

# **SPIRITUALITY**

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# PREFACE

No matter how complicated, educated or sophisticated we may be, or how simple we may be, we must all become Christians in exactly the same way. As the kings of the earth and the mighty of the earth are born in exactly the same way physically as the simplest man, so the most intellectual person must become a Christian in exactly the same way as the simplest person. This is true of all men everywhere for all time. There are no exceptions. Jesus said "Except a man be born again of water and the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." And again He said, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me."

It is impossible to begin living the Christian life or to know anything of true spirituality before one becomes a Christian. In one way physical birth is the most important part in our physical lives because we are not alive in the external world until we have been born. But physical birth is only the beginning. After we are born, the important thing is the living of our lives in all their relationships, possibilities and capabilities. The same is true of the new birth. In one way, the new birth is the most important thing in our spiritual lives because we are not Christians until we have come to God through Jesus Christ in this way. At the same time, after the new birth comes the living of the Christian life. This is the area of sanctification from the time of the new birth through this present life until Jesus comes or until we die.

The theme of the 1977 Abilene Christian University Bible Lectureship was "Seeking the Lost." It seemed appropriate to the Lectureship Committee that the 1978 theme be "Spirituality." Just as it is possible for one to be born physically and never thereafter develop his full potential, so it is possible to be born spiritually and never develop one's potentials in this area of his life.

What does it mean to be spiritual? What does it mean to live a spiritual life? Surely externals are important, but they must never be most important. Unless the externals spring from hearts that are truly committed to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, they must be branded hypocrisy.

The Lectureship Committee believes that this is one of the most pressing issues facing the church in our generation. It is our hope that this Lectureship will call Christians everywhere to spiritual growth and development, and it is with that same fervent hope and prayer that this Lectureship volume is sent forth to continue to be a blessing to Christians as long as the world stands.

CARL BRECHEEN  
Lectureship Director

## **MAIN SPEECHES**



# DEVELOPING SPIRITUALITY

Harold Hazelip\*

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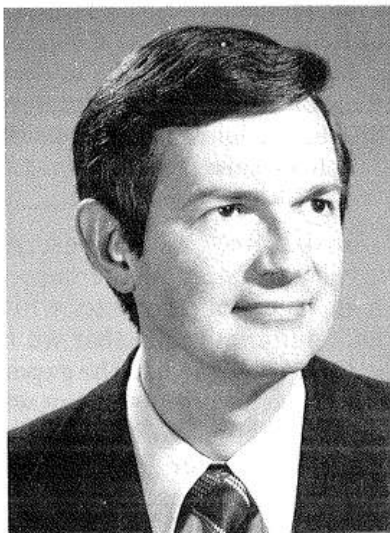
**Education:** Freed-Hardeman College, 1948. David Lipscomb College, 1950—B.A. Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, B.D., 1958. University of Iowa, Ph.D., 1967.

**Work:** Associate Professor of Christian Doctrine, Harding Graduate School, 1967. Dean and Professor of Christian Doctrine, 1972 to present.

**Ministry:** Central Church of Christ, Owensboro, Ky., 1949-1953. Taylor Blvd. Church of Christ, Louisville, Ky., 1954-64. Central Church of Christ, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 1964-67. Highland Street Church of Christ, Memphis, Tn., 1967-present.

**Herald of Truth:** Script Writer since 1971. Frequent guest on TV since 1972. Guest Radio Speaker, Summers 1973-74. Co-Speaker, Radio, 1975. Co-Speaker, TV, 1977-.

**Travel:** Visited 16 nations on Around the World Missions Tour, 1963; Preached in New Zealand, Australia, Singapore, Pakistan, Israel, France. Study tour in England and Scotland, 1966. Mission Tour to Germany and Spain, 1975. Preached in 25 states, including Alaska; frequently in Canada. Speaker on Lectureships of ACC, DLC, FHC, Harding, York, Columbia, Pepperdine, NCJC, OCC, LCC, ACU.



**Professional and Civic Work:** Past President of Forest Hill Civic Club, Forest Hill, Tenn. Past President: Germantown Kiwanis Club, Germantown, Tennessee. Member of: American Academy of Religion, Society of Church History.

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**Publications:** *Discipleship*, 1977.

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Josiah Royce once described man's life as a search for loyalty to an adequate cause. We all need to be delivered from the sub-plots to which we have given our lives unconditionally, so that we may open ourselves to God.

Everyone has had the experience of knowing a young man who was not promising but who later became an outstanding leader. When Thomas Edison was young, his teachers gave up on him. Later he would spend eighteen hours a day in his laboratory. The secret of such a change lies in new goals. When one sees the advantage of becoming a respectable husband, or a responsible businessman, a new motivation can mean the difference between life and death.

There are two ways to create the motivation for a spiritual life. One may describe sin in such realistic and ugly terms that its nature becomes repulsive and we avoid it. Or, he may plant a higher, nobler goal in the human spirit. Once we see ourselves as we are, and as we could be, the ideal becomes challenging. The man who loves his drink, or is greedy, may catch a picture of himself as a sober, generous person and learn to detest his present actions. A person with loose morals may see a happy home and realize that he cannot have both, and this insight stimulates a change of direction.

Christianity is primarily spiritual in its nature and impulses. Pagan religions often place emphasis on the satisfaction of sensual appetites. The Muslim view of heaven for the warrior who died in a defense of Islam was that he

would recline on a luxurious couch with ample supplies of food and drink, and be surrounded by beautiful darkeyed maidens (The Koran, Sura 52). Even the law of Moses, which had a spiritual purpose (Romans 7:14), accomplished its purpose primarily by outward ceremonies (Hebrews 9:10). Christianity's design is to make us spiritual beings.

### **A Spiritual Message**

This purpose is accomplished in a number of tangible ways. Spirituality is not left to be a "warm feeling." God's message to man through Christ appeals to our highest nature. Its purpose is to change us by a re-creation of the inward man (II Corinthians 5:17). "Therefore, putting away . . .," and "put on then . . ." are familiar instructions from Paul's letters to Christians (Ephesians 4:25; Colossians 3:12). The old nature is to be put away; a new orientation is born.

The message which is to produce this change does not appeal to the physical impulses of men. Its power is in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (I Corinthians 15:1-4). This approach was so contrary to Peter's desire that he rebuked the Lord for announcing it (Matthew 16:22). When Clovis the Frank first heard the story of the cross, he cried impetuously, "Oh, if only I had been there with my Franks!" Our human tendency, with Peter or with Clovis, is to fight back rather than to suffer. But the cross is the heart of a spiritual message which appeals to our highest instincts.

### **A Spiritual Birth**

I do not know why Nicodemus chose to come to Jesus by night. An interesting suggestion is that things are quite clear in the day, while a man does his work, leads his family and carries on a respectable existence. But when night comes, the anxiety which arises because something is missing which

constitutes the meaning of life becomes more severe. Nicodemus came seeking deeper insight into God's will for his own life.

He seemed astonished when Jesus told him he could not enter the kingdom except by being born again (John 3:3-5). As a ruler of the Jews, he would have been inclined to trust the privileges of being born a descendant of Abraham. Jesus' words at first suggested a physical birth to him. But Jesus had in mind a rebirth of the spirit of man.

### **A Spiritual Kingdom**

This birth brings us into a spiritual kingdom. While Jesus' contemporaries wanted him to become a physical king (John 6:15), he insisted upon the spiritual nature of his kingdom. It does not come with physical signs to be observed (Luke 17:20, 21). His "kingship" is not of this world (John 18:36). As Paul explained, "... the kingdom of God does not mean food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17).

Christ's kingdom is not measured in terms of physical geography or statistics. Its power comes from a different source. One of the dangers of the church becoming materially successful is that it may have little to say to people who have failed. The church does not so much *have* a mission or send out missionaries as it *is* a mission and its people are missionaries to bear the stripes of others instead of inflicting wounds. The kingdom does not exist simply for the spiritual nurture of its citizens as they become consumers of religion. It is Christ's mission to the world to promote spirituality among men.

### **Spiritual Blessings**

Another way God seeks to develop spirituality in us is through spiritual blessings. Jesus taught that physical



blessings come to the evil as well as the good (Matthew 5:45). The Psalmist wondered whether the evil were not especially blessed while the righteous suffer (Psalm 73:11-17). The suffering of the righteous while the wicked prosper is the burden of both Job and Habakkuk.

Jesus promised his disciples a joy which "no one will take . . . from you" (John 16:22) Paul praised God for having "blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing" (Ephesians 1:3). We will apparently have around our harbors within coming years an increasing number of "hovercraft" — craft that skim over sea and land without touching either. We are tempted in the midst of life's problems to take a "hovercraft" view of God, to decide that he sits in majesty above all of the uneven surfaces of life, that he skims over our experiences without being affected by them. But Jesus' promise of God's blessings for his children means that God cares for us.

### **Spiritual Worship**

Another evidence that Christianity is intended to develop spirituality in us is that God has designed worship upon a spiritual, not a sensual, base. Jesus told the Samaritan woman, "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). Each avenue of worship used in the early church was designed to praise God and edify the worshipper. There were psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:19). The contribution was given with purpose of heart (II Corinthians 9:7). The Lord's Supper does not satisfy our need for physical nourishment; it is a "participation in the body and blood of Christ" (I Corinthians 10:16). Preaching and prayer are just as obviously spiritual in their orientation.

Two reasons can be seen for this spiritual emphasis in worship. Man cannot worship an idea. He cannot address prayers to a great First Cause or Fountain of Values. We

simply cannot pray, "To Whom it may concern." Worship involves spiritual communion.

Worship also molds the human spirit. Man becomes like what he worships. The Psalms warn that idols are dumb, blind, deaf, they cannot walk or feel, and that "those who make them are like them" (Psalm 115:8; Psalm 135:18). Man becomes like his object of worship.

### **A Spiritual Life**

Christ's way of life is also designed to lead us from carnal desires and the limited spiritual tastes of the new babe in Christ to a mature Christian manhood or womanhood (I Corinthians 3:1-4). The fruit of the spirit is given a nine-fold description by Paul (Galatians 5:22). These traits have often been further subdivided into attitudes toward God, (love, joy, peace), toward other men (patience, kindness, goodness) and toward self (faithfulness, gentleness, self-control).

A Christian pursues God's will in his relations with others. C.E. Montague once complained that many people collect experiences as others collect stamps or coins. A new experience, such as becoming drunk, adds to the store. He warned that this is a messy philosophy and that life, like arithmetic, has its minus signs. One can be poorer for having had an additional experience.

The spiritual growth which takes place in the lives of some New Testament characters is amazing. The same John who proposed fire from heaven to destroy opponents (Luke 9:54) and requested the best seat in the kingdom (Mark 10:37), wrote the epistle of love — 1st John. John Mark returned from Paul's first missionary journey for an unworthy reason (Acts 13:13), but grew sufficiently for Paul to want his service in later years (II Timothy 4:11). Our spiritual life is one of growth (cf II Corinthians 3:18).

### Spiritual Goals

To this array of evidence that God is creating spirituality in us, Paul adds the mandate for us to set our minds on spiritual ideals (Colossians 3:1-4). Our lives are largely the outgrowth of our secret ambitions. Hawthorne illustrated this truth in *THE GREAT STONE FACE*. Ernest was the boy in the story who kept admiring the face which was imprinted in stone in his community and wondering who it represented. The townspeople could only tell him that someday a great leader would come to that community and would be recognized by his likeness to the great stone face. As the story ends, Ernest, who has admired the face so deeply, has himself become like it.

We are made for fellowship with God. True strength of character is created through this fellowship. John Ruskin once remarked, concerning the ease with which nature operates, that when we look at its works we do not say, "There is great *effort* here," but, "There is great *power* here." When people look at our lives individually or collectively, let us hope they will not be impressed by money, intellectual acumen, or organization, but by the power of God living in us.

There is an old legend that Satan was once asked what he missed most since his fall from heaven. His reply was, "The sound of the trumpets in the morning!" The vigor, the resourcefulness, the joy which comes from fellowship with God is what all of us would miss most and yet what none of us needs to be without.

### FOOTNOTES

\*This same lesson, basically, is included in Dr. Hazelip's book of sermons, *Discipleship*, published by Biblical Research Press, Abilene, Texas, in 1977.

# PAUL'S FORMULA FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Joe R. Barnett

Joe R. Barnett was born on March 11, 1933, San Angelo, Texas. He graduated from Midland High School, Midland, Texas, 1951 and Abilene Christian University, B.S. Degree, 1955. He was listed in *Who's Who in American Colleges and Universities*, 1955. He received Doctor of Laws Degree from Pepperdine University, 1973.

He has worked with four congregations: Anton Church of Christ, Anton, Texas, 1956-58; Cactus Drive Church of Christ, Levelland, Texas, 1958-64; Central Church of Christ, Amarillo, Texas, 1964-1968; and Broadway Church of Christ, Lubbock, Texas, 1968-present.

He is listed in latest release of *Who's Who in Texas*. He is also a member of Board of Trustees of Lubbock Christian College, Board of Lubbock Christian Schools, Board of Trustees of Pepperdine University, and the Board of Trustees of *Restoration Quarterly*. He is editor of *20th Century Christian* magazine and Senior Editor for *Power For Today*. He is staff writer for *Action* and Vice President for Christian Minister's Association, a non-profit organization for preacher retirement benefits.

He is a member of Lubbock Rotary Club, Lubbock Civic



Centers Board, Civic Lubbock, Inc. and International Platform Association.

He has co-authored two books with John D. Gipson, minister of Sixth and Izard Church of Christ in Little Rock, Arkansas. He is author of book, *Just For Today*. He is founder and Director of Pathway Evangelism, Inc., a non-profit organization for distribution of religious literature. He has written 25 booklets and over 200 shorter articles.

He is host of a weekly television program, "A Better Life" that is aired on KCBD-TV, Lubbock and KSWO-TV, Roswell, New Mexico each Sunday morning. The 30-minute telecast receives the highest rating of any religious program in the viewing area, with a viewing audience of 30,000 per week.

In November, 1976 he joined the Herald of Truth television team. Barnett, Dr. Batsell Barrett Baxter, and Dr. Harold Hazelip will produce 39 television programs in 1977 which will be aired on about 100 TV stations.

He has delivered theme speeches on lectureship programs at Lubbock Christian College, Oklahoma Christian College, Pepperdine University, Harding College, Fort Worth Christian College, York Christian College, Michigan Christian College, Columbia Christian College, Abilene Christian University, Alabama Christian College, David Lipscomb College, Atlantic Christian Schools, Ohio Valley College, and Great Lakes Christian College.

He married Alyce Gaines in 1955. They have two sons, John Hugh, 18 and Douglas Richard, 16.

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Do you like the way you look? Is there anything about your looks that you would change if you could? Most of us, if we had a choice, would be taller or shorter—would change the shape of our nose or the color of our eyes—or make other changes.

Another question. Do you like the way you look spiritually? Are there any changes you would like to make in your spiritual life?

I remember reading about a Pharisee who seemingly was completely satisfied with himself. He said:

God, I thank thee that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get.

Luke 18:11, 12

Totally satisfied. Regarding himself as the perfect exhibit of spiritual perfection.

Most of us aren't quite like that. Oh, we may not be as hard on ourselves as we are on others; may think we're better than average; may rationalize our wrongs while poking critically at others. But still, in our more sober and reflective moments, we are aware of our spiritual imperfections and deficiencies. And we'd like to be better.

I think the apostle John was feeling that when he said, "See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God" (1 John 3:1). He was humbled and amazed.

And while we stand with John, breathless at the very thought of God's goodness, he carries us a step higher, pointing to the glorious fulfillment of our spiritual destiny, saying, ". . . we shall be like him . . ." (1 John 3:2).

Beautiful! But the thing that bothers us is that John says, "*when he appears* we shall be like him. . . ." We don't want to wait until he appears. What about the here and now? What about these present weaknesses, inconsistencies, and sins which assault us?

Well, Peter had something to say about that. In the very last verse of his very last letter he advised: "But *grow* in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). We don't have to be content with the way we are. We can grow!

Paul sounded the same note. In fact, he even gave us a formula for such growth. Listen!

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another. . . .

2 Corinthians 3:18

Changed into his likeness! Christ-likeness! Is that possible? Yes. It is not, however, done in one quick, simple transaction. And that's what trips us up. When we decide we want something we want it right now. We don't want to wait.

I often visit with people who are punishing themselves unmercifully because they are not already full grown spiritually. I appreciate that spirit. But, they would find life much more fulfilling if they could only realize that growth to full spiritual stature is not an instant happening.

Spiritual growth is a progressive operation of two simultaneous processes—the *process of beholding* and the *process of becoming*.

### **The Process of Beholding**

“And we all, with unveiled face, *beholding* the glory of the Lord. . . .” There is a way for us to behold the glory of the Lord. God can be real to us. How do we behold his glory?

By searching the Scriptures. The Scriptures are given primarily to reveal God. Nothing reveals God as clearly as His Word. For this reason that Book should be read, studied, and shared.

A minister, 86 years old, said:

I've been blessed with a long and happy ministry. I was blessed with a vivid historic imagination and I made the most of it in my preaching. I would preach on Abraham, and the people would compliment me, saying I had made Abraham so real that it was as if they

had been in his physical presence and heard him speak. Encouraged by those compliments I would prepare a sermon on Isaac; then on Jacob. And they would continue to compliment me.

When I preached on Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, they would tell me that they felt they had made a visit in that little Bethany home. And I thought I was doing the very best of which I was capable.

But when I had been preaching for many years I came to realize that the Bible was not given as a revelation of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—but as a revelation of the *God* of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Bible was not given as a revelation of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus—but as a revelation of the *Savior* of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

Now when I am through preaching on Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob, I want to know above all else that the people have seen the hand of *God* in the life of Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. And when I have preached on Mary, Martha and Lazarus, I want to be sure that the people have seen the *Savior* of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

Yes! That's what the Bible is for—to show us God—to show us the Savior. If we are to *behold* his glory we must spend time with the Book.

Another thing. It takes *time* to behold his glory. Centuries ago Isaiah said, “. . . they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength” (Isaiah 40:31). One of the reasons we do not behold his glory is that we *rush* into his presence, and then *rush* out again. Frustration is upon our lives because we give God so little opportunity to speak to us through his Word. We don't know how to be still and listen.

I wish I could lay upon your heart the absolute necessity of a daily “Quiet Time” with God. Nothing would bless your life more. A study of the text at hand reveals that our



standing before God "with unveiled face" is a reference to Moses' repetitious appearing before God, then the people, then God, then the people . . . (Exodus 34). When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the Ten Commandments "the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God." When he finished talking with the people "he put a veil on his face; but whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he took the veil off."

We are faced with something like that. Day-by-day we deal with people. And day-by-day we must go back into the presence of Christ if we are to become like him. Each time we stand in his presence we take on a little of his glory. Looking at him changes us. You cannot survive spiritually without spending time with him.

How can people experiencing similar circumstances be so different? How can two persons sit in the same communion service and one be lifted to heights of gratitude and praise while the other sits in bitter examination of his brother? How can two persons in the same home pass through the same domestic circumstances and one mellow, become sweet and see Christ in all circumstances, while the other grows sullen, sour, bitter, critical?

The answer must be that one is daily coming into the presence of the Lord in meaningful "Quiet Time" while the other is not. For the Christian who is growing into the likeness of Christ, life is a continuous going into the presence of God from the presence of men, and coming out into the presence of men from the presence of God.

Such was the rhythm of Jesus' life. From those extremely busy moments of serving the needs of people he "... went out to a lonely place, and there he prayed" (Mark 1:35). And from that solitude he went back into service.

He advised the same pattern for his disciples: service . . . quiet . . . service . . . quiet. From those emotion-packed moments which brought the death of John the Baptist, Jesus

said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a lonely place, and rest a while" (Mark 6:31). And from that lonely place they moved back into serving the needs of the people, feeding a multitude.

From the feeding of that multitude Jesus "went into the hills to pray" (Mark 6:46). And from there to the rescue of his troubled disciples. Always the same pattern.

Such is the rhythm of the effective Christian life. It is an alternate meeting with God in the secret place and serving men in the public place. As someone has said, "the secret of religion is religion in secret." If we are to be successful in living the Christian life we must often be alone with God.

Take time to be holy, The world rushes on;  
Spend much time in secret With Jesus alone;  
By looking to Jesus, Like Him thou shalt be;  
Thy friends in thy conduct His likeness shall see.

### **The Process of Becoming**

"And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, *are being changed* into his likeness. . . ."

If we are diligent in *beholding* him, Paul says we will *become* like him. Several things should be noticed concerning this process.

*First, the change is inevitable.* The reason I urge you to have your daily "Quiet Time" with God is that when you do you are going to be "changed into his likeness." It's inevitable. It won't happen in one miraculous "sweep you off your feet" motion. But it will happen!

*Second, the change may be unconscious on our part.* Look again at the background to the verses of our text. Moses had spent a long time with God on Mount Sinai. When he came down and confronted the people, there was such radiance upon his face the people were afraid to come near him. But "Moses did not know that the skin of his face

shone. . . .” You see, a change had taken place in him, but he was unconscious of it.

