

Christian Living Aboard Ship

A series of pamphlets written for people of the sea and port chaplains

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Footnotes: Nouwen, Henri J. M., *Bread for the Journey: A Daybook of Wisdom and Faith*, Harper, San Francisco, Copyright, 1997

Contemporary English Version

Chapter 1 - Introduction

“Waiting is the hardest thing children ever do,” is from a children’s Christmas musical. But I don’t think the difficulty of waiting is limited only to children. Waiting is a reality in every person’s life. Our lives are filled with waiting; seafarer’s lives are filled with waiting.

We wait in lines; we wait for the bank or store to open; we wait for people and events. We wait for our contracts to end; and we wait for the time we can go home. We wait for our shift to end and we wait for the long night’s watch to be over. “Wait; it’s not time yet.”

Fr. Henri J. M. Nouwen says his devotional book, *Bread for the Journey*, “Active Waiting” (November 19), “. . . waiting as a disciple of Jesus is not an empty waiting. It is a waiting with a promise in our hearts that makes already present what we are waiting for.”

Do you understand what Fr. Nouwen means when he says that Christians wait “with a promise in our hearts that makes already present what we are waiting for.”? He is saying there is something already in our hearts that makes our waiting tolerable. We wait because we already know that God’s promise to us is true.

When we wait for our contract to end so we can go home, we know what and who is there at home waiting for our arrival. Knowing that fills us with excitement because we have already experienced what homecoming is like. In the same way, waiting to experience God’s presence is something we don’t have to wait until eternity to experience. We can already know God’s presence every day.

This book is designed with this thought in mind. It is designed to help you to experience Christian living aboard your ship in your life and to help you live that way until you get home.

Psalm 130:3-6 says, If you kept record of our sins, no one could last long.

But you forgive us, and so we will worship you. If you kept record of our sins,

no one could last long. But you forgive us, and so we will worship you. With

all my heart, I am waiting, LORD, for you! I trust your promises. I wait for you

more eagerly than a soldier on guard duty waits for the dawn” (CEV)

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Nouwen, *Bread for the Journey*, November 19, “Active Waiting”

“Waiting is essential to the spiritual life. But waiting as a disciple of Jesus is not an empty waiting. It is a waiting with a promise in our hearts that makes already present what we are waiting for. We wait during Advent for the birth of Jesus. We wait after

Easter for the coming of the Spirit, and after the ascension of Jesus we wait for his coming again in glory. We are always waiting, but it is a waiting in the conviction that we have already seen God's footsteps.

Waiting for God is an active, alert—yes, joyful—waiting. As we wait we remember him for whom we are waiting, and as we remember him we create a community ready to welcome him when he comes.”

November 20, “Waiting with Patience”

“How do we wait for God? We wait with patience. But patience does not mean passivity. Waiting patiently is not like waiting for the bus to come, the rain to stop, or the sun to rise. It is an active waiting in which we live the present moment to the full in order to find there signs of the One we are waiting for.

The word *patience* comes from the Latin verb *patior*, which means “to suffer.” Waiting patiently always means paying attention to what is happening right before our eyes and seeing there the first rays of God's glorious coming.”

Chapter 2 - Basic Questions

Regardless of where he or she is, everyone at some point in his or her life has to come up with answers to three basic questions: “Who am I?” , “Why am I here?”, and “Where am I going?”.

The answers each person gives to each question will set the basic direction of his or her life. A team of Cuban Health Ministry psychologists sent out a number of years ago to study the merchant and fishing fleets came to the conclusion that many seafarers have a tendency to think that their lives are wasted on board ship. So, when they are in port they feel they have to make up for that “wasted time.” That’s the reason for excesses of all kind. They view their time in port as a time to indulge themselves and make up for lost time and experiences.

Many seafarers see themselves as adventurers. Others who are exposed to these adventurers often become intoxicated by the constant bragging and the adventuresome, carefree or experimental atmosphere that exists on board the ship.

Sailors such as those described here, answer these three questions this way: I am an adventurer. I am here to experience life in every way possible. And probably almost no thought is given to the third question.

Other seafarers know that they are husbands or family members who have some sort of responsibility to those remaining at home. They are men (and women) with purpose. They have gone to sea to provide for their families a lifestyle which the family wouldn’t be able to afford without the wages of seafaring life. This is particularly true of seafarers from the Philippines or India. But they, too, may have given little thought to the third question, which is really a question of ultimate direction.

Sure, every seafarer knows where they are going in terms of the next port or even the next career move. But they may not have given much thought to ultimate direction. They are not alone in this as most people avoid thinking about ultimate destiny whenever possible. It’s too deep for them.

But the Bible points out some important things about this third question (indeed, it has things to say about all three questions.) The Apostle Paul in his first letter to the church in Corinth wrote, “You surely know that your body is a temple where the Holy Spirit lives. The Spirit is in you and is a gift from God. You are no longer your own. ²⁰ God paid a great price for you. So use your body to honor God. “ (1 Corinthians 6:19,20 CEV)

In answer to the three questions Paul might have put the answers this way: (1) I am not my own. (2) Because I was bought at a price, I am to honor God with my body. (3) I am living for God so that I may receive from him a crown of righteousness at the last day, the judgment day. (“So a crown will be given to me for pleasing the Lord. He judges fairly, and on the day of judgment he will give a crown to me and to everyone else who wants him to appear with power.” 2 Timothy 4:8 CEV)

One of the old Christian documents (The Heidelberg Catechism first approved in 1563) puts it this way: “. . . I am not my own, but belong-- body and soul, in life and in death-- to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil. He also watches over me in

such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven: in fact, all things must work together for my salvation. Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.”

Any seafarer who can agree with this statement can also answer clearly the three basic questions: (1) Who am I? (2) Why am I here? (3) Where am I going?

Of course there will always come times of questions who, why and where. Living as a Christian ought to live isn't a straight-line path. There are pitfalls and traps, problems and temptations, frustrations and loneliness to deal with. But a confession of direction such as that given in the Heidelberg Catechism gives a purpose and direction to a person's life to help them through the tough times.

If you have questions about your answers to these three basic questions, why not seek a chaplain the next time you are in port to help you discover your own answers.

Chapter 3 - The Navigator's Confidence

We live in the day of accurate global positioning. With the proper equipment we can accurately pinpoint our location anywhere on earth. But it has not always been like this. Early navigators could with a reasonable degree of accuracy, locate their latitude, but longitude presented a much greater problem. Early sailors followed the stars.

Other aids to navigation such as accurate charts and well-marked coastlines did not exist for many parts of the world when the early circumnavigators set out. Yet for those who have long-traveled the seas, very accurate coastal charts have existed for centuries.

Knowing where you are going and how to get there safely is always the navigator's task. Violent winds, ice storms, and fog are well-known threats. But the unexpected threat does occur. It took an iceberg to sink the mighty Titanic. The devastating tsunamis of December, 2004, wreaked havoc in the Indian Ocean, not only on land, but also at sea, particularly with fishing fleets of India's east coast.

