

YOUTH Messenger®

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A Song in My Heart

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The background of the page features a dramatic sky with a bright sun or moon low on the horizon, creating a lens flare effect. The sky transitions from a deep blue at the top to a warm orange and red near the horizon. Below the sky, a large, semi-transparent purple and red banner stretches across the width of the page. The main title is written in a white, elegant cursive font across this banner. Below the banner, an aerial view of a village with numerous mud-brick houses is visible, set against a backdrop of rolling hills and sparse vegetation.

*He dwelt
among the Lowly*

He was born in a barn and lived a simple, humble life. Do you want to follow Him?

Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (2 Corinthian 8:9).

The Bible tells about a sad experience that came to Mary and Joseph when Jesus was about to be born. We wonder if there was anyone that might have counseled Mary about going on a journey in the condition in which she was. But the decree of the Romans was strict. They were afraid of the penalty, and so they took the risk.

It is possible that Mary and Joseph might have hesitated as to whether they should go or not because the record says they were late when they arrived. When they arrived, there was no vacancy. “And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn” (Luke 2:6, 7).

The Word of God does not give the full details of the circumstances of the event, but we can imagine the anguish of Mary and Joseph at that precise moment: They were unable to secure a decent place for her to have a baby.

The couple had no choice but to go to a manger in a barn. The environment that surrounded the divine Son of God was inappropriate. “We marvel at the Saviour’s sacrifice in exchanging the throne of heaven for the manger, and the companionship of adoring angels for the beasts of the stall. Human pride and self-sufficiency stand re-

buked in His presence. Yet this was but the beginning of His wonderful condescension. It would have been an almost infinite humiliation for the Son of God to take man’s nature, even when Adam stood in his innocence in Eden” (*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 48, 49).

What was the Lord’s purpose in allowing this to happen? Why didn’t the Lord Jesus have a decent place to be born? Jesus purposed in Himself that no earthly motives would prevent Him from coming to dwell exactly as He did. He wanted to be accepted by humanity according to the testimony of the written word. That was the Lord’s purpose. Had the Lord been born in the royal palace, He could have been identified as a king. This would have made it impossible for poor people to approach Him. This is the very reason why He was born in a barn. Why did He do that?

“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”

Jesus came in a humble way to reach a class of His children. He identified Himself with the most humble people of this earth. Yet, amazingly, He attracted all classes of people. This is very important to analyze. Human presumption and pride are rebuked in this event. When we examine the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, we realize how much we need to learn of Him. He is the greatest example we have.

When Christ began His ministry and was preparing His disciples for ordination, a determined man came forward, seeking to be accepted among the disciples. The

BY EDUARDO LAINEZ

Spirit of Prophecy reveals that it was Judas. “And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head” (Matthew 8:19, 20).

Jesus did not reject Judas nor did He welcome him. He remained silent as He began to read the thoughts of this man. After a brief moment, He declared the statement we just read. “The foxes have holes and the birds have nests, but the Son of man has no where to lay his head.”

In other words, “If you are going to follow me because of the greatness of this world you are wrong. You will be disappointed.” The Master did not own any home; He had to rely on the hospitality of friends. That is how humble His situation really was.

Among the most faithful of Christ’s disciples was Lazarus of Bethany. He, too, was a man of very humble origin. Jesus knew how much Lazarus loved Him and was pleased to spend time with him and his family because they all accepted Him as their Saviour.

The family at Bethany was very sincere in serving Jesus and taking care of Him. Frequently Jesus found relief in the house of Lazarus. Often when He was seeking for some human companionship, He found rest in that home. In reality, for us to live a happy life we don’t need that much. If we have Jesus within our heart and accept the example of His life, we can be happy even in the humbleness of our life.

In the house of Lazarus, Jesus could relax while hidden from the people that persecuted Him. There He found sweet friendship and was comfortable. That was why Jesus spent time in that place. Their friendship was pure. In that home, He could feel free to speak because He knew His words would be well received, not twisted or misunderstood. Yet above all, His greatest peace was found when He used to retire to commune with His father in prayer.

Like Jesus, we need to come to the Father at all times. Those who are called to suffer for Christ’s cross, often have to endure mis-

understanding and mistrust from their own family, friends, or associates. Yet they may find comfort by remembering that Jesus suffered before them. He invites all to find companionship and relief in the same way He found these blessings. Where did He find relief? In communion with His Father. This is something we need to meditate upon: In the plan of salvation, the Lord Jesus humbled Himself in such a way that He chose to live a very humble and simple life that we may all follow His example.

Let us be happy with whatever the Lord has given us. And let us understand also that to serve the Lord sometimes brings difficult times. We must be determined to face all these types of difficulties. The apostle Paul in his many letters does not mention any piece of property he left behind. This man gave it all to

the Lord. His only hope—his heart’s desire—was the assurance of eternal salvation. In the history of the 12 apostles we find that they laid down their life for the cause of Christ. Yet what a legacy is theirs!