That’s often the way. When Peter and John were on trial before the Sanhedrin for preaching the gospel, they probably didn’t realize the extent to which they were reflecting Christ. But their persecutors “recognized that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

You may have taken on more of the image of Christ than you think. Occasionally I talk with someone who is distressed over his lack of spiritual growth. Often it is someone I’ve visited with before. And the amazing thing is that while he feels there has been *no growth*, I see *amazing growth* since the last time I visited with him.

We may not be conscious of our spiritual development—or deterioration. But those around us know. It’s reflected in our attitudes, words, actions . . . even facial expressions. If you spend time beholding Christ, you will come more and more to be like him, even though the change may be unconscious.

*Third, the change is gradual.* The expression, “. . . being changed into his likeness *from one degree of glory to another*,” reflects gradualness. Spiritual growth takes time. Maturity is not quickly developed.

I have never understood the parent who expects his child to exercise adult judgment when he is twelve. It takes time and experience to achieve mature judgment and discernment.

Nor do I understand our impatience with a “babe” in Christ. A newborn Christian is going to stumble sometimes—maybe even fall. That’s a painful, but natural, part of the growth process. A person doesn’t become a fully matured Christian in 90 days.

But growth is certain if we stay in touch with the Savior. Just as leaven silently and gradually leavens the whole loaf,

even so constant company with Jesus gradually changes us into his likeness.

Change, in either direction, is nearly always gradual. This is the reason the sweetest, most considerate, most lovable people in the world are those who are elderly. Also, the sourest, most critical, most contrary people in the world are those who are elderly. Whichever, it didn't happen overnight. The development of that personality was slow, perhaps almost imperceptible.

In just about every church there is that person who used to be sweet, optimistic, lovable. But not any more. Now he is pessimistic, grouchy, critical. Nothing pleases him. He doesn't like the decisions of the elders; doesn't like the sermons; doesn't like the program. In a word, he doesn't like anything! That cantankerous disposition didn't develop overnight. He changed gradually. And if he would take a careful look at his life and evaluate honestly, he would likely have to admit that he hasn't spent much private time with the Lord.

Conversely, there is that person who is sweet, congenial, cooperative, and loving. But it hasn't always been that way. There was a time when he was critical, easily angered, hard to get along with. How did such a change come about? Well, he has likely spent a lot of time with the Lord, beholding his glory and "being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another."

The apostle John is a dramatic illustration of this process. He is best known to us as the *Apostle of Love*. His gospel and his letters breathe the spirit of love. Early historians tell us that in his latter years he was the gentlest of men and repeatedly exhorted Christians to "love one another." Was he always like that? Hardly! In fact, when Jesus called John and his brother James to be apostles, he surnamed them "Boanerges, that is, sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17). They had a fiery temper. On one occasion they wanted to call fire

down from heaven and consume those who wouldn't receive Jesus. And Jesus had to rebuke them for that un-Christlike attitude (Luke 9:54, 55). But long association with Jesus changed John into the apostle best known for love. He was "changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another."

*Fourth, the change is true to pattern.* We are "changed into his likeness." Unless a conscious effort is made not to do so, we take on the color of our surroundings. The person who moves from one section of the country to another will soon be speaking with the accent of those with whom he associates.

This is the reason Paul carefully points us to the need of *beholding* Jesus. If we spend enough time looking at him, listening to him, falling in love with him, we will come to reflect him. We will be like him.

*Fifth, the change is within reach of all.* This is the most glorious part of the promise. And it may be the point where you find yourself in disagreement. Perhaps you are thinking, "I like what has been said and think it is generally true—but I'm weak, I'm not spiritual, I'll never be able to be like him."

Ah, my friend, look again! Paul says, "And *we all . . .* are being changed into his likeness. . . ." That's wonderful! This promise is not limited to those who are naturally pleasant and agreeable and "spiritually inclined." The meanest, ugliest, weakest, most un-Christlike person will find as he perseveres in "*beholding*" that he is also in the process of "*becoming*." Praise God!

That's the beautiful thing about Christianity—it is for every person; it has the power to change every person. I know someone is reading these words who is deeply grieved by his weakness. I wish you could know the deep-down struggles which have been experienced by that person you so much admire, that person whom you consider the ideal Christian. For if you could know the real story you would

likely find that there was an earlier time when he was so different; when he was weak and wicked and sinful. But he started beholding the Lord and over the years has become what he is today.

Thank God for the power to become something that you aren't today—the power to be “changed into his likeness.”

# THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

LeMoine G. Lewis

LeMoine G. Lewis was born in Midlothian, Texas, February 9, 1916, the son of P. G. and Anna Holland Lewis. He was graduated from Midlothian High School in 1932. He preached his first sermon in the Midlothian Church of Christ in August 1930 and was asked to preach each third Sunday of the month during his last two years in high school. He entered Abilene Christian College in the fall of 1932 and was graduated with the B.A. degree in the spring of 1936. He returned to ACC



the next year to take extra subjects that he wanted. After preaching for two years in Ardmore, Oklahoma, and two years in Snyder, Texas, he entered the Harvard Divinity School in the fall of 1941. He received the S.T.B. degree in 1944. From the spring of 1944 through the fall of 1949 he worked toward the Ph.D. in the history and philosophy of religion in Harvard University. While in Harvard he preached in Brookline, Massachusetts, Springfield, Vermont, and New London, Connecticut. He began teaching in Abilene Christian College in 1949. He was married to Shirley Harrell of the Class of 1945 in the summer of 1945. They have three children. He received the Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1959.

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Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, . . . and the curse, if you do not obey. . . . And when the Lord your God brings you into the land which you are entering to take possession of it, you shall set the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal.

Deut. 11:26-30

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What is the spiritual life? Can we define it? Describe it?

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

We not only recognize these first three verses of Psalms 1 as a description of the spiritual life, but we are awed by the picture. We are willing to be still and to behold it. But presently the Psalmist reclaims our attention. There is a reality to the spirit that cannot be grasped in one dimension.

We turn from hot to cold to grasp the meaning of temperature; from light to dark to probe the principle of illumination; from bad to good to comprehend the moral spectrum. In the last three verses, the Psalmist shows the other side of the coin:

The wicked are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of wicked will perish.



The Psalmist is standing between Gerizim and Ebal; he is pleading like Joshua: "Choose this day whom you will serve" (Joshua 24:15). Does not the Psalmist make it easy to choose the spiritual life? Such beauty! Such shame!

Over and over again the Bible paints these pictures. And we behold them both. We stand in awe before the godly; we fall in shame before the sinner, recognizing our own selves. In Jesus' day, we smote upon our breast and begged, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13). At Pentecost, we cried out, "Brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37)

And Peter said to us as to those afar off:

Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, . . .

Acts 2:38, 39

The Holy Spirit is here bringing to Peter's remembrance things that his Lord had taught him. He is saying with Jesus:

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God. . . . unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

John 3:3, 5

The new birth, the re-birth, that Jesus enjoined upon Nicodemus is the foundation of the spiritual life. We are born of the Spirit—born to whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely. Born to be that man who delights in the law of the Lord; born to be the tree beside the waters, to bring forth fruit in season. Born to live forever: "its leaf does not wither."

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16

We have enshrined this verse in our hearts; carved it upon our tombstones. It is the golden text of the Bible. But we have forgotten that it comes in the context of the new birth. Here, in this verse, Jesus led Nicodemus to the mountain peak of Gerizim, yet we know that he was not unmindful that Ebal lay just beyond the valley, for beginning in John 3:17, he says:

For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world but that the world might be saved through him. He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

Paul preached the same gospel, drew the same pictures.

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

Romans 6:3, 4

Here is the new life, the spiritual life. Both Paul and Peter picture newborn Christians as babes in Christ. After reminding Christians that they had been "born anew, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God" (I Peter 1:23), Peter entreats them:

“Like newborn babes, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation” (I Peter 2:2).

Paul goes to greater lengths, for he finds Corinthian Christians “behaving like ordinary men” (I Cor. 3:3). Sorrowing, he says:

I, brethren, could not address you as spiritual men, but as men of the flesh, as babes in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food; for you were not ready for it.

I Cor. 3:1, 2

Spiritual men! Men of the flesh! The flesh and the spirit—Paul’s favorite dichotomy. The flesh is his Ebal; the spirit, his Gerizim. He uses it here in Corinthians, again in Romans, and at length in Galatians 5:16-23:

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would. But if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are plain: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law.

How does Paul conclude this word picture? In verses 24 and 25, he says:

And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the

Spirit—[if we are made alive by the Spirit, born of the Spirit]—let us also walk by the Spirit.

Once again the priority of the new birth is laid upon us. To put it in the vernacular, “If we are Christians, we are born again Christians.” Spiritual life is a birthright—a gift and a responsibility. Being born of the spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

Consider with me John’s dichotomy, John’s two pictures: the man who loves the world and the spiritual man who loves God.

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If any one loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

I John 2:15-17

“He who does the will of God abides forever.” “Its leaf also shall not wither. . . . The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.”

John goes on writing to “his little children,” picturing the man who loves God:

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is a child of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith. Who is he that overcomes the world but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

I John 5:1-5

He who believes that Jesus is the Son of God—his is the victory that overcomes the world. He has his mind set on things that are above, not on things that are on earth (Col. 3:2).

The world is too much with us; late and soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;  
Little we see in Nature that is ours; . . . !

Had Wordsworth read John? How about the man of the world? You know him. The man who scrimps and saves for that house in the country, that cabin on the lake. He knows, his creator has written it in his heart: he is not really a man of this world. He has to relax. He has to get away from it all.

Fellow Christians, we may not be of this world, but we are in this world. Even Jesus had to get away from it all.

And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

Matt. 14:23

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

“On his law he meditates day and night.” This meditation is Bible reading; this meditation is concentration on whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely; this meditation is prayer. It is communion—a dyadic relationship that lifts us out of this world into fellowship with God “who is our home” (Wordsworth: *Intimations of Immortality*).

Let us practice the presence of God in our lives. Let us “live as though we were immortal” (Eugene O’Neill: *Lazarus Laughed*). If we are born of the Spirit, let us walk by the Spirit, for his spirit bears “witness with our spirit that we

are the children of God, and if children then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, . . ." (Romans 8:16-17).

Children, remember who you are.

"Do not quench the Spirit" (I Thess. 5:19), for if you have been born of the Spirit, the Spirit will bring to your remembrance those things that were taught you in that process of re-birth. You are the child of a King. Your home, your citizenship, is in heaven. Here we are strangers and pilgrims—God's ambassadors in a far country—pleading with men to be reconciled with God. Like Moses pleading with Hobab in the wilderness: "Come with us and we will do you good . . . the Lord has promised good." . . . (Numbers 10:29-32). We journey through the wilderness of the world toward the promised land.

In this journey, faith is the victory that overcomes worldliness. We must remember that we are the temple of God, and his Spirit dwells within us (I Corinthians 3:16). It will not stay in a temple defiled with the works of the flesh. We need to take a good look at what the Spirit showed Ezekiel. The Lord had called the angels of destruction, but before he turned them loose to rain the fires of destruction on the city he showed Ezekiel why the city had to be destroyed—it was full of sin. The Spirit of God will not dwell in a defiled temple. The one who defiles the temple must be destroyed. Before the angels rained the fires of destruction, Ezekiel saw the glory of God depart from the city (Ezekiel 10-11).

The life of the Spirit is the life marked by fervent prayer, "Deliver us from temptation" (Matthew 6:13). In watching and waiting we seek the way of escape that the Lord has promised—he will not let us be tempted beyond what we are able (I Corinthians 10:13). The vessels of the service of the Lord must be cleansed of all defilement (II Timothy 3:20, 21). As the holy and spiritual priesthood of the Holy God—we must be holy (I Peter 1-2). To grow up to

salvation—to mature to the stature of Christ—we must put away all defilement of body and spirit. The man of the spirit grows to hate every wicked way and to love the commandments and ways of the Lord.

The life of the spirit is the life of restoring the image of God that sin has ruined. The glory of God shone in the face of Jesus Christ. The spiritual life is the life of Christ-likeness. Looking at the glory of God in the face of Jesus we grow into this likeness (II Corinthians 3:17, 18; 4:6). When the spirit-filled apostles were brought before the Jewish authorities, they observed that they were common and unlearned men, but what was most obvious to them was that these men had been with Jesus—it was unmistakable (Acts 4:3).

When Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit as Counselor or Comforter, he promised that the Holy Spirit would bring to the apostles' memory all that he had said to them (John 14:26), he would bear witness to Jesus, he would take the things of Jesus and declare them to his apostles, and he would glorify the Son (John 16:12-14).

The disciples would be bombarded by many spirits. They must not believe every spirit: They were to try the spirits. Paul cautioned, “. . . no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says ‘Jesus be cursed,’ and no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit” (I Corinthians 12:3). John's warning was, “By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God. This is the spirit of antichrist . . .” (I John 4:2, 3).

The spiritual man is a truth-seeking man, one who hungers for truth and who rejoices in the truth and lives by the truth. Jesus promised that those who would abide in him would know the truth and the truth would make them free (John 8:31, 32). The church of the living God is supposed to be the pillar and bulwark of the truth (I Timothy 3:15). The disciple

that abides in Jesus will bear much fruit to the glory of God (John 15:5).

The spiritual life is not some impractical, idle, selfish life apart in some dream world, nor a life only for a few elite and impossible for the average person. It is the normal, the expected life of the Christian. The one who follows the Master will alternate between the inner closet and the marketplace, between the lonely desert spot before daybreak and the busy meeting place of the multitude, between the mountaintop of prayer and communion with the Lord, and the valley of serving and helping hurting, suffering humanity. The spiritual man brings to human need an inspired servant of the Master who has spent time alone in communion with the Lord. When the apostles returned from their arduous but triumphant trial mission, Jesus called them apart to a lonely place to rest awhile. He was teaching them one of the most important principles of the spiritual life—his Law of Alternation—alternation between service to needy humanity and communion with God (Mark 6:31).

The spiritual man will set his heart on knowing and living the teachings of Jesus. Here we have the higher level of “meditating on his law day and night.” In the very context where Jesus promised the Holy Spirit he said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15, 16:15:14). The biggest single block of Jesus’ teaching is the Sermon on the Mount that begins with the Beatitudes and moves to a higher way than the old law. Much of his teaching was given in a multitude of parables—each stressing some truth of his kingdom. The kingdom of God is doing the will of God. The test that Jesus gave for greatness among his disciples was “He will be greatest that serves most” (Matthew 20:26). The spiritual man will never forget that his Master was first a carpenter, one who went about doing good (Acts 10:38), one who washed the disciples’ feet (John 13:1-20).



The truly spiritual man will share Paul's great concern and anxiety for the church (II Corinthians 11:28)—the church that Jesus loved as his bride (Ephesians 5:25)—the church that he bought with his blood (Acts 20:28). The rule Paul laid down by which the spiritual man should judge all his actions was, "Does it build the church?" (I Corinthians 12-14). Paul put in strong contrast the gifts that belonged to the childhood of the church, such as tongues, and the gifts of the maturing Christian that would involve both mind and heart, gifts that built the church, that edified it with the message of the Lord. There were gifts and actions that were embarrassing and that would cause the visitor to the assembly to say, "They are mad." There are gifts and actions that would cause sinners to repent and cry, "God is in the midst of these people." The maturing Christian would set his heart on actions of decency and order worthy of God. The aim of the spiritual man would be faith, hope, and love. To attain the stature of a full-grown individual in Christ Jesus in these attributes is the work of a lifetime.

John gave a further test for the Christian to apply to the spirits trying to claim his loyalty: Compare the teaching of the spirits with the teaching of the Holy Spirit filled apostles. "We are of God. Whoever knows God listens to us, and he who is not of God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error" (I John 4:6). If the message is one contrary to the message the Spirit gave the apostles, it is not from the Spirit of God. Jesus gave his plan of salvation for the whole world to the end of time in his Great Commission before he ascended into heaven. Each of the four gospels makes mention of this commission to take his message of salvation to the whole world (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15, 16; Luke 24:46; John 20:21-23; see also Acts 1:8). We can see how the Holy Spirit brought back Jesus' words and guided the apostles in the cases of conversion in Acts. On Pentecost Peter told the people

whose hearts had been won by the gospel message, "Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." When one minimizes and denies the Lord's Great Commission, and teaches and practices a different plan of salvation, his message does not come from the Holy Spirit. The first church was praised for continuing in the apostles' teaching (Acts 2:42). The spiritual man meditates on and follows the teachings of his Master as handed down through his apostles.

We can see the life of the spirit as lived by the apostles in the book of Acts and as taught by them in their epistles—frequently in the earlier portion of these epistles will be a doctrinal section that gives the foundation of the spiritual life—the faith of the Christian. Then the practical section will teach how those who believe the apostles' teachings, live. Sometimes the doctrine and the practical living are mingled together. Like mountain peaks of revelation in these epistles tower such passages as: Romans 12, with the teaching to make one's body a living sacrifice as his spiritual service; in I Corinthians 13, where Paul gives the Spirit's picture of love; Hebrews 11, with the heroes of faith—men of a strong enough faith to walk with and obey God; James 2, with the picture of faith made perfect by works; and I John, with the Lord's New Commandment of love as the ultimate test of the life of the Spirit.

How can this life of the Spirit be nurtured and fed?

The saints of all ages have found the Bread of Life and the Water of Life in the Scriptures inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Words of the Master are spirit and life. The Bible is the manna of heaven for the Christian pilgrim. It is the everlasting spring from which the saints have drawn and will draw their inspiration. The Bible is the devotional classic of all devotional classics.

The Christian can learn much and gain much inspiration

from the great classics of devotion written by saintly men who sought to walk by the Spirit. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise" (Proverbs 13:20). There is wisdom and spiritual insight in Origen's beautiful work *On Prayer*. Augustine's *Confessions*, one of the most loved of Christian Classics, can teach much about the soul's battle against flesh and sin. One of the most treasured and inspiring of devotional classics is Thomas a Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ*. Brother Lawrence's *The Practice of the Presence of God* makes stand out the basic and great truth that the secret of the spiritual life is a never failing awareness of the divine presence. This awareness brings an awe-inspiring dimension to every aspect of life. John of the Cross, in his *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, would remind us of the battle of the man of God against the false prophets that would lead his soul away. John Woolman's *Journal* can open a man's eyes to the danger of bondage to his own age and culture.

Biographies of great servants of the Lord are pictures of good men that will encourage us to nurture the good in our own lives. Like Anthony of Egypt we can take from each biography truths and virtues that we need for our journey. Get to know men like Polycarp, John Chrysostom, Bernard of Clairvaux, Wycliffe, Huss, Luther, and Knox. Read the lives of Alexander Campbell, Walter Scott, James A. Harding, and David Lipscomb, and you will never be content to camp on your present plane. These men will lift your eyes and your heart to the promises of God through his Spirit.

Your greatest inspiration can come from fellowship with the living saints who are your fellow pilgrims. Rejoice and weep together, pray and work together, wait and hope together. Bear one another's burdens, and pressing on together your spirits will grow stronger day by day.

But no man among us will be strong enough to say, "I have no sin" (I John 1:8). Let us exhort one another, forgive one

another, and shield one another from “the sin that does so easily beset us” (Hebrews 12:1). Only the grace of God will save us, but Brethren, “shall we sin that grace may abound? God forbid!” (Romans 6:1, 2) Let us climb Mount Gerizim together. Listen to Moses, the servant of God:

See, I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God . . . by loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and ordinances, then you shall live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you . . . But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, . . . I declare to you this day that you shall perish. . . . Lay to heart all the words which I enjoin upon you, . . . that you may command them to your children, that they may be careful to do all the words of this law. For it is no trifle for you, . . . it is your life.

Deut. 30:15-18; 32:46, 47

To the Hebrews, who knew this prophet Moses, the apostle wrote:

If the message declared by angels was valid and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?

Heb. 2:2, 3

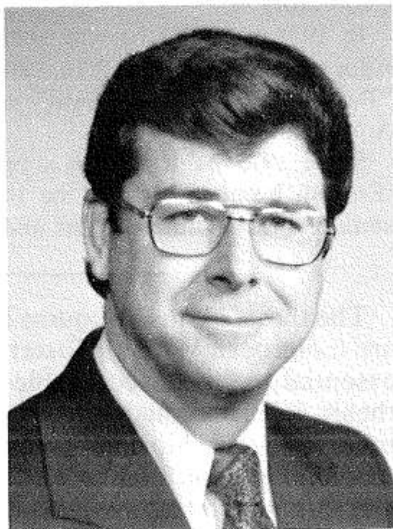
Keep the words of the Lord of Life—the one who is the way and the truth and the life. In so doing, truly love for God will be perfected (1 John 2:5), and the Spirit that is the source of new life, that intercedes in hours of need and despair and darkness, that bears witness with our spirits that we are heirs of God—this Spirit will teach us to say “Come Lord Jesus.”

