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THE MAGAZINE OF RAVI ZACHARIAS INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES

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Just Thinking is a teaching resource of Ravi Zacharias International Ministries and exists to engender thoughtful engagement with apologetics, Scripture, and the whole life.

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HELPING THE THINKER BELIEVE. HELPING THE BELIEVER THINK.

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Bridging the Heart *and* Mind

Ravi Zacharias with Danielle DuRant

As Christians we want to believe what we cognitively affirm—that God is sovereign and good—and yet sometimes we struggle to make sense of the emotions that we feel when we encounter difficult passages of Scripture. How do we begin to bridge the heart and mind when dealing with hard issues? Ravi Zacharias sat down with Danielle DuRant to discuss their roles in one’s faith journey. To hear the full interview, go to www.rzim.org.



Danielle DuRant: I've often heard you say that what I believe in my heart must make sense in my mind. Lately we've heard from many people wrestling with the reverse: that is, what I believe in my mind must make sense in my heart. Do you see a shift here and why might that be?

Ravi Zacharias: IT'S POSSIBLY A SHIFT. I think we went through a bit of that in the 60s and 70s. A lot was triggered by existentialist philosophers at that time; Sartre, Camus, and others were calling for the emotional side of life. Now after postmodernism, it comes in a second wave: there is a felt need that oftentimes supersedes the intellectual coherence of what it is that one believes. I would say the bridge has to be there, but I will always lean towards the fact that right thinking has to precede right feeling. Or, if the felt reality comes first, then the thinking has to be in keeping with what is being felt. So, I don't know about the chronological sequence of it, but the logical connection obviously ought to be there.



*DD: Well, I think, for instance, of the huge emotional response to Rob Bell's book **Love Wins**. As Christians we want to believe what we cognitively affirm—that God is sovereign and good—and yet sometimes we struggle to make sense of the emotions that we feel when we encounter difficult passages of Scripture. How do you begin to bridge the heart and mind when you're dealing with hard issues?*

RZ: I THINK ROB BELL'S book is a classic example of the reverse in logic. I don't want to be hard on it because I have no doubt whatsoever that he means well, that he is thinking that this is the right way to do theology. I don't believe it is. I think it's a very wrong way to do theology. However, he's tapped into a nerve and that nerve is when he makes a statement like "millions of people believe this." I'm not sure what that's supposed to establish: that therefore it is right or therefore it is worthy of our investigation. If the latter, yes, but I don't think it makes it right because millions believe it in a certain way. We don't often make our judgments on very critical issues be it in our jobs, our families, in disciplines, on the basis of exactly how we feel at the moment. We have to go with what is right and do it in the kind and in the best way.

When we talk of this thing called *love*, and specifically the love of God, God very clearly warned of moments of judgment and justice. He said, “He who is often reprov’d and hardens himself shall suddenly be cut off, and that without remedy” (see Proverbs 29:1). That’s a pretty tough statement. Not too many human parents would voice it that way, but God almost talks about a line that is crossed, and once it is crossed to regain the relationship is very difficult. You see the same thing with Esau who sought for a place of repentance but could not find it, after he had sold his birthright. Some lines when they are crossed cause one to lose ground and any remedy will never be total. So I think the touching of the nerve of emotions in Rob Bell’s book is a good way actually to phrase it, but it is the wrong way of thinking and demonstrates again the vulnerability that the human being has to move in the direction of felt realities rather than reasonable realities.



DD: So when you personally come up against difficult passages in Scripture such as Esau or hell and God’s judgment—perhaps you don’t have a visceral response anymore, but how do you wrestle with certain emotions or help someone else who is really wrestling with those difficult passages?

RZ: I THINK THAT’S WELL PUT. Even if I don’t wrestle with it personally because I’m not surprised at it, as an apologist I often encounter somebody who’s gone through an immense struggle, tragedy, heartbreak, or disappointment. Then you have to articulate a response, and you have to be very careful. I’ll never forget, never forget, the early days of my ministry. I was in Birmingham, Alabama, in the 1970s, and a man came up to me after I spoke. He said, “I’m a relatively new Christian and all this stuff is new to me. I don’t know often what to believe about

very critical things, so brother, you better be right in what you say because I’m listening to you.”

I thought, *My word that responsibility is a very serious one!* The speaker had better be right because there are an awful lot of people out there who are framing their answers on the basis of what they hear from the pulpit or what they are reading in books. So how do I deal with it? I have to deal with it because people ask me questions. Do I often think that I have comfortable answers? No. But, I do think I have to find satisfactory answers that pull together the nature of God and the character of God.

I was in Israel recently and I was talking to a young Palestinian man who told me about a fascinating conversation between Brother Andrew and a Muslim cleric, which occurred on the heels of an execution that the Muslim cleric had ordered. I think four Palestinians had been killed in a raid and he’d ordered eight Israelis to be killed. So Brother Andrew looked at him and he asked him two questions. He said, “Who has made you the executioner to execute people at your whim and your order?” The cleric said, “I’m not an executioner but part of my responsibility in life is to make sure God’s justice is implemented.” So Brother Andrew said, “What then becomes of forgiveness?” The cleric responded, “That’s only to those who deserve it.”

What a fascinating theory on the nature of God! That is the way Islam will see itself, as the executor of God’s justice in this world. Whereas a Christian sees the call to surrender to the state and the powers of government as described in Romans 13, and second, that forgiveness is never merited; you cannot earn it. So, comfort is not always the goal of your

answers, rather coherence and truth tempered with mercy, understanding, and compassion.



*DD: John Calvin begins his **Institutes of the Christian Religion** with this observation: “Without knowledge of self there is no knowledge of God. Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.” Would you agree with his observation?*

RZ: I MET A GENTLEMAN some years ago, a sculptor who was on his journey to faith. He said his favorite piece of work was the man lying on the side of the road with a bottle in his hand, disheveled and drunk, and the most important words in the Bible were of the prodigal son’s story when he came to himself. Those five words to him—“then he came to himself”—were the most important words. I believe there is a lot of truth in that. When you come to yourself, you realize the poverty of your life and your spirit. That’s why I believe Jesus spoke of this as the first beatitude. You start off with spiritual poverty, not just in my physical finitude or in my knowledge finitude, but in the fact that there is only one infinite being and that’s God. I think only when you get a glimpse of God do you truly get a glimpse of yourself. Isaiah the prophet

said, “Woe unto me! I’m a man of unclean lips living in the midst of unclean people” after he had cried, “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty.” So that true understanding of self will come only with a glimpse of God. An understanding of our shortcomings can come even in the human realm but with no real answers until you can put it in the context of who God is.