The apostle Paul wrote, “I know whom I have believed” (2 Timothy 1:12). May this be our hope, our decision, and our determination in seeking to serve the Lord. Our eyes must be focused upward, high in heaven. And we will understand that our life is short. We live here on a temporary basis and our only hope is in the hereafter. May the Lord give us courage to cultivate the same character of Jesus—that one day, soon, we may live and reign with Him. “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18). “While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:18). 

Like Jesus, we need to come to the Father at all times.



LITERATURE EVANGELISM 101

You've read the stories, heard the experiences, have friends who've canvassed, maybe even worked with a colporteur, or knocked on a few doors yourself! If so, you maybe didn't know what to say—you stumbled and stammered until the person politely closed the door with a “no-thank-you”—if they were nice. The barking dogs and crying children totally distracted you. Some people only peeked through the window and would motion for you to leave. When someone did open the door to you, all you could think to say was ... “This is a really good book.” Another person yelled at you and told you to get a real job, or never come back again.

If you haven't experienced these things yourself, a good-willed friend probably shared their canvassing “horror” stories. (My friends related more than their share!) The same person probably tried to convince you that Literature Evangelism is a great experience—“you should try it.” Maybe you have felt God's conviction tugging on your heart as you've read the past articles in this series. You might be nervous or scared, maybe excited. Any way, you want to give this work a try. How do you get started? Join me on a practical, step-by-step journey I am going to call Literature Evangelism 101.

WARNING! You are going to be extremely tempted to think that some of the things that I tell you are vital are really not that important after all. Resist that temptation, and just for a short time consider that maybe these principles or methods work. Maybe, just maybe, the advice and training based on the experience of many equally-human beings that have done this before you will prove effective. And, if after you have tested these methods for a reasonable amount of time and they fail for you (which they won't!), then try your own way. Deal?

Just in case the exciting stories you have heard have given you an inclination to think that you don't need any training, let me share something with you. There is a quote that reminds me why I should consider training in any line before I expect to be successful in it. *Evangelism*, p. 474 says, “One worker who has been trained and educated for the work [in the cause of God], who is controlled by the Spirit of Christ, will accomplish far more than ten laborers who go out deficient in knowledge and weak in the faith.”

PROMISE! My introduction and others' stories may have scared you, BUT, I promise you that canvassing isn't THAT hard, frightening, or life-threatening if you will carefully study

BY KYLA STEMMER

and apply what I am going to share with you in this and the following articles. Most bad experiences you hear are because of lack of preparation and training.

What is literature evangelism? Just that!—A means of reaching out and spreading the gospel to people through books, booklets, and pamphlets.

We're going to bypass an explanation of why Literature Evangelism is so important. I am trusting that you have read the previous articles and stories in this series—they were foundational to this. If you haven't, please do! Stories of my own experience have helped me realize that miracles still happen to real people and that God is a very

personal God—He's even interested in my day-to-day life. Stories like "The King Who Couldn't Preach" give me the courage to know that God has a place for everyone in His vineyard—no matter what your weaknesses and seeming failures happen to be. The stories and experiences of my students should make you happy to know that many others have gone before you—and haven't died from it! *The Colporteur Ministry*, by E. G. White, is a book you need to pick up and begin to read. It's powerful! It will convict you. If you need one quick reason to canvass, I'll share my absolute favorite canvassing quote with you. It says, in p. 151, "God will soon do great things for us if we lie humble and believing at His feet. . . . More than one thousand will soon be converted in one day, most of whom will trace their first convictions to the reading of our publications."

If you didn't say an "Amen" at least inside your head, then read it again. You may not have been concentrating. This statement should convict you. If you are reading this article out of boredom or curiosity, rather than out of a desire to learn how to do this work, this quote alone should have convicted you to do something to spread our publications containing truth.

All right, ready to get started?

The 5 Most Important Things

QUESTION: Ladies, if you were going to bake an apple pie, would you consider a pie plate helpful? Gentlemen, if you were going to change the car oil, would you find an oil pan handy? Of course you would! Now, which

would be more important: having a pie plate or an oil pan, or the fact that you can eat, breathe, sleep, and have a heart that beats, and a brain that works?

You've got my point. There are some things in life you just can't do without: like eating, breathing, sleeping, a beating heart, and a working brain. Some things are so important to success that not doing them can far outweigh the impact of a lot of other things done well. Seventy-five percent of your canvassing potential hangs on your mastery of these next 5 things that I will share with you. In other words, everything I share with you will be important, but you would be better off to master these and forget the 50 other things I teach you, than to remember the 50 other things I teach you and forget 2 of these 5. You've got the point. ☺ When I said 5 MOST IMPORTANT things, I wasn't kidding—Christians are to let their words be "yea yea, and nay nay."

No. 1 – Know Your Canvass!

Lest there be any lack of clarity, "Know Your Canvass" means "memorize the canvass word-for-word." The canvass is a set form of words that you memorize and say for the introduction, a brief explanation of each book, and the close of the sale, and so on. The canvass is based on about 18 years of canvassing experience, and brings out the key points that will catch the interest of your audience the most.