The same sort of navigation problems occur throughout our lives as well. Each of us needs an accurate chart or map to help us arrive at our destination. Obviously, you have to know where you are going in order for the charts to be of any use. This is certainly true for the seafarer; it's also true for all of us as we journey through life. Living poses all sorts of dangers and although storms do occur in each of our lives, there are some ways to help us through these life situations.

One of the strongest navigation aids for successful living is a life of prayer. Prayer isn't complicated. It doesn't require a set pattern or particular words. The Bible tells us that God walked with the first humans in the Garden of Eden. "Late in the afternoon a breeze began to blow, and the man and woman heard the LORD God walking in the garden. . . ." (Genesis 3:8a CEV) Hearing God and knowing he was there was obviously something they had experienced before. We all know that when friends get together they usually talk together as well. But something had happened to Adam and Eve, for the Bible tells us that because of their sin, their fellowship with God had been broken. The end of v. 8 tells us "They were frightened and hid behind some trees." When you have hurt your friend, you don't feel much like talking with him or her. You know that you are out of touch.

Now what's this story got to do with prayer? As the story unfolds in Genesis 3, we find God pushing Adam and Eve out of their home in the Garden of Eden and thrusting them out into a more harsh world where they are going to have to work hard to find their daily food and clothing and shelter. While they are outside of

the garden which had been their home, God makes it possible for them to still be able to talk with him and that talking is what we call prayer.

Prayer is simply talking with God. It helps our conversation when we are in a healthy relationship with him and so God provides a way of forgiveness so that our conversational fellowship can continue. Frequent conversation (at least daily and probably more often) is really important in maintaining a good and open relationship.

God also gives us a chart to follow which we call the Holy Bible. It's not a map or chartbook like the navigator has on the bridge, but it does contain directions. It is not a novel that is to be read beginning at page 1 through to the end. Rather, it's a collection of 66 different books divided into two parts, the old and the new testaments.

It contains books on the beginnings, history, poetry and prophecy, letters, and books that tell the life of Jesus Christ called the Gospels. A good place to begin is in the New Testament with the Gospel of Luke. It also tells the history of how God dealt with and led the people called the Israelites or Jews in their history which covers thousands of years.

Often most of us need help in maintaining a regular pattern of Bible reading. One Bible reading aid particularly written for people of the sea is *Water Words* by Robin Dale Mattison and its companion T.R.U.E.: *Steering by Scripture at Sea* by the same author. Both are published by Maritime Library. For more information contact (www.waterwords.net or info@waterwords.net) or ask your port chaplain.

Inez Larson wrote a land-based poem which can easily be understood from a seafarer's point of view. For "path", substitute "course". For "poplars" or "trees", substitute "waves" or "channel markers". For "walk", substitute "sail". She said,

A star to guide me!
Far above
And straight ahead the North Star shines
Out o'er my path as on I walk,
Hemmed in by poplars tall and straight,
In the deep darkness of the night.

A star to light me!
Hurrying on,
I watch the bright point far above,
The night has lost much of its fear;
E'en if the trees above me rise
And hem me in, I see the skies.

A Christ to guide me!

While on I walk

This path on earth all seems as night;

Around me rise obstructions dim,

But far above and straight ahead

I see the Guiding Star, the Christ.

Fall, 1929

Inez Larson (used by permission of the author's sole survivor)

Chapter 4 - "Daddy, when will you be coming home?"

Little children just don't understand how long a contract is. Their time frame is very limited. They can be barely out of sight of the door to your home and they are already asking, "Are we almost there?"

Of course they think you will be home before the day is over. But you know better. You know it's going to be several months before you are home. To them, months are an impossible concept. You say "months;" they think "moments".

I remember speaking with the Chief Engineer of a Greek ship which had been sold. He was the only remaining seafarer on the ship and he was waiting for the new owner and new crew to arrive so he could orient them to the ship they had purchased. He told me that he wanted to be home in Greece for his daughter's twenty-first birthday the next week. He told me he had been home for only three of her birthdays during her life. Only three birthdays in twenty years!

He didn't make it home; the new owners and crew didn't arrive in time. He missed another birthday. He hoped his daughter would understand. I hoped so too.

I remember speaking with an Indian seafarer who told me about a conversation he had overheard his young daughter have with one of her friends. The friend had asked his daughter who he was, and this daughter had said in answer to her, "That's the man who sometimes lives with Mommy." She hadn't said, "That's my father!" Instead, he's only "the man who sometimes lives with Mommy." That hurt him more than words can say.

How could he make up to her what she had lost? To her, father was the man who wasn't there. How could he, how can you make up the fact you are not there for much of their lives? How do you cope with missing so many rites of passage, births and birthdays, day-to-day events, school activities, family activities?

I'd like to suggest some strategies for helping you get through this painful experience. If you are from the Philippines, you know that your community at home is very much concerned for the care of your family while you are away. That's because off-shore workers are normal in the Philippines. It so normal for Filipinos and Filipinas to be away from home that the church and various unions organize activities to support the families of those who are left at home. But most other seafarers come from countries where there is no such organized recognition of the problem faced by families left at home.

What can you do without that arranged support network? Well, you can certainly thank God for better-than-ever communication. Phone cards and cell phones have vastly improved regular contact with home. Some seafarers make it a point to send audio recordings home so their children can hear their father's, mother's, sister's or brother's voice.

Communication technology is now so easily available that every seafarer ought to be able to have access to video cameras and projectors or computers so that your children at home (and your spouse, too) can have regular visual contact as well. Making that equipment available to you on board ship and helping you to get the proper viewing equipment at your home should be a top priority.

I'm sure not every seafarer can afford this technology, but using what is available and making sure the latest technology is available to you is something you can be praying that your seafarer's centers can help you obtain. In this way, you and your family, each one longing to see the other's face, can have their desires met. Frequent and regular voice and visual contact can help the long wait become less tedious.

Lamentations 3:21-26 says, "Then I remember something that fills me with hope. The LORD's kindness never fails! If he had not been merciful, we would have been destroyed. The LORD can always be trusted to show mercy each morning. Deep in my heart I say, "The LORD is all I need; I can depend on him!" The LORD is kind to everyone who trusts and obeys him. It is good to wait patiently for the LORD to save us." (CEV)

Chapter 5 - Maintaining Your Spiritual Health

You may have already read about the captain who was very concerned about the spiritual welfare of his crew. He wanted something that would help them remain focused spiritually. Another seafarer who I had met was concerned with how he could manage the stress in his life as a seafarer. This solution I am about to suggest will work in either situation. You don't even have to be a seafarer for it to work for you!