*DD: You’ve often cited Daniel Goleman’s book **Emotional Intelligence**. Goleman brought to the mainstream the critical importance of “emotional intelligence,” which he defines as a set of skills such as self-awareness, empathy for others, and self-control. Do you see a connection between one’s emotional intelligence and growth and one’s spiritual growth?*

RZ: GOLEMAN’S BOOK WAS fascinating and ground-breaking. I seem to recall the only problem that I had with that book is how he put it altogether within a naturalistic framework, and that to me was his struggle. But yes, emotions are an indicator of reality. If I may get on to a bit of a tangent, people often think of men as being more intellectual and women being more emotional. It is such an unfortunate caricature. I like to put it this way. Maybe the women’s intellect is intimidating to men because the woman immediately connects it with emotion,

When we talk of this thing called love, and specifically the love of God, God very clearly warned of moments of judgment and justice. He said, “He who is often reprovved and hardens himself shall suddenly be cut off, and that without remedy” (see Proverbs 29:1). That’s a pretty tough statement. Not too many human parents would voice it that way, but God almost talks about a line that is crossed, and once it is crossed to regain the relationship is very difficult.

and therefore there is a greater degree of coherence in her intellect with the felt need. Men like to amputate what should be the feeling on the basis of what they are thinking, especially if they're in trouble or if they've gone the wrong way. This is true. I've seen it again and again. If a man has messed up in some way he likes to break that connection between what is true and what ought to be reflected in feeling. A woman doesn't do that. You know, that's what makes a mother a mother. She'll sit down across a table and with the tears in her eyes tell you what is really wrong with what has gone on. The father may try to philosophize his way through and the son or the daughter is not quite sure and wonders, *Is this as bad as my mom is making it out to be or is this very platonic, the way my father is making it out to be?* So, I would say emotional intelligence is key to complementing intellectual coherence, and I believe this is probably the thorn in the naturalist's side.


What do I mean by that? Why do we feel guilty? Why do we feel wrong is wrong even when somebody else is trying to justify it? Why do we invoke absolutes even if we are relativistic in our thinking and applying it in our own lives? Why do we blame people who break contracts or exploit others? That feeling tells you something is not right, which is reflective of the moral framework in which God has created us. Emotional intelligence has been a neglected kind of intelligence, but it is often times an indicator, just as the body is. You put your hand on a flame, and it will burn to tell the brain what's going on, and the brain tells you to pull your hand away. So it is, I think, with the soul.

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DD: When I think of emotional intelligence, at least of the categories Goleman uses —self-awareness, empathy for others,

*self-control—I believe Peter Scazzero picks up on some of these components in his book **The Emotionally Healthy Church**. You could certainly see empathy for others and self-control being the fruit of the Spirit. So, there seems to be a connection between emotional and spiritual growth.*

RZ: DEFINITELY, AND AGAIN to invoke Calvin, he talks of the third use of the law. When you put laws into society, it is to tame the will for some people who want to take justice into their own hands. Or in the law courts, a judge may have compassion upon somebody and then bring that as a component into the decision making. So you have that even within the naturalistic framework. But once you bring in the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, He gives you self-control, helping you resist temptation, helping you ground your belief as to why you are saying *No* to certain things and at the same time, as C.S. Lewis said, being impatient with your own foibles and failures but very patient with the other person's. These, I think, are spiritual components to these categories of self-awareness, compassion, and self-restraint.

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DD: Our colleague Stuart McAllister speaks of the hidden inhibitors that keep Christians from experiencing deep transformation and you've also written of being troubled by why change is sometimes not more obvious after one comes to Christ. Of course, the apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans, "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do" (Romans 7:15). How do you make sense of this disconnection and how does one begin to experience deep transformation?

RZ: I THINK THE FOLLOWING chapter in Romans 8 really gives the help: it is through the Spirit-filled life and the empowerment of God. But let me back

up a moment and ask the question, “Why is this so often the case?” It is there, no doubt about it. I find it probably the most distressing aspect of the Christian walk. The fact that more believers do not show what the fruit ought to be of the life that is walking closely with God. But you watch the characters in the Bible and you notice that there is a path along which they move. It was not an instant transformation. It was an instant conviction. But it was a process transformation.

You look at Peter after having walked with Christ all that while and then towards the end betraying Him. You watch the apostle Paul who had been set aside for three years to be disciplined in what God wanted him to do, yet going into that conflict with John Mark. You look at Moses for forty years in the desert, another forty years in the wilderness, and then he’s not going to make it to the Promised Land because of his impatience and struggle with faith and with God’s purpose and plan.

So I think there’s a two-edged sword here. On the one hand, you see this in personalities in the Bible. You see some of the best of them struggling, stumbling. Who would have ever thought that Peter, after seeing all that he had seen, all the miracles that he had witnessed, would end up in the last days of Christ before the crucifixion denying Him? Just recently I was at Mount Carmel in the Middle East. I was thinking of Elijah: as powerful as he was in challenging the prophets of Baal, we then see him running from Jezebel and sitting under a tree saying, “That’s it! I’m not going to make it!” You look at Paul after all the preparation he’d been given and then having that conflict with Mark, and in the end saying, “Bring him to me; he’s going to be helpful to me.” And Moses, in eighty years of his life—forty years in preparation, forty years

in the wilderness—and yet he never makes it to the Promised Land because he faltered in the very critical moments. So, on the one hand you see that.

On the other hand, you have to realize that while life may have its up and down moments, it has to be moving upwards at an angle rather than on a flat terrain. Look at it as a 45° angle going up so that the downs are not as low as the previous down and the highs are higher than the previous high. That’s the way I think the apostle Paul meant it in Romans 7. Then in Romans 8 he talks about how the Spirit enables, empowers, and gives strength. That I believe is accomplished in two ways. First, in your own personal devotion to the Lord each day. So your mind is framed fresh in the morning rather than looking at God through the challenges you’re going to face; it’s you looking at your challenges through the eyes of God whom you’ve already met with in the morning. The second thing is to have some good mentors so that you realize that you are not unaccountable; you are not just responsible to yourself. Especially those in ministry, you have to find a way of viewing challenges where others may falter but you yourself should really have graduated from and moved forward. You’ll never be perfect, but I think you can have that sense of godliness in your walk that will touch people’s lives, and they will see you not as a perfect person but as a great example to follow when you have those imperfect moments.



