

Finding Your Mentor

By Calvin Miller

Calvin Miller:

Well we'll try to wrap all this up a little bit today, for us. I think that the whole issue with holiness is, what you really have to remember about it is that, sin necessarily was not innate. We weren't created to be that, but, we became that through self-will. And the theologians are always talking about a little problem that intrigues me. It's kind of a Calvinist proposition, I suppose, in some ways. The burden of God. God's greatest burden was to make us, knowing that it was going to later cost Him the life of His Son. I find that an intriguing proposition. And I want to try to wrap this all up by starting here, talking a little bit about mentorship, and then we'll talk a little bit, and we can kind of quit.

In the small hamlet of Germany, as the 16th century was pouring through the hourglass, there lived an aging, childless, rabbi named Japheth Ben Levi. One Thursday, as he was sitting in his old wicker chair and reading the Pentateuch, he began to weep. He pulled his prayer shawl far forward over his face and waited for the tears to stop. But alas, his tears would not stop. His prayers were choked by his sobs; (in German accent) "I'm sorry to come to you complaining, as so much of the world customarily does, God. But, my grievance is too long for a letter and too heavy to wait any longer. And God, I must ask you this: is it right that You should have made Yourself a whole world of children, and that my wife Esther and I are condemned to live alone? Your children are of the sands of the sea, God, but we have no inheritance at all. And furthermore, Your family is not all that well behaved. While I hate to point this out to You, God, many of Your children are giving You a bad name. But with being murderers, and malcontents,

and loud mouth politicians; if You will give us a son I promise You, my boy, they'll turn out no worse than some of Yours have."

"Why talk to me Japheth," said God. "If you think my family has too many brig-[cut off], cutthroats? Remember that I also have created an ungrateful Rabbi or two." Things get quiet in heaven, when God gets loud, and after a long time. God spoke again, "Japheth, You have a father, but no son. Am I right?"

(In German accent) "Yeah, you're right, God, You're always right," agreed the rabbi.

"Then you know the work of being a child. Am I right?"

(German accent resumes) "Yes. Yes, You are right, God, of course You're always right."

"But you do not know the really hard work being a father. Am I right?"

(German accent) "Yes, God, always and ever, You are right, which I might add, makes your work easier than mine."

"Do not sass me, Japheth. I'm going to give you offspring."

(Accented) "How can this be? I am old and Esther is as barren as a desert."

"Do you have a table leg?"

(German accent) "Yes, yes. God, You know I do. I have four table legs. They are on our table keeping it far enough from the floor to hold our simple meals."

"Well, take one leg off your table, and whittle out of marionette."

(German accent) "So should I take a leg off the table and let it teeter and be unstable?"

"Japheth, do you think any real miracles are possible while the whole world is seated at stable tables? Why should you be a lot of stable table when you have all of Heaven in an uproar? Do you want a son or not?"

(German accent) "To be sure."

"Then Japheth, you must whittle."

(Accented) "Yes, God." As soon as God got through talking to the rabbi, the sky was shattered with lightning, and that was about all that happened on Thursday.

(German accent continues) "What are you are doing to my table," said Esther, when she saw Japheth sawing a leg off their table.

"Why talk to me Esther? I am only obeying the almighty. So, God doesn't like this table either. I told you I was ugly when we bought it. Yesterday I have some wonderful news God wants me to carve a marionette, which in time will be our son. Why would God give us the son when His own children behaved so badly? I mentioned this to Him. He said parenting is harder work than we imagined." Japheth said nothing else. He sat down immediately and began to carve. "What shall I call you, my little one?" He said at a still unshaped table leg. "I know! Since I first complained that my childlessness while reading the Pentateuch, I shall call you Pentucchio." In so simple a way, the table leg was given the name, and the name stuck, and as a rabbi carved it, he would talk to the table leg; and day by day it looked less and less like a table leg, and more and more like a marionette. By the fourth week the rabbi was carving down past the marionettes eyes, and as he did so they snapped suddenly alive. And they darted around the room as though they were looking for some mischief they might cause; this so unnerved the old rabbi that he tied an old sock around Pentucchio's eyes, so that his skittish glances were hidden from the craftsmen. With the eyes covered, Japheth continued his work, and by the six week had calmed down past the head, setting the chin free to move. "How goes life, old man?" Said Pentucchio.

(German accent) "I'm your father, you will not speak to me in such a manner. Do you hear me, young man?"

"I'll call you anything I please," said the marionette. Japheth found another old sock, and stuck it in his sassy mouth. "Muff," said Pentucchio, trying to talk with a sock wedged in his wooden lips. Once the marionette quit trying to talk, Japheth faced a quandary: should he go on with this desperate dream, or throw his partly son, formed son in the fireplace? As the inner battle raged, the rabbi turned to God. "God, should I go on with this or not? It seems Pentucchio may turn out badly."