At one point in his writings, Fr. Henri Nouwen, (*Bread for the Journey*, August 31) says that we all have choices, life and death choices, we have to make in our lives. The kind of life and death choices he is referring to are the choices about what we are going to think about. Fr. Nouwen says we have to make choices "in our imaginations, our thoughts, our words, our gestures, our actions . . . even in our non-actions." He speaks of "some deep interior place", the place where we do our imagining and thinking that result in speech and action, or the choice not to speak or not to act.

It's that "deep, interior place" that is now the center of our concern. I like to think of that place as being like a reservoir. A reservoir is a water storage place, perhaps a large sheltered lake or tank. In it is clean water. It's safe water. It's health giving water.

The opposite of a clean reservoir is a polluted place, a cesspool. If you drink from a cesspool you will most certainly become sick because the water is not healthy; it's not clean, nor safe.

Remember, in this image this reservoir (or cesspool) is not an exterior place. Rather it is inside each of us, you and me. Now nobody wants to draw water from a cesspool, but rather we want to draw water from a clean, pure water source. Likewise, if we draw our thoughts and actions from an impure source, all of our thoughts and actions are also going to be impure. If our inner place is clean, what we draw from it will also be pure.

This image makes sense. But in order to draw from a good source, the source itself has to be good. How healthy our interior space will be depends on what we put into it. If we fill our reservoir with waste and garbage, its water will soon become polluted. As the saying goes, garbage in, garbage out.

The Apostle Paul in writing to the church members in Philippi says this "Finally, my friends, keep your minds on whatever is true, pure, right, holy, friendly, and proper. Don't ever stop thinking about what is truly worthwhile and worthy of praise. You know the teachings I gave you, and you know what you heard me say and saw me do. So follow my example. And God, who gives peace, will be with you." (Philippians 4:8,9 CEV)

You see, if the thoughts you put into your reservoir are “true, pure, right, holy, friendly, proper, . . . truly worthwhile and worthy of praise,” then that is what you are going to be able to draw from.

Where do you find things that are “true, pure, right, holy, friendly, proper,. . . truly worthwhile and worthy of praise. “? The best source of these things is from the Bible itself. If you steep yourself in the good things of the Holy Scriptures and store them away in your reservoir, that’s what you will be able to draw from when you need help. Psalm 119:11 says, “I treasure your word above all else; it keeps me from sinning against you.” (CEV) The NIV puts it this way, “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”

Treasuring something means you hold it very dear; you store it away. The New International Version of the Bible says you hide it away in your heart. Following the imagery we have been developing, you put it into your reservoir. Once it’s there, stored away, it’s yours to use when you need it. If you haven’t stored it away, if you haven’t memorized it, when the time comes that you need it, it won’t be there.

I remember a story about a student who was praying before he was to take an examination. He hadn’t studied, but he was asking God to bring the answers to his mind. He was asking for a miracle. A better prayer would have been said after he had studied. He could then have asked that God would help him remember what he had already stored away.

The psalmist asks “How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word.” (Psalm 119:9 NIV) How can a chaplain keep his way pure? By living according to God’s word. How can a seafarer keep his way, his thoughts, his imaginations, his words, his gestures, and his actions pure? By living according to God’s word which you are regularly putting into to your internal reservoir.

Chapter 6 - How Much Will It Cost?

If you are not very familiar with the life of Jesus Christ you may not realize how very knowledgeable he was about practical things. In one place he says, "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. What is the first thing you will do? Won't you sit down and figure out how much it will cost and if you have enough money to pay for it? Otherwise, you will start building the tower, but not be able to finish. Then everyone who sees what is happening will laugh at you. They will say, 'You started building, but could not finish the job.'" (Luke 14:28-30 CEV)

As you already know without me telling you, there are tremendous costs involved in becoming a seafarer. I'm not talking here about the financial costs of schooling or training or even the costs of transportation. No, I'm talking of the tremendous costs to your family and your own self.

You would hardly have gone to sea without the consent of your spouse because your spouse knows better than anyone else the high cost in terms of your life together. If you have children, Dad (or a few cases, Mom) is not home for long periods of time. The children of seafarers know first hand the cost of being in a seafarer's family.

The child of a Cuban seafarer found that at school she was the object of envy because she wore better clothes than her classmates. When one of the girls complained about these nice clothes, the seafarer's daughter responded, "You get see your father every day. But in order for me to wear these clothes, my father is gone for many months when I can't see him." She defended her clothing because she knew the sacrifice the family had already made in allowing him to go to sea.

When Jesus told the anecdote that is quoted at the beginning of this section, he was speaking to the crowds of people who were following him. He wanted them to know about the personal costs involved when a person decides to be a follower of Jesus. That's why he spoke about making sure that you have what it takes to be a follower before you set out on being a Christian; that you have some knowledge about what you are getting into.

One captain I spoke with was very concerned about the spiritual welfare of the crew. I was amazed because he himself was not a Christ follower. Yet, he came to me, a Christian chaplain and asked for help in getting materials that his crew could use in their personal meditation. He was, in my opinion, a wise captain. He knew that the ship's welfare depended in part on the spiritual health of his crew. We wanted them to have good material to read, rather than always watching videos.

I asked him how much time was given in his officers' training about ways to maintain the spiritual welfare of his crew. He told me that no time was devoted to that at all; it simply wasn't a concern. The crew's spiritual health was not a top priority in their training.

Part of the difficulty in maintaining your spiritual health while on board your ship is that the working environment of your ship is not a typical social community. Instead, it is atypical. What do I mean? Your working community is small, for one thing (unless, of course, you happen to be working on a cruise ship; then the crew is the size of a small town!) It is highly structured, much more highly structured than your own family or your own community at home. In addition, on most ships, the crew is variable; very few

crews remain together throughout the entire span of your contract. Besides that, the individuals that make up your crew might not be your first choices for friends. You are together because of your differing work skills, not because of your compatibility. All these factors put large amounts of stress on the individual.

In addition, your work life is always with you. One seafarer put it this way: "A seafarer may be off watch, but he is never off duty." You don't have time to be sick. Even if you have a cold, or a headache, you have got to do your watch. Your crew expects it and so does your captain. That's simply not the way life is in other kinds of workplaces.

So we'll assume you already knew all this (and your spouse and family did as well) when you started following the life of a seafarer. How do you spiritually cope with the demands put on you?

You have probably heard it before, but I'll say it again. You need to cultivate time to pray and read God's word. Probably the best time is just before you go to bed or just after you get up. Why? It's like the captain said. "My crew needs to maintain their spiritual health." It's worth doing, because it makes you healthier spiritually and when you are healthier spiritually, you'll be healthier physically and emotionally, too.

Chapter 7 - Gifts Given, Gifts Received

When I looked at my thermometer this morning, I saw that the temperature was -24°C. The weather channel said that was -36°C with the wind chill. That's cold! Seafarers from equatorial countries found +10°C to be cold. I'm sure that sailors crossing the North Atlantic in the winter experience even colder temperatures than these.

Most missions in most North American ports give every seafarer some kind of Christmas gift. There are several reasons for this gift giving. One of the most important reasons is that it is very difficult to be away from home on major holidays. A present on Christmas means that you have not been forgotten. That's the most important reason for giving Christmas gifts.

