

THE LAKE

Early one morning, a tour group consisting of 27 people boarded a bus and headed off for a lake. (Picture yourself as one of the group.) After driving for about three hours, they arrived to a lake. As the group exited the bus, they soaked in the surroundings. It was beautiful beyond their expectations. The sky was blue with perfect cloud formation. The air was brisk and still. Only the sound of birds was audible. The water looked amazing. It was crystal clear and smooth as glass.

When the last of their equipment was taken off the bus, the group's leader announced that he had to go to town to make preparations for them. He placed two people in charge of the group while he was away: a captain and a co-captain. "You have everything you need. There is plenty of food and beverages, music, a grill and countless games. I don't know how long it will take me. Listen to the captains in charge, and please do not go into the lake," the leader instructed as he drove away.

As the day progressed, the people began to enjoy themselves. They grilled steaks, hamburgers, and chicken. They also enjoyed salads and all kinds of fruits and vegetables. They played music and a few people danced. The younger people played volleyball and football; while the older people played board games. After a while, one of volleyball players looked toward the other end of the lake and saw five people in the water playing games.

"Hey, look over there!" the volleyball player shouted. Two guys were carrying girls on their shoulders playing water games. He stopped playing and started walking toward the smaller group. The co-captain reminded him to stay out of the water. "I'm just going to warn them," he said as he continued walking to the other end of the lake.

By midday, the temperature reached over 90° degrees Fahrenheit. The lake looked very inviting. Someone pointed to the volleyball player in the water engaging in a game with the small group at the other end of the lake. The co-captain walked over and stated that the water was not safe and asked the volleyball player to get out. He said, "No way! This water is great. The locals said people swim here all the time. Dude, you have to try it." Before long, the co-captain was drawn in. As others in the group saw the co-captain swimming, they got in as well.

Meanwhile, at the other end of the lake an older gentleman walked over to the captain and proposed, "The leader probably doesn't want to be responsible if someone drowns. I am a good swimmer." The captain quickly confirmed that the leader said not to go into the lake. The gentleman concluded

that the leader probably wanted to avoid the risk of someone drowning. He told the captain that he would sign a waiver. Then the gentlemen took off his clothes and jumped in. He sounded convincing, so others joined him.

By 5:00 P.M. all were lured into lake except the captain, a young girl in a wheelchair and a 12-year-old boy. The boy was standing at the edge of the water throwing rocks. The girl in the wheelchair looked at the boy and whispered, "It sure looks like fun. Would you push my chair to the edge of the water so I can put my feet in? It is so hot." The boy had a hard time pushing the chair in the mixture of grass and sand. After struggling for 20 minutes, he sat down beside the wheelchair. "There must be another way," he said. The captain walked over, "What are you doing?" The girl whispered, "I want to put my feet in the water. Can you help us?" He sternly looked at them, "The leader said we must not go into the water!" The boy stood and said, "Everyone else is inside playing and having fun!" While they were heavily engrossed in their conversation, the leader drove up unnoticed. As he stepped out of the bus, a look of genuine sadness was on his face. He walked up to the remaining three.

Others got out of the water to meet him with smiles as they walked toward him dripping water. Before anyone could speak, he said in a commanding voice, "I told you not to go into the lake. You were given everything you needed. Why didn't you wait for my return?" The older gentleman exclaimed, "We signed a waiver in case anyone drowned so you would not be responsible." The leader continued, "I went to prepare a place for you with things you cannot begin to imagine. Yet, you couldn't wait? (John 14:2-3) Why didn't you gather the equipment in preparation for my return?" The volleyball player shouted, "You were gone so long and it felt like 100° degrees Fahrenheit. We didn't know when you were coming back. The local people said the water is good." "But I told you not to go into the lake. It is toxic. Why did you listen to other voices? Your eyes are already showing signs of infection." Looking at the three he said, "Only these can go with me. The rest of you must go to the infirmary. There is no cure for the toxic effects. Perhaps in the infirmary you can be comforted."

He who has an ear, let him hear and understand. The Lake represents a besetting sin. Sin is very tempting, but we must overcome it. You see, it seemed as though the leader was gone for an eternity. He went ahead to prepare accommodations for the group. There were 27 people in the group; however, only 3 (a remnant) were able to go with the leader. Similarly, a remnant of the church will be taken when Jesus returns.

As in Noah's day, people were going back and forth living their lives until the flood came. So it will be when Jesus returns. On an ordinary day, he will return to retrieve his people. The Bible tells us that if the time is not shortened, even the elect will be deceived. It is a wise servant who is watching and ready. Those who wait expectantly for Christ will be blessed. (Isaiah 30:18) Time is in God's hands. Reach out to him and he will strengthen you so you can overcome. How will he find you if he returns today? Will you be one of the people who went into the lake enjoying sin, or will you be part of the remnant? It is an individual choice.

We must live our lives as people destined to be in the presence of God. Holiness and righteousness are not automatic, so let us live our Christian faith with purpose.