# WORSHIP AND SPIRITUALITY

Tom Holland

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**Education:** Graduate of Freed-Hardeman College; B.A. from David Lipscomb College; M.A. from Abilene Christian University; Ph.D. from Southern Illinois University.



**Preaching:** Served as regular preacher for the following congregations: Minor Hill, Tenn.; East Hill, Pulaski, Tenn.; Janesville and Beloit, Wisconsin; North Main, Winters, Texas.

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Two class workbooks: *Studies in the No-Chapter Books of the New Testament*; *The Gospel Declared and Defended*.

Several sermon outline books: *Challenge of The Commission*; *Seeking Spiritual Security*; *Soul-Sighted Sermons*; *God's Definition of a Christian*; *God's Good Gifts*; *The Key of Knowledge*; *Focus on Faith*; *Accentuating Acts*; *Heavenly Habitations*; *Complete In Christ*; *Reason to Rejoice*; *Christ Is Coming!*

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The thesis of this discourse is that worship and spirituality are reciprocal. Worship fosters spirituality; spirituality is an essential quality of acceptable worship. In the defense of this thesis we shall consider some definitions and explanations relative to worship and spirituality. Then the correlation of worship and spirituality will be illustrated in the heavenly worship which Isaiah witnessed (Isaiah 6).

The apostle Peter identified the church of Christ as a "spiritual house." In this spiritual house holy priests are to offer "spiritual sacrifices" and God will accept the spiritual sacrifices of holy people (I Pet. 2:5). It is interesting to observe, in light of Peter's statement, that true worship to God is a sacrifice. In contrast to animal sacrifices, offered under the first covenant, our worship involves spiritual sacrifices from spiritually minded people. Surely we see a significant combination of worship and spirituality in Peter's statement concerning the nature of the church and worship.

### **I. Definition and Explanations: Worship.**

"Worship" means acts of reverence paid to Deity. Worship is more than an attitude of heart, it is an action prescribed by the Lord which comes from the heart of man.

There is an "eternal principle" of worship set forth in the

Bible. God has always told man *how* to worship and He has always demanded that the lives of His worshippers be consistent with the Biblical demand of holiness.

Nadab and Abihu "offered strange fire before Jehovah." These sons of the High Priest sinned presumptuously. The Lord declared, "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me . . ." (Lev. 10:1-3). In failing or in refusing to do what God requires in worship, men repudiate the essence of worship, viz., showing honor and respect for God! How can men show reverence for God if in their attempt to worship Him they transgress His will?

However, there is more involved in worship than following the prescribed acts of worship. Worshippers must live consistent with God's will. Ritual without righteousness is repulsive to God. Forms of worship devoid of genuine expressions of faith and love are futile acts.

In the days of Isaiah and his contemporary, Micah, the Jews were keeping the ritual but their lives were repulsive to God. Micah said:

Wherewith shall I come before Jehovah, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God? (Micah 6:6-8)

It was important for the people under the Levitical system to offer animal sacrifices as sin and trespass offerings. Oil could be used in peace or thank offerings. However, unless aspiring worshippers treated their fellows justly, unless they

loved kindness and walked humbly with God, then all of their sacrifices were in vain.

Isaiah revealed to Israel how repulsed God was by their formalistic worship. God said:

I have had enough of the burnt-offerings of rams . . .  
and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or  
of he-goats . . . Incense is an abomination unto me . . .  
your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul  
hateth . . . And when ye spread forth your hands, I will  
hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many  
prayers, I will not hear. (Isa. 1:11-15)

What was the problem with Israel's worship? Had God not appointed the sabbaths? Had He not given instructions in Leviticus for offering animal sacrifices? The problem is one of inconsistency. The worshippers were evil, their hands were "full of blood," they oppressed the fatherless and the widow, they were dishonest in business, and they were so immoral that Isaiah called them "the people of Gomorrah." The audacity of such people attempting to show honor and respect for God in worship while their lives were mocking His will!

The Old Testament closes by giving an insight into the cold, formalistic "worship" of people who were keeping the prescribed feasts and holy days; however, they were robbing God of the tithes; they were offering lame and ill animals in "sacrifice"; and God's plan of marriage the people detested and rejected. Concerning these people Jehovah declared, "I have no pleasure in you . . . neither will I accept an offering at your hand" (Mal. 1:10).

In the New Testament our Saviour declared that God seeks true worshippers (John 4:23). There are at least two reasons why God seeks true worshippers. God is honored by man's worship (Heb. 13:15; Col. 3:16). Man is blessed,



edified, by true worship; and God, who really loves man and desires man's good, has designed worship for man's good (James 1:17).

True worshippers will worship God as He directs them to do in His word. God has always told man how to worship (Jer. 10:23, John 4:24). True worshippers are spiritual people and their worship enhances their spirituality.

## **II. Definition and Explanation: Spirituality.**

Unless the worshippers are spiritual the worship is a mere ritual. Formality in worship without spirituality is like a human body without the spirit! (James 2:26) Ritualism apart from righteousness reduces worship to entertainment by and for spectators. Genuine worship is the loving sacrifice of saints; it is not the shallow performance of superficial "spiritual showmen."

Worship apart from spirituality is ritualism, and ritualism is vain worship (Matt. 15:8,9).

But what is spirituality in a worshipper? This concept has been used in a variety of ways. Some have appropriated the term as a name for the finer perceptions of life, others have employed the word to identify a special mark of a superior intellect. The word has even been used to identify the mediums "through whom communications from departed spirits are said to reach common earth; Evangelical Christianity reserves the term to describe the warmer religious emotions . . ."<sup>1</sup>

Vine defines the word spirituality (*pneumatikos*) as: "things that have their origin with God and which, therefore, are in harmony with His character."<sup>2</sup>

Paul's discussion of the spiritual man, Romans 8, should give one an insight into the meaning of spirituality. He affirmed, "For they that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:5). The "flesh" identifies human nature

controlled by sin. The spiritual man is one who, following the Holy Spirit leading by God's truth, (Rom. 8:14, I Pet. 1:22,23), values holiness, worship, and service to God as the true values of life.

In view of some things presently occurring on the religious scene, it is expedient to emphasize that spirituality is not an emotion. Bales has correctly observed:

While it is true that Christianity enriches, disciplines, and refines our emotional life, and while chills may sometimes run up and down our spines as we sing the songs of Zion, it is not true that spirituality is an emotion. We have not become spiritual because we turn down the lights, hold hands, and get emotional reactions. We are spiritual if we live by the word of Christ, which includes that which at times may be emotionally distasteful duties.<sup>3</sup>

Spiritual people are those who faithfully live the Christian life (Gal. 6:1). They are morally upright. They are motivated by love for God, Christ, and righteousness (I John 5:3; John 14:15). They are people who obey God (I John 2:3, 4).

### **III. Isaiah's Response to Worship.**

Spirituality and worship are subject to definition. But seeing these vital matters illustrated may stir our hearts to combine these necessary factors in our own relationship to God.

Isaiah, chapter six, reveals three important aspects of spirituality as it relates to worship. We are concerned here not so much with Isaiah's immediate action in worship, but his personal reaction to the heavenly worship he witnessed.

Surely Isaiah was deeply impressed with the greatness of God. He saw the Lord "sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple." He heard the angel

exclaim: "Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." When Isaiah was deeply impressed by God's greatness he was deeply moved by his own frailty.

Spirituality is a proper estimate of self. It is a recognition of dependence upon God. When Jesus explained the two reasons why men do not pray as they should He said, in two parables, they either have an improper view of God, (Luke 18:1-8), or they have an unrealistic view of themselves, (Luke 18:9-14). Spiritual people are not so politically, economically, nor educationally independent that they blush to sing, "Every hour I need Thee!" People dependent on God may indeed worship God to find the direction and strength to do God's will.

Isaiah's worship experience revealed to him his own sinfulness and his acute need of God's forgiveness. Worship should make spiritual people sensitive to their lack of absolute moral perfection. This sensitivity to sin will provide a basis for appreciating God's love, (John 3:16; Rom. 5:6-10), His amazing grace, (Eph. 2:5-9), His abundant mercy, (Titus 3:5), His longsuffering and forbearance, (Rom. 2:4). People with this appreciation will want to show their genuine love, profound gratitude, and indebtedness to such a great and gracious God.

People who are stirred in their spirits by the love, grace, and goodness of God surely will be properly motivated to show honor, praise, respect, adoration, and love for God in worship and in so doing their spirituality will be enhanced.

Many things we do in worship now remind us of our sinfulness. The Lord's Supper, (Matt. 26:28), confessions of sins in prayers, Scriptures read and proclaimed which show the prevalence of sin and the reality of salvation in Christ. Many of the songs we sing emphasize the themes of pardon, peace, and hope in life.

Spiritual worshippers do not, like the Israelites of Isaiah's time, (Isaiah chapter one), attempt to ignore their sins. They

come to worship and unburden the conscience as they confess their sins and pray for forgiveness. This awareness of forgiveness prompts praise to God. Truly worship and spirituality are reciprocal.

Not only did Isaiah get an impression of God's greatness and his own sinfulness, there was power in worship to produce within Isaiah a missionary spirit. He said, "Here am I; send me" (Isaiah 6:8).

Occasionally one sees over doors leading into worship auditoriums this statement: "Enter to worship; leave to serve."

Surely spiritual worship should stir spiritual people to dedicate themselves to God's service. That service may be preaching the gospel to the lost. It may be restoring the erring. The service may be one of exhortation (Heb. 3:12,13). It may be helping the poor, encouraging the despondent, visiting the sick, or counseling the troubled.

There is power in true worship to make true worshippers truly active in the Lord's work.

Worship to God is an exciting possibility. But this art demands the best within one. True worship honors God and helps man.

Spirituality identifies qualities of character that are in harmony with the character of God: purity, holiness, love, joy, peace, and service. These qualities of character are enhanced by true worship. True worship fosters spirituality because men tend to become like that which they worship. True worship causes men to be more spiritual, and spirituality in men God appreciates and approves, because it moves men to be like God. God's image brightly shines in the hearts and lives of those who worship Him "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

Thomas Hayward beautifully expressed the privilege of worship in these lines:

Welcome, delightful morn, Thou day of sacred rest!  
I hail thy kind return: Lord, make these moments blest;  
From the low train of mortal toys, I soar to reach  
immortal joys.

To spend one sacred day where God and saints abide  
affords diviner joy than thousand days beside;  
I love it more where God resorts to keep the door  
than shine in courts.

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>*Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. by James Hastings, (N.Y.: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1921), Vol. XI, p. 808.

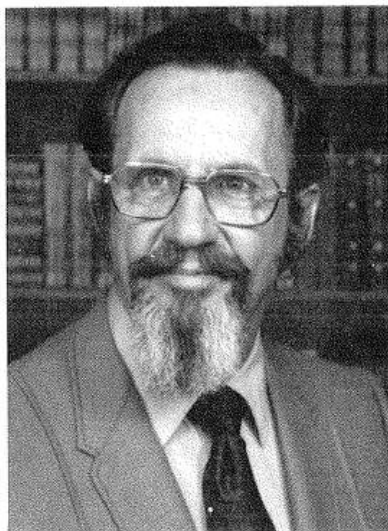
<sup>2</sup>W.E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, (Westwood, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1966), p. 64.

<sup>3</sup>James D. Bales, "Spirituality Is Not An Emotion," *Gospel Advocate*, May 18, 1972.

# THE MEASURE OF SPIRITUAL PROGRESS: RECEPTIVITY AND GROWTH

Wendell Broom

Wendell Wright Broom, Sr., was born April 6, 1923, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, the son of Benjamin Rufus Broom and Gladys Wright Broom. He graduated from Classen High School in 1941, Freed-Hardeman College in 1943, and Abilene Christian University (Bachelor of Arts) in 1945. He has studied at Faith Theological Seminary, Temple University, Harding Graduate School of Religion, University of Hawaii, and the School of World Mission and Institute of Church Growth of Fuller Theological Seminary.



He married Betty Billingsley of Fort Smith, Arkansas. They have six children, born from 1947 to 1962.

He has served churches in Wilmington, Delaware (1945 to 1951), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (1952 to 1955), again in Wilmington, Delaware (1960 to 1965), and Honolulu, Hawaii (1965 to 1968). He served in Nigeria from 1955 to 1960.

Mr. Broom has appeared on lectureships at Northeastern Christian Junior College, Harding College, and Abilene Christian University. He has written for *Power for Today*, *20th Century Christ-*

ian, the Christian Chronicle, and The Firm Foundation. He has taught in the Summer Seminar in Missions at Harding College, 1965 to 1967, and at the Abilene Christian University Seminar in Missions, 1968 and 1969.

He joined the faculty of Abilene Christian University in June, 1970.

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### *THE PROBLEM*

As elders shepherd the sheep of God in their discipleship, they are confronted by the same problem that missionaries struggle with: HOW DO WE PLAN OUR TEACHING AND ACTIVITIES TO FIT THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE WE WORK AMONG? WHERE ARE OUR PEOPLE SPIRITUALLY? Medical doctors must determine at what stage a disease is before they can treat it. Educators have to know whether a child belongs in grade three or grade seven before they can teach him well. In church life, we need a way to measure progress, because we are not very skilled in deciding where people are located, spiritually speaking. Jesus knew when men had "great faith," which man was "not far from the kingdom," and how to answer the man who asked, "What lack I yet?" We may not be able to gauge spiritual quality with the precision that Jesus did, but it would aid our leaders to have even a little help.

Complex processes can be dealt with practically by analyzing their functions and reducing them to identifiable stages. Our food intake and utilization is studied by noting the steps of ingestion, digestion, assimilation, and elimination. Growth from infancy to adulthood is dealt with more effectively by identifying the periods of prenatal, postnatal, infancy, youth, puberty, adolescence, teenage, and young adult. By recognizing the marks of each phase, parents can understand where their children are in the

growth process and fit their parental direction to the reality of the child's need.

One of the elements making the Restoration movement strong has been our clarifying of the complex process of conversion. Where the denominational world recognizes the new birth as passage from death to life, they have left generations of seekers after God frustrated, confused, and unsaved because other than "feeling saved" or "getting religion" or being "strangely warmed," they had no specific word from God about what happens to bring a man from death to life. When perceptive Bible students in the Restoration movement found in the Word the specific stages of faith, repentance, confession and baptism, then preachers, counsellors, parents and spiritual leaders could know better how to tell what was needed next for individuals who were drawing near to Jesus Christ. Faith, repentance, and baptism do not constitute the complete process of conversion, but they are prominent milestones in the process. The other elements ("deny yourself and take up your cross and follow me, . . ."; ". . . love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, mind, and strength . . ."; ". . . he that loveth father or mother . . . more than me is not worthy of me . . ."; and others) are certainly in the will of God and a part of the conversion and growth process. But while the faith-repentance-baptism measurement is not totally comprehensive, it helps a great deal in bringing seeking men and women into touch with God's power to redeem them.

In world evangelism, there is a need for such measures of spiritual progress. Missionaries need to know just where specific mission fields are classified spiritually; are they ripe and ready to harvest, or is the grain just beginning to head, or are the green shoots just breaking the ground, or is the soil barren and even yet without the seed at all? Because missionaries have been insensitive to these gradations in receptivity, many churches have felt deceived when an



enthusiastic missionary won their support to go to a field “ripe unto harvest” only to hear the same missionary say six months later, “It’s going to take years of planting the seed here before the harvest can be expected.” If church leaders knew the milestones of missionary receptivity (as we do the ones in conversion), we could help our missionaries to know what to expect. We could also decide strategy much more effectively. We would not send in harvesting teams when what is really needed is the harrowing or the cultivating teams.

In home churches, the same problem of a need for measurement confronts us. When members are babes in Christ, they do not need maturity level work assignments. They need nurturing and loving care. If we can recognize maturity in our people we can help them find their ministries more effectively. If we can recognize the various growth stages, we will better know how to feed and challenge the disciples who look to us for leadership. Above all, we can focus these growth processes on the need in God’s kingdom for reproduction and can bring disciples who are not now spiritually reproducing themselves to that point in Christian maturity where they will be fruitbearing disciples.

### *TOWARD A SOLUTION*

Divine revelation has not given us a ten-step progress measurement for receptivity or spiritual maturity, any more than angels have delivered the faith-repentance-confession-baptism formula for conversion (they are never found listed in one verse or chapter). These analyses of spiritual processes are the result of our desire to understand better how God works in His redemptive power among men. Since we constantly seek to understand God’s workings better, the following scale may be helpful in meeting the spiritual problems of Christian leaders as discussed above.

**THE MEASURE OF SPIRITUAL PROGRESS**

- 10 AWARENESS OF A SUPREME BEING
- 9 SEEKING SUPREME BEING, BUT NO EFFECTIVE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRISTIANITY
- 8 INITIAL AWARENESS OF CHRISTIANITY
- 7 ACTIVE INTEREST AND ACCEPTANCE OF MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATION
- 6 AWARENESS OF FUNDAMENTALS OF GOSPEL
- 5 GRASP OF IMPLICATIONS
- 4 POSITIVE ATTITUDE
- 3 RECOGNITION OF ALLEGIANCE AND MORALITY PROBLEMS
- 2 CHALLENGE AND DECISION TO ACT
- 1 FAITH AND REPENTANCE IN CHRIST

**REGENERATION/BAPTISM/NEW  
CREATURE/DISCIPLE**

- + 10 ASSURANCE AND SATISFACTION
- + 3 FAITH ADDITIONS (2 Pet. 1) IN PROGRESS
- + 4 CONCEPTUAL GROWTH IN WORD
- + 5 LORDSHIP RELATION
- + 6 FUNCTIONAL PRAYER LIFE
- + 7 STEWARDSHIP OF TALENTS AS GIFTS
- + 8 FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT
- + 9 CONSCIOUS MINISTRY WITH GIFTS
- + 10 REPRODUCTIVE FAITH

–10      **AWARENESS OF A SUPREME BEING.** For tribes and peoples who have never seen a Bible, heard of Christ, listened to a sermon, or watched a Christian, there is still an awareness of a Supreme Being. This awareness is the response to God's nonverbal message to them as described in Acts 14:17 ". . . Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." See also Romans 1:19-21. The tribes may not know God's name, His law, His kingdom, nor His Son, but they are aware that a Supreme Being exists.

– 9      **SEEKING A SUPREME BEING, BUT NO EFFECTIVE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRISTIANITY.** Progressing from inactive awareness, some men diligently seek after the "unknown God" — the power they know is there but do not yet understand. The confusing and distracting array of idols and false gods may divert these seekers for a while, but they still continue to seek Him, even though blindly unable to discover for themselves His face (1 Cor. 1:19-21). Without the word of revelation (Romans 10:14), their search must continue blindly unfulfilled.

– 8      **INITIAL AWARENESS OF CHRISTIANITY.** Some fragmentary contact occurs. A tract comes to hand. A radio program mentions Jesus Christ. A copy of the Bible is discovered. A believer passes through and leaves behind deeds of grace or touches of love containing the words of Jesus in some tiny form. There still is no definitive, comprehensive overview of the revealed truth of Jesus and His kingdom, but the seeker after God recognizes the footprint of the Supreme Being he has been searching for.

– 7      **ACTIVE INTEREST AND ACCEPTANCE OF THE MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATION.** Following this fleeting contact with Christianity, the seeker actively pursues whatever the communication medium has been. He seeks for more tracts. Or he tunes in the radio to hear that

program again. Or he rides a bicycle for miles to find the man whose sermon fragment he heard about. Or he cultivates the friendship of the new acquaintance whose behavior (seasoned with the word about Jesus) carried more promise of Light and Truth than he had ever seen before. The medium may vary widely, but the seeker pursues like the Gentile woman who insisted that even the dogs get the crumbs from the children's table (Mk. 7:28).

– 6 AWARENESS OF THE FUNDAMENTALS OF THE GOSPEL. As pursuit of the medium continues, the seeker begins to see the outlines of the Gospel come into focus. Jesus lived among men and was God's Son. There is a Bible which contains all the truth. A final day of judgment and accountability is coming. Death is not permanent, but resurrection is assured by Jesus. There is a way of forgiveness and the forgiven are banded together in the family of God. Many details are not yet clear, but the outlines of salvation, silhouetted against the rising sun of Truth, are beginning to be seen.

– 5 GRASPOF IMPLICATIONS. As the outline of the Gospel takes shape, the implications of this truth begin to appear. If God has given His only son Jesus, then what does this say about other gods, the traditional religions and the observances? Can all truth really be found in one small book? Can the whole mountain of death-fear really be removed by the resurrection of Jesus? What does this say for our ancestors and their spiritual power? Does this offer any hope for our dead relatives' salvation? These and other implications have to be reckoned with.

– 4 POSITIVE ATTITUDE. The seeker's pilgrimage maintains a forward motion. While there are serious implications that cannot be ignored or lightly brushed aside, a continuing display of the positive beauties and blessings of the Gospel keep overshadowing the negative implications. Forgiveness, grace, infinite power and authority of Jesus,

victory over evil spirits, personal resurrection, loving fatherhood, and many more such treasures of grace keep the positive forward motion.

