

FREEDOM'S GATE

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email: info@newandlivingway.org | website: www.newandlivingway.org

"Cowboy Up"

What does "cowboy up" mean? It is an expression I heard one of our sons say several months ago. We were having a conversation with him and he was sharing about a man he knew that had gone through a difficult situation.

This man was telling our son how hard it had been on his family. Our son's reply was a gentle, "You will have to 'cowboy up' – your family will follow your lead."

As he spoke, I found myself pondering on his statement. He is a father of several children and like all of us, has had some trials in his life. Hearing his words were music to my ears because I realized he understood the importance of his position as husband and father of his home.

He understood he was called by God to lead his family and they would do what he did. Because I know him, I know that he understands much of what that entails. Some of the obvious things are: loving your wife (by the way, that's top priority), being a good provider, spending time with your family (that includes babysitting). Then there are items like hanging pictures and curtains, taking out the trash and in general just being a "mister fix-it"!

However, there is also a side to being a husband and a father where the answers are not always obvious. In fact, they seem very obscure. Those are the times where the "rubber meets the road" and to quote our son, you have to "cowboy up". It is decision time. Chances are, if the dad caves in, the family will also.

There are places in all of our lives at one time or another where we simply don't have all the right cards. Sometimes it feels like we

don't even have the right deck! It is vital at this point that we know our God, because He always has the right cards and the right deck. He is the Father of all fathers and every father needs His fathering!

Dads, this is not a rebuke, but it is a word of challenge to you. Your wife and children need you. They **need** you to be the leader. They need **you** to hear from God. God didn't make your wife the leader of the home, He made you the leader. Your wife can't be the father, she is the mother! Your children need you to be dad! They need **relationship** with you, which means you spend time with them, teaching and instructing them.

Our six sons aren't the perfect dads; they make mistakes and they are learning like all of us are. But I have seen each one of them at some point encounter a situation that the "obvious" wasn't there. They simply did not know what to do. They had to turn to their heavenly Father for His fathering and get answers from Him. Their wives didn't know the answers, **they** had to get them from God themselves.

Those dads had to "cowboy up" and make a decision. The leader had to lead so the family would be secure. The dad had to get with God and get His wisdom. Father God has always come through. His wisdom is there for the asking and receiving. The Word says He was made wisdom for you.

What I am writing about has been on my heart for a very long time. Fathers/husbands, your wives and children don't need you to be perfect. They will forgive your mistakes, but they **need you to lead!** They want to see that you have a relationship with your Savior, Jesus.

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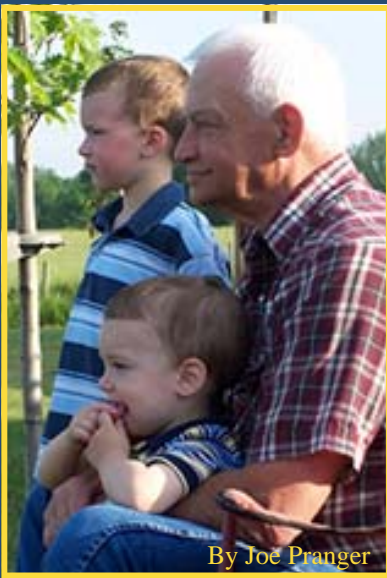
Sitting in my recliner reflecting on the question of "What do I have to write about fathers?" I don't find one obvious answer. Maybe it is the distraction of Olive thinking the laptop is her next toy or because Joe is trying to show me the bubbles he can blow with his spit, both of which are real occurrences. I could write a novel about those types of things and how six kids have redefined the meaning of what

a spiritual and peaceful life really is and is not. Thinking about Dad though, I do find a couple of common thoughts that continue to reoccur and have profoundly affected my own life on a daily basis that I will focus this article around. Dad's life is an open book about how knowing Jesus, not religion, is priority one, family is priority two and everything else will work itself out; easy to see, but tremendously difficult to practice.

In Dad's life and my own life I now understand that distractions, busyness, noise, people pulling and kids needing, quite honestly, is overwhelming at times. This is nothing new to the Lord though, as He is well acquainted with these things. He was all the time being pulled, pushed, harassed, awakened or needed to solve the next so called "crisis" and still is to this day. In all the pressure though, Jesus stays at rest while sitting at the right hand of Father God, expecting until His enemies be made His footstool. He doesn't fear, fret, become anxious or overwhelmed. As I consider Jesus, I realize many of us haven't learned to rest with Him and are having tremendous battles because we don't know how. Hebrews 4 tells us that we should labor to enter the "Rest" provided for us. The very fact that we will have to labor tells us it just isn't going to happen.

I think that most of the difficulty in resting and the cross road that most people make the wrong turn at comes with the idea or notion that we need to do something more than we are doing now. We need to be over there instead of here, we need to be up there where someone else is, we need to quit doing this and start doing that. These ideas that I hear over and over demonstrate that basically many of us believe that what we are doing on a daily basis somehow is not the "spiritual" thing we should be doing; therefore we cannot enter into rest because we think there is still "spiritual work" to do. I thank God

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By Joe Pranger

John 17:3 says eternal life is to know Him. Do you really **know** your heavenly Father? Is He a God way up in heaven and you're here in earth (flesh)? Is He somewhere sitting on a throne? No, God became flesh (Jesus) and dwells among us. It is not about getting to heaven – heaven came here. God and Jesus came here (John 14:23). He bought your body and made a temple out of you. He is no longer God of all creation, He is the God of the new creation! He is your personal Father God; you were born of His own incorruptible seed, Jesus. He lives 24/7 in you forever. Do you really know Him? Is He just God to you or is He Abba, Father, your Daddy? Hundreds of people know I am a grandfather and that I have 30 grandchildren, but only 30 know me as grandpa. Knowing God is about living a relationship - a new and living way in Christ.