DD: So perspective—seeing things through God’s eyes—and fellowship, relationships are key. As we seek deep transformation, we need both the Word of God and input from others that we can trust.

RZ: I THINK SO. The interesting thing about Middle Eastern culture is commu-

Romans 8: 1-2

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.

nity is a very big thing. Very big thing. That's why you see it in the Bible. You know, whether you are talking of Cornelius and all of his house has come to the Lord following his example or whether it's Joshua saying, "As for me and my house," community is very important. We in the West stress so much on individuality that we have forgotten our responsibility to the community, both the immediate family and extended believing family. If you have that connection you have a built-in context of accountability.



DD: Shifting gears a little, some Christians speak of the abundant life, which Jesus alludes to in John 10, as one of God's great promises. How would you define this abundant life and has your understanding of this concept changed over the course of your faith journey?

RZ: THE MOST IMPORTANT thing to know is what it is not. It is not the prosperity gospel. I was waiting to be picked up for the airport recently in Stuttgart, Germany. It was a Sunday morning and a preacher on television was going to town on all that you can have—and he is the best example of it, I guess. I think it is very sad, especially when you are coming from a context of so much deprivation. So first, the abundant life does not necessarily mean the wealthy life. The abundant life is what I would distinguish

as *zoe* from *bios*, the spiritual life versus the biological life.

Abundant life, to go back to your earlier questions on contentment and emotional complementariness to the intellect, is where you've learned whatsoever state you are in therewith to be content.

When eleven out of the twelve disciples die a martyr's death and when Peter is told that while he was young he went where he wanted, but when he was old somebody else was going to lead him, signifying the manner of death that he was going to die—that was hardly a projection of the abundant life. It was a projection of some abundant sacrifice that he was going to have to make. I like the way the apostle Paul talks about it because Paul came sequentially in a different way than the rest of the disciples. The rest of them came through Christ's birth, life, death, and resurrection. Paul came from the resurrection to the crucifixion, and that's why he says, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" (Philippians 3:10). He came triumphantly, getting a glimpse of the risen Christ, but he knew he had to move back towards the cross and be conformed to what it might entail.

So the abundant life to me is a full life of understanding what life is all about,

Abundant life, to go back to your earlier questions on contentment and emotional complementariness to the intellect, is where you've learned whatsoever state you are in therewith to be content. When eleven out of the twelve disciples die a martyr's death and when Peter is told that while he was young he went where he wanted, but when he was old somebody else was going to lead him, signifying the manner of death that he was going to die—that was hardly a projection of the abundant life.

whether to know how to abound and to know how to be abased. That is the one, I think, who is leading the abundant life: the one who can handle both success and failure.



DD: As I listen to you, I'm just amazed how far we are from the biblical text in Western culture. We really need, as Christians, a paradigm shift. We need to immerse ourselves in Scripture and understand it in order to rethink some of things that we assume that we know—like the idea of the abundant life, that we want X, Y, and Z. And not just material things, of course; we have existential longings. But there is a real discipline of the mind that you have spoken of today that is important as well.

RZ: I THINK SO, Danielle, and I think so very deeply. What we are doing and the way we are thinking is symptomatic of what we are reading. If you read the right kinds of authors, they will shape you to think God's thoughts after Him. I don't want to be critical here but so much of our theology today is based more on the songs we sing than on the biblical text or the books we read. And that's why so much of it reflects a kind of a jive or a dance or the happiness of it all. That's not to be denied, but I think it conveys the impression that that's all the Christian life is. Music is powerful and ought to reflect good thinking. But I'm afraid music helps shape our thinking rather than our thinking shaping the lyrics of our music. So I would say if we are going to win this battle in the West, we had better learn to read some of the great writers and great authors of history who will not rob us of the joy but will also give us the tremendous breadth of the Christian faith. This faith has a broad stroke brush but it all comes together in the person of Christ, who best represents for us what the abundant life is all about.



DD: The German theologian Jürgen Moltmann writes about the essential nature of hope, and he observes that “without hope, faith falls to pieces... hope nourishes and sustains faith.” You've had the privilege of traveling the globe and experiencing some amazing opportunities, and yet you've also encountered enormous heartache and suffering along the way. I'm just wondering how you've held on to hope over the years and how do you personally find renewal when you struggle in this area?

RZ: HOPE THAT THE BIBLE talks about is “that which needeth not be ashamed” (see Romans 10:11). It's a marvelous way of describing hope. But I would say probably meeting the people that I have met has brought such strength in my own walk. When I've seen people deprived of so much or having to endure so much, I think of “Breathe on Me, Breath of God.” That song talks about “to do” and “to endure.” We're always either doing or enduring. We are doing the will of God to honor Him or enduring what's come our way, which we are not comfortable with or not happy with. When I see the great saints of life who have walked through a lot, I don't ever wish the same things upon myself because I would rather learn it without having to go through what they have gone through. But what I have learned is what Malcolm Muggeridge said: that some of the greatest lessons in life he ever learned were through suffering and not through moments of great pleasure alone.

So there is a great paradigm in this as well. Dr. John Henry Jowett said that when you're speaking to the grieving, you'll never lack for an audience. A. W. Tozer said, “Whom God will use greatly He will hurt deeply.” So sometimes those great hurts almost seem a pattern for great instrumental usage of God. I'm not saying it's one hundred percent of the time, but as Thornton Wilder wrote,

Romans 10:11
As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.”

I always go back to the day when for the first time I heard the word, “Because I live so you also shall live,” in John 14:19. That is the verse that Jesus gave to Thomas, of not just living beyond the grave but living now with the truth that life goes beyond the grave. It is a present down payment of a future total inheritance, the *arrabon* in the Greek (see e.g., *Ephesians 1:13-14*), the inheritance that we have coming to us and the down payment of it right now.

“In Love’s service only wounded soldiers can serve.”

I think it brings back what you are talking about: the compassion, the empathy, the understanding, and the example. All of that is pulled together. I would say hope is that needed posture of mind at all times, and it seems to only come by watching other lives and having gone through much yourself. To know that you can go into the desert and come out triumphant to full service—that is the promise of God.