Another reason is that it's a way of getting a warm wool cap (a *toque* in Canada) to each seafarer. Every Spring and Summer women all across Canada knit these warm woolen caps which seafarers' missions give away. Chaplains know it's cold on the streets and on deck watch and woolen caps sure help reduce the effect of the wind chill.

The Christmas gifts also contain other gifts. Maybe there is some writing paper or chocolate. Maybe some woolen socks or mittens. Maybe there's a Christmas card inside signed by some child who made up the parcel you received. I've heard from schools and churches where the children received a Thank You card from a seafarer. Your card sent to the giver means so much to the person who made a present for someone he or she didn't know, for gifts and cards build bridges.

Can you imagine receiving a beautifully-wrapped gift and never opening it – just leaving it on the shelf in your cabin unopened? You look at it, admire the care of the wrapping, but never, ever open it up to see what's inside? That would be a gift given, but not received.

If you fulfill the terms of your contract, you naturally expect to be paid. The wages you receive are not a gift from the company; they are payment for the work that you did in fulfilling your contract. If you work overtime, you expect to receive your overtime wage. If you move up a grade, you expect to receive a higher salary. But your wages, whether big or small, are not gifts. They are yours by right. Gifts are not something you work for or earn. They are presents that the giver gives to you.

Another reason why Christian Seafarer centers give gifts at Christmas is because it is at that time of year that Christians celebrate the coming of the Son God, Jesus, to earth, born as a human baby, placed in a feed trough or manger, in a stable in the small town of Bethlehem in the Roman province of Judea over 2000 years ago. That's what Christmas or Christ's Mass celebrates.

One of the writers of the Christian Scriptures, the Holy Bible, a Jew named Paul wrote a series of letters to Christian churches. Paul tells the readers in several places an important message: "Christ died for us at a time when we were helpless and sinful. No one is really willing to die for an honest person, though someone might be willing to die for a truly good person. But God showed how much he loved us by having Christ die for us, even though we were sinful." (Romans 5:6-8 CEV)

That is an amazing statement; an amazing idea. Paul says that we are separated from the Holy God because we are sinners and there is no way to bridge that separation by human effort. So God himself, in Jesus, bridges the gap of separation. He says that Jesus Christ died for us.

In another letter Paul writes these words, "You were saved by faith in God, who treats us much better than we deserve. This is God's gift to you, and not anything you have done on your own. It isn't something you have earned, so there is nothing you can brag about." (Ephesians 2:8,9 CEV)

There you have the basic ideas of Christianity. Humans are separated from God by our sin. Humans cannot bridge the gap so God makes his own bridge by giving us the greatest gift of all, his one and only Son, Jesus, who died in our place. This is God's gift; it's not a wage. Paul wrote, "Sin pays off with death. But God's gift is eternal life given by Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:23 CEV)

Now what would you think, if God were to offer this gift of salvation and forgiveness and eternal life and the receiver just put the gift on the shelf in his or her cabin, looked at it on occasion, but never, ever opened it up. That just doesn't make any sense, does it?

But God has done just that, he has given Jesus to anyone who wants to receive him. If you don't know about this, the greatest gift of Christmas, why not ask a chaplain the next time you are in port about how you can receive and open God's gift to you?

Chapter 8 - Wants and Needs

My granddaughter, who is 27-months-old, has a new saying. When she sees something which she cannot reach, she demands that someone, her parent or grandparent, get it for her. And she wants it NOW. She cries loudly, "I need it!"

Of course there are things that she needs, and some of them she needs right now. But usually the thing she is crying out for is something she doesn't have right now, but she wants to have it. It would be more accurate if she said, "I want it." But she's only two and a bit. She hasn't yet learned to tell the difference between what she wants and what she needs. We hope that as she gets older, she'll learn to distinguish between wants and needs.

But the first time I heard her say this and watched her stamp her feet and raise her voice in exasperation, I thought to myself, she's so young and yet she has learned so quickly that if she says she needs something, the chance of getting it is greater than if she only says, "I want it." Somehow she learned that people will respond to her needs. That's kind of scary. It makes you wonder how she learned it or where.

As we get older we do learn to tell the difference between wants and needs, but I've also learned that some of us (at least me in particular) have learned to convert our wants into needs. For example, I see people around me who have a newer automobile than I do. Now there is nothing wrong with my car, but it's not the latest model. So I begin to look critically at my vehicle. I list its disadvantages and odd noises and repairs that it needs. If I'm not careful, I can quickly determine that it no longer is capable of doing its job and that I need a new or at least, a newer one.

Now wait a minute, do I really need a newer one or is it only that I want a newer one? Perhaps what I have done is to rationalize my desire converting it into a need. I know that I've done that and I'm perfectly capable of doing it again. Maybe you've done it too.

Occasionally I've been approached by seafarers as I've gone on board ship and since they know I've come from the mission, I've been asked, "Do you have women? What they want, of course, is sexual release. This desire is certainly understandable in a person who has been denied this for an extended period of time. It's not surprising that brothels and bars have characterized seaports as long as there have been seaports! Both seem to meet a need.

But wait a moment, is it that they meet a need or do they satisfy a want? Does the seafarer need a woman? Does he need sexual release? Or is the woman someone he wants and the release a feeling that he desires? Someone has wisely observed that no one has ever died from a build up of semen!

When you have gone without something for sometime, it takes on a high degree of desirability. We really, really want it. But do we really, really need it?

There are things that we all need. We need food, sleep, companionship, work. We need to have our contract honored. We need medical care from time to time. We need love and friendship. We need a safe work place. We need to pay attention to our duties.

We may want more than this. We may want more food than is good for us. We may want more sleep. We may want more work and become work-a-holics or we may want less work and become lazy. We may look for ways to avoid fulfilling our contracts. We may skip medicine or fail to maintain our bodies in good physical condition. We may find ourselves wanting companionship and love from the wrong source. We may feed our desires by watching pornography on board ship or seeking out a prostitute when in port.

Whenever I have been asked by a seafarer to hear his confession, he has always wanted to confess sexual sin or his unfaithfulness to his wife. This usually has happened just before he was to sign off. That's not surprising. The seafarer has felt a need to make things right before he goes home. And he's called it correctly; it is a real need, this need to experience forgiveness. It's not just a want; it is a need.

St. John in his first letter writes: "If we confess our sins, he [God] is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him [God] out to be a liar and his [God's] word has no place in our lives." (1 John 1:9, 10)

God wants us to confess our sins. It is his desire that we do so. It is we who need to do it. We need to make things right. We may also need to make things right between ourselves and our spouses, but first we need to confess our sin and receive from God the forgiveness that he offers to all those who confess.

