



Treasures Among Us

Betty Owens

When Betty Owens was a child, her family lived a couple of miles from Brixey,

which is near Gainesville in Ozark County, Missouri. Brixey itself was just a country store. She walked two miles from the family farm to Brixey where she caught the school bus. At one time, her family moved to Kirkwood in the St. Louis area for a while. Her dad worked at various factories while they saved money to build a house on land they had purchased "back home." Her younger brother still lives at Gainesville and is a member of the congregation there.

She was 12 years old when she was baptized in a spring-fed creek near Brixey. It was in December, so the water was really cold. Her family has been in churches of Christ for several generations. In fact, she describes her grandfather as "an old preacher." He may have been paid a little for his service to the congregation, but he also farmed. Her mom became a Christian when she was about to marry into the Young family. Incidentally, Betty and Ralph Young are first cousins.

She was 17 years old when she met Mearl Owens and 19 when they married. She first saw him when he performed at the Gainesville School. He was always one who loved music and was an excellent fiddle player. Betty says that she sometimes went with him to his gigs. Sadly, he passed away in 2001.

Mearl was in the service when their first child was about to be born. In fact, he didn't make it back in time for the baby's birth. When he came in late the next night, the nurse took him to the wrong room. He bent down to kiss his wife—and realized it was not Betty! The nurses made sure they showed him the baby and that she had the right number of fingers, toes, etc. He decided she was perfect! By the time President Kennedy was assassinated, Mearl and Betty had three little girls, one just a newborn.

Betty was a beautician by trade and says she really liked the people. She worked for a while in a shop in St. Louis in a Jewish community. She says the few men who came in were always very nice, but the women were harder to please. One lady had red hair and wanted a haircut, so Betty cut it and styled it for her. When she was cutting, she noticed a white strip of hair from the roots and told the lady she didn't want to cut it too short because the white strip would show. That was a good thing because the lady said her husband didn't know she colored her hair! After her children were born, she worked from her own home. Managing the girls and taking good care of her customers was challenging.

Betty and Mearl raised four lovely daughters. Seven grandchildren are special highlights in her life. Betty has served the church by helping in classes for the little ones, and she helped with Day School for a while. At one time, she was responsible for food for the sick and for the shut-ins. It was often hard to get help with that, but it was a wonderful ministry to people who needed the help. She used to set up for church dinners, sometimes wrestling the tables by herself unless Mearl could swing by to help her with them.

Betty has always been pretty independent. A recent fall has set her back and she is not yet able to drive for herself as she would like. She loves being in her home because it holds the best memories for her. John 3:16 is her favorite passage because, “It’s a promise from God to us. It’s a very comforting verse.” Mearl was a talented song leader, so it is hard for her to choose a favorite hymn. The ones she likes best were some of his favorites—*“Hallelujah, Praise Jehovah; I’ll Fly Away; He is Our God (Our God is Alive); and Glory, Glory Hallelujah (Battle Hymn of the Republic)*—all come to mind. She describes herself as having lived a pretty simple life and not being an interesting person. Don’t let her kid you. She is a very interesting person from whom we can all learn.

NOTE: *This is the eleventh in a series highlighting noble Christian women in our congregation. We truly have many “treasures among us” in the women who exemplify Christianity in all its facets and have much to teach us all.*

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Dented Up and Rusted Out

We were driving through town the other day and saw a flatbed truck hauling a car that was dented up and rusted



out. Mildly curious, I asked my husband what he thought the owners of that car would do with it...what they **could** do with it in its condition. He answered that it depended on whether they were in the

restoration business or in the demolition derby business. What an incredible answer!

There are two forces at work in the spiritual realm—God, who is in the restoration business, and Satan, who is in the demolition business. Satan delights in demolishing souls. He deceives with great promises that if we only compromise our faith a little, we will get that big bonus or promotion. If we just cheat a little on our taxes, we can spend more providing good things for our families. If we just use a few drugs, we will fit in with the crowd. If we just drink a little alcohol, we will be able to relax and feel more confident when talking to strangers. If we will just act on the sensual impulses we feel and sleep with that person to whom we are not married, we can experience thrilling sexual gratification. The list goes on: pornography, lying, gossiping, self-indulgences of all kinds.

