

NOVEMBER DEAL AT REFLECTIONS.ORG/SHOP

The Angel and the Voyager



This spiritually rich art book provides a study that ties together Thomas Cole's two masterful series—ultimately prompting readers to consider the dilemma of mortality and the meaning of life.



We will be moving to a new giving and communication platform called PushPay. We are pleased to announce that giving to Reflections Ministries will be easier and more convenient than ever! If you'd like to make a donation, please visit our website, or scan the QR code below. We are also thrilled to announce that the

Reflections App will be available this month, something Dr. Boa has wanted to do for a long time! Stay tuned for the announcement of the launch.



GOD'S PROMISES

SOMEONE TO TURN TO

The call comes out of the blue from a dear and trusted friend, obviously distraught. After helping her manage her initial emotion, you find out that your friend believes that you have betrayed her confidence by revealing information about her to another party. You know that you're innocent, but the accusation is difficult to disprove—at least over the phone. After a few minutes of getting nowhere, you ask your friend to meet you at the local coffeehouse so you can resolve this issue.

As you drive to the restaurant, you realize that you're totally dependent on your friend's judgment to clear your name. And as you turn into the parking lot and see your friend through the front window already sitting at a table, your mind races. What will be the best way to convince her that you didn't do this?

Whether the issue is major (the situation above) or minor (a sister accuses a brother of breaking a toy), we've all had the experience of having to defend ourselves from false accusations. When there's little or no hard evidence to prove our case, we have to rely on what we know to be true, and believe that truth will prevail, to convince others of our innocence.

Job, the wealthy Old Testament rancher, found himself in just such a predicament. His fortunes had plummeted so rapidly that his friends were convinced that some moral or spiritual failure in his life had incurred God's wrath. But Job was convinced of his own innocence. He knew of nothing he had done that could have offended the Almighty, and he challenged his friends to point

out what, if any, this sin might be.

After several rounds of discourse with these men, Job realized that his only recourse was to commit himself totally to the judgment and justice of God. Regardless of the outcome, Job refused to stop trusting in God and His justice.

When you suffer the pain of accusation, or even the pain of guilt, there is One to whom you can turn. God is just, compassionate, and merciful, and He will hear your case. Whether the verdict is "guilty" or "innocent," the voice you hear will be that of One whom you can trust.

God's Promise:

If you focus on Him in your trial, the verdict will be in focus as well.

Reflections Ministries

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REFLECTIONS

A teaching letter encouraging believers to develop a clear mind and a warm heart

GOD IS EXALTED ABOVE ALL THINGS

O Lord my God, You are exalted above all things we can conceive and imagine. Time and space are a part of Your created order—You brought them into being, and You dwell in all times and places. You are the eternal Now, the great I am, the Beginning and the End, the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last. You are present everywhere and You rule all things from the microcosm to the macrocosm. You spoke, and energy and matter came into being. Your boundless power and wisdom are evident in Your works, and all things derive their being from You. The beauty, radiance, and wisdom that abound in Your creation all point beyond themselves to You, their Creator and Sustainer. I ask for the eyes to see Your goodness, beauty, and truth as I behold plants, trees, animals, insects, sunrises and sunsets, landscapes, and the starry sky.

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Reflections on Our Times

H. Richard Niehbur once described late nineteenth century liberalism in these remarkably succinct words: “A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Jesus without a cross.” In recent decades, this distorted and emaciated gospel has also been seeping into the thinking and practice of popular Christendom. Terms like “wrath,” “sin,” “judgment,” and “cross” do not play well in a culture that has come to regard tolerance as more virtuous than truth. Through careful use of “text management,” we selectively focus on biblical images we want to hear and avoid the things in Scripture that seem harsh to our modern ears.

Notice how both John the Baptist and our Lord in His early Galilean ministry both proclaimed the same disturbing message: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:2; 4:17). How well do you think these words would go over in the average church today? We would be wise to consider how tightly we have been gripped by the cultural agendas of our times and re-new our minds by aligning our thinking with the whole council of Scripture.

The Context of Discipleship

Team Ministry

One way to offset our cultural tendency toward individualism is to be part of a team ministry, whether this is associated with a church or with a ministry organization. The gospels tell us about the team Jesus built around Him, and Acts and the epistles show that the apostles followed His example by ministering in tandem with others.

A team ministry provides fellowship, interdependence, encouragement, division of labor, cooperation, synergism, and a broad gift mix. Members of a ministry team commit to a common cause by covenanting together to fulfill a vision and mission. They also commit to a community (each other), and this partnership creates an environment of grace and mutual bonding as they purpose to walk together in peace and trust.

In any team ministry, it is normal to encounter a creative tension between the individual and the community. But the diversity of many projects can be brought into the unity of a larger vision that contextualizes these projects and is too big for one person to achieve.