But we must also be very careful to remember that once we have received forgiveness it is forgiveness for past sins, ones that have already occurred. But having received forgiveness for what is past is not a license to continuing sinning. When God forgives us and promises to remember our sins no more, (see Hebrews 8:12 and 10:17), he expects us to change our behavior. That's because "God's children cannot keep on being sinful. His life-giving power lives in them and makes them his children, so that they cannot keep on sinning." (1 John 3:9 CEV)

Is what you are experiencing a need or a want?

S1 - Introducción

“ La espera es una de las cosas mas difíciles para un niño” son palabras de una canción de navidad. Pero no creo que la espera sea difícil solamente para los niños. La espera es una realidad en la vida de toda persona. Nuestras vidas están marcadas por la espera. La vida del marino está marcada por la espera.

Esperamos cuando hacemos colas, esperamos porque el banco o la tienda abra, esperamos por personas o acontecimientos. Esperamos por el final de nuestros contratos y esperamos por el momento de regresar a casa. Esperamos por el fin de nuestra jornada o que una larga guardia termine “ Espera, no es tiempo todavía”

Padre Henri J.M. Nouwen dice en su libro devocional, *Pan para el Viaje*, “ Espera Activa” (19 de noviembre) “...esperar como un discípulo de Jesús no es una espera vacía. Se trata de una espera con una promesa en nuestros corazones que trae al presente lo que estamos esperando”

¿Comprende usted lo que el Padre Nouwen quiere decir cuando dice que los cristianos esperan “con una promesa en los corazones que trae al presente lo que estamos esperando”? El dice que ya hay algo en nuestros corazones que hace la espera tolerable. Esperamos porque sabemos que la promesa de Dios es verdadera.

Cuando esperamos por el fin de nuestros contratos de forma que podemos ir a casa, sabemos quién y qué está allá en casa esperando por nuestra llegada. Saber eso nos llena de excitación pues ya hemos experimentado lo que es un regreso a casa. De la misma manera , esperar por la experiencia de la presencia de Dios no es algo que tengamos que esperar hasta la eternidad. Podemos conocer ahora de la presencia de Dios todos los días de nuestras vidas.

Este libro esta diseñado con ese pensamiento en la mente. Esta diseñado para ayudarlo a experimentar la vida cristiana abordo de su barco y ayudarlo a vivir de esa manera hasta que regrese a casa.

Salmo 130: 3-6 “Si miras los pecados ¿quién podrá mantenerse? Pero en ti hay perdón para que seas reverenciado. Esperé yo en el Señor: esperó mi alma , en su palabra he esperado. Mi alma espera en Jehová más que los centinelas la mañana, más que los vigilantes la mañana”

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Nouwen, *Pan para el Viaje*, noviembre 19, “Espera Activa”

“La espera es esencial para la vida espiritual. Pero esperar como un discípulo de Jesús no es una espera vacía. Se trata de una espera con una promesa en nuestros corazones que trae al presente lo que estamos esperando. Esperamos durante el Advenimiento por el nacimiento de Jesús. Esperamos después de la Pascua por la llegada del Espíritu, y después de la ascensión, de Jesús, esperamos por su retorno en Gloria. Siempre estamos esperando, pero es una espera con la convicción que ya hemos visto los pasos que Dios ha dado.

Esperar por Dios es una espera activa, alerta- también alegre. Cuando esperamos, nosotros recordamos a quien esperamos, y cuando lo recordamos, nosotros creamos una comunidad lista para darle la bienvenida cuando regrese.”

Noviembre 20 “*Esperando con Paciencia*”

¿Cómo esperamos por Dios ? Esperamos con paciencia. Pero paciencia no significa pasividad. Esperar pacientemente no es como esperar por un autobús, que pare la lluvia o esperar a que amanezca. Es una espera activa en la cual vivimos el momento presente al máximo con el objeto de encontrar a Aquel a quien esperamos.

La palabra paciencia viene del latín *patior* que significa “*sufrir.*” Esperar pacientemente significa prestar atención a lo que está pasando justo ante nuestros ojos y ver allí los primeros rayos de la gloriosa llegada de Dios”.

S2 - Preguntas Básicas.

En cualquier lugar, tratándose de ella o él, en algún momento de la vida, tres preguntas básicas vendrán, “¿Quién soy?” “¿Por qué estoy aquí” “¿A dónde voy”

Las respuestas que cada persona le da a estas preguntas determinará la dirección de su vida. Hace unos años un equipo de sicólogos del Ministerio de Salud Pública de Cuba fue enviado para hacer un estudio en las flotas mercantes y de pesca, llegando a concluir que muchos marinos tienden a pensar que sus vidas están siendo malgastadas a bordo de los buques. Así que cuando arriban a puerto, sienten la necesidad de recuperar ese “tiempo perdido”. Esa es la razón por la que cometen excesos de todo tipo. Ven el tiempo en puerto como la momento para saciarse y recuperar las experiencias no vividas.

Muchos marinos se ven así mismos como aventureros y otros que son expuestos al primer tipo, usualmente se contagian en la atmósfera de alarde constante que se hace abordo de los buques.

Marinos como los descritos aquí, responden a estas tres preguntas de esta manera: Soy un aventurero, Estoy aquí para disfrutar la vida de la mejor manera posible. Y probablemente se le dedica poco pensamiento a la tercera pregunta.

Otros marinos saben que son esposos y miembros de familia que tienen un grado de responsabilidad con aquellos que quedaron en casa. Son hombres (y mujeres) con un propósito. Se han lanzado al mar para proveer a sus familias con un estilo de vida que probablemente no podrían costear sin los salarios de un navegante. Esto es particularmente cierto con los marinos de Filipinas o La India. Pero ellos , puede que tampoco le hayan dado mucho pensamiento a la tercera pregunta, la cual es una pregunta acerca de la dirección definitiva.

Seguramente, todo marino sabe adonde van cuando se trata del próximo puerto o próximo paso en la vida profesional. Pero ellos puede que no le presten atención a la dirección final. Ellos no están solos en esto, ya que la mayoría de las personas evitan el pensar en el destino final cada vez que es posible. Es algo demasiado profundo para muchos.

Pero la Biblia apunta hacia cosas importantes acerca de la tercera pregunta (de hecho dice cosas acerca de las tres preguntas.) El apóstol Pablo en su primera carta a los Corintios escribió.” ¿O ignorais que vuestro cuerpo es el templo del Espíritu Santo, el cual está en vosotros , el cual habeis recibido de Dios, y que no sois vuestros?, pues habeis sido comprados por precio. Por lo tanto, glorificad, pues a Dios en vuestros cuerpo y en vuestro espíritu los cuales son de Dios (1 Corintios 6:19-20).

En respuesta a las tres preguntas, Pablo puede haber respondido de esta manera “No soy mi dueño”, (2) Por haber sidio comprado a un precio, debo honrar a Dios con mi cuerpo

(3) Yo vivo para Dios de forma que pueda recibir de él una corona de justicia en el último día, el día del juicio. (“Por lo demás, me esta reservada una corona de justicia, la cual me dará el Señor, justo, en aquel día; y no solo a mi, sino a todos los que aman su venida” 2 Timoteo, 4:8).