Why is it so important to memorize the canvass, and word-for-word at that?

A quality canvass requires four things:

1. **Active listening** – to what the person is saying and not saying.



2. **Observation** – of their body language, physical surroundings, and the like.
3. **Constant prayer** – God has never asked you to do this alone!
4. **A quality canvass** – that will personally apply to the life of the customer.

All said, the #1 killer to your canvass is DEAD AIR SPACE! This is best described as that time when no one is saying anything and there is an uncomfortable silence. It is a very uncomfortable experience, even if the silence is only two seconds. It gives the devil a chance to work and whisper (or scream!) into the ear of your customer all the reasons why NOT to buy your books. Throughout the canvass they hear the excuses and need the continual reminder of the benefits, which your canvass contains. You will definitely experience a major amount of dead-air-space if you do not know your canvass.

The human mind is too worn down by 6,000 years of sin to listen well, observe well, pray well, and create a quality canvass well simultaneously. If you don't know your canvass, one or more of these have to go, and the lack of any of these is fatal to your success. You need a subconscious canvass.

The canvass is built to get rid of questions and answer objections before they come. Not knowing the canvass raises objections. Objections cause more trouble once they are spoken. Know your canvass!

The canvass contains powerful thoughts created by words. It covers all the main necessary points in a way that will impact your listener, but just one change in the wording can totally change its meaning. If you ALMOST know your canvass there are many powerful little things you will say that can totally undo what you are trying to accomplish.

The canvass gives you credibility. When you can speak smoothly and without hesitation because you know your canvass, while still fluctuating your voice so it's real and you don't sound like a robot—you will sound really confident. That is what causes people to believe in what you have—because you sound like you believe in it yourself. You will often hear, “You have an answer for everything!”

Your canvass is a tool in your hand – only when you know it so well that you can be saying it well while listening, observing, and sending up a silent prayer.

In another article we will talk about diversions from your canvass for the purpose of making friends. Be open to the Holy Spirit, and while you use your canvass word-for-word, the Holy Spirit will give you questions to ask and comments to make in addition to the canvass you know so well. E-mail me at kylajayne@yahoo.com for a copy of the canvass.

No. 2 – Get the Book in the Hand!

Say you were walking down the last aisle of the grocery store, picking up that last item off your shopping list, and a total stranger coming by reaches into your cart, takes the box of raisins and joyfully exclaims, “Here are the raisins I have been looking for!” How would you feel? Maybe, “What is he doing? Those are my raisins!” But are they yours? Did you pay for them? No. Then why do you think they are yours and not his? Because they were in your possession.

Use your canvass word-for-word.

When you put the book into the hands of the customers, they get a partial sense of ownership. Unless they have this sense they will not feel that they are seriously interested, listen well to your canvass, ask questions, or buy! So, as you finish your introduction and begin to talk about the book, get the book in the hand!

How?

Invade personal space. What I am not telling you to do is to forcefully push the book into someone's hands by hitting them in the stomach with the book. Don't do that! Once something comes within a few inches of your body, the natural response is to put out your hands to take it. Experiment on one of your friends without telling them what you are doing. It works! Still respect people's space –put the book in their space, but not yourself!

Hand it confidently! Hand the book with purpose, without hesitation, and while standing within a reasonable distance from them. If you are standing so far away from the person that you have to stretch to hand them the book you will appear hesitant and uncertain. While you hand them the book confidently, be sure to do it gently so you don't scare them!

No window shopping! Hand the book on an angle—usually with the spine facing up. If you hand it to them with the cover facing them, there is less of a need for them to take it. They can see what it is without touching it.

When should you smile? Always!

Getting the book can be more than a simple accomplishment when there are such things as closed screen doors, dirty or full hands, and so on. Here's what to do.

Through a screen door. When it is slightly open, slip it through the crack. When it is completely closed, put it (on an angle!) where the hand should be—to the doorknob or handle, and glance at it like they are going to take it. If they still do not get the point say, "Go ahead and take a look." You might add, with a smile, "...I promise it won't bite."

Dirty or full hands. Use the power of permission. "I can give you a minute if you would like to clean/empty your hands." If that is not possible at the time, find the nearest flat surface to use as a substitute—such as the hood of a car, a table, the arm of their chair, or other surfaces. If you cannot get the book in their hand, at least you want it out of yours. If you are speaking with a mother with a baby in her arms, don't assume she can't hold the baby and look at the books at the same time! Hand the book to her spare finger and turn the pages for her. Do not be the one to mention that the customer's hands are dirty or full. They will notice in good time and realize they need to do something about it and it will be at their initiative. If all else fails, take a chance—most dirt washes off.

LEAVE the book in the hand. Once it is in their possession, DON'T TAKE IT BACK! Don't even support the book with your hands, unless it is totally necessary—it removes the feeling of ownership and the desire to buy.

