

Words of Wisdom

As it is impossible for me to place a value on individuals who have personally helped me grow in my Christian walk, I also owe a debt to many brothers and sisters in Christ I have never met. These have shared something on paper – authors who have influenced me through their writing.

Just because something is in print, doesn't mean it is true. However, when someone's writing is compared against scripture and found true to those principles contained therein, often incredible insight is shed on what scripture has to say – either through the author's study of the Word or their own experience with the Lord. That is what happens in churches, Bible schools and seminaries. Believers are exposed to great men and women of the ages who help shape their understanding of God's Word.

In this *Reflective Focus*, I am sharing with you a few of the authors who have made an indelible imprint on my life. Some are quoted in my own book, *The Prayer Driven Life*. Many of my trusted authors have long since gone on to Glory, but their words live on. Although the language is not contemporary, just like the hymns of the faith, there is great value in many of the Christian classics. I also have favorites among current authors. A couple of them are noted below. Whether the author resides this side of Heaven or in Heaven itself, all have given me at least a nugget of truth that often comes to mind just when I need it.

Perhaps some of these are also your favorite authors. My hope is that you will be enriched by their words of wisdom just as I have been.

A.W.Tozer

My father introduced me to A. W. Tozer, a prolific writer who died in 1963. I have read several of his books, but the one that has yellow highlights all the way through is *The Knowledge of the Holy*. Several wonderful quotes from that work are:

- “He needs no one, but when faith is present, He works through anyone.”
- “God dwells in eternity but time dwells in God.”
- “He never differs from Himself. The concept of a growing or developing God is not found in Scriptures. . . . Is it not a source of wondrous strength to know that the God with whom we have to do changes not? . . . We need not wonder whether we shall find Him in a receptive mood.”

Hannah Whitall Smith

In 1875, a Quaker by the name of Hannah Whitall Smith, wrote *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*. From the very beginning of that Christian classic, my thoughts were molded by her teaching. Although this book is still in print and for sale, you can also read it online. I especially recommend the first chapter: God's Side and Man's Side. To paraphrase the author, God's part is to *do* all the work, your part and my part is to *trust* Him.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Early in my Christian life, someone gave me a copy of *The Cost of Discipleship*. The author is well known not only for his writing, but the fact that his faith and courage in opposing Hitler's persecution of the Jews resulted in what he called “costly grace” in his

book – his own martyrdom. Every Christian would do well to read his comparison of “cheap grace” and “costly grace.”

George Müller

There have been times when I have learned about the wisdom of a great man of God not from his own writing, but the record of his life given in a biographical volume. This is the case with George Müller, a Prussian-born English evangelist who founded orphanages in Bristol.

I appreciate someone like Andrew Murray, a wonderful example of godliness in his own right, who gives us a record of George Müller’s life and sayings. George Müller kept a journal of his prayers. Some of these are included in *George Müller, and the Secret of His Power in Prayer* by Andrew Murray. However, it was Murray who was able to include facts such as the following.

After some months of prayer and waiting on God, a house was rented, with room for thirty children, and in course of time three more, containing in all 120 children. The work was carried on in this way for ten years, the supplies for the needs of the orphans being asked and received of God alone. It was often a time of sore need and much prayer, but a trial of faith more precious than of gold was found unto praise and honour and glory of God.

The Lord was preparing His servant for greater things. By His providence and His Holy Spirit, Mr. Muller was led to desire, and to wait upon God till he received from Him, the sure promise of £15,000 for a Home to contain 300 children. This first Home was opened in 1849. In 1858, a second and third Home, for 950 more orphans, was opened, costing £35,000. And in 1869 and 1870, a fourth and a fifth Home, for 850 more, at an expense of £50,000, making the total number of the orphans 2100.

C. S. Lewis

C.S. Lewis is well known, especially for his *Chronicles of Narnia* series. However, it was *The Screwtape Letters*, a series of letters written by a demon named Screwtape to his nephew Wormwood giving him advice on how to turn his “patient” away from God and toward Satan, that most caught my attention. In this work, Lewis states, “The safest road to Hell is the gradual one – the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts.”

Oswald Chambers

My Utmost for His Highest may well be the most popular devotional book of all time. I know that it is mine. One day’s entry, *Nothing of the Old Life* states:

How are we going to get a life that has no lust, no self-interest, and is not sensitive to the ridicule of others? How will we have the type of love that “is kind. . . is not provoked, [and] thinks no evil”? (1 Corinthians 13:4-5). The only way is by allowing nothing of the old life to remain, and by having only simple, perfect trust in God— such a trust that we no longer want God’s blessings, but only want God Himself. Have we come to the point where God can withdraw His blessings from us without our trust in Him being affected? Once we truly see God at work, we will never be concerned again about the things that happen, because we are actually trusting in our Father in heaven, whom the world cannot see.

Jerry Bridges

Jerry Bridges, speaker and staff member of the Navigators, is best known for his work *The Pursuit of Holiness*, which is indeed a favorite in my library. However, it is his *Trusting God: Even When Life Hurts* that I have read, reread and will indeed read again.

Billy Graham

Having read many of the books that Billy Graham has written, *Angels, God's Secret Agents* is a book I refer to time and again. In his introduction, Dr. Graham states:

When I decided to preach a sermon on angels, I found practically nothing in my library. Upon investigation I soon discovered that little had been written on the subject in this century. This seemed a strange and ominous omission. Bookstores and libraries have shelves of books on demons, the occult and the devil. Why was the devil getting so much more attention from writers than angels? Some people seem to put the devil on a par with God. Actually, Satan is a fallen angel.

Since that time, there have been many books written about angels. Billy Graham's book is still my favorite.

Junior Hill

Junior Hill, a godly evangelist and personal friend, has authored many wonderful books. My personal favorite is *The Shadow of His Hand* which deals with suffering, pain and disappointment. It is worth repeating the quote from this book that is in chapter 15, "The Comfort Giver" of *The Prayer Driven Life*:

While God already knew how we felt, *He wanted us to know that He knew!* That's why He left Heaven. That's why He robed Himself in human flesh. That's why He subjected Himself to every hurt and every heartache that is common to us all. He wanted all the suffering and hurting saints of every generation to be able to confidently say, "*My Savior knows how I feel-He really does know-and thank God, I know that He knows!*"

Comforted by that blessed truth, we take joy in our tribulations and we rejoice in our sorrows for they become the doorway through which we pass into "*the fellowship of His sufferings*" (Philippians 3:10). And once we have been shut up with Him, He begins that wonderful process of instruction that prepares us to help others.

There are also notes in my Bibles from sermons preached by my husband, Richard, as well as other preachers who have helped me understand the passage covered in their sermon topic. I encourage you to be aware when God is giving you a gift of insight through preaching or someone's writing that will enable you to know Him better.