Unos de los antiguos documentos cristianos, (El Catecismo de Heilderberg aprobado en 1563) lo dice de esta manera “ Que yo con cuerpo y alma, tanto en la vida como en la muerte, no me pertenezco a mi mismo, sino a mi fiel Salvador Jesucristo, que me libró del poder del diablo satisfaciendo enteramente con su preciosa sangre por todos mis pecados, y me guarda de tal manera que sin la voluntad de mi Padre celestial ni un solo cabello de mi cabeza puede caer, antes es necesario que todas las cosas sirvan para mi salvación .”

Cualquier marino que pueda estar de acuerdo con esta declaración puede responder a estas tres preguntas (1)¿Quién soy? (2)¿Por qué estoy aquí? (3) ¿A dónde voy?

Por supuesto siempre vendrán preguntas, Quién , Por qué, Dónde. Vivir de la manera en que debe vivir un cristiano no es siempre un camino recto. Hay trampas y agujeros, problemas y tentaciones, frustraciones y soledad los cuales tartar. Pero una confesión de dirección dada como la del Catecismo de Heilderberg le da un propósito y una dirección a la vida de una persona para ayudarlo a través de tiempos duros

Si usted tiene preguntas acerca de las respuestas a estas preguntas básicas. Por qué no buscar un capellán la próxima vez que se encuentre en puerto para que le ayude a descubrir sus propias respuestas.

S3 - La Confianza del Navegante

Vivimos en los días de posición global exacta. Con los equipos adecuados podemos determinar nuestra posición sobre la tierra en cualquier lugar. Pero no siempre ha sido así. En épocas más tempranas los navegantes podían determinar la latitud con exactitud razonable. Pero la longitud presentaba un problema mucho mayor. Los marinos seguían las estrellas.

Otras ayudas a la navegación como cartas bien trazadas y costas bien señalizadas no existían para muchas partes del mundo cuando navegantes de antaño salían a navegar. Aunque cartas de navegación costera siempre han existido durante siglos para aquellos que han navegado extensamente.

Conocer por donde va y como llegar con seguridad siempre ha sido la tarea del navegante. Vientos violentos, tormentas heladas y la niebla siempre han constituido una amenaza bien conocida, pero la amenaza inesperada también ocurre. Un iceberg hundió al Titanic. El devastador Tsunami del 2004 hizo estragos en el Océano Índico, no solo en tierra sino también en la mar, particularmente en las flotas pesqueras de la costa este de La India.

La misma clase de problemas ocurre en la navegación de nuestras vidas. Cada uno de nosotros necesita un mapa exacto para ayudarnos a arribar a nuestro destino. Obviamente, usted debe conocer a donde va para saber si las cartas le son de utilidad. Esto es ciertamente verdadero para el náutico. Es verdadero para todos nosotros cuando viajamos a través de nuestras vidas. Hay algunas formas de ayudarnos a través de difíciles situaciones.

Una de las ayudas más fuertes para la navegación exitosa de nuestras vidas es la oración. La oración no es complicada. No requiere un patrón establecido o palabras particulares. La Biblia nos dice que Dios camina con los humanos en el Jardín del Edén “ Luego oyeron la voz de Jehová que se paseaba por el huerto, al aire del día...” (Genesis 3, 8a)

Oír a Dios y saber que se encontraba allí era obviamente algo a lo que estaban acostumbrados. Todos sabemos que cuando los amigos se reúnen, usualmente hablan. Pero algo le había pasado a Adán y Eva, pues La Biblia nos dice que a causa de su pecado su fraternidad con Dios se había roto. El fin del versículo 8 nos dice que “El hombre y la mujer se escondieron de la presencia de Jehová Dios entre los árboles de huerto”. Cuando usted hiere a su amigo(a), usted no se siente con ganas de hablar con él o ella. Usted sabe que ha perdido el contacto.

Ahora, ¿Qué tiene que ver esta historia con la oración? A medida que la historia transcurre, encontramos a Dios expulsando a Adán y Eva de su casa en el Jardín del Edén y empujándolos hacia un mundo más inhóspito donde tendrán que hacer un mayor esfuerzo para encontrar su comida diaria, ropa y refugio.

Si bien están fuera del Jardín del Edén el cual ha sido su hogar, Dios todavía les hace posible el conversar con él y esa conversación es lo que llamamos oración.

La oración es simplemente hablar con Dios. Ayuda a nuestra conversación cuando nos encontramos en una relación sana con él, de manera que Dios provee la manera de perdonarnos y nuestra conversación fraternal pueda continuar. La conversación frecuente (diaria y probablemente más a menudo) es importante para mantener una relación buena y abierta.

Dios nos da una carta de navegación como guía que llamamos La Biblia. No es un mapa o un cuaderno de cartas como los que se encuentran en el cuarto de derrotas de un barco, pero sí contiene direcciones. No es una novela que tiene que ser leída desde el capítulo 1 hasta el final, mas bien es una colección de 66 libros diferentes divididos en el nuevo y viejo testamentos.

Contiene libros en el comienzo, historia, poesía y profecía, cartas, y libros que dicen acerca de la vida de Jesucristo, llamados Evangelios. Un buen lugar para comenzar es en el Nuevo Testamento el Evangelio de Lucas. También dice la historia de cómo Dios trató y guio al pueblo llamado israelitas o judíos durante su historia que abarca miles de años.

A menudo muchos de nosotros necesita ayuda para mantener una norma de lectura de La Biblia. Una ayuda diseñada para la gente de mar es *Water Words* de Robin Dale Mattison y su acompañante T.R.U.E. *Steering by Scripture at Sea*, por el mismo autor. Para más información, contacte www.waterwords.net o info@waterwords.net. O hable a su capellán de puerto.

Una estrella que me guie!
Lejos alla arriba
Y recto hacia adelante la Estrella Polar brilla
Sobre mi sendero cuando camino
Cercado por álamos altos y rectos
en la profunda noche.

Una estrella que me alumbré!
Apresurándome,
Veó al punto brillando lejos encima
La noche ha perdido mucho de ese miedo
Aunque los arboles ante mi se levanten.

Un Cristo que me guie
mientras camino
Este sendero del mundo parece todo noche
En derredor obstrucciones traen tineblas
Pero allá arriba y recto hacia adelante
Veó la estrella que Guía, el Cristo.
Otoño 1929
Inez Larson.

S4 - Ausente al Rito de Paso.

“Papi, cuando vienes a casa?”

Los niños pequeños simplemente no entienden cuan largo es un contrato. Su idea del tiempo que toman las cosas es muy limitada. Pueden salir y estar aun a la vista de la puerta y empezar a preguntar ¿ Ya estamos llegando?

Por supuesto, ellos piensan que usted estará de regreso a casa antes de que el día termine.

