love endures forever (Psalm 136). How can you "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48)?

"People who attest to God's goodness in their lives do not have absence of trouble, but rather a keen awareness of God's presence in every situation."

- Think of a time when you saw God's provision in a painful situation. What was the result?

No Way Out (pages 8 & 9)

"My world focused on football and baseball. I had no time for God, no time for academics."

- What idols have you worshiped in your life? Are some yet to be dealt with? If so, what are they?

"Just tell them what I've done for you."

- How will you "answer anyone who asks about the hope you have" (1 Peter 3:15)?

W O R L D W I N D O W S

By John W. Samples

"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body" (Philippians 1:21, 24).

I AM INTRIGUED BY the way Paul discussed the value of his own ministry. To suggest that his death would be a good thing for him because he would be with Christ, but that it would be better for others if he stuck around awhile, seems rather boastful.

Some friends and I were discussing

people God brought into our lives at the right times. Then we got to talking about whose list we would be on. As each of us feigned humility and avoided any appearance of pride or impropriety, we started talking about Paul. Suddenly his "boastful attitude" took on a new meaning.

As I reviewed my list of coaches, bosses, peers, parents, and even enemies that God has used to touch me, encourage me, or otherwise get my attention, I was impressed that God would love me enough to work through those people for my benefit.

Now who's being arrogant?

If we remember only the people God uses to help us, and not the people he is helping through us, we are likely to become self-centered.

I am grateful for the helpers in my life, but I am more humbled that God can use me through my failures and weaknesses to touch other people's lives. I'm beginning to suspect that Paul's arrogance is in reality a humility I have only begun to glimpse. ■

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