DD: I think it’s interesting that you define hope as a needed posture of the mind. When I think of hope, perhaps not in the biblical context, but my immediate response is it’s an emotion, an emotional response. But again you’re going back to what we said earlier: the importance of perspective and the mind informing our emotions.

RZ: IT’S THE SAME WITH the Sermon on the Mount. When you talk about loving those who hate you and persecute you, you never feel like that. But it’s the posture of the mind that says, “If this is what I need to do in order for truth to

triumph over evil, I will do it.” These are things that some of the New Age gurus don’t understand. Deepak Chopra’s treatment of the Sermon on the Mount is bizarre; he doesn’t understand it. The Bible talks about dealing with contrary indicators and the emotions and how to triumph over them. Jesus is telling us to operate not with the feeling here but that which is the truth and that which needs to be the triumphant note.

I was talking to a man working in a section of Jerusalem; he made a fascinating comment to me. He said, “I have learned until I love a person I will never win them, but they are my enemy in politics. Yet, I had to actually first learn to love my own people whom I’d seen as the victim.” This was an interesting way for him to begin. He always thought it was that you start by looking at the other guy, but he said, “I’m not even sure if I love my own people. So I have learned to love my own people and then love those who may even persecute my people, and every one of my congregation today loves the ones who are our enemies politically.”

What a remarkable thing. And as he said, “It’s our only hope.”



DD: It seems he's been able to bridge the heart and mind as we've been speaking about today. Love is a decision of the will but it is an emotion as well, and hopefully we exhibit the fruit of the Spirit and we reach out in the Spirit's way.

RZ: A LITTLE PERSONAL NOTE here, he is one of our Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics graduates. He said to me that was the best year of his life. What he learned there in apologetics has had to be put into practice through an emotional reality of loving people, so he said that the combination of argument and feeling was significant.



DD: I have one more question for you. In the Gospel of John, Jesus says, "Because I live, you will also live." This could be read as a simple statement of fact, but you had a deep emotional connection with these words immediately upon hearing them as a troubled young adult. You were recently in India celebrating RZIM's twenty-fifth anniversary there. Are you amazed that the simple message that captured your heart so many years ago still captivates your heart and mind and countless others around the world?

RZ: IT IS A CAPTIVATING MESSAGE; it was a captivating message; it will always be a captivating message. And being there for the twenty-fifth anniversary, the most thrilling thing to me as always is to see two kinds of people at those gatherings: highly successful professional people—doctors, business people, heads of conglomerate empires and so on—and then the young people. There were a number of young people—engineers, computer experts, students at high-tech schools—coming for the meetings and up to the front to have a photograph taken. It's quite moving. Whether we like it or not, they are establishing their heroes in

life. It's a very touching thing to know that their hearts are so right in their ambitions. They want the right kind of thinking to shape their lives. So actually it makes me take my responsibility a lot more seriously.

I always go back to the day when for the first time I heard the word, "Because I live so you also shall live," in John 14:19. That is the verse that Jesus gave to Thomas, of not just living beyond the grave but living now with the truth that life goes beyond the grave. It is a present down payment of a future total inheritance, the *arrabon* in the Greek (see e.g., Ephesians 1:13-14), the inheritance that we have coming to us and the down payment of it right now.



DD: Of course, when you heard those words you were in a very critical period in your life, weren't you?

RZ: YES. I WAS HANGING between life and death. I attempted to take my own life. And to me, lighting up the meaning of life with that verse at a time when I was in total darkness is nothing but the grace of God and a reminder to me that He is the ultimate merciful invader who comes to you at moments that you least expect and when you are most vulnerable to let you know He's on your side. Lying in the hospital bed, mulling over those words in my mind without full explanation but to know that He meant something—I could never have given life meaning in a way that He does. He rescued me and not only rescued me from myself, but rescued me in order to be a propagator of that truth to people around the globe.

DD: And thanks be to God for that.

RZ: And I'm grateful too! ●

Ephesians 1:13-14

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

Ravi Zacharias is Founder, Chairman, and CEO of Ravi Zacharias International Ministries.

A woman in silhouette stands on a small mound of bushes by a body of water, holding a wire cage. A bird is flying away from the cage. The scene is set against a sunset sky with bare tree branches framing the top. The text "THE OLD IS GONE, THE NEW IS HERE" is centered in the sky.

{THE OLD IS GONE,
THE NEW IS HERE}



A Transformational Encounter

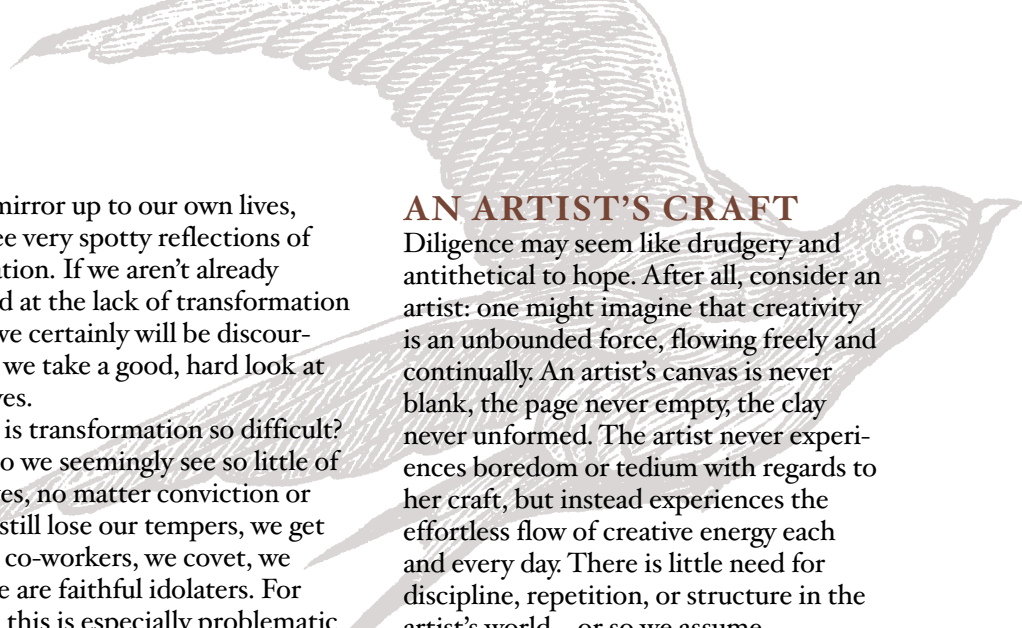
by Margaret Manning

Why is transformation so difficult? And why do we seemingly see so little of it in our lives, no matter conviction or creed?