"Ah, this is the burden of all makers, my child," said God. "Who can say how Sock-In-The-Mouth-Boy will turn out? When I first made my boy, Adam, I should have put a sock in his mouth. You know what the book says, Japheth, I gave him a thousand orchards and he picked the only tree I told him he couldn't have. Need to think this over, keep the sock in the marionette's mouth, put the table leg in the corner, fix yourself a bagel, and have a talk with Esther before--on family planning before you go any further."

So Japheth put Pentucchio in a bag and set him in the corner. "Shall we go on with this or not?" He asked Esther. "I have reason to believe that our little Pentucchio feel no more of sin than salvation. He's not even made and already he is sassy and sour."

"A table leg can be either a boy or a brat. It was you who wanted an heir and a son. And now on the brink of having one, would you throw the whole thing in the fire?" So on in future weeks the rabbi carved, and quoted scripture, and on week 10 when the marionette's arms came free, one of the arms lashed out, grabbed the carving knife, and jammed it into Japheth's leg. The rabbi impulsively cried "ow!" and then he grabbed an old sock, and lashed it around the doll's arms, and tied it behind his back. "Japheth," said God, laughing, "how can one little boy have so many socks, and no feet as yet? Your boy isn't turning out well, is he?"

As long as Japheth kept Pentucchio's arms and feet tied securely, the work went well. In the 15th week, the marionette was complete. Suddenly, Pentucchio lashed out with his little oak legs, kicking his maker again and again. It was only with the greatest of difficulty that the rabbi managed to thrash the--tie the thrashing legs together with yet another sock. After the legs were tightly cinched, Japheth put Pentucchio down and set a huge heavy rock on him. He blew out the lamp, and left his little wooden son orphaned under a rock in the darkness.

"Esther," he said, entering the bedroom. (German accent resumes) "Our boy is done. He is bound and gagged under a huge rock. I haven't the slightest hope that upon liberating it, he will do us much honor."

"Well, you can't keep him planted under rocks for the rest of his life, Japheth."

"Yeah, I know, Esther. In the morning I consider what to do."

Esther slept poorly. Japheth, not at all. The rabbi sat down early the next morning at a table and heard a familiar voice. "Japheth, this is God. I know, you got to let him go."

(Accented) "But what if he disowns me, and embarrasses me, or makes me cry for the sheer size of his disobedience? What do I do then?"

"Why, talk to me, Japheth. I had a daughter. My first daughter, who ran off with a snake and gave birth to a murderer. I tell you it's much easier to make children than set them free. But you can't create them to be free, and tie them up with socks and keep them under rocks. I didn't do that to Adam, and I didn't do that to you. So Japheth, now you know the burden of God, do you not?" God got quiet. With all his strength, old Japheth stood up, and walked across the room and lifted the lid on the box. He took this stone off his little one, he took away the sock that covered his eyes. Those strange little eyes squinted their wooden lids to adjust to the light; and his eyes were now free to look, and his little wooden ears were free to hear. And the old man

spoke (accented), "Tell me this, my little one: if I take the gag out of your mouth, will you speak honorably?" The marionette nodded in assent. The gag was removed. "Oh father," said little Rock-And-Sock. The very word brought tears of joy to old Japheth. "I love you, father. Take the socks from my arms and I will embrace you." And old Japheth, having waited all his life for such a word, quickly complied. The sock came off, the boy's thick oak arm shot up, and fell around the thick neck of his father and maker. "Oh father, take the cords from my legs, and I will walk with you to synagogue."

Japheth's clumsy, but kind, hands took off the sock that bound the legs of his little one. The boy leapt from his lap and danced around the room singing, "I'm free, I'm free, I'm forever free!" His delight was so great that the old man took his little wooden fingers in his own, and the two of them danced around the room. But the old man's merriment was short lived. In just a little bit, the boy shook free of his grasp and ran toward the low burning embers of the fireplace. He reached into the fire grabbed the burning log, tossed into the killing block and there were flames everywhere. While the old man worked at getting it under control Pentucchio jumped into the rabbi's wicker chair, leapt out of a nearby window, and hurried off into the night. The house was saved, but the old artist's little wooden boy was lost. Japheth wept and resigned himself to childlessness. In his later years, Pentucchio widely denied that Japheth had ever been his father or his maker. He lived longer than old, broken hearted, men should have to live, and during the final year of his life, he said God (accented), "You told me to set him free, and I did. And now this very son denies I ever made him."

"So, Japheth? Many of Adam's children treat me with the same denials. But you played my part, and you learn my burden; you were a good father. You freed your child, and if it hurts

console yourself by remembering you'll soon be home with me. And heaven is a great place for fathers to reminisce."

Three hundred years have passed away since old Japheth was laid to rest in a little German cemetery. But those who live in the villages nearby say that heaven's highest throne has right beside it a little wicker chair. There the great God and a wizened Rabbi often sit and talk about the high cost of making children and setting them free. But, the joy of that place has been made wise by pain. And Heaven's truths now have all been proved on a brute white planet, where some children still steal old man's dreams, and others still eat fruit that is forbidden. But, those who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God.