If they hand the book back there are a couple things you can do. First, you can ignore the fact that they are trying to hand it to you unless it becomes really obvious. Second, take it back, open up to a new page, hand it back to them and show them something you haven't mentioned yet. Third, just show them a different book. Fourth, remember the power of permission? Tell them "you can go ahead

and hold on to that for now." Some people think that you want the book back.

If you can't get or keep the books in the hand because they WON'T take them, treat it as if they are not interested. Still give them a chance, but be quick and do not waste your time. It might be simpler (if you are a considerable way through the canvass already) to ask if they are not interested since taking the book is the First step in acceptance.

If you can't get or keep the book in their hand because they CAN'T, canvass the book in your own hands, be sure to flip pages, make it brief, and close quickly. If they are really interested they will eventually find a means of emptying their hands.

Finally, NEVER close without the books in the hand if they are just refusing to take them. Some people think you are taking orders or want the book back. Use lines like "go ahead and take a look" and "we leave the books with you today (so there is no hassle of ordering)."

No. 3 – Smile!

It recommends the truth. It says, "You would want this if you only knew!" Christians are the happiest people in the world—a very cold and stoic person is not a Christian. People are miserable enough and don't need more misery!

It's attractive and the most contagious thing in the world. Since it is contagious, you will notice that when you smile, a lot of people will smile back at you. If you are meeting a lot of miserable people, check your countenance!

It's a trust factor. Most of our non-verbal communication is through our face. There are "microexpressions" which are miniscule movements of facial muscles. Wikipedia defines microexpression as a "brief facial expression that lasts less than a quarter of a second. They often occur involuntarily, and can reveal emotions not deliberately expressed." There is a fascinating test at <http://www.cio.com/article/facial-expressions-test>. Trained persons focus on these expressions to determine honesty. These expressions happen so quickly we don't consciously perceive them—in fact, they are what we perceive as "gut reactions." You have probably said something like, "That guy is creepy," "I don't

know ... but I wouldn't trust him," and "I really like that guy." Our judgment is based on these non-verbal cues. Your character and disposition are determined by your facial expression. People don't listen to details, but they see them. Smile!

It creates your attitude and disposition. Attitude is everything! Cultivate a positive attitude—one that always looks on the bright side. If you think about it, it's just a choice. And ... it is really attractive.

It sells books. Without a smile, no matter how well you know your canvass, or get the book in the other person's hand, you will not sell any books. Your high-sales days are the ones you smile the most. Smile to balance your days—nothing brings such a positive change to your day like your own smile.

Just make sure that is a real smile—the kind that comes from the inside and includes your whole face. A forced smile is better than none, but ask God to give you the joy of the Lord which is your strength.

Don't concentrate so hard you lose your smile! Another reason to know your canvass! A forced smile fades as you speak—and fades to whatever you are feeling. What is your neutral expression—the one you have when you aren't concentrating on it? Smile between doors. Choose to be happy, and you will make those around you happy as well.

When should you smile? Always! Even when you are standing at the door waiting for them to open, they might be looking at you through the peephole. It looks very fake when the miserable-looking person they saw when they were looking out their window as you walked by or when they were looking through their peephole, all of a sudden shines for a few seconds when the door opens. Between doors, sing and pray.

Did I say always? Well, your face is a tool—don't smile at the wrong times. Be serious when necessary. For example, when they are telling of a sad experience, or you are relating *The Great Controversy* canvass, you don't need to be beaming from ear to ear when you ask "Why would a God of love allow so much sin and suffering?"

No. 4 – Pray!

What is the first verse that comes to mind when you think about prayer? Maybe 1 Thessalonians 5:17, "Pray without ceasing." Ephesians 6:12 says, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." We're in a spiritual warfare. God never asks you to go to doors alone—He promises to be with you, and when you constantly uplift your thoughts to Him in prayer, His power will be manifest. *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 319, says:

"Humble, fervent prayer would do more in behalf of the circulation of our books than all the expensive embellishments in the world."

What kind of prayer? It's a prayer full of faith—a kind of prayer Abraham prayed. Speaking of him, Romans 4:20 says, "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." This is a prayer that stands on God's promises—that thanks and praises God even before the blessings are visible! It causes us to "talk and act as if your faith was invincible" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 147).

What can you pray for when you are working door-to-door? Here are just a few:

1. **Quick Rejections.** From the people who aren't interested so you can get to the next doors quickly where people are interested. More doors, more people, more sales, more souls. So don't be discouraged when those quick rejections come!
2. **The right person to come to the door.** Not everyone in the house may be equally open—there are many types of people even in the same household.
3. **Generous donations.** It is God's will that you have the money you need to cover your expenses. Also, people are blessed by giving. The more they give the more likely they are to read the books.
4. **God to speak through you.** That you can say just the right thing at just the right time to reach their hearts.