Pero usted sabe que no sera asi.. Usted sabe que pasarán varios meses para regresar. Para ellos, meses son un concepto imposible. Si les dice “meses” ellos piensan en “momentos”

Yo recuerdo haber hablado con un Jefe de Máquinas de un buque griego que había sido vendido. Él era el único miembro de la tripulación que allí quedaba y esperaba por el nuevo armador y tripulación para orientarlos en el nuevo barco que habían comprado. Él me dijo que quería estar de regreso a Grecia para el 21 cumpleaños de su hija la semana siguiente. Me dijo que había estado presente en casa por sólo tres de sus cumpleaños durante su vida. ¡Solamente tres cumpleaños en veinte años!

Él no llevo a casa. Los nuevos armadores y tripulación no llegaron a tiempo. Perdió otro cumpleaños. El esperaba que su hija comprendiera. Yo lo esperaba asi tambien.

Recuerdo haber hablado con un marino de La India que me contó acerca de una conversación que el escuchó entre su hija y una amiguita. La amiga le pregunto quién era él y su hija respondió “ Ese es el hombre que a veces vive con mami”. Ella no dijo “¡ ese es mi papa! En vez ella dijo “ Es el hombre que a veces vive con mami. Eso le dolió mas que lo que las palabras pueden describir.

¿Cómo podría él recuperar todo lo que ella había perdido? Para ella el padre era el hombre que nunca estaba allí ¿Cómo podría él, como podria usted arreglar la realidad de no estar presente por la mayor parte del tiempo? ¿Cómo usted puede tartar la pérdida de tantos ritos de paso, nacimientos y cumpleaños , eventos diarios, actividades escolares y actividades familiares?

Me gustaría sugerir algunas estrategias para ayudarlo con estas experiencias dolorosas.

Si usted es de las Filipinas, usted sabe que su comunidad se preocupa mucho por el cuidado de su familia cuando usted esta lejos. Eso ocurre porque trabajadores en el exterior son muy communes en las Filipinas. Es tan normal que la iglesia y varios sindicatos organizan actividades para ayudar a las familias de aquellos que están ausentes.

¿Qué puede hacer usted sin esa red de apoyo? Bueno, usted puede ciertamente agradecer a Dios por unas comunicaciones mejores que las que nunca antes existieron. Tarjetas de llamadas y teléfonos celulares han mejorado muchísimo los contactos regulares con su casa. Algunos marinos envían grabaciones a casa de forma que los niños puedan oír la voz de los padres , madres , hermanas o hermanos.

La tecnología de las comunicaciones está tan al alcance, que cada a marino debe serle posible tener acceso a cámaras de video, proyectores y computadoras de manera que a sus niños (y esposa) puedan tener contacto visual también. El tener disponible esos equipos a bordo y conseguir los equipos de proyección en casa debería ser de máxima prioridad.

No estoy seguro de que cada marino puede comprar esta tecnología , pero usar lo que se dispone y asegurar de que la última tecnología esté a su alcance, es algo por lo que usted puede orar que seafarer's centres le ayude a conseguir. De forma que usted y su familia, puedan satisfacer ese anhelo de ver cada uno el rostro del otro. Contactos audiovisuales regulares y frecuentes pueden ayudar a hacer una larga espera menos tediosa.

Lamentaciones 3:21-26 “ pero esto consideraré en mi corazón, y por esto esperaré: Que por la misericordia de Jehová no hemos sido consumidos porque nunca decayeron sus misericordias; nuevas son cada mañana. ¡Grande es tu fidelidad! “Mi porción es Jehová; por tanto en el esperaré”, dice mi alma. Bueno es Jehová en los que en él esperan, al alma que lo busca. Bueno es esperar la salvación de Jehová.

S5 – (Not Completed)

S6 – (Not Completed)

S7 - Regalos Dados, Regalos Recibidos

Cuando miré al termómetro esta mañana vi que la temperatura era de -24° C, el canal meteorológico dijo que era -36° contando el factor del viento. ¡Realmente frío! Marineros provenientes de países ecuatoriales encuentran fría una temperatura de + 10°C. Estoy seguro que marineros cruzando el Atlántico Norte encuentran temperaturas más frías que esta.

La mayoría de las misiones en los puertos en Norteamérica entregan a cada marinero regalos de Navidad hay varias razones para la entrega de estos regalos, una de ellas es el hecho de encontrarse lejos de casa durante las más importantes celebraciones. Un regalo de Navidad significa que ustedes no han sido olvidados. Esa es la más importante razón por la entrega de regalos.

Otra razón es el dar un abrigo de lana (un *toque* en Canadá) a cada marino. Todas las primaveras y veranos , mujeres a lo largo de todo Canadá tejen esos gorros que los clubes de marinos entonces regalan. Los capellanes de esas misiones saben que hace frío en las calles, en la guardia de cubierta o andando por ahí y que un gorro de lana seguramente puede ayudar a reducir el factor viento.

Los regalos de Navidad también contienen otros obsequios. Quizás algún papel para escribir o chocolate. Quizás medias de lana o un par de guantes. Quizás haya una tarjeta de Navidad firmada por un niño que empaquetó la parcela que usted recibe. Yo he oído de escuelas e iglesias que han recibido tarjetas de agradecimiento de los marinos. Su tarjeta enviada a quien regala significa mucho para aquel que hace el regalo a una persona a quien no conoce, porque regalos y tarjetas hacen mucho para construir puentes.

¿Puede imaginar un regalo bellamente envuelto y nunca abrirlo- simplemente dejarlo en un armario en su camarote sin abrir. Mirarlo, admirar el cuidado con que fue hecha la envoltura pero nunca abrir para ver que contiene? Eso sería un regalo dado, pero no recibido.

Si usted cumple con los términos de su contrato usted naturalmente espera ser pagado. El salario de la compañía no es un regalo. Ellos le pagan por el trabajo que usted realizó para cumplir con su contrato. Si usted trabajó horas extra, usted espera recibir salario de horas extra. Si usted ascendió en el rango, usted espera recibir un salario más alto. Pero su salario, grande o pequeño no son un regalo. Le pertenece por derecho. Los regalos ,en cambio son algo que usted no trabaja para adquirir. Es algo que el regalador simplemente le da.

Otra razón por la cual los Seafarer's centres hacen estos regalos en la Navidad es por la temporada del año en la cual el cristiano celebra la llegada a la tierra de Dios Hijo, Jesús

Nacido como bebé humano, colocado en un pesebre en un establo en el pequeño pueblo de Belén, en la provincia romana de Judea hace más de 2000 años. Esto es lo que celebra la Navidad.

