

**University Heights Church
of Christ**
445 Columbia Ave.,
Lexington, KY 40508
(859) 255-6257
www.uheightschurch.com

WORSHIP SERVICES

Sunday

Bible Study: 9:45 AM

Worship: 10:45 AM; 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Bible Study: 7:30 PM (This is
immediately followed by a
short worship period)

First Friday of Each Month

Singing: 7:30 PM

LEADERSHIP

Elders

Garry Banks, David Collins,
John Thompson

Evangelist

Adam Litmer

Deacons

Troy Antle, Richard Brundige,
Matt Thompson, Adam
Litmer, Bill Morelan, Jim
Parsons, Pat Seabolt, Adam
Daniels, Jamie Powell

Adam's Office Hours

Tuesday-Friday (8:30-4:00)

The psalmist makes all of this quite clear by the illustrations he uses: *Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maidservant to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, till he has mercy upon us.* (Psalm 123:2). Like the servant who knows any good thing that comes his way will only come from his master; like the maidservant totally dependent upon her mistress, so is the look of the psalmist as he lifts his eyes to the one enthroned in heaven. There is no hint of disdain in the eye of the maidservant like there was with Hagar toward her mistress, Sarai. (Genesis 16)

We must never forget neither our desperate need for divine mercy nor the only source of it. On one occasion we might stand far off with head bowed, so ashamed of our sinful selves that we avoid lifting our eyes to heaven, begging "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." On another occasion we might shift our eyes to heaven, pleading "till He has mercy upon us." Take a moment to read Ephesians 2:1-10 and rejoice in our merciful God.

IN NEED OF PRAYERS

Jeff Howerton, Rhonda Boyd, Paul Atkisson, Janice Parsons, Barbara Matheny, David Morrow, Debbie Parker, John Bennett, Robert Brundige, Donald Dawson, Gail Stein, Sandy Childress, Susie Burton, Jacob Profit, Valerie and Barry Boyd, Jannett's mother and stepfather, Sandy Driver, Erlene Young, Doris Baker, Burnice Richardson, Ruth Poynter, Larry Sells, Christian Shadburne, Mattie Johnson (hip replacement), Evelyn Damron, Cassie Neel, Tony Tirey, Rose Curtis, Paula Johnson, The Nunez and Antle families (Ricardo Nunez, 18 years old, was Troy's second cousin. He passed away after a car accident last Tuesday)

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An Appeal To Take Off The Mask (2)

Adam Litmer

In the previous article I urged Christians to remove their "brave" masks and really let brethren know how things truly stand in their lives. I urged us all not to hide the difficult circumstances in our lives that desperately require prayer from righteous people (James 5:16b). In that article I set forth the "it's no one's business but mine" and "no one wants to hear my problems anyway" attitudes as possible reasons we modern Christians seem so hesitant to request prayers for our less public (illness, surgery, pregnancy, relocating, etc) circumstances of life (depression, doubt, emotional pain, tough work, school, or family situations, etc).

A request has come for a companion piece that explores another reason for hesitancy on the Christian's part: the vulnerability of opening all the way up. There are 75 names listed in our new directory, including children. That means there are 75 different stories represented in this congregation (this obviously will become more pronounced as the children age). 75 people who have, and will, experience life in different ways. I have no doubt that if we could see into the heart of each individual we would be stunned by the varied concerns and struggles faced. We would likely see struggles with sin, depression, sorrow, family, debt, doubts, and much more. I do not speak of these struggles as things that are about to overthrow faith (though that may be the case for some), but struggles that exist on a daily basis and could certainly use the prayers of righteous people petitioning our gracious God. But we've got to tell the brethren these things and that's where the vulnerability comes in. We've got to open all the way up, or at least further than we're usually comfortable with, and request the aid of spiritual family.

In a familiar passage Paul opens a very personal door to let his brethren from all ages right into his heart. *So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.* (2 Corinthians 12:7-10) It is amazing the number of

suggestions for Paul's thorn in the flesh. The truth is that we have no idea what it was. It could have been an obvious thing, such as a handicap of some sort apparent to all who saw him; or it could have been something internal that only he and perhaps his most intimate companions were aware of. Whatever it was, every Christian from then to now knows he had one. What's more, Paul chose to use it to teach very important spiritual lessons. Earlier, in 11:28, Paul said he faced daily anxiety for all the churches. This man requested prayers more than any other Bible writer and knew brethren would pray for the things he mentioned in these two passages. When was the last time we requested the brethren pray for some anxiety putting pressure on our souls?