5. **To know what books to show.** You don't show the same books to everyone. Everyone has different needs.
6. **Divine appointments.** This is when God brings people to you, allows someone to be homesick, have a car breakdown, or walk by just at the right time so you can meet and bring them the gospel! So don't neglect the mailman walking by.
7. **God to bring the people home.** That you can canvass them!
8. **Our daily prayer.** From *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 474:

“Our daily prayer should be, ‘Lord, help me to do my best. Teach me how to do better work. Give me energy and cheerfulness. Help me to bring into my service the loving ministry of the Saviour.’”

Pray *with* people. Before you leave homes ask, “Would you like me to say a quick prayer with you before I leave?” If the response is

positive, ask, “Is there anything in specific you would like me to pray for?” This is often the point where hearts melt, tears flow, and real ministry happens. When you leave, some people will wonder if you were an angel—and never know!

No. 5 – Walk Fast!

Running or walking fast between doors has many benefits:

1. **Increases your circulation.** With more oxygen to your brain your memory and general mental faculties will be clearer and quicker.
2. **Helps your attitude.** It increases your “feel good” endorphins.
3. **Gets you to more doors.** More doors, more people, more sales, more souls!
4. **God's secret for success.** It is “human effort + divine power = success.” The divine power is waiting for your fullest effort!

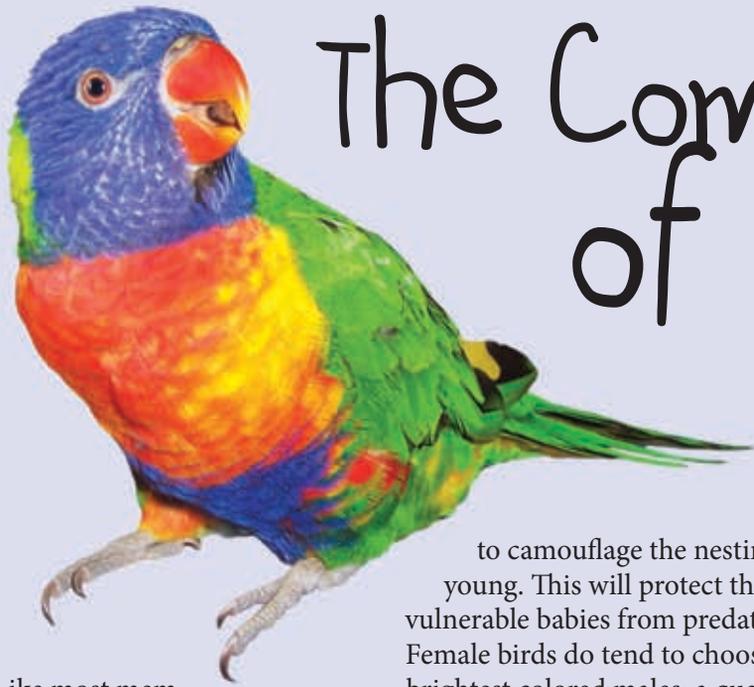
Conclusion

The 5 most important things are indeed important—vital to your success as a colporteur. So know your canvass, get the book in the hand, smile, pray, and walk fast!

Just remember something. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 146, says: “It is not the capabilities you now possess or ever will have that will give you success. It is that which the Lord can do for you. We need to have far less confidence in what man can do and far more confidence in what God can do for every believing soul. He longs to have you reach after Him by faith. He longs to have you understand in temporal as well as in spiritual matters. He can sharpen the intellect. He can give tact and skill. Put your talents into the work, ask God for wisdom, and it will be given you.” 

P.S. To order books, contact the Colporteur Department of the Southeast U.S. Field @ 501-520-9580 or kylajayne@yahoo.com.





The Communication of Birds

BY B. MONTEIRO

Like most members of the animal kingdom, birds communicate with each other in various ways. While many mammals relate to one another through scent, birds rely chiefly on visual signals, songs, and calls in order to speak to each other.

As birds communicate, a signal is passed from one bird to another. The meaning of it depends on what is happening at the time—the same signal can convey different messages at once. For example, the same song of a male bird that wards off potential rivals also lures unmated females. Bird “language” is similar to human laughing or crying; it does not consist of complicated words or grammar.

Visual displays

A well-known way by which male birds communicate is through their brightly colored feathers. During mating season, the brilliant plumage of many species of male birds is “shown off” to attract female birds, whose comparatively dull colors are designed

to camouflage the nesting young. This will protect the vulnerable babies from predators. Female birds do tend to choose the brightest colored males, a quality which will then be carried on in the female’s future brood. There does not appear to be a real benefit to the male’s bright colors, except that they increase the chance of success at mating.