–3      **RECOGNITION OF ALLEGIANCE AND MORALITY PROBLEMS.** As Jesus said, the cost must be counted. If spiritual allegiance is given to Jehovah God in Jesus Christ, what will this do with the traditional allegiances of the seeker's religion, culture, and family? Will the morality patterns of his past life be acceptable to Jesus Christ? What changes will have to occur? What grace and power will be available in Christ to make those changes possible? What will it cost to be a Christian?

– 2      **CHALLENGE AND DECISION TO ACT.** At some point in this growing conviction, there must come the crisis point in which a decision is called for: "Choose you this day whom you will serve." This call for decision may be made by the Christian communicator or evangelist, or it may come about by circumstances or conflicts with the community or tradition out of which the seeker is being called.

–1      **FAITH AND REPENTANCE.** The response to the challenge to act is the seeker's commitment to believe in Jesus and to turn himself (repentance basically means a turning) to a course which follows Jesus. This turning will include both a change of religious allegiance and a change of moral behavior. As discipleship deepens later, there will be further penitent response as more of the will of God becomes known. But this decisive commitment of morals and allegiance begins here.

00      **THE NEW BIRTH.** In baptism, the faith is culminated so that the old man dies, the new man is born. God justifies and regenerates. Man becomes a new creature. The Spirit is given to dwell within. Citizenship in the kingdom is conferred. The new heritage is now valid.

+1      **ASSURANCE AND SATISFACTION.** The

“rejoicing” of the Ethiopian eunuch testifies to his assurance and satisfaction. The joy of the new heritage in God needs to be explained and understood. Post-decision doubts and uncertainties must be dealt with. Questions will arise as new implications appear which were not anticipated. Early failures will need to be corrected. A growing sense of victory results from the nurture-care of the young babe in Christ. The measure of present and future power to win others to Christ is being set in these first hours and days: the greater assurance and satisfaction, the more desire to share the good news. Neglecting to nurture the new infants leaves little to share.

+2 **INCORPORATION INTO BODY LIFE.** The young Christian discovers that in addition to the “father in the Gospel” who has led him this far, there are many others in the body, sharing the same faith, who are ready to accept him into the society of believers. This acceptance is forthcoming in spite of their recognition that he has some “weights to be laid aside” (Heb. 12:1), and his moral skills are not well developed. As a new member of the Body, he learns what resources are available to him in Body Life with people whose gifts he needs. He begins to sense that fellowship requires a reciprocal relationship.

+3 **FAITH ADDITIONS IN PROGRESS.** Peter (II Pet. 1:5-7) gives a growth chart for the Christian as he adds to his faith virtue, knowledge, self-control, and the others. While achievements in these moral virtues will continue for life, the early sprouts must begin to appear. While psychologically ingrained traits from culture and family may be strong, there must be counterbalancing strength in the Spirit to create these beautiful new traits where mere human will alone could never produce them. The works of the flesh are consciously laid aside, and freedom from the old man begins to be felt.

+4 **CONCEPTUAL GROWTH IN THE WORD.** As the

Word becomes more and more a part of the new life in Christ, the Christian fundamentals first dimly seen before conversion now begin to be clearer concepts. The coming of God in the flesh (John 1:1-14), the pre-existent Christ (Phil. 2), a working understanding of atonement, the meaning of justification and how it surpasses forgiveness, the particulars of resurrection and its meaning, the second coming of Jesus, a comprehensive Christian world view and the value system that must spring from it — all these arise as the Word provides meat to follow the milk, both publicly and privately. Christian writings and study aids are discovered. The young Christian learns that his intake of Christian knowledge depends partly on his output of Christian knowledge. He begins to enlarge his concepts by explaining them to those younger than himself.

+5 **LORDSHIP.** Counterattacks by Satan demand a strong relation of Lordship with Jesus. Jesus as Savior has brought assurance and satisfaction. Jesus as Lord brings obedience, discipline, working allegiance to equip the tender disciple to become a tough warrior. The world calls through culture, tradition, family ties, ingrained habits, profession and business patterns, and with a strength that only a strong Lordship can conquer. Weekly and daily renewal of the covenant with Jesus as Lord is essential to maturity.

+6 **FUNCTIONAL PRAYER LIFE.** Prayer grows on from the formal to the functional. The believer finds prayer to be a usable tool in coping with problems, a meeting place with his Lord to learn the battle plans for the day. Private prayer grows more and more regular and important, a scheduled part of daily business. As busses must stop for gasoline, as airplanes must have hangar time, as miners cannot go to their work without their dynamite, the Christian functions with prayer.

+7 **STEWARDSHIP OF TALENTS AS GIFTS.** What the former “old man” called talents and skills, the new man

in Christ calls gifts of God (Eph. 4:7-16). These talents are not owned privately, but are lent by God, a stewardship of the Divine. They are at the call of the Lord, and are at the disposal of the Church. The question is not "Can they be used by God," but "where can they be used best for God." The question of full time service for God will probably arise for many.

+8 **FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT.** Beauty begins to radiate in the Christian life. Love is seen glowing. Joy gleams even through tears. Peace floats like a halo over all. Patience gives its enduring ironlike strength. Kindness, goodness, faithfulness, all the rest of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5) comes alive. These powerful beauties interact within the circle of disciples, intensifying the Christian life and adorning the doctrinal teachings with living reality. Here is the magnetism that attracts a new wave of seekers into the Kingdom.

+9 **CONSCIOUS MINISTRY WITH GIFTS.** As the Christian's gifts function under Jesus' Lordship, conscious ministry begins. Without a sense of meriting salvation by labors for the Lord, the disciple lets his faith and love flow out in thanksgiving to God by serving his brothers in Christ and the world outside Christ. His ministry may be changed from lesser to greater callings from time to time. There may be times of rest and renewal between ministries. But he now is seen to be a man sanctified — reserved for good works in Jesus Christ. He is not available when the world calls. His calling is from God through Jesus Christ, and from Him only.

+10 **REPRODUCTIVE FAITH.** Bringing new seekers into Jesus Christ is at the pinnacle of multiple ministries. The reproductive Christian is a flame which lights other flames. He is functioning directly to bring others to faith (while many others also help by functioning indirectly or institutionally to bring men to Christ). He has the gift of God to instruct (see



-6, -5, -4, -3) to challenge (-2) and to assist in decision making. Many say of this disciple, "he led me to the Lord."

**OBSERVATIONS:**

1. This word of caution must be repeated. This model is not a divine dictum, but a working paper designed to help in practical church growth in missions and the edification of the church. It will doubtless be revised and improved, and others will adapt it to various purposes.\*

2. At the point of -10, when seekers begin progressing toward Christianity, there are countless ways they can be diverted. Ranging from atheism thru false religions and into humanism and materialism, the devices of Satan to detour human souls from reconciliation are many, clever, devious and demonic. In various countries, these detours take on local forms unique to the culture of the society. Evangelism and successful winning of souls depends on accurate information and understanding of the local "detours" from the God-ward path.

3. From the new birth to +10, growing souls are often diverted by struggles with the reviving "old man" of sin, self-pleasure, love of the world, or the lust of the flesh, eyes, and pride of life. Herein is the struggle to be and do what the regenerate soul "wants to do" while the remaining fleshly desires fight against it (see Romans 7).

4. This model explains why new converts to Jesus are often the best soul-winners. They may not be skilled "workers in the word" as yet, but they are fresh from the battles with self and Satan at -3, -4 and -5, and they can be powerfully helpful to others who struggle with those forces. Loving, sympathetic counsel may mean more to one escaping the kingdom of darkness than advanced theological skills and intricate knowledge of many biblical truths that are

\*This model was adapted from a similar one by James F. Engel in *What's Gone Wrong with the Harvest?*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1975).

not immediately applicable to the personal struggles of conversion.

5. This model may also explain why some third (or fourth or fifth) generation Christians find it easier to become nominally involved in the church, but without depth or fire of conviction. When one has grown up with his family and most peers in the +3 to +8, +9, or +10 zones of Christian living (parents are diligent and faithful church leaders, spiritually advanced, dedicated, committed), the growing child is never exposed to or familiarized with the problems encountered in the -3 to -6 phases of pre-conversion struggle. He is well fed in sermons and Sunday school on the basic biblical stories, problems of the Christian life, and church-centered activities. He does not understand the problems of other gods, the nature of and need for atonement, a deep consciousness and pain of sin in its grosser forms, the reality of guilt, suffering, death, loneliness, alienation — the daily absence of the fruits of the Spirit. As long as he stays in the community of faith, he is adequate to the spiritual demands made on him. Two serious problems can arise. If he is thrown into a -3 to -6 or -8 environment where the battles are on ground completely strange to him, he may find himself completely unprepared to meet the spiritual issues (although the answers are in the Word), and conclude that the “real truth” is outside the Christian faith that his childhood training claimed to be all-sufficient. For this reason, many “strong Christian young people” succumb to sophisticated unbelief as delivered through professors of higher education or in other arenas where unbelief is especially articulate.

The other serious problem lies in the reluctance of such well-trained upper level Christians to venture out into unbelieving circles in evangelism. They are adept at biblical debates and refutation of error among those who share in the unquestioned fundamentals (atonement, resurrection,

inspiration, second coming, etc.). But when prospective converts raise doubts or challenges at  $-3$  or  $-6$ , the sheltered believer is beyond his theological depth, becomes confused or frightened, retreats to more familiar biblical ground, and waits for someone else to lead the unbeliever in close enough for his faith-weapons to reach. The result is the limitation of evangelism to nearby circles of "others like us," while the really hungry multitudes are unreached. It is often among these that the real receptivity lies, and where thousands could be brought to fellowship with the Supreme Being after whom they are seeking. If third generation soul winners are to be effective among such seekers in "the uttermost parts," they must train themselves to venture far out into the jungles of unbelief and to become sympathetic with the struggles of those escaping that darkness.

6. It should be noted that the progression from  $-10$  to  $+10$  does not always follow a time lapse of standard measurement. The journey does not necessarily require ten years or ten months. Variables include frequency of exposure to truth, availability of instruction or instructors, depth of desire in the seeker, strength of counterattacks from the anti-godly forces, and other factors. While the sequence of pre-conversion events is probably fairly logical, there may also be variation in the sequence of these post-conversion growth stages. Prayer life ( $+6$ ) may occur before Lordship ( $+5$ ) or after stewardship ( $+7$ ). Other phases of the Christian life may occur in mixed order, and it is not claimed that this is the absolutely invariable sequence of growth. The reading student should feel totally at liberty to adapt and revise this to fit his own ministry.

7. Servants of the Kingdom are urged to apply this model to their particular ministries and ask questions about how it fits. Bible school directors or superintendents should ask what changes in curriculum could be recommended to enable third generation believers to be skilled in the struggles

of -3 to -7 or -8. Elders should gain some insights in how to prepare the children of faith as they go into worldly education so that they will be equipped to meet questions about Christian truth which have never occurred inside the sheltered family circle. Other ministries can well benefit from the model.

### *CONCLUSION*

The apostle John recognizes gradations among believers and fits his exhortations according to their position in growth: "Little children . . . fathers . . . young men . . ." (I John 2:12,13). Another writer hinges an important instruction on the evaluation and measurement of their spiritual progress: "You need milk, not solid food; for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness for he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil" (Heb. 5:12-14).

May this working model as presented above help us to minister with sensitive discrimination to the needs of the Kingdom, both in missionary evangelism and in nurturing the children of God in the church.

# **SPIRITUALITY: THE FULLNESS OF THE PERSONALITY OF CHRIST**

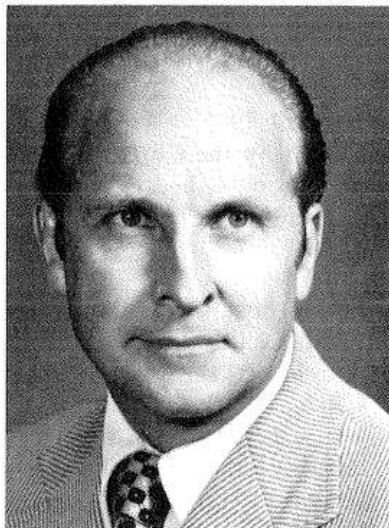
James S. Woodroof

James S. Woodroof is presently the evangelist for the College church of Christ, Searcy, Arkansas. He preached for the White Haven church, Memphis, Tennessee, from 1970 to 1972, prior to coming to Searcy. Before going to the White Haven church in Memphis, he and his family had spent five years in New Zealand, establishing a congregation at Christchurch, and working there until March 1970.

He was born in Obion, Tennessee, the son of Mr. and Mrs. C. H. Woodroof of

Shelbyville, Tennessee. His father has spent more than 60 years as a gospel preacher in Tennessee and Alabama. Woodroof attended both David Lipscomb High School and David Lipscomb College in Nashville, Tennessee, graduating with the B.A. degree in 1955. He received the M.A. degree in Bible from the Harding Graduate School of Religion in 1967.

In 1953, Jim was married to a Lipscomb classmate, Louine McGee, of Memphis, Tennessee. The Woodroofs have five children: Tim, David, Jon, Beth and Rachael, ranging from college age to junior high.



After graduating from Lipscomb, Woodroof spent several years preaching in North and South Carolina. Later he preached for the South Highland church in Little Rock and then served as assistant preacher for the Union Avenue congregation in Memphis while doing graduate study, prior to their work in New Zealand.

Woodroof has been effective in both home and foreign mission work, as well as in local work. Woodroof's ministry has been characterized by his ability to communicate with all ages, especially young people of high school and college age. He has conducted a series of seminars for Bible majors at Harding College.

In April 1972, his first book, *The Divorce Dilemma*, was published by the Christian Family Book Club. In 1975 another book was published, *Struggles Of The Kingdom*, co-authored with John Payne.

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His intention was the perfecting and the full equipping of the saints (His consecrated people), [that they should do] the work of ministering toward building up Christ's body (the church), [that it might develop] until we all attain oneness in the faith and in the comprehension of the full and accurate knowledge of the Son of God; that [we might arrive] at really mature manhood — the completeness of personality which is nothing less than the standard height of Christ's own perfection — the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, and the completeness found in him. Eph. 4:11-12 (Amplified Version)

This is one of the rich, full statements that Paul makes in the Ephesian letter regarding the purpose of the church on earth. The passage speaks of our growth and development as Christians and of the means that God has employed to bring about that growth. Ideally, all Christians are to be involved in that growth process; realistically, we know that many are

not. We are all growing old. Whether or not we are maturing in Christ is another question. It is this maturing to which I wish to call our attention.

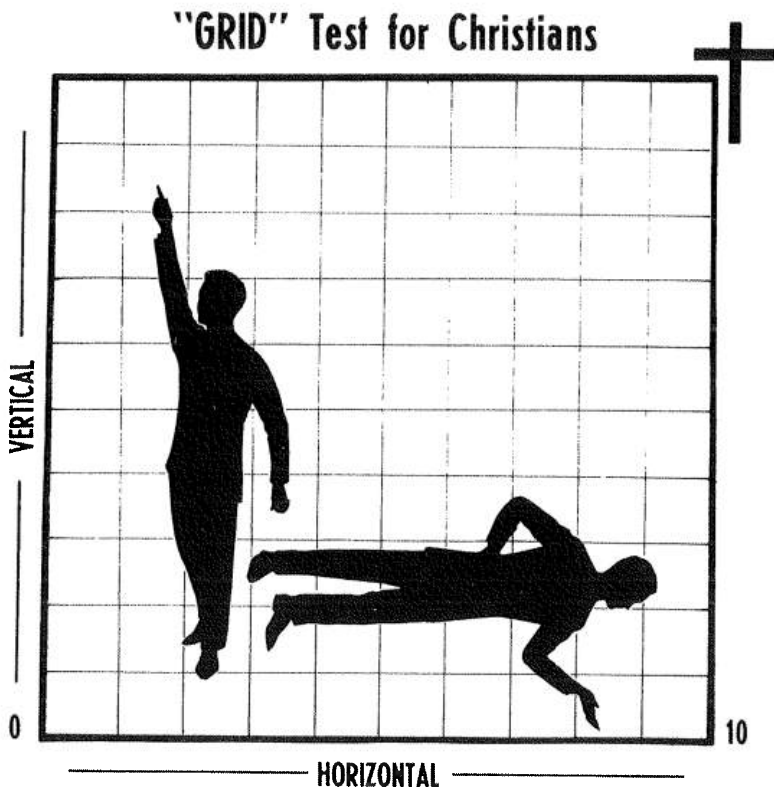
Paul says the purpose of the gifts which Jesus gave to his people is that of bringing his people to maturity. Listen to these expressions from Eph. 4:11-12 (Amplified Version): "perfecting," "full equipping," "comprehension of the full and accurate knowledge of the Son of God," "the really mature manhood," "completeness of personality," "nothing less than the standard height of Christ's own perfection," "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ," "the completeness found in him." The emphasis is obviously on development into the fullness of Christ's own personality. Stating it negatively, Paul says Christ gave certain gifts to men in order that we might avoid being half-baked, one-sided Christians. His intention was that we, as Christians, might become well-rounded, mature personalities.

In Matt. 22:34-40 Jesus gives the heart and soul of the well-rounded, God-like personality. It is in fact Christ's own personality. On that occasion one of the lawyers asked Jesus,

'What is the great commandment in the law?' And Jesus said to him: 'You shall love the Lord your god with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.'

All the law and the prophets — boiled down, condensed, distilled — reside in these two commands: "Love God supremely" and "Love your neighbor as you love yourself." This is the perfect Christ-like personality. It is this to which we are being called.

These two relationships (to God and to neighbor) have been called the “Vertical” relationship (that which pertains to God), and the “Horizontal” relationship (that which pertains to fellowman). They can be illustrated by the following graph.



Frankly, the task of incorporating both these qualities in the same personality in the proper proportion is the most difficult and protracted endeavor that a human being can



undertake. Some ten years ago I recognized these principles. I also experienced the extreme difficulty involved in attempting to incorporate both these in the heart in the proper proportions. Almost invariably one of these will take precedence over the other and, as a result, will encroach upon the rightful place of the other. thus, the one grows abnormally — much like the growth of cancer, while the other quality is dwarfed and stunted. Result? An unbalanced personality, thus defeating the expressed purpose of God's design for the Christian's life.

Not only does this apply to Christians individually, it applies to us congregationally. Congregations are composed of people. And as long as there are congregations composed of unbalanced Christians making no progress toward maturity or well-roundedness, there will be the resultant lack of balance and maturity in the congregation. Now, there is no way of escaping the bringing in of immature people into the church. The key to wholeness lies in development toward maturity. But in the absence of such development, the all-too-familiar result takes place: cliques, factions, and divisions form. Individual Christians, failing to develop into well-rounded personalities, produce congregations that are likewise unbalanced. And being unwilling to endure the discomfort of change involved in growth, they find solace at last in division. Thus we fragment the body of Christ and destroy the temple of God.

The consequences of this lack of development toward maturity are felt on an even broader scale. The repercussions are felt all across the brotherhood. The incompleteness in the individual, if allowed to go unchecked in the congregation, will eventually cause incompleteness, immaturity — a personality deficiency in the brotherhood as a whole, resulting in a movement with a lopsided personality.

We, the church in America, are facing an identity crisis of

major proportions at every level of our existence. Oh, we are more than able and willing to identify *each other* as “legalist,” or “liberal.” But we’re not all that able to identify *ourselves* and understand what place we all fill within the one body; nor are we all that willing to tolerate the painful process of the development involved in maturing into the fullness of Christ.

It has been affirmed above that the fullness of the personality of Christ is expressed in these two relationships: Loving God and loving our fellowman. Consequently, if any Christian possesses only one of these traits he possesses only half of the personality of Christ. Thus he doesn’t have the personality of Christ. If any congregation possesses virtually only one of these traits, building its personality around either to the exclusion of the other, it also possesses only half of the personality of Christ. Thus that congregation does not have the personality of Christ. If, then, a brotherhood is formed virtually on the basis of swarmings spawned by “differences of personality,” the result is an entire brotherhood lacking the fullness of the personality of Christ.

Do not we, in fact, stand in danger of this very thing today throughout the church? How many of our congregations presently existing in the Restoration movement have been formed due to “personality differences?” Here is the familiar process: A congregation finds itself composed of a varied assortment of people from all strata of society and of all degrees of disposition or personality. And though no two members are exactly alike, most will fit into one or the other of two personality camps. They are oriented either toward the “vertical” personality or toward the “horizontal” personality. The vertical personality is strong in such areas as principles, rules, law, discipline, etc. He is a stickler for doing right. This quality is essential in loving God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. Thus, for the purpose of

personality identification, we'll call these people "God oriented." And, thankfully, there are always these in each congregation.

But there are also others in the same congregation who are horizontal personalities. They major in the areas of people, practicalities and pragmatics. They are less rigid in conformity; very sensitive to human dilemmas, and open to reason. For the purpose of personality identification, we'll call them "people oriented." Thankfully, there are also these people in each congregation. The horizontals usually outnumber the verticals in most "average" congregations.