Over coffee at the ubiquitous Starbucks, my friend shared the story of his departure from his Christian faith. He did not leave his faith over a whim or because of some intellectual crisis he couldn't resolve with his dearly held beliefs. He left because his work as a journalist led him into Christian circles where he met some of the most influential Christian leaders and teachers. He left his Christian faith because as he traversed these circles, he saw very little evidence of what he had believed was true, Christian transformation. What he experienced was a group of men and women who resembled the world more than they did Jesus, and

whose lives showed little resemblance of his character. The dissonance between what was espoused in word and what was clearly missing in deed caused him to doubt the transformative power of the gospel. If Christianity made little difference in the lives of these Christian leaders—to whom so many look for guidance and example—what difference could it make in his life?

All of us, at one time or another, have wrestled with a similar conflict. We may not walk away from belief or religion as my friend did, but we have been stung by disillusionment when our favorite leader, mentor, or friend turns out to have feet made of clay. Moreover, when



we hold a mirror up to our own lives, we often see very spotty reflections of transformation. If we aren't already discouraged at the lack of transformation in others, we certainly will be discouraged when we take a good, hard look at our own lives.

Why is transformation so difficult? And why do we seemingly see so little of it in our lives, no matter conviction or creed? We still lose our tempers, we get irritated at co-workers, we covet, we lust, and we are faithful idolaters. For Christians, this is especially problematic because transformation is so clearly written into the good news of the gospel: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Yet, as my friend experienced, an honest comparison of Christians and non-Christians sometimes leads us to wonder about the possibility of real and lasting transformation.

Perhaps the elusive nature of transformation is illustrated in a conversation Jesus had with his own followers. Jesus asked his disciples: "And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?" (Luke 6:41) Jesus suggests that a relentless focus on the foibles of others hinders the one who fails to see her need for transformation. So often, our critical gaze is relentlessly on others. We identify the failures of others before we honestly examine our own hearts; we vociferously pull the speck out of the eye of another, while we maintain a Redwood-sized log of our own. Jesus is clear on this point: "You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye" (verse 42). Even in this stern warning, the hope of transformation grows substantially when we remain diligently self-critical, rather than persisting in an "out there" focus.

AN ARTIST'S CRAFT

Diligence may seem like drudgery and antithetical to hope. After all, consider an artist: one might imagine that creativity is an unbounded force, flowing freely and continually. An artist's canvas is never blank, the page never empty, the clay never unformed. The artist never experiences boredom or tedium with regards to her craft, but instead experiences the effortless flow of creative energy each and every day. There is little need for discipline, repetition, or structure in the artist's world—or so we assume.

And yet, even an artist will tell you that creativity is something that must be practiced—exercised, as it were, just like any muscle. In fact, creativity achieves its greatest potential when bounded by discipline, and a tireless commitment to practice, routine, and structure. Rather than being opposed to creativity, discipline provides the conduit through which creative engagement grows and develops freely.

Such misguided assumptions about an artist's process often parallel assumptions about growth and creativity in the spiritual life. Perhaps we expect unbounded growth or instant results. Perhaps we expect the constant flow of good feelings surging through us. If we do not experience these things, or if we don't perpetually experience something novel from the rhythm of worship, prayer, or study, then we believe that something isn't right. As a result, we often chase after the wind of emotional experience or spiritual high, constantly seeking the "next thing" that will move us or make us feel good. Ritual, discipline, commitment, and structure seem impediments to growth, rather than the soil in which spiritual growth is nourished and fed. We mistakenly believe that spiritual transformation is like osmosis, a process over which we have little control or responsibility.

2 Corinthians 5:17
Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

Yet just as artists expect that practice, routine, and repetition are necessary disciplines of the creative life, so too should those who seek to grow in faith. For spiritual practice sharpens insight and enhances spiritual creativity. Routine and discipline are the nutrients necessary for the spiritual life to flourish and grow.

A GIFT OF GRACE

The Christian can also nurture the hope of transformation in the stories of the less than stellar characters that cooperate in God's great work of redemption in the Bible. *Transformation in biblical terms entails God's faithfulness, not human perfection.* Noah got drunk; Abraham lied twice about Sarah being his sister, rather than his wife; Gideon became an idolater; Samson failed to honor his vows; David committed adultery; Paul and Barnabas argued over John Mark and went their separate ways; the disciples of Jesus all left him in the Garden of Gethsemane and fled. The psalmist alerts us to the fact that God is not ignorant about humanity's humble condition: "For God knows what we are made of; God is mindful that we are but dust" (Psalm 103:14). Yet in spite of this dusty substance, God is at work in and through flawed individuals. Through Noah's obedience, humanity was preserved. Gideon defeated the Midianites who were terrorizing Israel, and all the families of the earth would be blessed because of Abraham. As these biblical stories illustrate, God can and does use us despite our fits and starts in following.

Perhaps there is something further to be gleaned about the nature of transformation from the biblical story of Jacob. Favored by his mother, he schemed and connived his way into receiving his brother's birthright and his father's blessing. He treated his wife Leah with great contempt and ended up taking a great deal of his family's dysfunction into his own family; he, too, favored the children of

his wife Rachel. But Jacob had a profound encounter with God one night in the lonely ford of Jabbok.¹ It was this wrestling match with the living God that proved truly transformational. Jacob received a new name, "Israel," as well as a dislocated hip. He named this place of transformation *Peniel*, which means, "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved." His life had been preserved, but he would forever bear the mark of that transformational encounter in a new name and identity—and in his permanent limp.

Could it be that our own journeys of transformation reflect a similar experience? For those who follow the God of reconciliation, the hope of the living gospel, God indeed changes our names and gives us new identities in the hope of becoming all that God intends for us. But God undertakes this work in a way that doesn't erase our humanity. After all, God is mindful that we are but dust. Yet, God takes this dusty substance and shapes it into something beautiful.