Vocalization

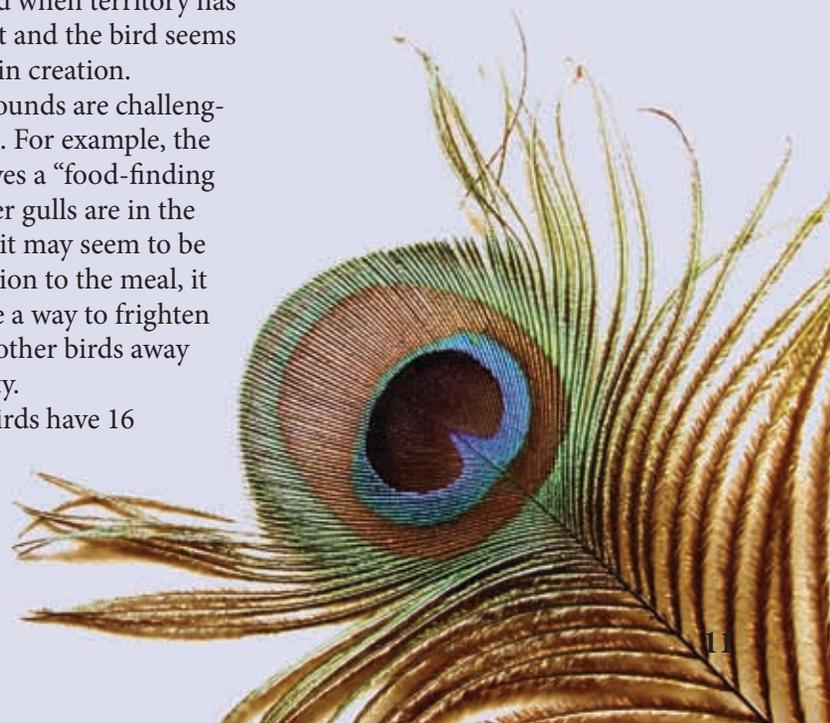
Researchers use “sonagrams” in the form of a graph in order to analyze bird songs. This way they can tell the difference between simple notes (not necessarily songs) and actual music. Real bird “songs” are commonly used when territory has been staked out and the bird seems to be rejoicing in creation.

Some bird sounds are challenging to interpret. For example, the herring gull gives a “food-finding call” when other gulls are in the vicinity. While it may seem to be an open invitation to the meal, it may actually be a way to frighten or distract the other birds away from the bounty.

Some songbirds have 16 or more basic calls, plus variations.

The most commonly heard calls are made between members of a flock or mated pairs, especially at times when predators are threatening or during the rearing of a family. Birds in flocks often call to each other just to stay in touch and stick together.

Sonagrams have shown that the calls of both birds in a pair of American goldfinches are virtually identical but are different from those of other pairs. This begins in courtship when the male learns to imitate his prospective female’s call—and it is believed that in 90% of bird species, the couple will remain as a pair for life. When a mated bird is killed, its “spouse” may engage in fervent efforts to revive it.





Watch out!

Small birds (such as sparrows, cardinals, wrens, and chickadees) make two types of warning calls to help one another. “Chat” calls are abrupt and harsh and are used when there is danger of a ground predator such as a cat. “Seet” calls are thin and high-pitched. These are used when an airborne predator such as a falcon or hawk is flying overhead. Normally the bird sounding the alarm is wise enough to be well concealed when issuing the signal.

Melody and mimic

The truly elaborate melodies we know as “song” are actually made by relatively few of the several thousand species of birds. Scientists have observed that these songs are more common among those birds that have had the privilege of being “taught” by more experienced mentors.

When caged, birds such as parrots and mynas become good at mimicking. They do not, however, use this characteristic much in the wild. Some birds, such as blue jays, starlings, catbirds, and mockingbirds, continually adapt their song to their environment, using barking dogs, meowing cats, axes chopping wood, and automobile horns as sources of inspiration.

Benefits for humanity

Probably the most important messages that birds communicate are their epistles to us. Birds, like all things in nature, have a special ministry. Birds teach humans the sweet lesson of trust. “Our heavenly Father provides for [the birds]; but they must gather the food, they must build their nests and rear their young. Every moment they are exposed to enemies that seek to destroy them. Yet how cheerily they go about their work! how full of joy are their little songs!” (*Education*, p. 118).

“Not even a sparrow falls to the ground without the Father’s notice. Satan’s hatred against God leads him to delight in destroying even the dumb creatures. It is only through God’s protecting care that the birds are preserved to gladden us with their songs of joy. But He does not forget even the sparrows. ‘Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows’ (Matthew 10:31).”—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 273.

When, for example, invalids are removed from dark, gloomy surroundings and are exposed to the beauties of nature, their hearts are gladdened by the melody of the birds. This has a peculiarly exhilarating effect on the human nervous system. As Jesus Himself walked upon the earth, “He enjoyed the

varied notes of the birds as they caroled forth their praise to their Creator” (*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 135).