What Satan does not reveal is the end result of those behaviors. Cheaters nearly always get caught and pay a price, sometimes in the penal system. The drugs used recreationally so often prove to be addictive, and soon users are controlled by them. Alcohol soon chains us to a bottle in a never ending pursuit of courage, relaxation, etc. Illicit sex breaks the sacred vows of marriage, destroys trust between husbands and wives. In this day and time, extra-marital sex often leads to a premature death from ravaging diseases. Hearts and minds polluted by filthy morals and sinful habits often find it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to change.

On the other hand, God is in the restoration business. He loves us. His love is so deep that he paid the ultimate price to redeem our souls. Romans 6:23 tells us that “the wages of sin is death.” Though we owe so great a debt, we cannot pay for our own sins—yet God did so by allowing his own perfect, sinless Son to die in our place on the cruel cross of Calvary. He restores our souls to a wonderful relationship with Him. He blesses us bountifully and gives us strength and courage to handle whatever comes our way. His promises are not empty and deceitful—they are true and everlasting. He waits patiently, like the prodigal son’s father, for us to come to our senses and return to Him, to put Him first in our lives. That dented-up, rusted-out old car looked hopeless and useless to me, but a collector could see beauty hidden underneath the rust and possibilities beyond the dents. Do our souls ever look dented, rusted, hopeless, even useless? Those in the car collecting business take an old, seemingly useless car and lovingly restore it to its original grace and beauty. In an even grander, more loving way, God takes our sin stained souls and lovingly shapes us into the children He wants us to be.

Praise be to God, He can see beyond the dents and rust, beyond the pain, fear and hopelessness we sometimes feel. He gently smooths out the dents in our souls and molds us into the likeness of His Son, Jesus. He carefully removes the rust and decay from sins in our lives...in other words, He cleans us through and through, shines us up, and presents us proudly as His own children.

I am reminded of the words of an old hymn:

Bring Christ your broken life, So marred by sin.

He will create anew, Make whole again.

Your empty wasted years, He will restore,

And your iniquities, Remember no more.

Just as the dented, rusty old car has great potential with the loving care of the restorer, so our souls can be heaven bound with the loving care of the Master Restorer.

Evelyn Waite
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IT IS NOT ABOUT ME

I never cease to be amazed at the number of “religious” people who have the mistaken attitude that God’s plans, somehow, revolve around their desires. I’m sorry, but they **just don’t get it**. It has never been about ME; it has always been about the Lord and what He expects me to do while I am on this earth.

Just what is it He expects us to do? When asked, Jesus gave two great truths by which to live. (1) *“You shall love the Lord your God with ALL your heart, with ALL your soul, and with ALL your mind.”* (Matthew 22:37), and (2) *“Love your neighbor as yourself.”* (Matthew 22:38)

If I really do this to the best of my ability, there is no room left for selfish motives or self-seeking behavior. Jesus told His disciples, “...but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:26-28)

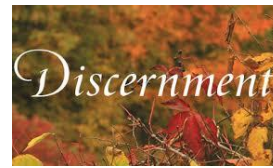
If we really need a reason to do what He says, read 1 Samuel 12:24. *“Only fear the LORD, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you.”*

While going through a box of old papers, I found the following, written by my mother after the death of my father, which left her a widow at age 48.

“I was so blessed to be raised by Christian parents who loved God first, then others. I was never ‘told’ not to treat people differently because of the color of their skin, or station in society. Daddy just lived it for me to see, by treating everyone with respect and kindness. Nobody ever had to tell me to share the blessings God bestowed on me, I saw it every day in the lives of my parents. They didn’t have much, but were forever finding ways to help others...many times in secret so as not to receive the credit.”