Such diversity of personality exists in every congregation that is formed out of the world. And such diversity is not bad, but rather good — provided each is "subject to the other out of reverence to Christ" and all subject themselves to the maturing process that causes each to become better because of the presence of the other; each partaking of the good of the personality of the other until they all become more full, well-rounded personalities.

But often, instead of a blending of the two into one, a polarization takes place around the two facets of the Christ-like personality, resulting in a schism in the body. Each of these "half personalities" becomes entrenched in his particular polarization and division is the outcome. This has happened thousands of times all over the country. In fact, I suspect that most of the divisions among us are caused by "differences of personality," and not real differences of doctrine. The doctrinal differences are only the cover-up. Not always, but more often than not.

The tragedy of this whole process is that each faction goes off by itself, taking with it only one part of the personality of Christ. They each mark the other as "legalists" or as "liberals." And in a way they are both right. Because each faction, when isolated from the other, does become something quite different from what it was while in union

with the other. The "God oriented, vertical" people, left to themselves, deteriorate into suspicious, judgemental, self-righteous keepers of orthodoxy. And the "people oriented, horizontal," left to themselves, slip and slide ever closer to a social gospel devoid of divine directives and safeguards. And so we label each other "legalists" and "liberals," while actually we are just "lopsided" and choose to remain that way.

Multiply this kind of division by thousands and you have a religious movement formed out of a fragmented personality, characterized by extremism at both ends of the spectrum, and each carrying with it the seeds of perpetual splintering. Each "half of the personality of Christ" identifies with other splinters of like mind; they organize a paper with an editor who also possesses that same half of the personality; they form a college on the same basis; they line up preachers who are vocal in their "defense of the truth." Thus you see two new sects enter on the religious scene, each possessing only part of the spirit of Christ; and both, by isolation from each other, remove themselves from the God-ordained plan designed to bring them both to the fullness of Christ. And on and on we go.

Understand that this failure to "attain the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" is not occasioned by any flaw in the divine principle involved. It is rather caused by a fly in the human personalities of the people involved, and by an unwillingness of the two facets to remain together until the "synthesis" of the two personalities occurs.

This can be illustrated by yet another relationship — marriage. Eph. 5:31-33 explicitly states that the relationship between a man and his wife is intended by God to produce oneness. Listen: "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, *and the two shall*

*become one.*” Now, it is a known fact all through nature, from the lowliest particles of matter to the highest partners of marriage, that opposites attract. Two like particles of matter repel each other, whether they are two positive particles or two negative particles. But a positive and a negative attract each other. So it is in marriage. Even in externals: a blond is most often attracted to a brunette. But also in internals: diverse personalities are attracted to each other. An extrovert is attracted to an introvert; a very neat and tidy person finds herself married to an untidy man; a “here-comes-the judge” marries a “let’s-let-it-slide.” A vertical marries a horizontal. Heaven forbid!!

But it is not “Heaven forbid.” It is “Heaven designed.” The human personality, estranged from God, is not a total personality. We tend to be either one way or the other, but not often a balance of the two. Personality-wise, we need the other part which our mate provides. And, as difficult as such cohabitation with someone so unlike ourself may be, this is God’s design. It is his desire that the “two become one.” Each through association with and assimilation from the other becomes a more well-rounded personality.

But 1976 saw over 1,000,000 couples who failed to stay together and allow this blending process. They divorced, usually each taking his or her part of the personality and going separate ways. Thus God’s plan for the two to become one is aborted.

Is not this also God’s plan for the church? A plan so often put asunder, resulting in division? In Eph. 2:14-16 the same language is used to describe the bringing of two diverse personalities (Jew and Gentile) into one body: the two are to become one. “For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility . . . that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace.” Here, in the Jew and Greek, there existed the same diversity of personality that usually exists

in a marriage and that commonly exists in every congregation. Generally speaking, the Jews would have to be considered as the "God oriented" ones; while the Gentiles would have been the "people oriented" ones. The Jews, trained by law and made rigid by tradition, were brought into one body with Gentiles who were without law and were deprived of the moral discipline of divine guidelines. But it was God's design that these two should become one in Christ.

The oneness between Jew and Gentile, husband and wife, and the diverse personalities of a local congregation lies in the perfect synthesis which exists in Christ. The perfect personality is exemplified in Christ. He had perfect love for God and perfect love for his fellowman. This perfection is seen in the cross. Shortly before his death he prayed "with loud cries and tears," "Let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will but as Thou wilt." Here we witness perfect love for his Father. And then in his dying hours he manifested perfect love for his fellowman as he prayed even for his executioners: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Lk. 23:34). It is this perfect blend of personality to which God calls us.

But we're so diverse; so different. What keeps us together in the meantime until this synthesis is brought about? What allows us to live in peace without sacrificing principle on the way to this perfection of personality? What spans the gap of diversity? Simply stated, it is found in Eph. 4:15, "Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ." The basis of unity is truth; the atmosphere of unity is love. Either one without the other destroys unity and oneness. A fuller statement of both the basis and the atmosphere of unity is found in the earlier part of that same fourth chapter of Ephesians. After begging them to lead a life worthy of the calling to which they had been called (4:1), Paul then describes the atmosphere of unity in

the following terms: "with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (vv. 2, 3). All of these relate to our fellowman, and they correspond to the horizontal. But there is more to unity than just atmosphere. There must be a basis. There must be truth and unswerving loyalty to right. This Paul lists in vv. 4-6. "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all." This corresponds to the vertical. So here again we see the well-rounded personality displayed as the essence of unity.

This subject is again under discussion in the great 12th and 13th chapters of I Corinthians. After treating at length the diversity of the body due to its manifold gifts and various functions (chapter 12), Paul describes in chapter 13 the bridge that spans the gap created by diversity. It is love. In 13:1 he says essentially that "all the talk in the world and in heaven cannot make up for the absence of love." In fact such talk, without love, is "empty nothingness." Then, in verses 2 and 3 he comes close to describing the very personalities that we have been discussing. Listen: "Though I have prophetic powers, and understand *all* mysteries and *all* knowledge, and thought I have *all* faith, so as to remove mountains . . ." (v. 2). Shades of the vertical!! Is not this attitude of having *all* the answers to *all* the questions regarding doctrine and faith one of the most often-made claims of those who major in the "vertical?" It is indeed! Well, Paul says that without love all such unassailable positions of superior knowledge are absolutely nothing. But that is only one side of the coin. In verse 3 he speaks of the horizontals, and couldn't have chosen a more apt description than when he said, "Though I give away all I have." The "free wheeling, easygoing personality" that sacrifices self for the good of others is

characteristic of the horizontal. But without love it is likewise nothing!

Love is the bridge between the two that brings unity out of diversity without the loss of identity. Correction! Love is the bridge between the two that brings unity out of diversity and in so doing *establishes* its identity!! "Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful, it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends" (13:4-8a).

Herein lies the identity crisis that faces the church today. Until we resign ourselves to the task of holding together in love, until, with each other's help, we grow into the fullness of Christ's personality I doubt that many, if any, will identify us as Christ's people. And I doubt that He will. And why should they? Why should He? Too long have we been "children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men [whose personalities are like ours], by their craftiness and deceitful wiles." Let us henceforth resolve to "speak the truth in love" and thus "grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ." And by the grace of God, may "the *whole* body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, make bodily growth and upbuild itself in love."

Herein lies true spirituality! Herein lies the true identity of the people of God.



# SPIRITUALITY AND THE FUTURE

Batsell Barrett Baxter

**Name:** Batsell Baxter.

**Residence:** 3703 Mayfair Avenue, Nashville, Tn.

**Title:** Professor, Head of Department of Bible, David Lipscomb College.

**Born:** Cordell, Oklahoma, son of the late Batsell and Fay Scott Baxter; father, who died March 4, 1956, the President Emeritus and Head of the Bible Department at David Lipscomb College and had been President of Abilene Christian College and George Pepperdine College. September 23, 1916.

**Married:** Wanda Roberts, Taft, Texas, December 22, 1938.

**Children:** Scott, Feb. 23, 1950; Alan, Jan. 29, 1953; and John, Sept. 25, 1955.

**Education:** David Lipscomb College High School—Graduated 1933. Abilene Christian College, B.A., 1937. University of Southern California, M.A., 1938; Ph.D. 1944. Vanderbilt University, B.D., 1957.

**Teaching Experiences:** Instructor and, later, professor of speech, George Pepperdine College, Los Angeles, California, 1938-1945; Professor of Speech and Bible and head of Speech Department, David Lipscomb College, 1945-56; Professor of Bible and head of the Bible Department, David Lipscomb College, 1956.



**Churches Served as Regular Preacher:** Church of Christ, Burbank, California 1941-45; Church of Christ, Trinity Lane, Nashville, Tennessee, 1946-51; Church of Christ, Hillsboro, Nashville, Tennessee, 1951.

**Publications:** *Churches of Today* (with Norval Young), Vol. I, Gospel Advocate Co., 1960; *Heart of Yale Lectures*, The Macmillan Co., 1947; *Preachers of Today* (with Norvel Young), Vol. I and II, Gospel Advocate Co., 1952, 1959; *Speaking for the Master*, The Macmillan Company, 1954; *If I Be Lifted Up*, Gospel Advocate Company, 1956; *Great Preachers of Today*, Vol. I, Biblical Research Press, 1960; *Making God's Way Our Way*, Gospel Advocate Company, 1964; *As A Man Thinketh in His Heart*, Washington Industries, Nashville, 1966.

**Organizations:** Past President of Southern Speech Association and of the Tennessee Speech Association; member of Executive Council of Speech Association of America; member of Pi Delta Kappa, national educational fraternity, and Pi Kappa Delta, National forensics fraternity.

**Hobby:** Photography.

**Travels:** Made trip to Europe and Holy Land in 1949, and again in 1972. Was flown to Tokyo, Japan, at invitation of members of church of Christ in armed forces stationed in Far East, on trip that lasted from November 17 to December 12, 1957, and included visits to Hawaii, Ibaraki (Japan), Seoul (Korea), and Los Angeles, California. Held week's lectureship in Tokyo for benefit of men in the armed forces, and preached and lectured at other churches in Tokyo, Hawaii, and Korea, and at Ibaraki Christian College and George Pepperdine College.

Led campaign of forty workers in establishing a new congregation in London, England, during the summer of 1961. Led similar campaign in the summer of 1963, with 90 workers.

**Radio and Television work:** Made fifty-two half-hour television films in the 1960 series of Herald of Truth films. Made fifteen additional films in the 1962 series. From 1961-65 was regular speaker on the Herald of Truth network during the second and

fourth quarters each year. Herald of Truth television speaker since 1966.

**Honors:** Was chosen “Alumnus of the Year” by the Alumni Association of Abilene Christian College in 1961.

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While in England last summer I saw a documentary program on BBC television which dealt with the problem of “redundant churches” — churches which are no longer needed and are being closed. The speaker said, “These no-longer-needed churches number not in the hundreds but in the thousands.” The *London Times* gave even more concrete statistics, “As congregations have dwindled, many churches have become little more than a financial liability to parish and diocese. In the past eight years, the Church of England alone declared 639 churches redundant and it calculates another 350 will go the same way in the next five years.”<sup>1</sup> These redundant church buildings are now being used, the article further explained, for museums, theaters, warehouses, social services, and in the case of small chapels even private homes. Churches and chapels are numerous in England, but the people frequenting them for worship are few. People are everywhere. Millions of them. And, tragically, in our particular generation, most of them have little faith in God and little knowledge about the Bible. *What all of this means is that modern society, especially in Europe, is moving at an accelerated rate away from God and toward secularism.*

There are many evidences here in America also which indicate that our society is drifting away from spiritual concerns toward humanistic secularism. There are many evidences all about us, such as the decline in morals, the growth of materialism, and the rise in crime. Harvey Cox documents this trend in his bestselling book, *The Secular City*, when he says,

The rise of urban civilization and the collapse of traditional religion are the two main hallmarks of our era and are closely related movements . . . The age of the secular city, the epoch whose ethos is quickly spreading into every corner of the globe, is an age of "no religion at all." It no longer looks to religious rules and rituals for its morality or its meanings.<sup>2</sup>

Pendulums have a way of swinging from one extreme to another, and in our time the pendulum in Western Civilization seems to be swinging away from the spiritual toward the secular.

Almost since the beginning of man's existence upon the earth there has been a raging battle between God on the one hand and Satan on the other. By the time we reach the third chapter of the first book of the Bible, we see the conflict in sharp focus. In every generation since, we find man pulled downward toward the material and secular, while there are also within him inclinations toward the eternal and spiritual. The battle goes on in every life, in every place, and all the time. Tonight, we ask ourselves the question, what of "Spirituality and the Future"?

### **The Advance of Secularism**

Interviewed on his ninetieth birthday, some months ago, Will Durant, Pulitzer Prize-winning historian and dean of American historians, was quoted as saying,

It is interesting to observe the condition of the Roman Empire in about 160 A.D., after it had reached its height and was beginning to crumble, for that period very much resembles ours . . . Our great wealth has made us narrow in our outlook, and we are overly concerned with acquisitions . . . Wealth leads to freedom, but freedom is an awfully difficult business. And freedom

without intelligence — without thought — becomes chaos . . . Our moral code has withered. Once, we had an all-seeing, rewarding and punishing deity. He set limits for us because we feared him. Now we are unbounded — and humankind needs discipline to survive.<sup>3</sup>

Within very recent years Arnold Toynbee, the late leading British historian, described our condition,

Of the nineteen civilizations which have preceded ours, eighteen of them had perished by the time they had reached the moral condition the United States is in now.<sup>4</sup>

A more detailed analysis of this trend away from spirituality toward secularism appeared in an article in the *Readers' Digest*, by journalist Raphael David Klein, in which he said,

Western man began to lose his belief in God as a personal force, as a decider of his fate, as ultimate judge of his actions. The idea that God created man became old-fashioned; we evolved . . . After milleniums of living under gods, man came to regard such belief as archaic and superstitious . . . He set forth to make his own way in the world . . . (This first generation) obeys the Commandments without believing they were commanded; he speaks of right and wrong in the framework of convictions he no longer possesses; he acts according to the Judeo-Christian ethic, although he has abjured the beliefs . . . What used to be an offense against God became "antisocial"; a sin became a crime; religious precepts governing conduct became matters of hygiene, efficiency or social value. Stealing was bad because honesty is the best policy. You tried to avoid

being unfaithful to your mate because it might harm your relationship . . . A societially-based ethic such as this is variable according to time, place and circumstance. There are no absolutes in it, and it has no clear, codified system . . . He finds his life-standards dissolved beneath him. Cynicism plagues him, but he cannot refute it; he rejects pure hedonism as a way of life, but he has no philosophy with which to dispute its claims. And, beyond all of this, another trouble bewilders, wounds, frightens and embitters him, in the face of which he is as impotent as toward all the rest: the rebellion of his children against him . . . If a parent must tell a youngster that life has no meaning, how can he tell him that he should not take drugs? In fact, how can he convince him that he should not commit suicide outright? . . . For the young person the experience of learning that an entire civilization is founded on nothing solid morally . . . that he finds nothing in it to give his life meaning — this has become so overwhelming a shock that it has left him largely mute, inarticulate, confused, unable to cope. He can literally be sure of nothing.<sup>5</sup>

This trend toward secularism did not begin in America. Its roots go deep into our racial, social and historical ties with Europe. The philosopher David Hume, among others, began to describe the world in such a way as to leave God out. Charles Darwin made his round-the-world voyage in the "Gypsy Moth" and came back to announce his evolutionary hypothesis in his now famous book, *Origin of Species*, published in 1859. The result of this one book has been tremendous in leading mankind to feel that he is simply a product of organic evolution and that there is no God in the picture.

The German philosopher Frederick Nietzsche coined the "God is dead" slogan that has been so widely echoed in our

own generation. The noted psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud added his influence to the godless view. Karl Marx, in writing his famous book, *Das Kapital*, launched the Communist movement that has been so devastating to the religious faith of literally billions of people.

H.G. Wells and others have talked as if all man's problems would be solved with the advance of science and the achievement of universal education. It is interesting to note, as a sidelight, that Wells came to the end of his life disillusioned with man's ability to achieve utopia. His last book had the significant title, *Mind At the End of Its Tether*.

Religion is dying in England and on the continent of Europe. In England one hears the chilling statistics that only seven percent of the population go to church as much as three times each year. It is obvious that the huge churches are all but empty. For example, on a Sunday evening in July of last year, I decided to visit the largest Methodist church in England, Methodist Central Hall Westminster. I observed the worship and was deeply impressed by the valiant effort that the preacher was making to keep the church alive. When the service was over I asked the size of the building and was told that it would seat 2700 people. Not more than 250 had attended on that particular Sunday evening and obviously half or more of these were visitors. I asked how many had attended at the morning hour and was told by a young man who had sung in the choir, about the same number, maybe 250. Remember this is London's most pretigious Methodist church, situated just across the street from Westminster Abbey. As mentioned earlier, hundreds and even thousands of churches are being classified as "redundant" and are being closed. Secularism is winning the battle for men's minds in all of Europe.

At the same time Western Civilization is abandoning religion, it seems to be having monumental problems of many kinds. Unbelievable as it may sound, the past thirty

years have seen 100 wars in various trouble spots around the globe. No other century has seen such devastation as our century. The drums of war have been our music. The machines of war have been our works of art. At this very moment, men still hold councils of war and there are nervous fingers on millions of triggers.

Masses of people are starving, also. A band of hunger stretches across the Sub-Sahara, clutches at the masses of Bangladesh and even creeps into the inner cities and mountain hideaways of America. Poverty continues to grind the human spirit into the dust of bitterness in many of our great cities.

Then there is the massive growth in crime. Why can't we walk the streets of our cities anymore? Why are we forced behind barred windows and tightly locked doors? Were the last survivors of the Roman Empire, as they were surrounded by the vicious hordes of barbarians, any more afraid than we are? What about the breakdown in ethics? Where did the cheaters come from? The lie, the kick-back, the deal, the cut-throat tactics, the white collar thievery—what laboratory developed all of these? Even the most loyal of us have become cynics, losing faith and confidence in our national leaders. What has shattered the fragile trust which once tied us together and made our civilization prosper?

The answer to these questions is found in some very familiar Scriptures. "Righteousness exalteth a nation; But sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34). "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12). "O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). As mankind has abandoned faith in God and has departed from the moral and ethical teachings which God has provided he has made a sorry mess of civilization. The truthfulness of the Scriptures just mentioned, and many other Scriptures as well, has been



demonstrated over and over again through the centuries. The demonstration is being made especially clear today.

### **Stemming the Tide of Secularism**

Our challenge in the twentieth century is to stem the tide of secularism and bring humanity back to spiritual concerns. Mr. Malcolm Muggeridge, World War II war-correspondent, writer for the *Manchester Guardian*, editor of *Punch*, and constant speaker on BBC television, grew up with atheistic, humanistic views. In mature life, he came to embrace faith in God, Christ, and the Bible — as man's only alternative to annihilation. The brilliant mind of this seventy-four year old elder statesman has seen the disaster that lies ahead for a civilization which is abandoning faith in God. His voice is sounding forth a vigorous, influential call for men to reverse the direction of their lives and come back to the Christ of the Bible. Like the late famous C.S. Lewis of Oxford, who was an atheist or agnostic in his younger years, but who came to faith in God in his mature years, Muggeridge is a tremendous challenge to the spirit of our times.

There are other voices as well. "We are beginning," writes Dwight Stevenson, "to see that a full garage, a full pocketbook and a full stomach can add up to an empty life."<sup>6</sup> Arnold Toynbee, quoted earlier, has also written,

What shall we do to be saved? In *politics*, establish a constitutional cooperative system of world government. In *economics*, find working compromises (varying according to the practical requirements of different places and times) between free enterprise and socialism. In the *life of the spirit*, put the secular superstructure back onto religious foundations . . . Of the three tasks, the religious one is, of course, in the long run by far the most important.<sup>7</sup>

Several Scriptures come to mind. In I Corinthians 3:11, there is the statement from Paul, "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Nothing is more fundamental in terms of saving civilization than this. You remember, too, as the writer of Hebrews put it, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yea and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). The final words of the Sermon on the Mount, when applied to all of Christ's teachings, seem especially appropriate for our generation:

Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock. And every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof (Matthew 7:24-27).

It is proverbial to say that history has a way of repeating itself. We are seeing, in our twentieth century, a repetition of what Solomon described, from his own life and experience, in the book of Ecclesiastes. In his earlier years he sought pleasure, wealth, power and knowledge. I never cease to be impressed by that remarkable paragraph in the second chapter of Ecclesiastes where Solomon described his own self-centered search for pleasure. I made me this . . . I made me that . . . I planted . . . I bought . . . I gathered . . . and on and on it goes. Then comes the climax, "Then I looked on the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do; and, behold, all was vanity and striving after wind, and there was no profit under the sun" (Ecc. 2:11).

