

T. F. TENNEY



WATER
from an
OLD WELL



Water from an Old Well

by T. F. Tenney

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CONTENTS

Introduction	9
What's Hiding in Your Well?	15
Priming the Pump	29
Stagnant Water	39
Not Just Ankle Deep—Water to Swim In!	51
Water Flows as One Body	67
What Is Truth?	79
When Your Well Seems Dry	91
Some Water Is Only There to Be Passed Through	105

1 WHAT'S HIDING IN YOUR WELL?

Character—Attitudes

Several years ago a most heartrending real life occurrence came to my attention. A little three-year-old girl was struck by an automobile one block from her home. She died as a result of her injuries. Immediately, an attempt was made to place the blame. Someone had to be at fault. The last time her mother had seen her was in the fenced yard, safe from the heavy traffic passing in the street. Standing on her tiptoes, the child was able to open the front gate, walk down the sidewalk, and dash into the street where the tragedy occurred.

It was someone's opinion that the tragedy could have been avoided if the child had not gone to the corner. Another individual thought she would be alive if she just had not stepped into the street. Finally, the ultimate conclusion was that if she just had not opened the gate she would not have been killed. If she had never opened the gate, she would have never walked down the sidewalk;

she would have never gone to the curb; and she would have never dashed into the street. The problem came when the gate was opened!

As I meditated and mused upon what happened, I could not get away from the truth at hand. The last assessment seemed to be the best. The real problem occurred when the gate was opened.

If ever there was a day we need to be “guardians of the gate” it is today. What may appear to be a little insignificant act can turn into a spiritual tragedy. Let’s take a closer look at a few people who opened the gate. The past can be a great teacher.

“And the LORD said unto Cain, Why are thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door” (Genesis 4:6-7). Just beyond the door—or gate—tragedy lurked. When Cain did not heed the warning—but instead opened the gate—jealousy entered and murder followed hard on its heels. There never would have been a murder if Cain had not opened his heart to the spirit of jealousy. It is not enough to say Cain was the first murderer. He was a gate-opener. The crux of the matter is, he should have never opened the gate to illicit emotions.

The same is true with King Saul. He was head and shoulders above all of Israel, a mighty leader of Israel and the armies of God—but he opened the gate of a bad attitude. It was the second verse of a song that got to him. He could smile with glee as the women sang, “Saul has killed his thousands.” But when the second verse was

sung, “David has killed his ten thousands,” his countenance changed and the gate was opened to bitterness and jealousy. *Do not let bitterness pollute your well.* (See I Samuel 18:7.) No

wonder the writer of Hebrews warned us, “lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled” (Hebrews 12:15). Saul failed God and eventually ended up in the house of a witch. Where did it all begin? It started the day he could not allow another man to be praised. Do not let bitterness pollute your well.

Here is the “well” principle: “Rejoice with them that do rejoice” (Romans 12:15). It is easy for us to weep with those that weep. What do we do, though, when someone else gets the promotion that should have been ours? Can we rejoice? Our ability to rejoice can be the latch that keeps the gate of bitterness shut. What tremendous results can swing on such small hinges.

The wise man said in Proverbs 16:32: “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.” A man who can rule his spirit is greater than a man who can take a city? In Old Testament days, a city could not be taken until one of two things happened—either the walls had to be torn down or the gate had to be battered open.

There was, however, a very subtle third way. Someone within the city—a traitor, a spy—could slip to the gate at night and open it. The city fell only when the walls were down or the gates were open. The wise man tells us that when we lose control of our temper and our