I battle depression. At various points in my life I have sought professional help and been prescribed medication. Though he did not make a formal diagnosis, the last doctor I met with told me he would wager his practice that I have bipolar disorder. Now, those three sentences were the most difficult sentences I have written in my life as a preacher. Why? Because now I've let you in. Now I've told you that I face certain difficulties that I've been ashamed and guilty of for a long time. Now you know something only a *very* small number of Christians have known.

Shame has a lot to do with it, doesn't it? How will people view us when they find out these more intimate details about our life? Will they laugh at us, yell at us, dismiss us, ignore us, or hold it against us? Will they view us as something less than before they knew? And what of the guilt? We don't want to have struggles and so often we feel guilty when we do.

Many years ago a brother declared in my presence (I paraphrase), "There is no excuse for a child of God to ever struggle with depression. If they do, they never really believed to begin with and certainly have no faith." This was before my own struggles and was a source of great shame and guilt to me when depression first reared its head. I assumed all Christians thought the way he did, that no "real" Christian ever had these problems, and that I had better keep it a secret or else. A careful consideration of the Psalms did me a world of good and will for anyone else facing the same sort of struggles. The man after God's own heart was certainly no stranger to depression or sorrow (Psalm 5:1; 13:2; 22:1-2, 6; 38:1-14; 51:1-17, etc.). These psalms, which became the hymnal for the nation of Israel, were intensely personal and show many instances where David seems to have been a broken man. The reason for these moments of depression and sorrow differ, yet there they are for all to see. Indeed, David is the one who has taught God's children through the ages that we rely on what we *know* to be true even when the feelings are not there.

This is what I have found to be true in my life: Christ, His Word, and His saints are my medication. There are medications that make one numb, neutral, fuzzy, and loopy. I have had them. Yet my Lord and my brethren make me *rejoice*. Even the darkest days brighten when I am with you. To see you worship with joy and thanksgiving, in spirit and in truth, stirs me up to love and good works and encourages me tremendously (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Is there a vulnerability to truly opening up to the brethren, letting them see whatever hurts and struggles dwell within? Yes. Are there brethren who will treat us differently

afterward? Perhaps. Are there others whose love and concern for us will manifest itself in a rich outpouring of petitions to God on our behalf? Absolutely! That's the great blessing of taking off the mask.

One of the interesting things about the beginning of Habakkuk's short prophecy is that his eyes were wide open to reality (1:2-4). Dwelling among a people who loved to cry "Peace!" when there wasn't really any peace, Habakkuk refused to pretend things were good when they weren't. Why should we? God knows the truth of things. Hopefully none of us seek to wear masks even in our prayers to Him. So let's not wear them among our brethren. How wonderful to know that fellow saints, members of the household of God, are standing ready to petition Him on our behalf!

Our Need for Divine Mercy

John Thompson

Psalm 123 begins, *To you I lift up my eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens!* In Luke 18:9-14 Jesus told a parable involving a Pharisee and a tax collector who went to the temple to pray. We are told in verse 13 the tax collector, *standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast.*

How is it that one individual lifts his eyes to heaven, to the one who rules the universe while another purposely avoids that very action, and we find no fault with the behavior of either? A careful study of those two passages will reveal that both approaches to Deity came from the same state of mind, a mind best expressed in Matthew 5:3, *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Consider the tax collector. He went to the temple to pray. Now there are a variety of ways for one person to communicate with another. This tax collector's very livelihood depended upon his successful communication with people under very trying and difficult circumstances. Much of that communication would have involved the exercise of his authority over others. But his approach to God is so different from how he approached those who owed taxes. His appearance conveys no self-importance; his voice is that of the most abject beggar. Wherever one was accustomed to stand when praying in the temple he does not approach, but stands far off with downcast eyes. He makes no claim as to who he is or what he has accomplished, but can only plead for mercy because of what he is, a sinner.

Now consider the psalmist of Psalm 123. He does not hesitate to lift up his eyes to heaven, to the one enthroned there. One perceives that he is in a hurry to do so, that a sense of urgency prevails. Yet, it is not a demanding gaze, not a look that says, "You owe me; pay up or else!" It is not a mere arching of the eyebrows meant to put the one being looked at in his place. Rather, it is a look of desperation, a look that says, "I have nowhere else to look, no one else to turn to." It is the look of one who is as poor in spirit as he can possibly be.