Though we often bear the limp of our humanity, transformation remains a gift of grace. Philosopher and theologian Dallas Willard explains that the renovation of the human heart "is at once new and very old, both very promising and full of danger, illuminative of our lacks and failures and bursting with grace, an expression of the eternal quest of God for man and of man's ineradicable need for God."² Indeed, Willard continues, "Christlikeness of the inner being is not a human attainment. It is finally, a gift of grace."³

The God who created us will not abandon us to ourselves but promises to walk alongside us. God gives continual grace for transformation all for the hope of God's glory. ●

Genesis 32:29-30
Jacob said, "Please tell me your name." But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there. So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."

¹ See Genesis 32:22-32.

² Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (NavPress: Colorado Springs, CO., 2002), 22.

³ *Ibid.*, 23.

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{ A HIGH
VIEW OF TRUTH }

Why Truth Matters

by Os Guinness

At first sight, the biblical view of truth is obscene to modern minds. But on a deeper look, the biblical view is profound, timely, and urgent for today, even for those who reject it.

The following is a plenary session delivered by Os Guinness at Lausanne 2010 in Cape Town, South Africa (www.lausanne.org). Used by permission of the author.

In this extraordinary moment in human history, why is it that truth matters? There are times when history and the gospel of Jesus converge and create a great thrust forward in human history. So it was with the “gifts” of the gospel, such as the rise of philanthropy, of the reform movements, or the creation of the universities, or modern science. There are other times when history and the gospel collide and the titanic struggle shapes history in a different but equally decisive way. So it was when the Lordship of Christ triumphed over the might of imperial Rome. But there are still other times when history and the gospel appear to collide but, in fact, the gospel speaks to the deepest dilemmas and the highest aspirations of the age, even to those which oppose it. So it is today with the concept of truth.

At first sight, the biblical view of truth is obscene to modern minds. It’s arrogant, it’s exclusive, it’s intolerant, it’s divisive, it’s judgmental, and it’s reactionary. But on a deeper look, the biblical view is profound, timely, and urgent for today, even for those who reject it. But obviously regardless of what the world thinks, we follow the one who is the way, the truth, and the life. We therefore worship and serve the God of truth, whose Word is truth, and who Himself is true and may be trusted because of his covenant faithfulness.

Let me, therefore, sum up six reasons why truth matters to us supremely. And why those Christians who are careless about truth are as wrong, and as foolish, and as dangerous as the worst scoffers and skeptics of our time.

FIRST, ONLY A HIGH VIEW OF TRUTH HONORS THE GOD OF TRUTH. Too often truth is left as a philosophical issue. Philosophical issues are important to us but truth is first and foremost a matter of theology. Not only is our Lord the God who is actually, objectively, really, and truly there—so that what we believe corresponds to what actually is the case—but our Lord is also the true one in the sense that He is the one whose covenant loyalty may be trusted and the entire weight of our existence staked on Him. Those who weaken their hold on truth, weaken their hold on God.

SECOND, ONLY A HIGH VIEW OF TRUTH REFLECTS HOW WE COME TO KNOW AND LOVE GOD. Jesus is the only way to God although there are as many ways to Jesus as there are people that come. But the record of Scripture and the experience of the centuries show us that there are three main reasons why we believe, often overlapping. We come to faith in Christ because we are driven by our human needs. We come to faith in Him because He seeks for us and finds us. And we come to faith in Christ because we believe his claims and the claims of the gospel are true. It is because of truth that our faith in God is not irrational. It is not an emotional crutch. It is not a psychological projection. It is not a matter of wish fulfillment. It is not an opiate for the masses. Our faith goes beyond reason because we as humans are much more than reason. But our faith is a warranted faith because we have a firm, clear conviction it is true. We are those who think in believing and we believe in thinking.

THIRD, ONLY A HIGH VIEW OF TRUTH EMPOWERS OUR BEST HUMAN ENTERPRISES. Skeptics and relativists who undermine the notion of truth are like the fool who is cutting off the branch on which he is sitting. Without truth, science and all human knowledge collapse into conjecture. Without truth, the vital profession of journalism and how we follow the events of our day and understand the signs of our times dissolve into rumor. Without truth, the worlds of politics and business melt down into rules and power games. Without truth, the precious gift of human reason and freedom becomes license and all human relationships lose the bonding element of trust that is binding at their heart. We then as followers of Christ are unashamed to stand before the world as servants and guardians of a high view of truth, both for our Lord's sake but also for the highest endeavors of humanity.

FOURTH, ONLY A HIGH VIEW OF TRUTH CAN UNDERGIRD OUR PROCLAMATION AND DEFENSE OF THE FAITH. If our Lord is the God of truth, we gladly affirm that all truth is God's truth and we therefore welcome all ideas and arguments and beliefs that pass the muster of God's standard of truth. But we also know that all humans, including we ourselves, are not only truth seekers but truth twisters. And that because all unbelief, as St. Paul says, holds the truth in unrighteousness, we have the grounds as well as the duty to confront false ideas and false beliefs with the assurance that they are neither true in the end nor are they in the best interests of those who believe them. And we must never forget today that our stand for truth must start in the church itself. We must resist the powerful seductions of those who downplay truth for methodology, or truth in the name of activism, or truth for entertainment, or truth for seeker-sensitivity, and above all those who put a

modern and revisionist view of truth in the place of the biblical view. Whatever the motive of these people, all such seductions lead to a weak and a compromised faith and they end in sorrow and a betrayal of our Lord. To abandon truth is to abandon faithfulness, and to commit theological adultery, and to end in spiritual suicide. Let the sorry fate of Protestant liberalism be a stern warning to us all.

FIFTH, ONLY A HIGH VIEW OF TRUTH IS SUFFICIENT FOR COMBATING EVIL AND HYPOCRISY. Postmodern thinking makes us all aware of hypocrisy but gives us no standard of truth to expose and correct it. And now with the global expansion of

markets through capitalism, the global expansion of freedom through technology and travel, and the global expansion of human dysfunctions through the breakdown of the family, we are facing the greatest human rights crisis of all time and a perfect storm of evil. Both hypocrisy and evil depend on lies. Hypocrisy is a lie in deeds rather than in words. And evil always uses lies to cover its oppressions. Only with truth can we stand up to deception and manipulation. For all who hate hypocrisy, care for justice and human dignity, and are prepared to fight evil, truth is the absolute requirement.