You did not receive the spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship; and by him we cry, "Abba, Father." We know that all of creation has been groaning in the jaws of childbirth, right up to the present time. Not only so but we ourselves also who have the first truth as spirits grown inwardly as we wait eagerly for our own adoption as children, the redemption of our bodies. And to as many as received Him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to those who believe on his name. So, our struggles with sand and holiness have been realized, I believe, in Jesus Christ, who makes automatic this whole matter of achieving that which we cannot achieve by our own striving. And I want, I want to talk to you just a little bit about mentoring, and then I'll be ready to quit; you'll probably be ready before I am.

I want to talk to you just a little bit about, about, being a mentor and how you find that person. I can't tell you what a good mentor is, but when John said a moment ago "they were looking for people as immature as they are," I liked that. He didn't quite say it that way, but I like that notion. It isn't so much that a mentor knows more than you do. A mentor is someone who

sits with you while you learn together, and you who are a kind of public ministry know the danger of this, because as a pastor, good brother here, I know that within your life experience, so oftentimes, arrived to, and others of you who pastor find that sometimes people come in and they literally--I don't know, they just plug their umbilical into us, and they suck us dry. That is not mentoring. And you don't want to plug into people who vampire away all of your body fluids in the name of Jesus. What you want to do, is to find those people who you meet, who do, who will serve with you as a mentoring a person; who give you a sense that they really are what you want to be. The great thing about them, if they're authentic, is they won't feel like they're what you want to be, or feel immature in themselves. Whoever would stand in any kind of spirit of Christ and say, "wow, I am so strong, I want to be your mentor." Who would want a mentor like that? A mentor is someone who comes with you in some sense of need, but whom you find a great deal of admiration. Can I just rehearse with you about five or six people? Because I think these people were instrumental at various times in my life.

I mentioned my first pastor, Sister Close. I used to be at church, when I would see Sister Close [cut off]. It would seem to me--by the way, there's something wonderful about having a woman for your first pastor, if you're a child. I know that you will probably remember this, and your children would certainly agree to it. Children are rarely afraid of women; and in fact often find them, and I think in some way, a kind of mother symbol. [Cut off] for mother, they happen to be. I found that true of Sister Close. I loved her, she always wore a white dress, kind of like Amy Semple McPherson. She would stand in the pulpit, and she would preach, and I don't remember all that she said. It wasn't so much what she said, it was the fact that I could look at her, I could see in her eyes a love for Jesus. And she would often look up to the ceiling of our little Celotex church, kind of like this, and whatever she was seeing up there fascinated me. It

seemed like she was looking through the Celotex to a wider heaven than I could imagine. It was a kind of rapture with [cutoff] the address to the Celotex week by week. And I looked at her and I thought "this is what I want to be. I want to see what she sees." I never could see anything more than Celotex, but I wanted to see what she was [cut off]. And I used to sit--it was interesting to me. I was not, I was not a good Pentecostal; I could never talk in tongues, and I used to sit on the back seat with Rosie Todd. Rosie Todd could also not talk in tongues. We were only two, however, in the church--and it always amazed me, they call it the unknown tongue and they all seem to know it except for me and Rosie Todd--but I can remember thinking--and I'm sure Rosie must have felt this way, Rosie must have thought "you know, someday, someday Calvin's gonna get this, and I'll be the only one"--and I would think, "someday Rosie's gonna get this, and I'll be the only one." And this was in the days, you know now, sometimes, they suggest little phrases like, "get you started. But in our little church, in our little church, there was no suggestion; this was the thing that really was a movement of the spirit. What amazed me about Rosie was that, and I think I served this too--I think we both served this doctrine that God would love us better if we were good Pentecostals. So that meant we didn't, I didn't, I wasn't tempted to smoke at that age. But Rosie, I remember always wore long dresses, long sleeves, no makeup, no jewelry, just a long face. Everything about Rosie was long. We would sit there, and I would think, and I know that she was doing all this so she wouldn't be, uh, sexually stimulating, and that worked real well for her. And I remember that when first, that when first I went over to the Baptist church, I think I really, was really kind of intrigued by a more colored up proposition of femininity. But, in that church itself, I truly believed I was focused in on Sister Close. She became, for me, the first kind of mentor. I saw that, her life week to week, to week.