It is wise to count the cost of being a team player, and this includes the conscious choice to focus on others’ positive attributes in light of a commitment to an ongoing relationship. A team requires the interpersonal chemistry of like-minded, sympathetic collegiality and mutual respect. When the members meet together, they encourage each other and “stimulate one another to love and good deeds” (Hebrews 10:24-25).

A Philosophy of Evangelism

Near the end of his life, Aldous Huxley, author of *Brave New World*, arrived at this conclusion: “It is a bit embarrassing to have been concerned with the human problem all one’s life and find at the end that one has no more to offer by way of advice than ‘Try to be a little kinder.’” Without God, humanistic answers to the questions of earthly existence ultimately reduce to naïve bromides and platitudes.

The Significance of Evangelism

Perspective

The Scriptures paint a sobering and realistic portrait of the human condition. People delude themselves with short-term aspirations and pleasures, but a brutally honest analysis of life on this side of the grave without hope on the other side would lead to despair. If death ends all, human life is a mere incident in an indifferent universe, a meaningless blip in cosmic time.

In “My Speech to the Graduates,” Woody Allen confronted this dilemma with ironic humor: “More than any other time in history, mankind faces a cross-roads. One path leads to despair and utter hopelessness. The other, to total extinction. Let us pray we have the wisdom to choose correctly. I speak, by the way, not with any sense of futility but with a panicky conviction of the absolute meaninglessness of human existence which could easily be misinterpreted as pessimism.” This ironic statement by Woody Allen is simultaneously humorous and tragic, depicting as it does the corporate and individual human condition without a transcendent and timeless foundation for meaning.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 tells us that God has set eternity in our hearts. Since this is so, people have deeply embedded desires for meaning and fulfillment that no natural happiness will satisfy. In *The Weight of Glory*, C. S. Lewis observed that “Almost our whole education has been directed to silencing this shy, persistent, inner voice; almost all our modern philosophies have been devised to convince us that the good of man is to be found on this earth.” Someone noted that while people in our culture are reading the *Times*, we should be reading the eternities. The more we develop a biblical perspective, the clearer we see the true emptiness and hopelessness of people without Christ.

Purpose

Those who have been found by Jesus know that life does have a purpose. But even believers tend to forget the *important* because of the clamor of the urgent. Like the Israelites who disbelieved God at Kadesh Barnea and wandered in the wilderness as the years raced by, our lives can become a wilderness of routine and of crowded schedules. While the urgent tasks call for immediate attention, we can overlook the important things, since they can always be deferred. We rationalize our postponement of the important by letting the good become the enemy of the best.

We need a heart of wisdom (Psalm 90:12); if we blind ourselves to reality, our whole value system will be distorted (“As if you could kill time without injuring eternity”—Thoreau). The eternal is what gives meaning to the temporal. It is when we live in the light of our true destiny that we see our calling and purpose from a biblical perspective. Instead of asking, “What will I leave behind me?” it is better to ask, “What am I going to send ahead?” As ambassadors of Christ, we have been entrusted with a ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:16-21) in a lost and dying world.

The Lord Jesus summarized the purpose of His earthly life in these impassioned statements: “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. . . . For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Luke 19:10; Mark 10:45). When we resonate with our Lord’s purpose, we lay hold of an enduring legacy.

In the discussion of discipleship we saw that the purpose of our earthly sojourn as “aliens and strangers” (1 Peter 2:11) is spiritual growth and reproduction. We are called to

growing conformity with Christ, and the trials and obstacles of this life are designed to produce Christlike character as we learn to depend more and more on Him. We are also called to the sublime privilege of reproducing the life of Christ in others. God has seen fit to use ordinary people like us to accomplish His extraordinary work of creating eternal life where formerly there was darkness and death. It would have been easy for Him to communicate the word of life directly to those whom He foreknew, but He entrusted us instead with the priceless message of the Good News. What greater calling can we have than to be used by the living God as spiritual obstetricians and pediatricians?

Priority

Human works quickly erode and evaporate, but the works we invite the eternal God to do in and through us abide forever. Scripture urges us to invest in eternity by making God’s purposes our highest priority. In His parting words to His disciples, Jesus strongly stressed the priority of spiritual multiplication (Matthew 28:19-20 and Acts 1:8). Seeking the lost was central to our Lord’s own teaching and ministry (Luke 15), and He wanted this to be a central thrust in the lives of His followers.

This desire to reach the lost was also the heartbeat of the teaching and example of the apostle Paul (see 1 Corinthians 9:19-27 and 2 Corinthians 5:16-21). At the end of his life he told Timothy that he had fought the good fight and finished the course (2 Timothy 4:7-8). Like Jesus, he set about his Father’s business by making a priority of seeing others enter the kingdom. He even went so far as to say that he could be willing to be accursed if it would mean the salvation of his Jewish kinsmen (Romans 9:1-3). Many believers are not willing to go across the street for their unsaved friends. Unless evangelism is a priority in our lives, it is unlikely that it will even be a part of our lives.

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