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Staying Positive in a Negative World (Excerpt)

By H.G. BISHOP YOUSSEF

How does one stay positive in a negative, imperfect world? To do so, one must start by coming into reconciliation with negativism and imperfection. Peace is not an inherent quality of imperfection. That is why those who constantly try to make their life situation perfect live in unrest. The desire to live in peace and a state of positivism often conflicts with the need for absolute perfection particularly in an imperfect world of imperfect human beings. For example, in our daily various endeavors more often than not, we face a lot of hindrances and oppositions and end up feeling like we have fought a lost battle. When such unsatisfactory situations overwhelm us, we lose contentment and gratefulness, and the result is discouragement and dissatisfactions. Negativism is not meant to be part of our being. Instead we get allured to and ensnared by it through our thoughts and deeds. This happens when we get preoccupied with the affairs of others and constantly compare ourselves to someone else and thus invite negativity in our life. Discovering the positive side of life helps to uncover the perfections that preexisted therein. What is the remedy to get rid of negativism?

A. Develop Compassion "*And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth'*" (Exodus 34:6). Compassion for others is something every Christian needs to feel and possess. It is acquired by putting yourself in someone else's shoe taking the focus off of yourself, your family, your family's needs, and your personal thoughts. By taking the "you" out of the scenario, and instead of harboring negative thoughts about another person, you will be able to look at "their" options in life and benefit from them. It will help us come to understand that they too have the same problems, life worries, and circumstances. Compassion is something you develop over time and with concentrated, conscious effort. It is a call to action and change in thinking.

B. Evaluate Things Against Time Ask yourself "will it matter a year from now?" In the Old Testament holy Book of Ecclesiastes, the wise King Solomon said "*And further, my son, be admonished by these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh*" (Ecclesiastes 12:12). Life is not "more is better". Life is not quantity unending, a constant emergency nor a constant problem to be solved. When approaching a negative situation, ask yourself whether it would matter a year from now; whether it is so earth shattering to require so much upheaval or whether I am making it more important than it really is. Chances are a year from now you are not going to care or even remember the details of the problematic situation. Laugh at yourself when you take things far too seriously. Instead of using that energy to be upset and hold angry grudges drop that feeling of being overwhelmed, get past the obstacle of your unhappiness and spend time in prayer and meditation. Such practices will certainly make you feel nearer to the uplifting nature of the Heavenly life. "Life is not fair". Heaven, but not the world, is fair and perfect. When life is not fair we should be encouraged to do our best to improve our own lives or the world as a whole. But, to feel pity is wrong. Pity is a self defeating emotion. Replace it with compassion. Compassion for others and for your situation will move you to action.

C. Practice Humility "*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up*" (James 4:10). Humility requires practice and concentration especially when confronting those who constantly seek to rob you of your positive attitude. Athenagoras (c. 175) teaches, "What, then, are the teachings in which we Christians are brought up? 'I say to you, Love your enemies; bless those that curse you. Pray for those who persecute you.'" . And do it with a smile. Humility and inner peace go hand in hand. A humble person does not need to prove themselves to others. Humility and calmness impact the soul with peace. Trying all the time to convince others of our correct point of view takes a great deal of energy especially when we are always met with opposition. Sometimes it requires bragging about ourselves in order to convince people of our worth and to sway them to adopt our ways. Who wants to expend this amount of energy over matters that many times are trivial in themselves? Ask yourself "will it earn me a Heavenly reward?" We are called alike as children of God and as children of promise. God does not judge us by outward appearance or circumstance. How we chose to live, whether with a positive or negative attitude, is up to us.

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UPCOMING RETREATS AT ST. MINA'S – 2011

September 29 – October 1

October 6 – October 8

October 17 – October 19

November 24-25

Retreat

Group Retreat

Individual Retreat

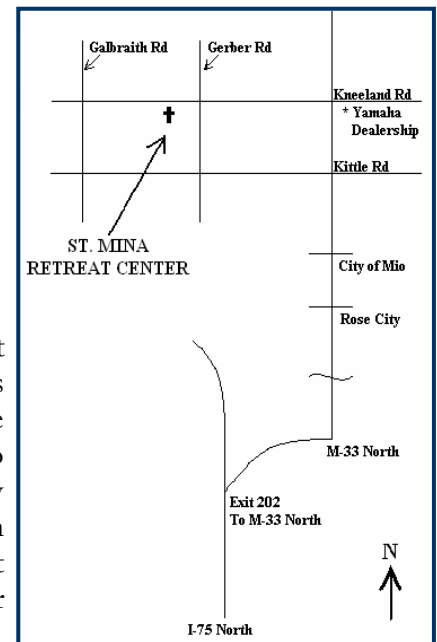
Commemoration of the Feast of St. Mina

WHAT'S NEW AT ST. MINA'S RETREAT CENTER...

MIDDLE SCHOOL RETREAT

JUNE 23 -25, 2011

For the 4th time, a group of 39 middle school youth, along with 10 servants spent a great time at St. Mina Retreat Center. This year's theme was "Fearing God and Feeling His Presence". We had open discussions with Abouna where we talked about many of the problems and situations that we as middle school youth face. Everyone was able to share their thoughts and the new servants helped a lot by adding in their input. The new servants were so much fun; they made a jeopardy game for us that allowed us to learn about our church. They also organized basketball, volleyball and soccer games for us. At night we prayed Asheya followed by Tasbeha. After Tasbeha we would gather together around the camp fire and roast marshmallows and sing spiritual songs. We also had a Liturgy and had the chance to go rafting on the Ausable River. Even though we are in three different grades, we had the chance to come together during our time in the retreat center in unity. We are looking forward to the next time we will all go to the retreat center.



OTHER NEWS... A new building is under construction at St. Mina's Retreat Center. We seek your prayers for the completion of this project and also offer you the chance to share in the in the blessing of finishing this wonderful effort. A DVD is available commemorating all the events at the St. Mina Retreat Center and is available at the fundraising table in St. Mary's church.

If you know anyone who is not currently receiving this newsletter and would like to receive it, please send their information to info@stminaretreatcenter.org