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 Subject: Fwd: The Torture Rack

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Subject: The Torture Rack

X-Mailer: Juno 5.0.33

From: David A MESSER <andrulius1@juno.com>

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Dear Friends,

I was seeking a good subject to grab your attention. Hope it worked. I tell you what, it feels like we have had our faith on God's stretching rack and sometimes, yes, it feels like torture. BUT, God never does anything to hurt us or damage us in the long run. It is more like a Doctor stretching a bone that is too short. The end result will be a much easier, and much less painful walk. God so wants us to walk in His Spirit and to experience the abundant life that we can have in Him, but alas, we're so scared of the pain (or is it that we don't trust the Doctor?) that many will not even make an appointment. I read something terrific this morning in my devotional Bible study. Dr. Jim Berg (Changed Into His Image) was asking young people what held them back from surrendering their lives to God. Many gave answers like "If I did that I'd never have a nice home, car, clothes, friends etc." or "I'm afraid He'd make me be a missionary or a minister and I'd have to sit around all day reading a Bible." Basically, they thought that giving their lives to God would be a big mistake and He would ruin their chances for a good, happy, fun life. HA! What a joke. I can hear wisdom laughing (Prov. 1). If God wants to ruin your life, believe me, He does not have to wait till you give it to Him. He can go ahead and ruin it right now. What foolish children we can be. If you have never given your life and your will to GOD, (your Maker who loves you more than anyone could ever love you), let me encourage you to STOP right now and JUST DO IT!! Pray and say, "Lord, please forgive me for my lack of trust in YOU (it is basically idolatry, worship of self, to think we can do better than God with our lives). Please, Lord, take my will and my life from this day forward." It is the only reasonable thing to do with your life (Rom. 12:1-2). I've found my life to be quite fun, good and full of adventure. NOT DULL at all!! If I've sounded whiny at times, it has been my old, ungrateful sin nature talking. I know I've been blessed and there is nothing more fun than being God's child, having sweet fellowship with His other children (especially if they have already given their lives to Him)

and helping others get adopted into His family. COME ON, lay aside those weights of unbelief and fear of man and GIVE YOURSELF TO GOD! Love Him. Get to know Him. Listen to Him, and serve Him. You will NEVER regret it!

Ok, I had to get that off my proverbial chest. It was burning me. So, what has been going on with us? Good question. We've done a bit of travel to report to more of our supporting churches. We enjoy these times tremendously. We do long to see more believers who are willing to step out and say, "Lord, here I am, please use me!", but we are very encouraged by those that we do see who are doing this. We pray for you that you will remember to get your strength and power from the Lord daily so that your ministries can be truly effective. Please pray this for us as well. We are growing more and more aware of our complete dependance upon Him. In the next couple of weeks we will be involved in a VBS in Manassas, Va (Berean Baptist Church) and a week of camp in Maryland. We are looking forward to these times that God is giving us to challenge the young people to KNOW CHRIST and to FOLLOW HIM! Pray for the Holy Spirit's power in us and for hearts to be tender to His working. We long to see the kingdom advance.

The news from the Ivory Coast (Cote d'Ivoire) is good. Praise the Lord that MANY missionaries are returning. The rebels and the government have officially declared the war over and are working toward disarmament. We plan to return in January of 2004. This is not set in stone. We have seen many times that God's time is not always our time and HIS time is perfect. So, we plan, knowing that He can change it. We do, however, desire to return at that time and we know the believers in San Pedro desire us to come to them. We have set our face to go to San Pedro and unless the Holy Spirit closes the door, we will be there.

We do have some needs which we are bringing before the Lord and you. We are trying to do our part as well, but the needs seem a bit big for us. OK, they are huge for us. We have sold our vehicle in Africa and used that money to pay for our plane tickets to return home. This leaves us with no car in Africa. We have talked about this and prayed about it for some time now and will continue to do so. The original plan was to use love offerings to save up for a car. For some reason (does this ever happen to you?) things just seem to keep coming up that require us to use the love gifts. We are thankful to the Lord for the love gifts as they have always been there when we needed them (like when our car broke down twice this past month costing a total of \$900.00). I believe perhaps the Lord is not allowing us to save the love gifts so that HE can provide the car we need thus bringing glory to HIMSELF (and not to us and our good financial planning). Of course we do believe in planning!, don't get me wrong. So, the second plan is for Andy to get a part time job (one that will allow him to travel and report) in order to pay off our last car (the one we sold in Africa) quickly and be able to save up for another car. Let me tell you, there is not really enough time between now and Jan. for this to happen. He is going to go on with the plan, but we are praying much. The question is, should we stay here until we have enough money to buy the car? (and we feel we should also have enough money to pay for passage out of Africa if we have to leave again, God forbid), or should we just go on to Africa and trust the Lord.

We know that if He chose to NOT give us a car, we would have a hard time out there, but maybe there would be lessons He wants to teach us. These are not easy decisions. I know many of you face tough decisions in your

lives and in your ministries, so you should be able to pray for us with understanding. That is what we ask. Please pray for us to have wisdom and to seek godly counsel (which we plan to do). Pray for us to be frugal with the money that God gives us. Pray for our faith to grow and for us to trust our God more and more. We pray this for many of you as well.

Thank you so much for your love and prayers for us. Thank you for sticking with us even when, perhaps you have seen areas where we need to change and grow. We are amazed at God's love toward us through you. We desire your faith to be strong and your life to be full.

Much love in Christ,  
Andy and Becky Messer