Uno de los escritores de La Santa Biblia un judío llamado Pablo, escribió una serie de cartas a las iglesias cristianas. Pablo les dice en varios lugares un mensaje importante "Cristo, cuando aun eramos débiles, a su tiempo murió por los impíos. Ciertamente a

penas morirá alguno por un justo; con todo puede ser que alguno tuviera el valor de morir por un bueno. Pero Dios muestra su amor para con nosotros, en que siendo aun pecadores, Cristo murió por nosotros”. (Romanos 5: 6-8)

Esa es una declaración asombrosa, una idea asombrosa. Pablo dice que estamos separados del Santo Dios porque somos pecadores y no hay manera de poner un puente sobre esa separación mediante el esfuerzo humano. De modo que Dios mismo, através de Jesús, coloca el Puente sobre esa brecha. El nos dice que Jesus murio por nosotros

En otra carta Pablo dice “Porque por gracia sois salvos por medio de la fe; y esto no de vosotros, pues es don de Dios. No por obras para que nadie se gloríe (Efesios 2: 8-9)

Aqui usted tiene las ideas básicas del cristianismo. Los humanos estamos separados de Dios por el pecado. Los humanos no pueden cerrar esa brecha de manera que Dios pone su propio puente dándonos el mas grande regalo su Único Hijo, Jesús quien murió en nuestro lugar. Este es un regalo de Dios, no pagado. Pablo escribió: “porque la paga del pecado es la muerte, pero la dávida de Dios es vida eterna en Cristo Jesús, Señor nuestro”. (Romanos 6:23).

Ahora ¿qué pensaría usted si Dios ofreciera este regalo de salvación, perdón y vida eterna y el recipiente simplemente lo pone en el armario de su camarote, lo mira ocasionalmente, pero nunca lo abre. Eso no tiene ningún sentido no es así?

Pero Dios ha hecho justamente eso. Le ha dado a Jesús a todo aquel que quiera recibirlo. Si usted no sabe de esto, el más grande regalo de Navidad, ¿por qué no preguntarle a un capellán la próxima vez que esté en puerto, acerca de como recibir y abrir el regalo de Dios para usted?

S8 - Querer y Necesitar

Mi nieta, de 27 meses de edad tiene un nuevo dicho. Cuando ella ve algo que no puede alcanzar, demanda que alguien su padre o abuelo se lo alcance y lo quiere AHORA, ella grita, ¡Lo necesito!

Por supuesto hay cosas que ella necesita y algunas las necesita de momento, pero usualmente grita por cosas que no tiene en el momento, pero que las quiere. Sería más exacto que dijera “lo quiero, pero solo tiene poco más de dos años. No ha aprendido aun la diferencia entre lo que quiere y necesita. Esperamos que mientras crezca distinga la diferencia entre querer y necesitar.

Pero la primera vez que yo la escuche decir esto con un pisotón y levantado la voz con exasperación, me dije a mi mismo, es tan joven y ya aprendió que si dice que necesita algo, tiene más posibilidades de conseguirlo que si dijera “ Lo quiero”. De alguna manera sabe que la gente responderá a sus necesidades. Eso asusta un poco. Te hace pensar como o de donde lo aprendió.

Cuando vamos creciendo, vamos aprendiendo la diferencia entre querer y necesitar, pero también he aprendido que muchos de nosotros (por lo menos yo mismo en particular) he aprendido a convertir lo que quiero en necesidades. Por ejemplo, veo gente a mi alrededor que tienen automobiles mas nuevos que el mio. No hay nada malo con el que tengo, pero no es el último modelo. Así empiezo a mirar mi vehículo críticamente. Hago una lista de las desventajas y ruidos raros y reparaciones que necesita. Si no pongo cuidado puedo determinar rápidamente que ya no es capaz de hacer su trabajo y que necesito uno nuevo o al menos más nuevo.

Ahora, espera un minuto. ¿Necesito realmente uno más nuevo o es que quiero uno más nuevo? Quizás lo que he hecho es racionalizar mi deseo y convertirlo en una necesidad.yo se que lo he hecho antes y soy perfectamente capaz de hacerlo otra vez. Quizás usted lo ha hecho también.

En ocasiones se me han acercado marinos cuando he ido a los barcos y sabiendo ellos que vengo de la misión me han preguntado “¿tienen ustedes mujeres? Lo que ellos quieren, por supuesto, es alivio sexual. Este deseo es perfectamente comprensible tratándose de una persona a la cual le ha sido negado esto por un período de tiempo prolongado. ¡No sorprende que burdeles y bares han caracterizado puertos de mar desde que estos existen!. Ambos parece que llenan una necesidad

Espera un momento. ¿Es que ellos llenan una necesidad o es que satisfacen un querer? ¿Necesita el marino una mujer?¿Necesita alivio sexual? ¿O es la mujer y el alivio algo que el desea? ¡Alguien ha observado sabiamente que nadie ha muerto de una acumulación de semen!

Cuando usted ha estado falto de algo por algún tiempo eso lleva a un alto grado de deseo. De veras realmente lo queremos. ¿Pero lo necesitamos realmente?

Hay cosas que todos necesitamos. Necesitamos comer, dormir, compañía, trabajo. Necesitamos cumplir con nuestros contratos. Necesitamos asistencia médica de tiempo en tiempo. Necesitamos amor y amistad. Necesitamos un lugar de trabajo seguro. Necesitamos prestar atención a nuestras labores.

Podemos querer más que esto. Podemos querer más comida de la que es buena para nosotros. Podemos querer dormir más. Podemos querer más trabajo y enviarnos con él, o podríamos querer menos trabajo y convertirnos en vagos. Podemos encontrar manera de incumplir los contratos. Podemos no tomar nuestras medicinas a tiempo o descuidar nuestra forma física. Podemos encontrarnos buscando amor y compañía en el lugar incorrecto. Podemos alimentar nuestros deseos mirando pornografía abordo y una prostituta en puerto.

San Juan en su primera carta escribe: Si confesamos nuestros pecados, él (Dios) es fiel y justo para perdonar nuestros pecados y limpiarnos de toda maldad. Si decimos que no hemos pecado, lo hacemos a él (Dios) mentiroso y su palabra no está en nosotros.

Dios quiere que confesemos nuestros pecados. Es su deseo que hagamos esto. Somos nosotros quienes tenemos que hacerlo. Tenemos que corregir las cosas. Tenemos quizás que corregir las cosas entre nosotros y nuestros cónyuges, pero primero debemos confesar nuestro pecado y recibir el perdón de Dios que es ofrecido a todo aquel que confiesa

Pero debemos tener mucho cuidado al recordar que una vez recibido el perdón se trata de perdón por los pecados pasados, aquellos que ya ocurrieron. Pero habiendo sido perdonados por lo pasado no es una licencia para continuar pecando. Cuando Dios nos perdona y nos promete no recordar nuestros pecados, (ver Hebreos 8: 12 y 10 :7), el espera que cambia nuestro comportamiento. Eso es porque los hijos de Dios no pueden mantenerse en el pecado. Su poder dador de vida vive en ellos y los hace sus hijos, de manera que no pueden seguir pecando.(1 Juan 3:9 CEV)

Lo que usted experimenta ¿es querer o necesidad?