“It is He who made the flowers and who gave to the sparrow its song who says, ‘Consider the lilies,’ ‘Behold the birds’ (Matthew 6:28, 26, RV). In the loveliness of the things of nature you may learn more of the wisdom of God than the schoolmen know. On the lily’s petals, God has written a message for you, written in language that your heart can read only as it unlearns the lessons of distrust and selfishness and corroding care. Why has He given you the singing birds and the gentle blossoms, but from the overflowing love of a Father’s heart, that would brighten and gladden your path of life? All that was needed for existence would have been yours without the flowers and birds, but God was not content to provide what would suffice for mere existence. He has filled earth and air and sky with glimpses of beauty to tell you of His loving thought for you. The beauty of all created things is but a gleam from the shining of His glory. If He has lavished such infinite skill upon the things of nature, for your happiness and joy, can you doubt that He will give you every needed blessing?” (*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 96, 97). **YM**

BY GERSON ROBLES

A Song in My Heart

I opened my eyes, took a deep breath and stretched. It's a wonderful feeling, waking up. For a few moments, it feels like your mind is blank—like a baby's mind ready to be filled with knowledge. Anyhow, there I was lying on my bed adjusting my thoughts to a fresh new day. I turned my head towards the window. It was still dark. The clock on my bedside flashed 4:55 a.m. Suddenly, my pleasant experience turned sour.

Those brief moments of peace were abruptly disturbed by memories of the previous night. I had skipped my evening worship and sat up late watching a movie on television. By the time it finished I was exhausted and went to bed feeling very guilty. Upon waking up the next morning, my fresh thoughts were spoiled by flashbacks of violence and immorality. My guilt returned but it seemed heavier. The clock hit 5:00 a.m. and the alarm went off, which made me jump. Now I was facing my TO DO list for the day. I had to be at work by 6:00 a.m.

It was a bad start to the day, but I determined not to be late so I quickly hopped out of bed, threw on some clothes and walked out to my car. The sun was rising and I watched as it turned the morning dew to ice on my windscreen. The icy breeze made me shiver. My thin jacket wasn't warm enough on this winter morning. But I didn't care

so much about freezing. I felt that my heart was colder than the ice on my car. Sin had chilled my faith and my mind was numb with guilt. I tried vainly to comfort myself with thoughts of the peace I enjoyed when Christ was near.

I reproached myself on the way to work. "Why did you have to watch that movie? You fool! You big fool! Why couldn't you resist?" No answer came. It seemed to me I was the weakest fool on the planet. Then I consoled myself with thoughts like, "You only watched one movie. People watch them everyday. There are worse people in this planet than movie watchers!" I felt better—but it didn't last long. I knew better.

It was this high and low experience that marked my early walk with the Lord. I would be near to the Lord one day but a couple of days later I would fall under temptation. Sabbaths were a high time. It was easy for me to be a Christian on Sabbath. I was fed spiritually most of the day, and it was good. I remember thinking, after hearing a great sermon, "Wow, this will keep me now for a few days." The same thing happened when we had a really good Sabbath School. I would often ponder though about the

possibility of having victory after victory. How wonderful it seemed to me—but how to get it? That was the question. This continued for a number of months, but thankfully, things were about to change.

My church was putting on a missionary training program in the New Year, so I decided to go. One day, while I was at the missionary college, another student and I were digging a hole in search of a leaking water pipe. As we dug, the conversation turned to the subject of personal worship. He mentioned something that stunned me. But it was like finding the missing piece in a thousand piece-puzzle. It just made so much sense. He spoke of the importance of personal morning and evening worship as though his whole life depended on it—a new concept for me.

I wasn't totally ignorant about personal devotion. I normally knelt next to my bed and "said my prayers" before going to sleep. It was usually part of my daily routine. Often my prayers were very brief, and my morning prayers weren't much longer. But the value of personal devotion first thing in the morning had never been as clear as when my friend was sharing his

Living for Christ is a daily process.

experience. He asked me, “Do you realize that personal worship will prepare you to face the day? Do you have personal worship before we worship together?” I had to admit that I didn’t.

I decided to try out my friend’s advice. Next morning I woke up half an hour earlier, hard though it was. I asked the Lord for His presence, being determined that He would hear my prayer in Christ. During this time, I felt a new and living power come to me through the study of the Word of God. I knew the Lord was near, giving me life.

Soon it was 7:00 a.m., time for our morning worship. I walked out of my dorm feeling at peace with God. I was looking forward to facing the day. I walked towards our meeting place with something to share—the joy of an abiding Saviour.

That night I communed with my own heart upon my bed and was still. Just like David wrote in Psalm 4:4. Many things happened that day and I briefly thought about them. Did I do the best for God? Was there anything I could have done better? Did I offend anyone? Could I have said anything to help someone? I talked with God as to a friend and listened to His voice speaking to my soul. Confessing my sins, I went to sleep, sure of the pardoning grace of Christ.

When morning came, I opened my eyes. To my surprise I woke up singing a hymn! Not out loud, but I could hear the song in my heart. I was singing the hymn, “Nearer, My God to Thee.” I smiled with joy and thanked the Lord for such a pleasant rest and His wake up call. I knew what had happened; I fell asleep in my Saviour’s hands and I woke up in His arms.

I have since then woken up many times praising the Lord with hymns. It’s like the Lord is saying to me, “I have cared for you during the night, and now I have prepared your heart to worship Me.” Your soul wants nothing else but to spend that quality time with Him first thing in the morning. Communion with Christ becomes our highest joy.