I think the next person I saw that really kind of motivated this hunger in me. Was a seminary friend of mine, Loy Reid. Loy and I used to go out between classes and go out to the car, sit in the car. We had what we call the dashboard prayer meetings. We did it pretty much every day. It was a systematic part of our life that we sat in our car, and prayed every day. We talked about God all time, read the kind of classic John talks about, or I talk about my books. We read that kind of stuff all the time. But one day, when Loy was a young minister, he was coming back from taking his girls to [cut off]. It was one o'clock in the morning. He was out late. He got out of the car, just to stretch, so he wouldn't go to sleep-- He was about to go to sleep by the wheel. [Cut off] A car came over the hill, and struck him on the highway, and catapulted his body about 200 feet, and he wound up in the hospital--and seriously in the hospital. And in fact, he was on one of those kind of beds that, sort of, can clamp you down, and turn you over, and things like that. No clothes on, except just what they need to cover him up; pins in him, stretching him out hither and thither so he would heal back--it took him months to heal back. Terribly uncomfortable position. Saw him in the hospital and he said, "You know how we used to always talk about how we needed more time to get with God?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Well you know, all the prayers I had about 'give me more time with You,' God has answered." And he said, "Now I can't." He said, "I'm gonna be here for a whole year, and I believe God has given me this time to really move in to fellowship with Him." Every time I think about that being a rich year of his life--I don't envy him his car wreck, necessarily, but what I do envy is that he used that time to great advantage, and went on to move into other and deeper levels of Christ. Finding a mentor who has the hunger and no matter what it costs; he seemed to celebrate that in his life.

I mentioned Brother Marty, this Crosier, a monk friend of mine. By the way, I will never forget this. The Crosiers are a small order of Catholic priests that're dying out; they're not, in

fact, the only one I know is in Grand Isle in Nebraska. I think that's only one left. They're all getting very old now, and there's not anybody joining the order, they don't have a good recruiting system, so the order is just kind of going down and going away. But some years ago they asked me come and do a spiritual retreat for them. You know, I need to learn my limitations, uh, but I went. I went to do the spiritual retreat for a group of monks. I had nothing to do with any spiritual growth that came with their lives. I suspect none came to their lives that week. But, some came in my life that week as I touched these men and, when people start talking to me about monks, I have to stop and say, "You know, what I discovered there was really a kind of beautiful thing. Men who had elected never to marry. Men who lived out their devotion to Christ in some very practical ways. Namely Brother Marty, who always worked with retarded children. He died about a year or two ago. I don't know, I can't remember the exact date, but some of his brothers wrote me a letter; somethings that he wrote about me in his diary and his journal. I found myself falling in love with the man who worked with children who would never even be able to say his name. He loved my children's sayings. We got along great and he always lived with them; reading them my poetry and the Bible as they can understand. Always just loving. Is there a place in God's heaven for such a fellow? I suspect there was, and I found myself eagerly thinking about him, and my wife did, too. We would anticipate, we would anticipate this. He filled me with the Spirit of Christ to be around, and I loved just to be around him.

God gave me another friend who served as a mentor in my spiritual walk. He was an Amish man. I was in an airport in Harrisburg Pennsylvania and he was sitting there. A guy named Ruben. I don't remember why he was at the airport, but in his little black Amish suit, his little black Amish cap, he was sitting there and we struck up a conversation. He was quite a handsome young man and we just had a great visit there in the airport. I gave him my card.

When I got back home, I got a letter from him and he said, he said, "I really enjoyed meeting you." And then he went on to talk about his life in Christ. And for a number of years, the next three or four years, we were pen pals. An Amish man and a man trying to build a church in suburban Omaha, America. I found his letters were like hearing from the Apostle Paul, truly, when I get one I would rip it open. He only had been educated to the eighth grade, as I assume is true of all Amish men, but his education in scripture was exquisite, and what he had to say about Jesus was was compelling. I would just read it, and I would grow, and I would grow. And then one day I got a letter from him. He said, "I've grown my beard around the corner, am getting married, and I'm marrying Sadie"--and his name was Ruben Saultzfoose, her name was Sadie, I don't remember her maiden name. But they got married, and then he said, "And we would like to come to Omaha on our honeymoon." I'm never intimidated by having anybody in our home, except that, and I figured in my heart that, probably Amish people are fairly sedate on their honeymoon, it wasn't that, but I somehow, I somehow figured, I somehow figured that here, here is a guy who's, who's spirituality I'm going to get to test upfront. But more than that, he's going to get to test my spirituality up front. So, for all the beautiful letters we had written together, now we're about to get a firsthand look at each other.

He came to Omaha with his wife, and I picked them up at the bus station. I will never forget, because they were all, both, in their black clothes. She's got a black dress on, he's got his black outfit on--black hats, bonnets, total Amish thing; and I took them to our house. I could see, I could see when I brought him in that night my kids, you know how kids are, teenagers, they looked at him and I could see them making some decisions about them that--you want to box your kids around once in a while. But, but, Ruben and Sadie just became just delightful people in our home. I found myself in the next little bit in a kind of role reversal, seeing them in ways I

had never seen them before. For instance, they didn't have a radio, they didn't have television, they didn't have a car, they had never seen a play, never been to a movie, didn't have a TV. They, I think, on their farm they did actually use a tractor to plow with, but that was about all the mechanization they had in their lives. And I found myself explaining simple things like Fresca, or the Dallas Cowboys. I remember a little girl running through our house that little Dallas Cowboys sweatshirt on, and uh, and Ruben looked at her and said, "I hear there are cowboys in the West." I said, "These aren't cowboys. These cowboys play football." I couldn't--it's hard to explain these things to him. I had a hard time explaining that one.