Never underestimate the power of the influence you have over all who are watching you. Just by putting the Lord first and living as He taught us, you are teaching. Even if my parents had never told me how to live, I saw by their lives that Christianity is never “all about me!”

Jeanetta Watkins, Adamsville, AL
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SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT

Webster defines “discernment” as “keenness of insight, to separate or distinguish between two separate opposing sides.” It means a power to see what is not evident to the average mind. It stresses the power to distinguish and select what is true, appropriate or genuinely excellent. To see and understand the difference.”

Paul says in Philippians 1:10, *“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and DEPTH OF INSIGHT, so that you may be able to DISCERN what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ.”* (Capital letters my own)

Christians are to approve and practice what is morally and ethically superior to the world’s system. Paul says in the above verses that in order to have that discernment or “depth of insight,” we must have knowledge. The only way we can have knowledge is to study His word with an open mind and heart so He can speak truth to us through that word. *“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”* 2 Timothy 2:15 says, (NIV). (The King James Version says, “study.”) Note: *“CORRECTLY handles the word of truth.”* *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God (Christian) may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”* 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Scripture is the only place we can go for knowledge and “depth of insight.” James 1:5 says, *“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.”*

The Bible is our teacher, our rebuker, our training guide, our corrector. No other book or person can be, or is needed as, a spiritual guide.

The book of Proverbs is filled with references to discernment and wisdom, which go hand in hand. In order to be discerning, we must have wisdom. When Solomon became king after his father, David, he asked God for wisdom. *“So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?”* 1 Kings 3:9-12 says, Solomon did not ask for wealth or for a long life, only

wisdom; therefore, God answered his prayer. He also gave him riches like no one else. In the same way, we must gain knowledge through study of God's word, then ask God to give us wisdom and discerning hearts as He did Solomon.

One of the spiritual gifts spoken of in 1 Corinthians 12:10 is the ability to distinguish between spirits. There are two spirits that exist. One is the Holy Spirit and one is Satan. "...Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness," 2 Corinthians 11:14-15. Remember that Satan is the great deceiver, the father of lies.

Many are being deceived by these "angels of light" because they do not have the wisdom or knowledge of God's word to discern what is right or wrong. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:14-16, "The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments for, "Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ." And yet, there are those in the world who are teaching and claiming to have had a glimpse into Heaven. Children of God, we must be very careful. If anyone is teaching anything contrary to God's word, it must be totally rejected.

The following are just a few verses from Proverbs pertaining to discernment: 1:5; 3:21; 10:13; 14:6, 33; 15:14-16; 21; 17:10, 28; 18:15; 19:25; 28:7, 11. Also see Psalm 119:125. After you read these scriptures, ask yourself these questions: How important is it for Christians to have wisdom and a discerning heart? What does it mean to have the "mind of Christ?" Are wisdom and discernment the same? How did Solomon use his God-given wisdom to solve a problem in 1 Kings 3:16-28?

Mary Anna Melton, Rolla, MO
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BEING A SERVANT IS A PLEASURE

If you want to be a servant, it takes loving kindness and willingness to help anyone that needs help. If we are Christians, we need to help others. When we do, it pleases God.

When I was able to do so, I took my neighbor and his wife at different times to the doctor as well as another neighbor and his wife. At other times, I took two of my aunts to the store or wherever they needed to go. Every Friday, I took my mother to the store to get groceries; and I took my sister to get her shot at the doctor's office. It made me happy that I could do this for them. My cousin's mother didn't drive, so I also took him to the dentist when he needed to go. I drove my mother and a couple of aunts to Cabool to see my grandma once a week at the nursing home.

My mother and my husband both needed insulin shots twice a day. My mother was first, and few years later, I gave them to my husband, who was legally blind. When he needed to go to the VA hospital (and sometimes to the University Hospital across the street) in Columbia, I was the one who drove him there and back.

Doing things like this is being a servant. Even though I am now unable to do those kinds of things, I enjoyed doing things for people when I could.

Shirley Isbell
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Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!

Psalms 100:4



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