SIXTH AND LASTLY, ONLY A HIGH VIEW OF TRUTH WILL HELP OUR GROWTH AND OUR TRANSFORMATION IN CHRIST. Just as Abraham was called to walk before the Lord, so are we called to follow the way of Jesus. Not just to believe the truth

or to know and defend the truth, but to so live in truth that truth may be part of our innermost beings, that in some imperfect way we become people of truth.

So let there be no uncertainty from this Congress, as followers of Christ and as evangelicals. If we do not stand for truth, this congress might as well stop here. Shame on those western Christians who casually neglect or scornfully deny what our Lord declared, what the Scriptures defend, and what many brothers and sisters would rather die than deny: that Jesus is *the way, the truth, and the life.*

Let us say with the great German reformer, as he said of truth in regard to the evil one, "One little word will fell him." Let us demonstrate with our brother the great Russian novelist and dissident, "*One word of truth outweighs the entire world.*" If faith is not true, it would be false even if the whole world believed it. If our faith is true, it would be true even if the whole world were against it. So let the conviction ring out from this conference. We worship and serve the God of truth and humbly and resolutely, we seek to live as people of truth. Here we still stand, so help us God.

As evangelicals we are people of the good news, but may we also always be people of truth, worthy of the God of truth. God is true. God can be trusted in all situations. Have faith in God. Have no fear. Hold fast to truth. And may God be with us all. ●

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IN THE HAND OF GOD



Things *Unseen*

by Danielle DuRant

“Things unseen” is a motif that runs throughout Scripture—and what is not visible to the eye often presents a significant challenge to those unable to discern God’s presence and purpose when God seems silent.

AS I WRITE, I AM home awaiting a plumber. My water bills over the past few months have been slightly higher than usual, but I hadn't noticed a leak until my neighbor informed me that she saw a small amount of water pooling near my meter. I have mowed over the spot on several occasions and never sensed anything out of the ordinary, yet the invisible leak is finally visible and now trickling into the street.

Luke 1:5-7

In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly. But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old.

The apostle Paul speaks of "things unseen" when he writes, "For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

You could say that "things unseen" is a motif that runs throughout Scripture—and what is not visible to the eye often presents a significant challenge to those unable to discern God's presence and purpose when God seems silent. Consider barren Sarah and her husband, Abraham, who is told by God, "I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth" (Genesis 13:16). And yet twenty-five years pass before Sarah bears Isaac. In the meantime, the couple attempts to take matters into their own hands to fulfill God's promise only to experience more heartache (see Genesis 16).

Then there are Jacob and Moses, who flee their homes without seeing God's

purpose or promise for years, and Joseph, betrayed by his own brothers and dragged to a foreign land where he is falsely accused and imprisoned. Did they not wonder if God really had a better story for their lives in the face of "things unseen?" Or how about Elizabeth and Zechariah who pray for decades for a child but seemingly see no evidence of God at work? Even though they are "righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly,"¹ barrenness in their culture symbolized shame, scorn, and God's supposed disapproval. They live with the heartache of being both childless and greatly misunderstood. Not surprisingly, when an angel finally tells aging Zechariah that Elizabeth would bear a son who would be the forerunner to the Messiah, he doesn't believe him and asks to see with certainty that this would be so.

Yes, this long road is riddled with love, loss, and bewilderment, and perseverance tests the faithful to the core when we "labor under the misimpression that we see what we see, that seeing is believing, that either I see it or I don't."² Yet it is in such places, Scripture tells us, that God "longs to be gracious" and promises that all "who hope in him will not be disappointed."³ Indeed, "by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise" and "by faith [Moses] left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible."⁴

Each of these characters' journeys through things unseen allows their faith, once small as a mustard seed, to become visible, and their trust in God to grow deep roots. Such faith, the writer of Hebrews says, "Is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (11:1).

Moreover, Scripture reveals that long before we may see God's hand, He

Each of these characters' journeys through things unseen allows their faith, once small as a mustard seed, to become visible, and their trust in God to grow deep roots.

is at work on our behalf. For instance, the prophet Daniel mourns and fasts for three weeks earnestly seeking God’s wisdom. Twenty-four days later, he is visited by a heavenly being who announces, “Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before God, your words were heard and I have come in response to them” (Daniel 10:12). As A. W. Tozer notes, “Wherever faith is present, we touch and handle things unseen.”⁵

I have had the privilege of working alongside Ravi Zacharias for nineteen years now and have heard him speak about the founding of RZIM on numerous occasions and been asked about it myself—as I was just the other day. And it never fails: every time the story is recounted, I get goose bumps. As Ravi writes in his autobiography *Walking from East to West*, he was on a flight back from Amsterdam where he had addressed a large gathering of those “inside the faith” when he became more burdened for those on the margins and for the “happy pagan” who expressed little interest in (so it appeared) spiritual concerns. *Who was addressing their heartfelt and challenging questions*, he wondered. So Ravi and his wife, Margie, began to pray about their next steps yet chose not to disclose this burden but rather wait on God’s leading.

The more they prayed, they sensed that if Ravi were to leave his comfortable seminary teaching post, they would need a certain amount of money in order to move forward with a ministry that would respond to the needs of inviting bodies such as universities with little to offer beyond the great privilege of answering student’s genuine questions. One day, after Ravi’s last lecture at a conference where he was speaking, he decided to ask those present to pray for him and his wife as they wrestled with a decision but said nothing more. Ravi was in the hotel lobby preparing to leave when a gentleman

whom Ravi didn’t know asked to speak with him a moment.

The man said, “I went to my room and got on my knees, and I asked the Lord to reveal to me the wisdom you need. I asked him if there was anything I could do to help in the decision you’re making. Now, I don’t know what that decision is, but the Lord did impress me that I could help.”⁶ He then handed Ravi a check for the exact amount that he and Margie had prayed about for several months! (As Ravi notes in his autobiography, he did not accept the gift until after getting to know Mr. D.D. Davis and sharing more about his vision; Mr. Davis, in time, would become a father figure and mentor in Ravi’s life.)

For a season, a couple journeyed through things unseen—and in a sudden moment, God revealed his answer to them through a complete stranger. Like the slow leak in my yard, just because we cannot see God at work doesn’t mean that He is not. As scholar Timothy Paul Jones observes, “When [God] doesn’t seem to respond to our prayers, it may not be because He’s chosen not to speak; it may be that His answer is already on the way.”⁷ ●

Danielle DuRant is director of research and writing at RZIM.

¹ Luke 1:6.