But I will never forget, as we drove around visiting, he went visiting with me, I always wondered what my people thought. He went to the hospital, he went everywhere with me, and we'd talk about Jesus, we're having a great time. But here would come Ruben and I into a hospital room, him in his little black outfit and me and my, I don't know, probably leisure suit in those days, but we're praying. And so, on Thursday night, I said to him, "Ruben, my wife and I have tickets to see Camelot." Actually it was season tickets to the playhouse. I said, "Would you, would you and Sadie like to go to the play?" He said, "Yeah, we'd like that." Now, they've never seen a play before, never seen any live theater. And suddenly, I remembered something Martin Luther said. He said, "To go against conscience is neither safe, nor right." And I thought, "I need to be real careful here that I don't take two beautiful people, who love their walk with the Lord, and spoil their conscience. I really have no desire to do that." I said, "You know," I said, "I need to tell you a little bit about this play, and you need to make a more informed decision on whether you want to see it or not, because you know it may not be to your Amish tastes and sensibilities, it might not fit that."

And he said, "Well, Calvin," he said, "I know from your letters you are a man of God, and you would never lead me into sin."

I said, (loudly exhales) "Sit down Ruben, and let's talk about this play." So I said, I told him, I said, "Now, here's the worst lines in the play. But," I said, "and sometimes an actor will kiss an actress, who is not his wife, on the mouth, on the stage in front of 800 people or whatever is in the playhouse."

Okay. He can handle that. And I said, he said, "Is that all?"

I said, "Well, this is about a King Arthur."

He said, "Is this a recent king, or king lived a long time ago?"

I said, "He lived about 1400 years ago."

He said, "Well, are they just now making a play about it?"

I said, "Well, it's been a while, but yes." He said (laughs) he said. And I said, "You need to know this. All the guys are going to be wearing leotards."

He said, "What's leotards?" And this it's really hard to explain leotards to the Amish. But I worked, and I think I've finally got that. So we finally come down to the night of the play, and this I will never forget. By the way, talk about the arts: I think they're just incredibly important, and they came with a fairly innocuous beginning in some ways. But we, we get dressed to go and Ruben and Sadie come out, they're going with us. They've got on their black outfits: hats, bonnets, everything. And my daughter says, "Well, Dad, are they going like that?"

I said, "Yeah. This is all the clothes I have. These are our friends. They're going like that."

She said, "Well, could we sit in another part of the theater," [inaudible].

And I said, "no we're going to stay with 'em, these are our friends." so we all got to the playhouse, and it was, it was one of the most wonderful evenings in my life in some ways, because Ruben and Sadie are sitting here in the middle of us, and we are down pretty close to front. And when the curtain goes up, I mean, their eyes are wide open. Everybody else in that theater has seen Camelot 500 times, except Ruben and Sadie. So Ruben and Sadie, the only two people watching Camelot, and everybody else is watching Ruben and Sadie, and so, so it was, it was an interesting evening. But on the way out of the theater, they didn't say anything. And I thought boy, they didn't bring it up the rest of the week, and gosh, I didn't want to bring it up. I thought, "I've, I've humiliated them in some way, I've sinned against their conscience." And when Ruben got back to Pennsylvania, had been there about a week, I got a nice letter from them saying "thank you, thanks especially for that play Camelot. We really liked it."

But here's the thing: that night. But I thought, I thought, you know, I believe with all my heart God put him in my life to mentor me spiritually for a long period of my life. I can think of any number of other people, and I've written down just some more of them here. I've written down Richard Foster, that I came to know right before [cutoff] a Celebration of Discipline before he was famous, he was teaching at Friends College in Wichita. I was up in Omaha. And we just kind of became friends. I went to school, taught, he came to our church and preached. We just became real close friends, and his friendship has been really amazing. He knows that his endorsement is on the back of the book, but I've really appreciated Richard across the years and who he is. By the way, he's one of those people who convinces me that, even if you're a spiritual guru, you can still be a human being. You can still be a human being. Richard laughs a lot. I don't know if you know that or not, but he laughs a lot. And first off, when I first met him, that put him at a little distance with me because I just read Celebration of Disciplines, which sounds

like it's written by an angel. You know, just somebody very other worldly, and I start talking him on the phone, I says "is this Richard?"

He said "Richard Foster, yeah. Who are you?"

I said, "I'm Calvin Miller."

He said, "Well, good to meet you, Calvin."

I said, "What you do for a living?"

He said, "Oh, I teach here at Friends University." He laughed, and he laughed, and he laughed. He said--I thought I was talking to the village idiot, not the guy that wrote Celebration of Discipline. He laughed all the time, and finally, when I said to him on the phone, I said, "Yeah, you're gonna have to forgive me, I'm just trying to put this guy laughs all the time together with this book that I've just read that sounds like it's written by an angel."