Modern man seeks *pleasure* in eating, drinking, drugs,

sex, pornography, and entertainment of all kinds. He seeks *wealth* by exploiting the resources of our planet with a recklessness unsurpassed in history. He is greedy for *power* of all kinds: military power, economic power, political power and the like. He avidly searches for *knowledge*, putting science and education on pedestals, almost as if they were gods. But none of this has brought deep, genuine happiness. None of this has brought utopia. As Solomon found in the long ago, it is “a striving after wind and there is no profit under the sun.” May we fervently hope and work incessantly to help those of our generation learn what Solomon ultimately learned, “This is the end of the matter; all hath been heard; Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecc. 12:13).

Those of us who are Christians, with our voices and our lives, must call modern man back to Christian faith. Some call our era “the post-Christian era,” but this is only an illusion. Christianity is as true today as it was when it began. Christ is as greatly needed by modern man as by any previous generation. As people become more numerous and as modern science makes our world more and more complicated, it becomes ever more imperative that Christ’s values and his guidelines for living be accepted by all men. Christ’s way is the only way, if we are to survive here in this life, and in the life to come. So, our challenge is clear. It is an old challenge, but it is ever new, ever more urgent.

### **A New World Begins With Me**

Up to this point we have been speaking about the urgent need of spirituality — that is, a meaningful faith in God — for the world. I should like to turn at this point and think of the need for a greater spirituality in the lives of those of us who are already Christians. It is so easy for the standards of the world to become our standards. It is so easy for the materialism, the permissiveness, and the secularism of the

society about us to contaminate our lives. There is an urgent need, therefore, for Christians everywhere to renew their allegiance to the Lord regularly and to grow in spiritual maturity.

The Scriptures are very clear in their emphasis upon the importance of spiritual growth. There are warnings, for example, like those found in Hebrews 5:12; 6:1-3,

For when by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food . . . Wherefore leaving the doctrine of the first principles of Christ, let us press on unto perfection; not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the teaching of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit.

The positive side of this spiritual emphasis is found, among other places, in Ephesians 4:11-15,

And he gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ: till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: that we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error; but speaking truth in love, may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ.

Then there is that beautiful statement from the apostle John in III John, verse 2, "Beloved, I pray that in all things thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth."

The apostle Peter spoke of our spiritual growth in these terms,

Yea, and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue; and in your virtue knowledge; and in your knowledge self-control; and in your self-control patience; and in your patience godliness and in your godliness brotherly kindness; and in your brotherly kindness love (II Peter 1:5-7).

But, just how do we achieve this spiritual growth? Actually, the plan is a very simple one. Some years ago in thinking of how spiritual growth could take place in the lives of those of us who live today, I decided to go back and make a careful study of how the men of Christ's day grew from very ordinary men, pursuing very ordinary vocations, into the towers of spiritual strength that they became. I refer particularly to the apostles, but also to others of that beginning generation of the church. My conclusions, after carefully studying the New Testament with this theme in mind, was that *they grew primarily by association*. As the rough fishermen, tax collectors, farmers and the like associated with Christ, they became different men. This is evidenced by an incident recorded in Acts 4:13, in which the attitude of the Sanhedrin is reflected:

Now when they beheld the boldness of Peter and John, and had perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13).

Over a period of a bit more than three years these men associated with Jesus day after day, observing his behavior, learning his attitudes, and accepting his values. The result was that this close association with Jesus changed their lives marvelously.

The same principle was at work in the influence that the apostle Paul had upon those who traveled with him. As his companions beheld his own dedication to Christ and his own sacrificial life, they also were changed for the better. How could one hear Paul say,

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me (Galatians 2:20),

without being affected by it? The same would be true of his marvelous statement,

For which cause I suffer also these things: yet I am not ashamed; for I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day (II Timothy 1:12).

Again and again, they heard him teach concerning Christ and the church. As they learned more and more of what Christianity means and as they saw his life, they grew spiritually. Paul recognizes this as God's plan for spiritual growth, for he said, "Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ" (I Cor. 11:1).

We also grow by association. That growth can be enhanced by several different kinds of association. First, we grow as we associate with faithful Christians of our own day, through being with them in our homes and in our recreations,

and by worshiping and studying together. Who among us cannot look back to such associations and realize that his own spiritual growth was greatly enhanced by knowing and being with certain other people who were deeply committed to Christ?

Second, we grow as we associate with those in need — the sick, the disturbed, the poor, the young, and the old. As our hearts are tendered by the realization that others need help that we are able to give, we find ourselves becoming more compassionate and more generous with our time, our talents and our money.

Third, we grow by association with Christians of other generations, through reading of their lives and their works. This has been true in my own life as I have read of the lives of such men as T.B. Larimore, David Lipscomb, James A. Harding, Alexander Campbell, and a host of others back through history.

Fourth, we grow as we associate with people of the long ago whose lives are reflected in the Scriptures. As we read of Joseph, Moses, David and the prophets our lives are changed. As we read of the apostles, Timothy, Titus, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of Jesus, Dorcas, Lydia and others our lives are changed. Their faith, their attitudes, and their behavior tend to become ours as we associate with them through the reading of the Scriptures.

Fifth, most important of all, we grow as we associate with Christ through the pages of the Scriptures. Paul suggests this when he says,

But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit (II Cor. 3:18).

The same emphasis is also found in another of his writings, Romans 12:1-2, where he says,

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service. And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Our association with Christ and with God through the reading of the Scriptures and through prayer and meditation constitutes the best means of our growing spiritually. In this connection read the 19th Psalm again. As we study the heavens which declare the glory of God and as we read and meditate upon his law, his testimony, his precepts, his commandments, we come to be more like the God who created us in his own image.

### **Conclusion**

What is the future of spirituality? Only God knows the direction in which our world will go. If it is wise it will turn from the secularism which has been prominent down through history and which has become so very dominant in our time, to a faith in God and a respect for his commandments. We do not know what calamities, natural disasters, wars and the like may need to come to shake man's faith in his own ability to guide his affairs. We do know that whatever comes in the future it is imperative that the voices of Christians be raised in declaring their faith and their lives be such as to draw men toward Christ. If this is to be done, then each of us must come to live ever more fully the life that Christ exemplified before us. As we think as he thought, live as he lived, and love as he loved, the world will be drawn to Christ. My prayer is that we may grow spiritually in order that the world may come to know the beauty and the power of the spiritual life that is only to be found in Christ.



FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>*The London Times*, "Lifespan Sunday Supplement," July 10, 1977, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup>Cox, Harvey, *The Secular City*, Macmillan, New York, 1966, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup>Berkow, Ira, "Will Durant Hints At What Might Be," *Nashville Tennessean*, November 12, 1975.

<sup>4</sup>Toynbee, Arnold, quoted in the *Moody Monthly*.

<sup>5</sup>Klein, Raphael David, "Is There A Substitute For God?", *Readers' Digest*, March, 1970, pp. 51-53.

<sup>6</sup>Source unknown.

<sup>7</sup>Source unknown.



# **EXEGESIS OF DIFFICULT PASSAGES**



# BY FAITH OF CHRIST

James Burton Coffman

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Mr. Coffman was named Outstanding Alumnus of A.C.U. in 1971 and received the Honorary Doctor of Laws Degree from Pepperdine University in 1977. He has preached, and/or led the singing, for churches in over 100 American



cities, besides some twenty in foreign nations. While minister for the church of Christ in Manhattan, he was successful in raising funds for the construction of the first house of worship built on Madison Avenue in this century.

His extensive writings are the invaluable tools of religious leaders throughout the United States, and his current works include the completion of an outstanding series of commentaries on the New Testament.

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Text: Even the righteousness of God which is *by faith of Jesus Christ\** unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference (AV) — Rom. 3:22.

\*Emphasis mine.

Even the righteousness of God through *faith in Jesus Christ\** unto them that believe; for there is no distinction (ASV) — Rom. 3:22. (ASV margin: *of*)

Text: That he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus (ASV) — Rom. 3:26. (ASV margin: *is of faith of*)

That he might be just, and the justifier of him *which believeth in Jesus\** (AV) — Rom. 3:26.

The second of these texts is important because it shows that the translators of the ASV recognized the fact of their departing from the Greek text when they rendered the passage “that hath faith in Jesus” instead of “is of faith of Jesus.” Oddly enough, the translators of the AV also missed the true translation in this verse. However, in a number of other instances, they gave the following:

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by *the faith of Jesus Christ\**, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by *the faith of Christ\**, and not by the works of the law (AV) — Gal. 2:16.

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by *the faith of the Son of God,\** who loved me, and gave himself for me (AV) — Gal. 2:20.

But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by *faith of Jesus Christ\** might be given to them that believe (AV) — Gal. 3:22.

In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by *the faith of him\** (AV — Eph. 3:12. (ASV margin agrees).

\*Emphasis mine.

And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through *the faith of Christ*,\* the righteousness which is of God by faith (AV) — Phil. 3:9.

The major proposition of this presentation is that the AV is correct in the renditions which give “faith of Christ” as the proper translation of these passages. We shall not attempt to multiply the opinions of scholars against each other on this, because if numbers alone were counted, those favoring “faith in Christ” would probably be in the majority. Nevertheless, there are scholars of the very greatest ability who still support the AV renditions. James Macknight and Adam Clarke, during the 19th century, supported the AV renditions of this phrase; Gabriel Hebert did likewise in 1955; and currently, Foy E. Wallace, Jr., and Professor George Howard of the University of Georgia have written vigorously, supporting “faith of Christ” as the true rendition of these passages.

The question of which is the correct rendition is not merely an idle, academic puzzle. Two vastly different theologies pivot upon this very phrase. Such things as the righteousness of God, the justification of the redeemed, the perfection of the saints in Christ, the self-denial that must precede union with Christ, the vital necessity of the church itself in the economy of salvation, and the basis of confidence in Christian hearts — all of these, and many other considerations, are either devastated by one of these renditions, or established and fortified by the other. Therefore, our argument for the validity of the translation “faith of Christ” is based entirely upon textual, grammatical, and theological considerations.

I. In Romans 3:22, 26 and in Galatians 3:22, it is impossible for the phrase to refer to the sinner’s faith, since the sinner’s faith is mentioned in the succeeding clauses, thus:

\*Emphasis mine.

Even the righteousness of God through faith of Jesus Christ *unto all them that believe\**; for there is no distinction (AV) — Romans 3:22.

II. Since absolute perfection is required of all who would be saved (Matthew 5:48), it follows that the faith which justifies must be perfect, the same being impossible for the faith of any human being. However, the faith of Christ is perfect, able to justify sinners. Even in the case of Christ, however, it was not faith *alone*; for he was made perfect through obedience (Hebrews 5:8,9). Thus the great Lutheran heresy was wrong on two counts: (1) regarding whose faith it is that justifies, and (2) even in the faith of Christ it was not faith only, but perfect faith and perfect obedience.

The perfection that is required of Christians is total and absolute. Subsequent translations have attempted to render "perfect" as in Matthew 5:48, as "mature"; but the qualifier, "even as your Father in heaven is perfect," denies such a meaning. Once the sinner is convinced that only absolute perfection can save his soul, he is confronted with the great dilemma, (1) either he must achieve it himself, or (2) receive the perfection of Christ. This will drive any thoughtful person to his knees and send him seeking at the feet of Jesus Christ.

III. How does God impute righteousness to sinners? This is done, not by transferring the righteousness into sinners, an absolute impossibility, but by transferring sinners into Christ, identifying them with Christ, as Christ, and in Christ, in which state of salvation they are indeed righteous, not in their own identity as Joe Doakes or John Doe, but "as Christ" in Christ. Thus their righteousness is perfect, as Paul put it: "that we may present every man perfect in Christ" (Col. 1:28).

IV. Jesus said, "Let a man deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). The word for "deny"

\*Emphasis mine.



in this place is the same as that used of Peter when he denied the Lord; and the proposition that would make a sinner's faith the basis of justification leaves the sinner still trusting in something that he did, rather than in the perfect faith and obedience of Christ. There is nothing that a sinner can either believe or do which either separately or collectively may form any logical grounds of justification. In this connection, the distinction must be made between pre-conditions of justification, and the justification itself. Faith, repentance, baptism, etc., are indeed pre-conditions of justification, without which no one can be justified; but the ultimate ground of God's declaring that a sinner is righteous is all of Christ, and nothing of the sinner.

V. The reason for the supremacy and absolute necessity of the church which is the spiritual body of Christ shines in this. All of the righteousness ever achieved on earth was achieved by Jesus Christ. His perfect faith and obedience are "the righteousness of God," without which no one can be saved. But that righteousness remains in Christ, especially in his spiritual body the church, of which he is the head. The notion that God shoots some of that righteousness into stinking sinners merely upon the basis of their believing is ridiculous. There is absolutely nothing that God could shoot into a sinner that would make him righteous. It would be just like putting one can of clean oil in a crankcase full of dirty oil. Not even the Holy Spirit could accomplish such a thing, for the Holy Spirit is not granted to sinners, but given to those who are sons, and "because they are sons" (Gal. 4:6).

VI. Let the spiritual body of Christ be thought of as a corporation, which in a similar sense is an extra-literal body, a legal person, with a life of its own. This conception is widely presented in the New Testament by the use of such phrases, as "in Christ," "in him," "in whom," "in the beloved," etc. Paul used that phrase, or the equivalent of it, 169 times in the New Testament, which says as loudly as the

Holy Spirit could say it that this is about the most important conception in the New Testament. Like any good corporation, Jesus Christ, Inc., has a seal (Ephesians 1:13); its stock in trade is all of the righteousness that ever existed on earth. It is *that body of souls* which make up Christ's spiritual body, who shall be saved; and they will be saved, not in their own identity, but "as Christ." See Galatians 2:20. The righteousness which characterizes this corporation, and all of its members, is the true righteousness achieved by Jesus Christ. It is not an imputed righteousness at all, except in the sense of its being imputed to members of that body. It is an *actual* righteousness, achieved in the perfect faith and obedience of the Son of God.

VII. There is a world of difference between being saved by "faith in Christ," and being saved by "faith of Christ." What sinner ever had faith perfect enough to merit his justification by Almighty God? It is sometimes objected that Christ as deity incarnate did not have faith at all, but *knew* all things. However, the New Testament speaks of Christ as "The faithful and true Witness" (Revelation 1:5, 3:14); and our contention here is that all of the passages cited speak of the faith of Jesus Christ, in the sense of the faith that the Saviour exercised.

There is a sense, however, in which one is saved by "faith in Christ," meaning the faith of a child of God exercised by him "in the Lord," as a member of his spiritual body. For a man who was never baptized into Christ to speak of having faith in Christ is a monstrous error. Such a person may indeed have faith "out of Christ," but not "in Christ"! Sanday pointed out that there are no less than seven meanings associated with "faith in Christ" in the New Testament. The most widely accepted meaning is that which construes it as "sinner's trust/faith," a meaning which it rarely has in the New Testament. In the current theological jargon of the times, faith is usually thought of as "trust/faith"

in the Lord, apart from any obedience or compliance whatever. Howard, however, after extensive research on the New Testament usage of it, affirms that the proper meaning is "fidelity," "faithfulness," "trustworthiness."<sup>1</sup>

Paul both began and closed the book of Romans with pointed emphasis upon "the obedience of faith" (1:5, 16:26), making that apostolic definition to stand fore and aft in the greatest dissertation on the subject of faith ever written, and leading to the conclusion that throughout the entire epistle, it is an *obedient* faith that the apostle speaks of in every single line of it.

The notion that understands faith as some kind of a "spiritual orgasm" that lights up the whole soul and saves the sinner instantaneously is nowhere in evidence in the New Testament.

VIII. Here is the ground of utmost confidence on the part of Christians. If one has been truly baptized into Christ, his righteousness in the sight of God is one and the same thing as the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. The perfect faith and obedience of our Lord is indeed the "righteousness of God through the faith of Christ." Everything that Christ did is credited to members of his spiritual body. "In Christ" Christians are dead to the law, because Christ died. They have paid the penalty of death due to sin, because Christ paid it, etc. Thus is achieved true and complete and final justification. Justification is the opposite of condemnation; and, in condemnation, there is in evidence a penalty, along with the judgment that the penalty is deserved. But in justification, not only is there remission of all penalty, but the judgment that *no penalty is deserved*. It would be wrong for God to condemn a man who is "in Christ," "as Christ," fully identified with the Lord. Such a condemnation would be equivalent to condemning Christ himself.

Of course, the Christian must *remain in Christ*. As Paul put it, "AND BE FOUND IN HIM" (Phil. 3:9), meaning that

until probation is ended or life is over, the Christian must not forsake, blur, or cloud his identity with the Lord who saved him. Therefore, let a man answer two questions only, and he will have the answer concerning the destiny that awaits him. Is he in Christ? Will he be found in him? Answer those two questions affirmatively, and there is no way a man can be lost, for Christ cannot be lost. Even gross sins, as long as they do not separate the Christian from his Lord (as for example the case of Peter's denial), cannot result in the damnation of the Christian. This is the basis of the true predestination.

IX. Christ himself taught this very same thing, thus:

I am the true vine . . . Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in me . . . If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned — John 15:1-6.

Thus the false notion that the corporate spiritual body of Christ is a Pauline invention, or development, falls to the ground. It is all right there in the metaphor of Christ as the true vine. There is another classical presentation of it in Revelation:

And I heard a voice from heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth; yea saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them — Revelation 14:13.

Note that the blessed are those in the Lord, and not this alone, but those who are “found in him,” that is, “die in the Lord.” The only way that any person can be “in the Lord” is to be in the spiritual body which the Lord has provided for

that very purpose, namely, the church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Converse of these Propositions**

Now, looking at the other side of the coin, if one is saved or justified by sinner's faith, apart from obedience and compliance with divine regulations that would make him a member of the spiritual body, in short, if he is justified by sinner's faith alone, then the very church of God itself is unnecessary. Since all of the righteousness on earth is "in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3), if sinner's faith is made to be the righteousness that saves him, it offsets and makes useless all of the vast achievements of faith and obedience on the part of Christ.

The arrogant heresy that affirms that Christians are under grace but not under the law of God has simply misread the holy text. It is true enough that Christians are not under the Law of Moses; but they are under the Law of Christ (Gal. 6:2), The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:2), The Perfect Law (James 1:26), The Royal Law (James 2:8), The Law of Liberty (James 2:12), or The Law of Faith (Rom. 3:27). If Christians are not under *that* Law, there is no such thing as sin, because "sin is the transgression of the law." The notion that the sinner's trust/faith removes from him all legal obligations is to make the sinner's faith greater than the very law of God itself. True, Paul used "law" in Galatians in a sense wider and more comprehensive than that of Moses' law alone; but the thought is not that of removing God's law in its entirety, but that of including all human codes and rules as being incapable of bringing salvation. Certainly, if the divine law of Moses itself could not achieve righteousness, then no lesser human code could do so either.

The concept of making a sinner's trust/faith the grounds of justification, leaves out of sight the fact that all "entering into life," in the last analysis is founded upon "doing the will of

God.” Jesus said to the rich young ruler: “If thou wouldest enter into life, keep the commandments” (Matthew 19:17); and that has never been repealed. A man can either keep the commandments himself (an impossibility), or he can become identified with Christ, as Christ and in Christ who *did keep them all* perfectly. But even for sinners saved by grace, the basis of their entry is still the keeping of all the commandments in our stead and upon our behalf by the Christ himself. To make the passages in question mean justification by the sinner’s faith is to nullify this word of the Saviour.

X. The proper understanding of these passages as referring to the faith of Christ, instead of to the sinner’s faith, also gives new meaning and clarity to the famed passage in Ephesians 2:8,9:

For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory.

“Through faith . . .” Whose faith is this, if not the faith of the Son of God? The qualifying clause, “And that not of yourselves” shouts in tones of thunder that it was the “faith of Christ” (and his perfect obedience) which God gave for the salvation of mankind “in Christ.” Grammatically, it is impossible that the qualifying clause should modify anything else except “faith”; but the understanding of this as the sinner’s faith has led to the monstrous proposition that “faith only is required for salvation, and that God supplies that!” All involved arguments on this text from the fact of “faith” being feminine and “that” being neuter are no barrier to regarding “faith as the gift of God.”<sup>2</sup> Dating back to Jerome, Chrysostom and Theodoret in antiquity, this passage, until recent times, has always been understood as a reference to the faith of Christ, the faith God gave “in him.” The saving

faith is therefore the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, available to men in only one way, namely, through their believing the gospel and being baptized into him, that is, into his spiritual body, the church.

This presentation is only a sketchy little outline of all that might be said of this immense topic. It is most regrettable that through a series of well-intentioned, but erroneous mistranslations in the ASV and subsequent versions, the ancient doctrine of "salvation by the faith of Christ" should have been so nearly lost to the theological thinking of our times. It is my humble prayer that young men of faith and vision will take up this question anew and press forward to unimaginable victories. The faith of Christ as the grounds of justification is a concept so lofty and comprehensive that none can deny it. The long arguments between ourselves and the theologians of Protestantism regarding justification find here their higher resolution. May God bless his holy word to the salvation of all who will heed it.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>See article by George Howard: The Faith of Christ, in *Expositor Times*, Vol. 7, pp. 212-214, April, 1974.