² Esther Lightcap Meek, *Longing to Know: The Philosophy of Knowledge for Ordinary People* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2003), 99.

³ See Isaiah 30:18 and 49:23.

⁴ Hebrews 11:11, 27.

⁵ A. W. Tozer, *Living as a Christian: Teachings from First Peter* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2009), 25.

⁶ Quoted in *Walking from East to West: God in the Shadows* by Ravi Zacharias (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 197.

⁷ Timothy Paul Jones, “The Awkward Silence of God: Why Pray When You Seem to be Talking to Yourself?” *Discipleship Journal* (November/December 2006), online at <http://www.navpress.com/magazines/archives/article.aspx?id=21643>.

Isaiah 30:18
Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!

Think Again

The Bible places supreme value in the thought life.



THE SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY French philosopher Rene Descartes is best known for his dictum, “I think, therefore, I am.” A cynic may well quip that Descartes actually put des cart before des horse because all he could have legitimately deduced was, “I think, therefore, thinking exists.” I do not intend to defend or counter Cartesian philosophy; I only wish to underscore that thinking has much to do with life and certainty.

One of the tragic casualties of our age has been that of the contemplative life—a life that thinks, thinks things through, and more particularly, thinks God’s thoughts after Him. One might surmise that thinking is a dying art.

However, the Bible places supreme value in the thought life. “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he,” Solomon wrote. Jesus asserted that sin’s gravity lay in the idea itself, not just the act. Paul admonished the church at Philippi to have the mind of Christ, and to the same people he wrote, “Whatever is true ... pure ... if there be any virtue ... think on these things.” Thus, the follower of Christ must demonstrate to the world what it is not just to think, but to think justly.

The sentences above are words I penned twenty years ago—in our very first issue of *Just Thinking*. This magazine exists to engender thoughtful engagement with apologetics, Scripture, and the whole of life. Though the world seems to change before our eyes, there are some themes that are ever timely, and it is our hope that the articles in *Just Thinking* will consistently challenge your mind and stir your heart.

We hope you enjoy the magazine’s new format and more regular availability; beginning with this issue, *Just Thinking* will be released four times a year. In the meantime, keep thinking.

Warm Regards,



Ravi

For more information or to make a contribution, please contact:

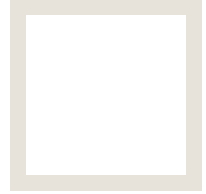
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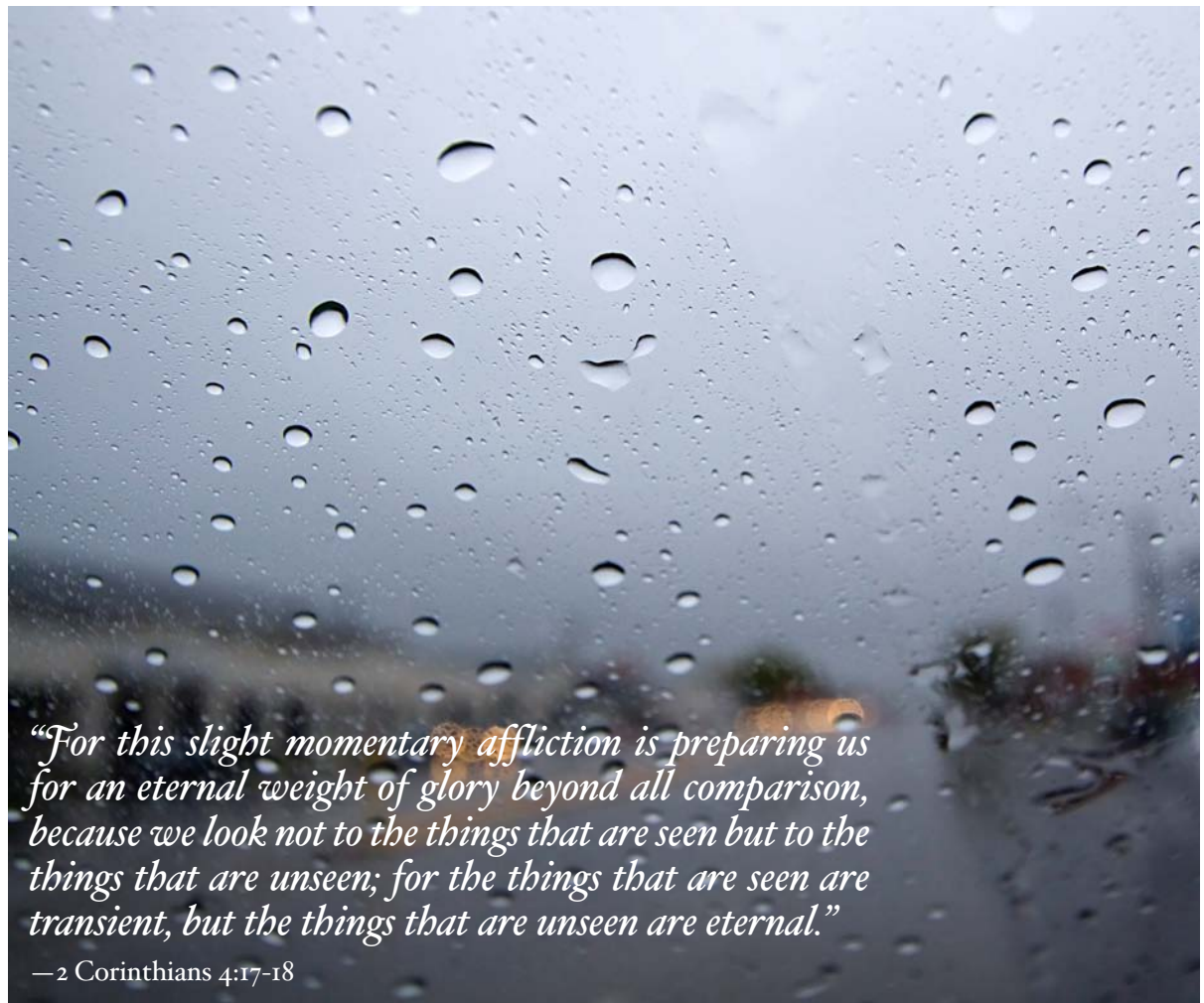
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*“For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us
for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,
because we look not to the things that are seen but to the
things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are
transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”*

—2 Corinthians 4:17-18