And I've never forgotten what he said. He said, "Well, do you think," he said, "that people who write spiritual books necessarily," He said, "Do you think we don't go the bathroom?" That's a direct quote.

I said, "Well, you know, it is, it's hard for me to imagine St. Francis at a urinal but, but nonetheless I know the man. I just can't really put this together." He has taught me more about how to be a human being and love the Lord than about anybody else there is. I think that, all of these, there've been so many other people who have, who played a, an, important part in my life, and I've tried to learn from them as I go by them.

One of the people that I met was a good friend of Mother Teresa's. I don't know how good a friend, I should probably not use maybe too strong a word. My friend David in Calcutta, when he first got over to be a minister there at a missionary, he called Mother House and he asked to talk, if he could set up an appointment to see Mother Teresa. And in just a moment, he

was talking to her on the phone. Her secretary just put her through to him. This one reason I like her, by the way. I like Mother Teresa with two or three reasons. First of all, I liked it when she stood by Bill Clinton, the Southern Baptist president, at a prayer breakfast and said how she felt about life. Man, if she never did anything else in her life, I admired the dickens out of her that day. It wasn't like she was on a crusade. She just said how she felt about life, and boy was that powerful. And boy, did he need to hear that. I'm a Republican by choice, but, I guess I listened that day, and I think, "Thank you, Jesus, just thank you." I love her for that, but she was on the phone with David. She said, "Sonny, you don't need an appointment to talk to me. You just come over." And so he did.

And they sat under the trees and talked at Mother House, and he said--I don't know all that they talked about, but here's something I did notice, right off. I noticed right off, that when I met David, he had a piece picked up a little habit of going down to the bakeries, or stores and buying day old bread--something that didn't cost him very much money. And every night, probably last night, at 2 o'clock in the morning he takes that day old bread and scatters it in the street, just ahead of the hordes of the insane, who maraud through the streets of Calcutta at night. Calcutta is like a European city in the middle ages. There are no asylums. The insane just wander around like anybody else does in that city. And when David hears them coming, or sees them--he knows their path of travel now--he puts the bread in their path. Now, I've asked myself, "Where did he get such Marty, Brother Marty, idea of ministry?" The only place I can figure that he got that, I have a feeling that Mother Teresa said to him something like, "you can begin-" you know, her famous statement that American lady says, "Where do I begin to help in such a world?" She said, "Here's a broom. This is a dirty city." You know, I bet you, I bet you ten bucks I won't bet on it, that that's, that's where, what started that whole thing.

He had been mentored in a way, and I tried to remember my example. Boy I try to remember that. I try to remember that with students--especially the students who take me for a class or, even more important than that, the ones who come into my office and they've got some kind of thing. Sometimes it's a pretty serious thing, it's breaking their hearts. I would like, I would like to be. I would like the world to know they are welcome to come in there and I'd like to back down and kneel with them.

I don't know how to solve their problems. I have a theory about problems that most of them can't be solved. That's why we call them problems. If they had solutions we wouldn't call them problems anymore. We call them problems because they can't be solved. So all I know to do, is to get on my knees with the student, and cry with them about what's going on in their lives, and then say to them: "I'll try to be here. I'm pretty sure God is going to be there, and you're going to trust Him. And someday you'll get through this. If not, you'll walk away from this." That's one of my theories about problems, if you can't solve it, walk away from that. Don't let it eat you alive. Most problems I think has to be abandoned because I don't think that can be solved. Let them go and let Jesus walk with you along the way as you do that.

So all the stuff I said about mentoring I believed to be terribly true. And I want to read you one final poem. Then I'm free to take your questions, and we'll look at your one minute synopses here. I believe that this is the end, and of I saw Dallas Willard. We were in a program together. I read this little thing, and when it's over, over, got through it, I saw him over the table copying it down. Do you know how it feels to have, to actually see Dallas Willard copying down one of your poems? Oh gosh, I feel so great. I mean, he is truly a great guy and I have such admiration for him, and this is--but, but I believe this is the business: all that we've been talking about, the business that we've been talking about is to conform you to the image of Christ. And

all that you're asked to do in spiritual formation, it seems to me, is aimed at your transformation. God is trying to shape you into something that looks like His Son. That's what it's all about. This is summed up in a little poem about a caterpillar, who was reluctant for the next step. Here's what it says:

"Mother Caterpillar turned to her daughter one day
And she said, "My sweet Catherine, I'm going away
And I cannot come back, I'm sorry to say."
And she clipped the last threads on her bright new cocoon and then turned to Catherine again.

"Well Cathy, I'm going in now.
Are you sure you quite understand?
Can you spin the webbing and knit the silk threads,
And fleece the inside of your own little pod?"

"Yes mother I can," said Catherine Caterpillar.
"I've woven the uprights, just as you said.
I've tied off three hundred and seventy threads.
I am sure that before the birth of the moon,
I'll be more than prepared for my own cocoon."