<sup>2</sup>F.F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972), p. 104.

# AN EXEGESIS OF I CORINTHIANS 7:10-17a.

R. L. Roberts

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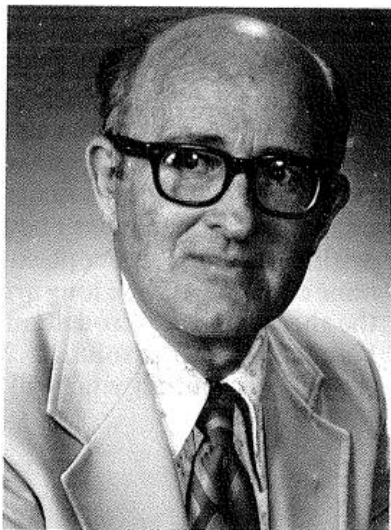
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He has written numerous articles on Restoration History and New Testament topics for *Restoration Quarterly*, *Firm Foundation*, *20th Century Christian*, and other publications. He edited the *Union List of Restoration Periodicals in Christian College Libraries*, 1975 and currently serves as an editor of *Index for Selected Religious Periodicals*, 1975- an annual index to periodicals published by members of the churches of Christ.

He is a deacon for University Church of Christ in Abilene.

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## I. General Instructions, 10-14.

- A. "To the married" (Christians), vv. 10, 11.
  - 1. "I charge, not I, but the Lord," v. 10.
  - 2. "Wife not to separate herself," v. 10.
- B. A Parenthesis, v. 11.
  - 1. Not an exception.
  - 2. Wife separating herself, 11a.
  - 3. Suggests:
    - (1) Either, that divorce had already occurred, or
    - (2) Would possibly follow.
  - 4. The only right course, 11b.
    - (1) "She must remain unmarried,"
    - (2) "Or, be reconciled."
- C. "To the rest" (Mixed Marriages), vv. 12-14.
  - 1. "I say, not the Lord," 12a. (Not disclaiming inspiration.)
  - 2. Brother married to unbeliever, 12b.
    - (1) "She agrees with him to remain married," 12b.
    - (2) "He is not to divorce her," 12c.
  - 3. Woman married to an unbeliever, 13a.
    - (1) "He agrees with her to remain married," 13b.
    - (2) "She is not to divorce the husband," 13c.
  - 4. Not an approval of Christians marrying unbelievers, II Cor. 6:14.
- D. Reason for injunctions stated above, v. 14.
  - 1. Unbelieving husband sanctified, v. 14a.
    - (1) "In the wife," 14a. Causal basis.
  - 2. Unbelieving wife sanctified, 14b.
    - (1) "In the husband," 14b. Causal basis.
  - 3. Proof of sanctity of such relationship, 14c.
    - (1) The other alternative—your children are unclean, 14c.
    - (2) Axiomatic basis, "but now they are holy," 14c.

- II. *Modification Under Special Circumstances*, 15-17a.
- A. One condition under consideration, v. 15a.
    1. Unbeliever wishes divorce. His action.
    2. This due to religious belief and unbelief.
      - (1) Contrast between *Ho apistos* and *ho adelphos ē hē adelphē* (*ho pistos*).
    3. A permissive imperative, 15a.
      - (1) "Let him separate himself," 15a.
      - (2) Christian's action—he or she may acquiesce.
    4. The believer's liberty, 15b.
      - (1) "Is not under bondage," "is not a total slave," 15b.
      - (2) If not permitted to acquiesce, then is enslaved.
      - (3) Freedom to remarry not considered.
    5. Limit of the circumstance.
  - B. Positive complement of the negative "not under bondage."
    1. "But in peace God has called us," 15c.
  - C. Confirmation of counsel given in verse 15, v. 16.
    1. Ambiguous: Is it *for* separation, or *against* separation?
    2. Expression of doubt: "For what assurance have you, O wife (husband), whether you shall convert the husband (wife)?"
    3. Fits context better, if *for* divorce.
  - D. A general rule, v. 17.
    1. Exceptive sense of *ei mē*.
    2. The exceptional and guarded permission of divorce must be understood under this rule.

## INTRODUCTION

First Corinthians 7:10-17 belongs to a section of the epistle that begins with chapter 6:12 and continues to the close of

chapter 7. In this section Paul is dealing with a number of problems in the Corinthian church. Some of these were subjects of interrogation by the Corinthians in a letter to the Apostle. Before answering the questions posed, some of which were regarding the continuation of marriages of Christian partners and mixed marriages, Paul establishes the permanency of the marriage bond and relationship (cf. 6:15ff.). This principle has very significant bearing upon the passage herein discussed.

Practical principles having been laid down, Paul now proceeds to apply these to special groups: first, to the "unmarried", v. 8f; then, to the married: 1. Believers married to believers, vv. 10, 11; 2. Believers married to unbelievers who consent to remain, vv. 12, 13; 3. Believers married to unbelievers who do not wish to continue such marriage, vv. 15, 16.

## EXEGESIS

Verse 10 - But to the married I charge, not I, but the Lord,  
That the wife not be separated from her husband.

"But to the married," *tois de gegamekosin: De* (but) is transitional, denoting that a new group is now under consideration, being repeated throughout this section of the book as Paul discusses the different groups. The groups under discussion here and in verse 12 are different. In the latter, mixed marriages are under consideration (one of the partners is an unbeliever), so it seems clear that Paul is discussing marriages of Christians in verses 10 and 11.

"I charge, not I, but the Lord," *paraggellō, ouk ego, alla ho kurios*: Paul is not just passing on the order or stating a mere wish, but says that the Lord gives the command. "*Paraggellō* is used in Classical Greek of military

command.”<sup>1</sup> Grosheide, in discussing Paul’s style here, quite appropriately says,

Paul’s appeal to a word of Christ here is bound up with the special character of the argument. Twice Paul had spoken of what was “good,” i.e., commendable, to be pursued under certain circumstances only. The statement in vs. 7 was again in the form of a recommendation since it presupposed the presence of a special charism given by God or of other special conditions (vs 26). A commandment is necessary to prevent the Corinthians from thinking that for married people to remain together is only a “good.”<sup>2</sup>

Lenski states the exact sense of the tense of the verb when he says that the form of *paraggellō* is that of the present tense showing that Paul “means that the order of Jesus has continuous permanent force.”<sup>3</sup>

“That the wife not be separated from her husband,” *gunaika apo andros mē chōrīsthēnai*: While the case of the women seeking separation is mentioned first, it is difficult to assign a specific reason for this, though there may well have been one. Several have been mentioned as possibilities. 1. “Christianity had powerfully stirred the feminine mind at Corinth (see 11:5ff; 14:34f.) possibly from incompatibility or ascetic aversion (cf 3f) caused the wish to separate.”<sup>4</sup> 2. Robertson and Plummer suggest that beginning with the wife indicates that such separation had occurred, but also say that some women may have raised the question.<sup>5</sup> 3. Alford thinks that the woman’s part is brought out first because the Christian women at Corinth may have been the most ready to make the separation.<sup>6</sup> 4. T. W. Chambers, in a footnote to Meyer’s commentary, says that

The state of morals at Corinth is explanation enough, more especially in connection with the easy and frivolous way in which divorces took place in Greek social

life generally—, not merely by *dismissal* on the part of the husband (*apopempein*), but also by *desertion* on the part of the wife (*apoleipein*).

Chambers notes that there is no sign of interrogation on this point and thinks that Paul “simply disposes of the point in the evenly course of the discussion regarding marriage, and with a view of its completeness.”<sup>8</sup> There is certainly reason for accepting the latter view, especially since ascetism, which might lead a Christian woman at Corinth with the new ideals of life to shrink from matrimonial intercourse, is inadmissible “for this reason—Paul having before him such a mere error of feeling and judgment, would not have made a disproportionate concession to it by saying *menetō agamos*”<sup>9</sup> (remain unmarried). Grosheide agrees that “the fact that at Corinth a woman might leave her husband as well as be dismissed by her husband” is conclusive reason, and rightly concluded “in any case Paul must forbid the women in the name of the Lord to leave their husbands.”<sup>10</sup>

Notes: It is interesting to note that those who seek to explain the Synoptic Gospels on the basis of oral tradition regarding Jesus’ sayings, rather than inspiration, comment that “The best-attested saying of Jesus is his repudiation of divorce.”<sup>11</sup>

The law of Moses mentions no case of a wife divorcing her husband. By the time of 1 Corinthians, Herodias had deserted her husband and Drusilla deserted her husband, also, (because he would not be circumcised). Josephus (Ant. 15:7) mentions Salome, the sister of Herod the Great, as the first Jewess to formally divorce her husband.

Verse 11 - (But should she be separated, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to the husband); and that husband not put away wife.

"But should she be separated," *ean de kai chōristhē*: The thought from *ean* to *katallagētō* is parenthetical and is disjoined from the command begun in verse 10 and concluded in the last part of verse 11. Though the parenthesis is introduced by the *de* of antithesis (as in verse 28), this is not to be taken as granting a separation by way of exception, as if the preceding injunction were not to be understood in the strictest sense. The supposition is that an actual case of a wife separating from her husband will possibly arise in the future, notwithstanding the plain command of the Lord.

It might be possible that the clause introduced by *ean kai* is concessive, in which case, the suggestion would be that there was such a case already in the church at Corinth, or, at least, it was likely to be realized; but it is more probable that the case had not yet actually occurred. Burton says that *ei (ean) kai* is the general manner of introducing a concessive clause, but he views *ean* in the protasis as conditional and *kai* as "simply intensive, emphasizing the following word and suggesting a supposition in some sense extreme (1 Cor. 4:7, 7:11)."<sup>12</sup> The aorist subjunctive is timeless with the context supplying the occasion. Robertson notes that the condition is a "third class condition, undetermined,"<sup>13</sup> and calls *chōristhē* ingressive. Lenski says that the condition is that of expectancy.<sup>14</sup> It is clear that Paul is not stating an exception, but is saying that even an extreme case must be viewed as being under the strict rule of Christ that a wife not be separated from her husband.

"Let her remain unmarried," *menetō agamos*: The imperative *menetō* is understood as applying to the woman as a resultant requirement (apodosis) conditioned on the fulfillment of the protasis (if clause). By this she is not permitted to marry. Findlay says, "Her remaining unmarried is virtually included in the law of Christ (Matt. 5:32; 19:9)."<sup>15</sup> Robertson and Plummer note that "Christ had forbidden marriage with a divorced wife (Lk. 16:18)" and contend that "Paul here

takes the same ground.”<sup>16</sup> Alford comments that Paul supposes actual separation “contrary of course to Christ’s command; if such have really taken place . . . the additional sin of a new marriage (Matt. 5:32) must not be committed.”<sup>17</sup> Robertson justly observes that “no allowance for remarriage of the innocent as Jesus does by implication” is here given.<sup>18</sup> Grosheide concurs and says that the supposition “cannot be an approval of divorce” and views the action taken by the woman as illegitimate divorce and does not consider the marriage annulled.<sup>19</sup> This might be if there were some legal divorce such as we now know. But, as Lenski points out, “neither Jesus nor Paul discusses what we term ‘divorce,’ namely legal court action; both speak about what destroys a marriage.”<sup>20</sup>

The woman is said to be unmarried (*agamos*), as much so as those of verse 8 who have never been married, and with respect to any other than her husband, she must remain so.

“Or be reconciled to her husband,” *tō andri katallagētō*: If she should decide that she cannot or does not wish to remain unmarried, the only course open to her is to “get herself reconciled” (passive) to her husband. Findlay states that the verb *katallagētō* (be reconciled) “indicates the fact of alienation or dissension, but not the side on which it exists.”<sup>21</sup> The reconciliation is to be initiated by the wife. The verb is second aorist passive imperative and is ingressive, i.e., with stress on the beginning of the action of which the woman is the subject. The case of the husband (*andri*) is dative of personal interest.

“And let the husband not put her away,” *kai andra gunaika mē aphienai*: *Aphienai* is an indirect command, as is *chōristhenai* (to be separated), following *paraggellō* (I charge). Paul used a different term from the one used of the wife, v. 10, when speaking of the husband. The change is understandable when we see that the wife could not “send away” the husband, since the house was his. She could only

“separate herself” by leaving, while he could divorce her by “sending her away.” *Chōristhēnai* is used in the LXX frequently of the separation in place. This was especially in accord with Jewish custom, while that of the woman leaving the husband is frequent in Greco-Roman custom. Paul uses *aphienai* here just as Jesus uses *apoluō* in Mark 10:11, 12 of both husband and wife. Both means the same, i.e., “divorce” or “to send away.”

Paul is here stating the rule not the exception. We are not to infer that he does not know or allow fornication as an exception, as does Christ in Matt. 19:9. Having already (chapter 6:15ff) established that fornication breaks the marriage relation as well as one’s relation to Christ, he proceeds with this fact understood as a matter of course. As Meyer says, “the validity of *this* ground of divorce is self-evident.”<sup>22</sup>

All of this fits well the context of this section of the book from 6:12 to 7:40 in which Paul first establishes the indissolubility of marriage (6:15-18) and also the immediate context where the absolute strictness of the command of Christ regarding divorce is applied to Christians married to each other.

A note on *Chorizō*: *Chorizō* is used four times in this context with reference to the marriage relationship. It is also used by the Lord in the statement that “what God hath joined together, let not man *put asunder*” (Matt. 19:6; Mark 10:9). This word is formed by the use of the adverbial preposition *chōris* (separate, apart, by itself) which became the tense-stem to which is added the suffix *-izō*.<sup>23</sup> The verb is intensive or iterative, that is, it expresses the idea of separation more intensively than does the adverb.

Originally the word seems to have been used as a reference to mere separation or division of any sort, but by the fourth century B.C. it had come to be used of marital separation or divorce. The Greek orator Isaeus (8, 36)



(420-350 B.C.) and Polybius 32:26 (2nd century B.C.) use the word in the sense of divorce.<sup>24</sup> Arndt and Gingrich state that *chōrizō* is found often “in marriage contracts in the papyri” and cite one reference of this use in a second century B.C. papyrus (Psi 166, 11) and three references to first century B.C. papyri where the same use occurs. Based on those uses their claim is that the passive (or middle) form means “a. *separate (one-self), be separated of divorce*” and conclude that Paul’s use of the same word in 1 Corinthians 7:11-15 is that of indicating absolute separation in divorce.

Moulton and Milligan say “The word has almost become a technical term in connection with divorce, as in 1 Corinthians 7:10, 11, 15.”<sup>25</sup>

Adolf Deissmann says of *chōrizōtai* that it is used in the Fayyum Papyri as in 1 Corinthians 7:10, 11, 15 and is a “technical expression for divorce.” He further says that “in marriage-contracts there are usually conditions for the possibility of separation; these are introduced by the formula *ean de (hoi gammuntes) chōrizōtai ap’ allelon*,”<sup>26</sup> “but if (the married) separate from one another.”

There is little doubt that the word as used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 7 refers to the separation of divorce. It is not just separation in “bed and board,” but of the dissolution of the marriage bond.

Verse 12 - But to the rest I say, not the Lord: If any brother has an unbelieving wife, and she consents to dwell with him, let him not put her away.

“But to the rest,” *tois de loipois*: Here Paul is dealing with the circumstance of mixed marriages, which has as yet not been considered. This is clear from no more than a casual reading of the text and needs not to be discussed. The use of the expression “the rest” to refer to those not included in the Christian fellowship (Eph. 2:3, 1 Thess. 4:13; 5:6) argues strongly for the idea that at the time of their marriage neither

husband nor wife was a Christian, but that one of the partners afterwards was converted. So, a new problem not existing in Jesus' day is now in view, i.e., should the marriage of a believer and an unbeliever continue?

"I say, not the Lord," *legō egō ouch ho kupios*: The meaning is that Paul is not quoting the Lord. He is not disclaiming inspiration, nor does he distinguish between his own personal writings and those that are God-breathed. *Legō* is emphatic by position, *legō egō* (say I) being the right order.

"If any brother has an unbelieving wife," *"ei tis adelphos gunaika echei apiston*: The verb has the sense of "has," not "keeps," or "retains." This is also the sense in verse 2. On the force of the conditional clause here used, Grosheide explains that

The first part of the conditional clause shows that there were Christians at Corinth who thought that they were permitted or even obligated to divorce their wives when the latter refused to abjure their paganism. But Paul points out the necessity for a distinction here. There is one condition, which if fulfilled renders divorce not only unnecessary but even forbidden.<sup>27</sup>

Paul is not speaking of an "unfaithful" wife, though *apistos* sometimes has this sense.

"And she consents to dwell with him," *kai hautē syneudokei oikein met' autou*: As the circumstance mentioned above is not to be taken as a ground *per se* for divorce, Paul now gives the reason why such is true, i.e., she consents to dwell with him. "Consents," from the compound *syneudokei*, indicated "mutual consent, implying more than one person satisfied."<sup>28</sup> It is often used with the dative of the thing in which agreement is found. So, Paul is saying that both parties agree to live together in marriage (this is the meaning of "to dwell with"). Compare Romans 1:32.

“Let him not put her away,” *me aphietō autēn*: Paul is speaking of divorce which is here forbidden as before. The Revised Version has “leave” here and in verse 13, but “put away” is better, as in both cases the idea is that of divorce. The Revised Standard Version so translates, “he should not divorce her.” *Aphietō* equals the same sense as *apoluein*, Mark 10:11.

Verse 13 - And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to dwell with her, let her not put him away.

The wording of this verse is much like that of verse 12. These differences occur:

1. The wife is now the subject. Paul says the same thing with respect to the wife not divorcing her partner when he consents to continuing the marriage. Why does Paul repeat this rule with respect to the wife? Two possibilities may be suggested: (1) Paul is giving the woman a place of honor; (2) the Christian wife would have to send away her husband if the unbeliever consents to dwell. This would be a presumptuous violation of duty.<sup>29</sup>

2. Whereas a conditional clause is found in verse 12, a relative clause is now used, and its force is that of referring to a definite and actual event or fact.

Some observations:

1. Paul is not giving woman the right to rule the man. This is opposed to Gen. 3:16 and many New Testament passages.

2. *Aphietō* is used of the wife while it is commonly used only of the husband. This shows that both have the same liberty and responsibility regarding Christian behavior in such mixed marriages.

3. The translation of *aphietō* in verses 12 and 13. The King James Version fails to denote the identity of the term in both verses. It has “put away” (12) and “leave” (13). This is unfortunate neglect. The American Standard Version has “leave” in both verses, but this does not give full identity.

The Revised Standard Version is quite exact with “he (she) should not divorce her (him).” The New English Bible is stronger—“must not divorce.”

4. “Paul would not sanction Christians marrying nonbelievers any more than Ezra (10:10) would permit Jews to marry Gentile women; but he did not call for the dissolution of such marriages.”<sup>30</sup>

Verse 14 - For the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the brother: else then your children are unclean; but now are they holy.

“For the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the brother,” *hēgiastai gar ho anēr ho apistos en tē gunaiki, kai hēgiastai he gunē he apistos en tō adelpho*: The language of this verse is evidently meant to obviate any objection that Christians might feel toward continuing a union with an unbeliever. Paul’s warning in 2 Cor. 6:14, would certainly tend to create such a feeling. Also, it might have been felt that a Christian would become defiled by intercourse with a heathen, this due to Paul’s statement in 6:15. Whether such a protest was actual does not appear, but that it is likely appears certain and Paul now replies with: the unbelieving is sanctified (*hēgiastai ho apistos*). Findlay comments that this reply is a paradox and “does not affirm conversion—whether incipient or prospective” but rather is referring to “a relationship established for the non-Christian in the past.”<sup>31</sup> This is the sense of the perfect tense used here.

The sanctification of the unbeliever has its causal basis in the person of the believer. “Note the *en* in both cases. The Christian partner is the sphere in which the sanctify takes place.”<sup>32</sup> The footnote of Chambers in Meyer’s is most interesting and to the point just here:

In a mixed marriage, the Christian *hagiotēs* forms, in relation to the non-Christian unholiness, the prepondering element (so *Chrysostom*). Observe, how in a totally different way Paul regarded the relation of the Christian who had connected himself with a *harlot* (6:15). In that case the harlot is the prepondering element, and the members of Christ become unholy members of an harlot.<sup>33</sup>

The force of Paul's language is clearly that the union, though mixed, is not unholy due to the holiness of one of the partners, so the marriage is not impure or unlawful. The principle of "one flesh" (6:16) holds good even in such a union and it is not to the detriment of the believer, while an unlawful union *desecrates* a believer.