Think about a soldier in the army, during wartime, or anytime for that matter. He just “decides” one day that he doesn’t want to be a soldier, so he goes to his captain and tells him that today he just doesn’t want to be a soldier. What do you think that captain’s reply would be? “Sure soldier, just take a day off and relax. We’ll get by without you.” I don’t think so!! It would be just the opposite: “Soldier, you are a soldier! You have a job to do, now get back to your post.”

Well, dads/husbands, you are dads and husbands! You have a job to do and you need to get back to your post! God equipped you for the job and you are up to the task..

Now, lest you think I am being harsh, let me soften up a bit and assure you I am not. I didn’t always understand this, but being a wife, mother and grandmother for many years, I have learned some things. One of those is that you can’t be this husband and father that you are called to be in your own strength. God never intended that you even try! His plan was always that you know and depend on Him.

He created you to dwell in Him and have His life in you that you would have all sufficiency – **His sufficiency.**

Our Lord never intended for you to live life on your own – He never intended for you to live your life at all. He wants to live His life through you. If you will let Him, He will be that husband and dad that your family needs. He will be the answers that you need. He will lead your home through you.

The world’s meaning of cowboy up is to get tough and move on. There is certainly some truth in that, but the spiritual meaning is to get the strength to do that from the Holy Spirit. It’s learning to let Him lead and He does a great job because it is His job to lead! Decide you will let Him be the leader through you.

I realize that not everybody reading this is a father or husband or even married for that matter. But you can still glean from the principles of this article. You all have a calling – first to be IN HIM and then as a member in particular of His Body with a specific job to do. There is no retreating from that job – like the soldier, the Body needs you to do your part.

Then there are times in your life when you need to “cowboy up” and make a decision. What good does it do if you cave in? Most probably there are those that are looking to your leadership and they need you to stay strong in your relationship with Jesus. The bottom line is we all need each other. We are a Body! So, for the sake of His Body and all the members of the Body, **“cowboy up!”**

Fathers, have a great Father’s Day and be blessed!!

~ Anne Pranger



that He taught my Dad, who in turn has taught me that the daily, sometimes mundane processes of fathering, providing for a family, fishing with the kids, hunting, vacationing, working around the house, etc, the things we all call normal life, are the most “spiritual” and lasting investments that can be made. I don’t feel guilty for a moment that my life doesn’t involve what some would consider “spiritual” activities. I am resting in my Father and what He has for me at this moment. If adjustments are needed, He will let me know and we will go together, but for the moment we are just sitting, talking and writing this article.

The second thing that really compounds or fuels the first item is our definition of what spiritual things really are and what being in the Spirit or Rest is defined as. Many churches add to the confusion, not intentionally, but none the less perpetuate an underlying mindset that needs confronted. Certain ideas whether self induced or by someone else keep the believer in a state of restlessness trying to get somewhere, see someone or recreate an experience that they think is “spiritual”. Being in the Spirit is not obtained by once a week engaging in a predefined list of ministry activities. It is not being called as one of the five fold ministry. It is not praying loud or praying soft. You are not there because you do or don’t attend church. It is not closing your eyes and raising your hands during worship. It is not going to the altar at church. It doesn’t happen when it gets quiet or because you are in a state of tranquility. It is not in how many people you prayed with or for. It is not how much money you give, it is not how many scriptures you can quote. It is not a feeling or emotion, it is believing in Jesus and therefore being **in Christ** and resting in the Fathers acceptance of you **RIGHT NOW**, not tomorrow, not when you get somewhere, or do something.

Why do we Christian people so often characterize our “spiritual” or “ministry” activities with these feeble ideas? We cannot rest and receive peace from God on a consistent basis because we have grown

dependant on CD’s playing background music, a choir softly humming a favorite worship song or a peaceful stream to sit by in order to have a “connection” or be at rest in God. We constantly run to church or Bible studies thinking that as we pass thru the door that somehow we have just entered a “spiritual” environment that is more



Start resting in His acceptance

so than our everyday lives and homes? Have we conditioned ourselves to the idea that we need to get a word from God “via” someone else who in our eyes is at Gods work “full time”, while we are just off doing “natural” non ministry things all day? One of my favorite commercials puts it so plainly - “WAKE UP PEOPLE!” and stop running to and fro trying to get to God. He has come to you in your home, in your family and yes even down at the factory. Start resting in His acceptance and all that Jesus has done. Every ounce of spiritual matter and every answer you will ever need is in Christ and you are in Him. In the Spirit is NOT someplace you are trying to get to in order to get in touch with God. It is the place you ARE if you believe Jesus died and rose again. Rest in your family,

stop trying to control everything and let the Blessing take over. It is designed to produce a harvest once you take your hands off. Rest in your job, don’t let anyone tell you it’s not “full” time ministry. If God has placed you there then it is just as important as if you were preaching to thousands! You have been given the “full” time ministry of reconciliation wherever you are and whatever you do.

If you approach everything thru the eyes of Rest, you will find the wisdom of God in every situation. Why? Because you are seated with Him expecting to find it. You are not frantically running to and fro, fearful, anxious, full of doubt, trying to control every door and path, but rather you are seated patiently waiting and expecting the Blessing to change your situation and your Savior is right there fellowshipping with you the whole time. This is your inheritance – so settle down, labor only to stay in Christ, our Rest.

~Nick Pranger