And they kissed goodbye on the old milk pod twig
And the old woolly worm adjusted her wig
And crawled on into her vacant cocoon.

Catherine was scared.

"Is it true, mother, I will lose all my legs?"

"Yes, Katherine, almost. You get to keep six."

"Only six? Oh, what then?"

Her mother knitted the last 30 threads

And answered her back from her own downy bed.

"Well then, Catherine, you'll never walk anywhere ever again."

And she pulled the last threads and closed the cocoon and was gone.

Well Cathy spent 13 days weaving and webbing packing in fleece and cutting the threads

And when the day at last came to enter her pod,

Catherine looked sadly down at her two hundred legs

And she spoke very sharply to God.

"God this is Catherine Caterpillar.

I don't mean to gripe, but you haven't been fair.

I haven't got long now to talk.

Already I feel a frost in the air.

But God it's like this. I've two hundred legs

And while it's an effort to climb up a stock

I enjoy so much just crawling along
And taking a nice autumn walk.

Please God, if you don't mind, could I keep my legs?"
God only smiled and pulled out the moon,
And Catherine looked down at her two hundred legs,
And stomped her way in to that fleecy cocoon.

And for one hundred and seventy days the frost gathered,
And God smiled as the snowflakes piled high [cut off] red,
Catherine slept warm in her own downy bed

And seven cold moons smiled down on the snow
Till in May, God came rapping on Catherine's cocoon.

It's terribly dark said Catherine, in fright.
"I must clip these threads and let in the light."
She chewed through the wedding and cut the silk threads
Crawled out and stretched,
And suddenly thought as she looked at her bed.

"My legs, they're gone. What can I do?
I cannot go far."

She looked and saw a winged creature

Who landed in splendor on the old milk pod twig.

“Catherine Caterpillar, the morning is bright.”

“Mother, it's you. I've lost all my legs. I think I will die.”

“Nonsense, you're at the beginning of life.

You're not going to die.

You're through crawling, dear Catherine.

When God takes our legs, He expects us to fly.”

Catherine tried her new wings and they both rose and flew.

“I never knew, mother, the skies were this blue.”

“Stretch out your wings, and float on the wind

And tell me do you want to be what you've been,

And crawl in the dust and have legs once again?”

“Oh, Mother I'm flying, today all is sky

And surely, God's watching as we flutter by.”

He watches the winters.

He guards the cocoons.

He smiles when the snow falls 'Neath icy dead moons.

He laughs at our fears while the winter wind sings

And He wakes us to fly on filigree wings.

If any man be in Christ, he's a new creature. All things are passed away. All things are become new. And this is the end of all our, all of our talk about formation. It's all of the end of all that we say about sin and holiness; the end of all that we say about mentoring. In the all that we say, I believe, about how we are formed in Christ, as we move in this marvelous [inaudible] into the depths of God's love. That's what we are. That's who we are. That's our heritage and calling.

Well I want to have you think about, we're going to take about five or ten minutes to do this. I want you, somebody, to stand and give me a verse scripture, and something you've written down in the last two hours that defines it. In short, preferably. But let us hear from just a little bit. Okay?

[Silence, 38:53-39:06] Well don't be bashful (laughter). Good brother pastor, did you just volunteer?

Speaker 1:

Oh, no. (Both laugh)

Calvin Miller:

Can you?

Speaker 1:

Anywhere? Any verse?

Calvin Miller:

Any verse.

Speaker 1:

Ecclesiastes 5:1-2.

Calvin Miller:

And?

Speaker 1:

When you draw near the throne of God, summary. Draw near the throne of God. Draw near to hear, rather than know the words of a fool, the uttering of many words, there is sin.

Calvin Miller:

Wow, okay, you might--say it again, can you? Little bit louder.

Speaker 1:

When you draw near to the throne of God. Draw near to, to listen rather than to utter the words of fools. In the uttering of many words, there is sin.

Calvin Miller:

Boy, so true. Okay. Somebody else. Ralph, did you come up with anything great?

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Speaker 2:

[Inaudible]

Calvin Miller:

(Laughs) I hate to call on you by name. Okay good.

Speaker 3:

All discipline is sorrowful for the moment. But you who are trained by it will yield to peace and the fruit of righteousness. And--

Calvin Miller:

All discipline is hard for the moment but he who will yield to it, will sorrowful for the moment but he who yields to it will--

Speaker 3:

But he who is trained by it, will yield a peaceable fruit of righteous--

Calvin Miller:

Good.

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Speaker 3:

and my thing was, and that really hit me is, by my not being willing to crawl over that fence and go into the mist, into the unknown again, that I quench and limit that fruit that God wants to do in my life.

Calvin Miller:

Amen. Great, somebody else. Yeah.

Speaker 4: [inaudible] 17:37 God did this so that men would seek Him, and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him. Oh He is not far from each one of us.

Calvin Miller:

All right good. What else? Yeah.

Speaker 5:

Jeremiah 29:11.

