

## Living Freely and Lightly

**T**alk about Christian living can be embarrassingly timid, palpably judgmental, or elusively abstract. But as a rule we sense a big gap between “what is” and “what ought to be.”

Perhaps that’s why we are mostly quiet on the subject. Ideals about Christian character or prescriptions for holy living can weigh us down, hanging over us like a dark cloud or eluding us as we struggle to keep our heads above water coping with life’s daily demands.

Not so for Mother Teresa of Calcutta who inspired holy living. “I have found the paradox,” she said, “that if I love until it hurts, then there is no hurt, but only more love.” Love, freedom, and joy were persistent yet counterintuitive themes as she made clean beds and extended a healing touch of compassion to the sick and offered food for body and soul to the hungry. More than one visitor was confounded by the community’s radiant joy in the midst of desperate suffering and back-breaking hospitality.

But Jesus promised: “My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase makes it plain: “Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly” (Matthew 11:28-39 *Message*).

We won’t play down how important it is to choose life over death. Shaping our character around the means of grace and following Jesus requires paying attention and making decisions to grow in how we know, love, and serve God. The contributors in this issue of *Circuit Rider* offer clues and pose questions that can help us do that work.

But isn’t the heart of the matter of Christian character learning to love with the heart of Jesus Christ? We’re called most of all to stop talking, be silent, and open ourselves to the Spirit. Mother Teresa said: “The fruit of silence is prayer, the fruit of prayer is faith, the fruit of faith is love, the fruit of love is service, the fruit of service is peace.” May the peace of Christ be with you.

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