During this time, the question that con-

cerned me most was, “What makes for a successful season of worship?” I began to realize that it’s really quite simple. By the end of my time spent with God, I had to be certain of four things:

1. That I was dead to sin (the old man).
2. That I was living for Christ (the new man).
3. That His will was clear and duty plain as day.
4. That His presence would go with me to give me strength for that day.

I had no reason to doubt the above points, because they were written in God’s Word.

Today, I know that living for Christ is a daily process or the old man soon begins to revive. We must starve the old man so the new man can live. The same food that’s poison to the old man is Living Bread to the new man. I’m reminded of a song I used to sing as a child, “For me to die is to live, for me to live is Christ.” But I’ve also understood that dying and living for Christ should not only happen in the morning and evening—when Christ is first and last—but throughout the day, that He may be best in everything. It is a moment by moment surrender.

When I give my life to God in the morning, I no longer walk alone, but Christ is by my side. When in danger of forgetting Him, His Spirit never fails to remind me of the choice I made to serve Him, assuring me that His grace is sufficient. His grace received today assures me I’ll receive more abundant grace tomorrow, but it all depends on something. Read carefully these next few words, especially the underlined ones. “The gifts of Jesus are ever fresh and new. The feast that He provides for the soul never fails to give satisfaction and joy. Each new gift increases the capacity of the receiver to appreciate and enjoy the blessings of the Lord. He gives grace for grace. **There can be no failure of supply. If you abide in Him**, the fact that you receive a rich gift today insures the reception of a richer gift tomorrow” (*The Desire of Ages* p. 148).

Tomorrow morning, will you open your eyes with a song in your heart? Will you say with David, “The Lord will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life” (Psalm 42:8)? 

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Echoing the Song of Abundant Life

From
the Editor

On our spiritual journey we face moments when we are not happy, and we cannot enjoy spiritual life because there is something missing. You try to be good, to do things right, and you fall again. You make promises, and you make mistakes again.

Then Satan comes and says: “What kind of Christian are you? You see, it makes no sense to keep trying. You are false; you are a liar before God, you say one thing and do another, you believe one thing and live other. If you want to be honest—leave this church, give up, you cannot be perfect, it is impossible to be perfect on this earth.”

We need to be helped by a power outside of ourselves.

“There are those who have known the pardoning love of Christ and who really desire to be children of God, yet they realize that their character is imperfect, their life faulty, and they are ready to doubt whether their hearts have been renewed by the Holy Spirit. To such I would say, Do not draw back in despair. We shall often have to bow down and weep at the feet of Jesus because of our shortcomings and mistakes, but we are not to be discouraged. Even if we are overcome by the enemy, we are not cast off, not forsaken and rejected of God. No; Christ is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 64.

A mother, wishing to encourage her young son's progress at the piano, bought tickets for a Paderewski performance. When the night arrived, they found their seats near the front of the concert hall and eyed the majestic Steinway waiting on the stage. Soon the mother found a friend to talk to, and the boy slipped away. When eight o'clock arrived, the spotlights came on, the audience quieted, and only then did they notice the boy up on the bench, innocently picking out, “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.” His mother gasped, but before she could retrieve her son, the master appeared on the stage and quickly moved to the keyboard. He whispered to the boy, “Don't quit—keep playing.” Leaning over, Paderewski reached down with his left hand and began filling in a bass part. Soon his right arm reached around to the other side, encircling the child, to add a running obbligato. Together, the old master and the young novice held the crowd mesmerized. In our life, unpolished though we may be, it is the Master who dwelt among the lowly that surrounds us and whispers in our ear, time and again, “Don't quit—keep playing.” And as we do, He adds and supplements until a work of amazing beauty is created. And so we enjoy every moment with Him, and it becomes a pleasure to work for Him while singing the song of abundant life.

The Master assures us, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). 

Obstacles

Sharp thorns and brambles oft impede
Our progress as we go our way;
But, drawing garments close, we slip
As quickly by them as we may—
Perhaps among the thorns to spy
A fragrant bud or blossom start,
That hides the brambles for a time,
And helps us to forget their smart.

Upon the hill of high ideals,
The rocks are smooth and thickly set;
They give no foothold in themselves,
And wrench the feet that slip and fret:
But when we view the scene below,
And breathe the summit's purer air,
The upward struggle we forget,
With rocky road that led us there.

Perhaps the gateway to success
Is hung upon a rusty hinge,
That opens not, though long we strive
With tug and pull and painful twinge:
Yet, spite of groan and piercing creak,
Sweet triumph will our souls imbue,
If effort swings the gate at last
Enough to let us struggle through.

The sunbeam-lighted lane that threads
The summer of prosperity,
Oft ends in drifts impassable,
And winter's cold adversity:
But Spring-breath melts the deepest snow,
And frost and cold with drifts depart;
So trials dwindle in the warmth
Of courage in a strong, true heart.

—Minnie Rosilla Stevens