Calvin Miller:

Go. Go for it.

Speaker 5:

I know the plans I have for you, and in the version I like, plans for good and not for evil. And I thought of that when you first mentioned it. I hadn't written anything down, but it just

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came to mind again while you were reading the poem; that we may be afraid of where God leads us, but He knows those plans, and whatever that fear is, He's bigger than our fear.

Calvin Miller:

Amen, amen.

Speaker 5:

Go ahead. I wouldn't be here if I had listened to my own fears.

Calvin Miller:

Yes, God bless you. Alright, yes.

Speaker 6:

Philippians 2:13, For God is the God who works in you to will to act in according to His good purpose; is a passage that I have dreamed about and aspire to for years, but it's... This weekend has caused me a hunger to to surrender more to allow that to happen. I've worked very, very hard on my own rather than finding Him and allowing Him to work and willing to act through me.

Calvin Miller:

Yes, that is so true that the patient waiting for godliness. Good, someone else. Yes, Ralph.

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Ralph:

Philippians 1:6. This is also a verse I like.

Calvin Miller:

Me, too.

Ralph:

When we think about sometimes God doing all that He wants to in us and through us, for me it gets very scary because I lose all control. But going back to what you talked about earlier about the diving bell. Going down deep into, to God. The picture came to me of God with His hands around me, and going down into that depth that is the safest place I could be. That, that diving bell was my protection as I'm deep into the Lord and there's nothing to be afraid of.

Calvin Miller:

Yeah. Do you mind saying if you're struggle with a heart attack this year influence that, you?

Ralph:

In the last several years. Yeah.

Calvin Miller:

I think there's something about terminality; I went to a doctor some years ago and thought I was going to have to have a heart valve replacement and I remember, I remember some sense

of uneasiness about it. But what kind of pleased me was the fact that I didn't have a horrid fear; I'm sure you experienced that same thing. I mean, I think when you face finality it's kind of an amazing thing that God, God is there making you live out. What are the values of the inwardness that we so cherish.

Ralph:

It really helped me to change a lot in realizing as never before that the relationships are the only thing in life that really count. And I am a collector by nature and I have had a lot of things I collected: stamps, trains, Coca-Cola memorabilia, and stuff like that. I've found over the last few years that those things have lost all of their glamour in relation to my investing my life into the people closest to me. And that has been a great change.

Calvin Miller:

And I think we all go through that. I mean I've done some, been collecting some things myself. One of the things that somebody asked me today: if you retired, they knew at 65, if you retired, what would you what would you want to do? How would you, how would you define the rest of your life? And what does surprise me is, I guess I thought I would just erupt in terms of books I wanted to produce, but I didn't. I thought about two or three people that if I were able to help them, these particular people, is going to take probably some years of my life. One of the things that I think, as you get older, you realize you can't help people very fast. Most of the real help you give, you give over a period of time as you wait for them to grow, and now I'm sort of praying that God will give me time to help those two or three people I want to help, and I'm actively pursuing that in my life and my prayer life. And what I what I believe is, I am real big

on intercession for other people, not for myself. I agree with Mother Teresa on this: don't pray for yourself. I think, I think the weakest thing about that it is a self-supplication. Give me bigger, more territory, whatever it is. I always try to remind my people that acts contrition is a confession, thanksgiving, and supplication is the outline all evangelicals cherish for how we pray. It's the things we draw out of the Lord's Prayer that talks about adoration, contrition, confession, thanksgiving; but supplication is one little aspect of that. And I want to be found on my face before God in praise, and thanksgiving, and confession, and all those other values, and I want my supplication to be aimed at these people that I want to help. If God gives me the years left to do that, and so that may be one of the better things, Ralph. That's it how God is affecting me, so far. I haven't had any recent judgments against my life. But, if that were to happen I would want to be faithful in accounting it. I'm wandering, and this was your time. But I've used it all up. Somebody give me a great benediction here, real fast. Yes.

Speaker 7:

I would like to because I was raised in a home where there was a lot of fear, and not a lot of faith. And I got to know Jesus when I was 9, and I had no growth until I was 30, and then I, that's when I was getting into the word of God. He richly blesses me through scriptures, and so I have personalized Jeremiah 17:7-8 in a feminine form: Blessed is the woman who trusted the Lord and whose trust is the Lord, for she will be like a tree planted by the water that extends her roots by a stream; and will not fear when He comes. For her leaves will be green; and she will not be anxious in a year of drought, nor cease to yield fruit.

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Calvin Miller:

Wow.

Speaker 7:

And I love that.

Calvin Miller:

Me, too, I love it. That's great, great stuff. Well I need to let you finish your sub-- it's your comment, your convention. I think I will go out then, and so I can catch you on the way out. I know you didn't get your book signed a while ago. Can I do that?

Speaker 8:

Oh yeah, that's fine.

Calvin Miller:

Okay.

Speaker 8:

Well I think what we are going to do is we're going to be ending an early.