"Else then your children are unclean," *epei ara to tekna humōn akatharta estin*: *Epei ara* is an elliptical clause meaning "since in that case (i.e., as understood, the other alternative—the *non-hallowing*)."<sup>34</sup> Paul is not declaring the alternative as true, when he uses the present *estin*, the supposed case is assumed and the present indicative is used of what has place in assumption. If what is assumed in the *protasis* (the conditional clause) is true, then what is stated as a co-ordinate clause (*apodosis*) is true—your children are unclean. But this is not true, as Paul now affirms their holiness.

"But now are they holy," *nun de hagia estin*: This is axiomatic; it proves the sanctity of the marriage. If the sanctity does not hold good, the children are unclean, but they are not unclean. Paul argues from the holiness of the children back to the sanctity of the marriage.

This part of the verse has come into play often in the controversy over infant baptism. Some think that it argues for it and definitely establishes its practice in the first century. The basis for saying that the children are holy is a difficult thing to establish with certainty. Chambers thinks

that it does not lie in the fact of their being born or begotten of Christian parents.<sup>35</sup> This may be true, since as he says, some of the children may have been born before either parent embraced Christianity. But this should not be thought to infer that the children of non-Christian parents are unclean, neither should they be thought of as holy in the sense of the children mentioned here who have a relationship to one who is holy. Children out of the sort of union mentioned in 6:15 would be unclean, and it may be that Paul is now showing that the children of mixed marriages would not be unclean.

The holiness of the children seems to be analogous to the sanctity of the unbelieving partner, according to Findlay's view. Alford agrees with this view and comes to what is probably the real basis of the holiness in this comment: "The holiness is not personal holiness which is here predicated of the children, any more than of the unbelieving husband or wife, but holiness of dedication by strict dependence on *one dedicated*."<sup>36</sup> The holiness of the children, having this basis, does not depend on another basis, namely, baptism or the new birth. The sanctity of the unbeliever certainly could not rest on anything else nor have its basis in the new birth, which is definitely conditioned on faith. If the unbeliever should be converted, then his sanctity would not be due to the married relationship, but in his own person. The holiness of the children in this state must include a time in their life when it is yet inconceivable that they have faith or exercise faith. Since the uncleanness would be removed by the new birth and holiness would follow, another basis for the holiness not mentioned and not in Paul's view would be evident. Meyer makes the case for this point very clear and shows that Paul's language argues against the practice of infant baptism at this time:

Had the *baptism* of Christian children been then in existence, Paul could not have drawn this inference (else were your children unclean, rlr), because in that

case the *hagiotes* of such children would have *another* basis.<sup>37</sup>

Robertson and Plummer agree that Paul

. . . is not assuming that the child of a Christian parent would be baptized; that would spoil rather than help his argument, for it would imply that the child was not *hagios* till it was baptized. The verse throws no light on the question of infant baptism.<sup>38</sup>

Verse 15 - But if the unbeliever separates himself, let him be separated: the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God has called us in peace.

“But if the unbeliever separates himself,” *ei de ho apistos chōrizetai*: Here Paul uses the present tense (middle) to indicate the state of mind of the unbeliever, the force of the tense showing that the heathen partner wishes to disassociate himself from the believer. The act of separating himself (or herself) is entirely the act of the unbeliever as is seen from the fact that *ho apistos* stands in an emphatic position. Alford says “but if the wish for separation (implied by the present *chōrizetai*)—is for being separated—proceed from the side of the *UNBELIEVER* (emphasis on *ho apistos*), let him (or her) depart (be separated off).”<sup>39</sup> Nothing said indicates that the Christian partner is to take the initiative in seeking the divorce.

“Let him be separated,” *chōrizesthō*: Paul now says that the Christian may let the unbeliever depart, since he does not consent to dwell. Using the present imperative middle for expressing permission, Paul refers to the liberty granted to the believer—he permits the unbeliever to separate (divorce). F. W. Grosheide states the matter plainly by noting that when the unbeliever departs,

If the believing party were under obligation to prevent the departure he would be subject to the unbeliever and would virtually be forced to abandon his or her faith, since only by doing that could a divorce be prevented. That price would be too high. If, therefore, circumstances are as Paul describes them, the Christian shall resign himself to the divorce.<sup>40</sup>

“The brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases,” *ou dedoulōtai ho adelphos ē hē adelphē en tois toioutois*: *Ou dedoulōtai* (is not under bondage) is closely connected with *chrōizesthō*. Since the Christian is told to acquiesce, the liberty to do so is further explained by: “is not under bondage.” *Dedōulotai* is the perfect passive indicative form of *douloō*, to enslave, and with the negative means literally “does not remain a slave.” This is the perfect of existing condition indicating that the party “has been enslaved.” The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* says that *douloō* is used literally or figuratively “to denote absolute subjection or loss of autonomy,” and that in 1 Corinthians 7:15 “expresses total binding by another.”<sup>41</sup>

The apostle speaks to the situation of the believer attempting to prevent the divorce, not understanding that the unbeliever may be permitted to depart. Such a situation possibly existed at Corinth (implied in the context). Paul is probably answering a question regarding such a case. Robertson and Plummer say of *ou dedoulōtai* that it indicates that “The Christian partner is under no slavish obligation to refuse to be set free. . . . In such matters the Christian *ou dedoulōtai*, has not lost all freedom of action.”<sup>42</sup> Paul disabuses the Christian partner who might believe himself or herself obligated to maintain cohabitation at all costs.

“But God has called us in peace,” *en de eirēnē keklēken hemas ho Theos*: Robertson and Plummer<sup>43</sup> think that this clause forces the above interpretation. They ask, “To what is ‘peace’ opposed?” To them it seems natural to understand



it as being opposed "*to bondage*." "Then the meaning will be that to feel bound to remain to one who objects would violate the peace" in which Paul says we are "permanently called." "If 'peace' is opposed to separation, then the meaning will be that you ought to do your utmost to avoid divorce." To them the former is probably right, as "the *de* [but] the positive complement to the negative *ou dedoulotai*."

Some observations:

1. Greek and Roman laws offered great facilities for divorce, especially for the husband. Roman law allowed the husband full disposal of the wife for almost any reason. But here Paul is not permitting such action on the part of the believer, in any case. *No word indicates that a Christian might divorce a spouse.* Let it be clearly understood that this action is that of the unbeliever, not the believer.

2. It is argued that the fact that Paul used *douloō* (an intense word) here, while in other places used a milder word for the marriage bond (*deō*) (Rom. 7:2; 1 Cor. 7:39), that this indicates that surely the marriage bond is broken and that the believer is permitted to remarry. Remarriage is not in the scope of Paul's language here. "The stronger verb of this passage implies that for the repudiated party to continue bound to the repudiator would be slavery."<sup>44</sup>

3. *Ou dedoulōtai* does not appear to equal "free to marry." If Paul had been wanting to express such an idea he could easily have used a more natural expression such as found in verse 39: *eleuthera . . . gamēthēnai*, free . . . to be married.

4. The verse is silent concerning remarriage. No discussion is made regarding guilt and innocence in the case of remarriage. "Whether the freedom of the innocent divorced extends to *remarriage* does not appear."<sup>45</sup> Robertson states that Luther argued for remarriage then adds, "But that is by no means clear, unless the unbeliever marries first."<sup>46</sup> So

also, Robertson and Plummer, "We cannot safely argue with Luther that *ou dedoulōtai* implies that the Christian partner, when divorced by the heathen partner, may marry again."<sup>47</sup>

5. The absence of a clear, unambiguous statement concerning remarriage strongly indicates that no question on this subject had been posed. If the matter of contracting a new marriage had been the subject of inquiry, we believe that Paul would have made a full response and not have left the matter to be decided on mere implication.

6. The historical context is opposed to an exegesis which sees verse 15 as authorization for a Christian to enter into a new marriage contract. Considering "the distress" (verse 26) and "the shortened time" (verse 29), Paul declares that to be unmarried "is good" (verse 8). He suggested that with continency husband and wife might with consent be apart for a season for prayer (verse 5) and advised that the unmarried remain so for their own profit (verse 35). The unity and cohesion of the context is clear when we see verse 15 as allowing only the minimum of change.

Verse 16 - For what do you know, O wife, whether you shall save your husband? or what do you know, O husband, whether you shall save your wife?

*-ti gar oidas, gunai, ei ton andra sōseis; ē ti oidas, aner, ei tēn gunaika sōseis:*

The two questions that form this verse are very curiously ambiguous. They may be taken, if viewed separately, either as reasons *for* or *against* divorce. The syntax allows either interpretation seemingly. The difficulty is that of determining the force of *ti oidas* (what do you know) followed by *ei* (whether). This construction can refer to a matter about which there is *hope* (in this case it would be against divorce in hope of saving the unbeliever, though he may be for separating). It is also a form for expressing *doubt* (in which case it would be understood as being for divorce because the

doubt exists regarding the remoteness of saving an unbeliever, when he wants to be separated from the Christian partner on account of religion). If it is for divorce, it is only for it under the circumstances of verse 15.

1. The case for viewing verse 16 as *against* divorce:

“For how do you know, O wife (husband), that you shall (not) save your husband (wife)?” or, as William Barclay translates: “Remember that as a wife, for all you know, you may very well be the means of saving your husband.”

One device for establishing this interpretation is to view verse 15 as wholly parenthetical. Findlay feels that those who hold for the interpretation as being for separation are reading “between the lines.” His reason for thinking this verse to be opposed to divorce is:

It should also be observed that the Corinthians, with lax moral notions, need dissuasives from rather than encouragements to divorce; and on the other hand, that to discountenance the hope of a soul's salvation is strangely unlike the Ap. (x.33). On the construction here adopted Paul returns at the close of the section to the thought with which it opened—*mē chōristhēnai*.<sup>48</sup>

*Tis oiden ei* is used in the LXX as an expression of hope. Lightfoot cites four places in the LXX (Esth. 4:14; Joel 2:14; Jon. 3:9; 2 Sam. 12:22) where there are expressions of hope introduced by the above words. He prefers the interpretation “that a chance of saving is ‘worth any temporal inconvenience.’”<sup>49</sup>

Objections to this view: To view verse 15 as altogether parenthetical is harsh as regards the context. Meyer very justly says though some

make 16 to be the concluding confirmation of the whole admonition beginning with *tois ho loipos* in ver. 12. This is impossible, for this reason, that the *first* part of the counsel given to the *loipos* has already received its

confirmation in the *gar* of ver. 14, and in accordance therewith the *gar* of verse 16 must now refer in the way of confirmation only to the *second* part of the said counsel, as confirmation in ver. 15.<sup>50</sup>

Alford objects to the view and says that those who interpret as against divorce take *ei mē* for *ei* though this is hardly grammatically permissible. Paul is not saying "What knowest thou . . . whether thou shalt *not* save . . .?" Alford also says that each of the passages cited from the LXX to show *tis oiden si* to express hope is different in that in them the verb stands in emphatic position and claims that the same expression is also found in the LXX to signify uncertainty. The position of the verb is important. On this Alford comments that

If the point of the argument had been the importance, or the prospect, of saving (= converting) the unbelieving party, the arrangement would probably have been *si sōseis toy andra*, and *ei sōssis ten gunaika*, whereas now the verb holds in both clause a subordinate place, rather than subjective to the person addressed, than the main object in the mind of the writer.<sup>51</sup>

Lightfoot's "temporal inconvenience" is serious understatement.

## 2. The case for viewing verse 16 as *for* divorce.

There is little or no point in trying to avoid the fact that Paul is speaking of divorce in verse 15 and no reason for putting parenthesis around it. Paul is definitely speaking of actual divorce on a very limited exception. The Christians at Corinth might very naturally have had conscientious scruples against divorce even "in the cases." They would try to prevent it on the grounds that all hope of saving the unbeliever would be lost. What Paul says shows that he evidently did not deem this sufficient ground. Marriage as a

means of conversion is of real significance, but freedom and peace are of greater importance. Grosheide says that "this appears from the fact that the question introduced by *for how* follows after the legitimacy of divorce has been argued first."<sup>52</sup> This is in exact accord with the whole context. Grosheide further says that verse 16 "is not a reason for the two latter parts of v. 15. It is rather an additional reason for the statement in 15a: *let him depart*." But the questions cohere with the words immediately preceding, 15b, and thus the strict sense of all of verse 15 is preserved. "God has called us in peace" and just here this peace is only possible through separation.

This view of the verse suits the context best and it is adopted by most commentators. Yet, as Robertson points out:

One hesitates to interpret Paul as advocating divorce unless strongly insisted on by the unbeliever. There is no problem at all unless the unbeliever makes it. If it is a hopeless case, acquiescence is the only wise solution. But surely the believer ought to be sure that there is no hope before he agrees to break the bond.<sup>53</sup>

A note on the translation of verse 16. The King James Version by two arbitrary variations here mar the symmetry of the picture. It has "what . . . how?" for *ti* in both questions. "What" is no doubt better, as *ti oidas* is not the manner of knowledge but the extent.

With Stanley we conclude "this interpretation is the only one compatible with the obvious sense of ver. 15 . . . and is also in exact harmony with the general tenor of the Apostle's argument, which is not to urge a union, but to tolerate a separation."<sup>54</sup>

Verse 17 - Only, as the Lord has distributed to each, as God hath called each, so let him walk; and thus I order in all the churches.

No detailed exegesis of this verse will be given. However, we should notice briefly its relation to the argument of the preceding verses.

The question has been raised (Alford and Ellicott) whether Paul is summarizing in verse 17 or making a fresh start. Robertson and Plummer say that there is no close connection between 18 and 17.<sup>55</sup> What connection there is can be seen from the exceptive sense of the first two words: *ei mē*.

*Ei mē* "only" or "save only" "except that" introduces a caution regarding the preceding instruction. It also forms an introduction or preface to what follows. The exceptive sense of *ei mē* is like *plēn*, Rom. 14:14, Gal. 1:7, 19.

Paul has already (12-14) prohibited the Christian partner from divorcing an unbelieving spouse when such a one consents to marriage with a Christian partner. But, after the statements regarding a situation where the unbeliever is for separating (divorcing), in which Paul says that the Christian may permit the divorce, avoid slavery, as doubt of saving the companion is so certain that to continue in the union would not guarantee it, (vv. 15, 16), he now warns that the Christian is not to make this the ground for causing separation. In verse 17 Paul is stating a general rule and "under this general rule the exceptional and guarded permission of divorce in ver. 15 was to be understood."<sup>56</sup> This principle extends to every situation in life, as Paul proceeds to show in the verses following.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. Paul establishes the indissolubility of marriage, even mixed marriages resulting from one partner's becoming a Christian.

2. The Christian partner is never to take the initiative in seeking a divorce.

3. On the other hand, the Christian partner is at liberty to accept acquiescently the action of an unbelieving partner who is for divorcing. The Christian thus avoids absolute servitude.

4. Both the literary and historical context of I Corinthians 7 is opposed to seeing verse 15 as a Pauline authorization to enter a new marriage.

# FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, ICC (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1925), p. 140).

<sup>2</sup>F. W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIC (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1955), p. 162.

<sup>3</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of I and II Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1956), p. 285.

<sup>4</sup>G. G. Findlay, *First Corinthians*, Expositor's Greek Testament (New York: Doran, n.d.), p. 826.

<sup>5</sup>Robertson and Plummer, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

<sup>6</sup>Henry Alford, *Alford's Greek Testament*, Vol. II (London: Rivingtons, 1865), p. 523.

<sup>7</sup>A. W. Meyer, *Commentary on the New Testament, I and II Corinthians* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1884), p. 156.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup>Grosheide, *op. cit.*, page 163.

<sup>11</sup>Clarence T. Craig, *First Corinthians*, *Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. 10 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1953), p. 79.

<sup>12</sup>Ernest DeWitt Burton, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943), p. 114.

<sup>13</sup>A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. IV (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1931), p. 127.

<sup>14</sup>Lenski, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

<sup>15</sup>Findlay, *op. cit.*

<sup>16</sup>Robertson and Plummer, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

<sup>17</sup>Alford, *ibid.*

<sup>18</sup>Robertson, *ibid.*

<sup>19</sup>Grosheide, *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup>Lenski, *op. cit.*, p. 295.

<sup>21</sup>Findlay, *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup>Meyer, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

<sup>23</sup>A. T. Robertson and W. H. Davis, *A New Short Grammar of the Greek Testament* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1933), pp. 113, 179.

<sup>24</sup>W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952).

- <sup>25</sup>James Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1959), p. 696.
- <sup>26</sup>G. Adolf Deissman, *Bible Studies* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1923), p. 247.
- <sup>27</sup>Grosheide, *op. cit.*, p. 164.
- <sup>28</sup>Robertson and Plummer, *op. cit.*, p. 141.
- <sup>29</sup>Meyer, *op. cit.*, p. 158.
- <sup>30</sup>Craig, *ibid.*
- <sup>31</sup>Findlay, *op. cit.*, p. 826.
- <sup>32</sup>Robertson and Plummer, *op. cit.*, p. 142.
- <sup>33</sup>Meyer, *op. cit.*, p. 159.
- <sup>34</sup>Alford, *op. cit.*, p. 524.
- <sup>35</sup>Meyer, *op. cit.*, p. 160.
- <sup>36</sup>Alford, *ibid.*
- <sup>37</sup>Meyer, *ibid.*
- <sup>38</sup>Robertson and Plummer, *ibid.*
- <sup>39</sup>Alford, *op. cit.*
- <sup>40</sup>Grosheide, *op. cit.*, p. 164.
- <sup>41</sup>Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964, Vol. II, p. 279.
- <sup>42</sup>Robertson and Plummer, *ibid.*
- <sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>44</sup>Findlay, *op. cit.*, p. 827, Cf. Kittel, *op. cit.*
- <sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>46</sup>Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 128.
- <sup>47</sup>Robertson and Plummer, *ibid.*
- <sup>48</sup>Findlay, *op. cit.*, p. 828.
- <sup>49</sup>Quoted in Robertson and Plummer, *ibid.*
- <sup>50</sup>Meyer, *op. cit.*, p. 164.
- <sup>51</sup>Alford, *ibid.*
- <sup>52</sup>Grosheide, *op. cit.*, p. 167.
- <sup>53</sup>Robertson, *ibid.*
- <sup>54</sup>Quoted in Alford, *op. cit.*, p. 526.
- <sup>55</sup>Robertson and Plummer, *op. cit.*, p. 145.
- <sup>56</sup>Findlay, *ibid.*

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## **FEATURED CLASSES**



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Mary Oler

Mary Oler has worked in Training for Service Series in twenty-nine states, in Mexico, Hong Kong, Saigon, Puerto Rico, Nova Scotia, and the Philippines. She began teacher training in Dallas, Texas, in December, 1944, working with teachers in the pre-school department. Since that time, she has expanded her field to include teachers of primary children, juniors, and high school girls.



In addition to her work in training teachers, Mrs. Oler has done special work with ladies' groups in individual churches, college lectureships, Women's Retreats, and Special Ladies' Day events.

Former editor of a weekly publication for children, *Glad Moments*, Mrs. Oler included many original songs and poems for children during the eleven years of publication. More than one hundred of the poems are included in a book entitled: *Mary Oler's Poems for Children*.

For two years, 1953-55, Mrs. Oler was featured in a Sunday morning program on WFAA-TV, Channel 8, Dallas, a station-sustained program entitled: "TV Sunday School."

Mrs. Oler and her husband, Gayle Oler, lived for twenty-six years at Boles Home, Quinlan, Texas, where Mr. Oler served as superintendent for a home for 275 children. The Olers were parents of four children of their own. Mrs. Oler now lives in Dallas, Texas, 8075 Fall River. She worships with the White Rock Church of Christ, in Dallas, where her husband served as an elder for three years.

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### I KNOW WHO I AM!

I know who I am. I am Mary Oler. It does not take a great intellect to repeat my name. My name appears on my driver's license, my credit cards, my morning mail, my school records, and my monthly bills. My name is in the telephone directory, the church directory, my friends' address books, on a few works published in magazines, and even on a cemetery marker. Yes, I know who I am.

I also know that a person is not judged by a name. On the morning of February 8, 1910, I was given the name "Mary Kelly." My father chose to let me be the third Mary Kelly in his family—first, his mother, then his sister, and at last, his baby daughter. He spoke with reverence of his devoted mother, and with delight of his playmate and loyal sister. Memories were stirred, hopes were held high, and a baby was named to perhaps follow loved examples. My parents would not have considered naming me Jezebel, Virago, Flirtacia, or Seducia. They wanted me to have a "worthy" name.

My father told me the first words my mother spoke after my birth. It had been a cold winter in the west, where they were schoolteachers. I was born at sunrise. My mother said: "Look! She's brought the sunshine!" As a child, I asked for that story to be repeated over and over again. At the first hearings, it was the sunrise that seemed important to me. Possibly, that was a part of the joy my mother expressed

when she saw day dawn on a cold, bleak prairie. With the years, her words took on added meaning. I have experienced the feeling of warmth, and thanksgiving—and sunshine—that comes after a child is born. My mother's words must have been filled with deeper meaning than gratitude for a new day.

Yes, I know who I am. I am a child who was wanted, and loved, and considered worthy to wear a family name. It has been good to carry such confidence through life.

Yes, I know who I am—but oh, what an added blessing life has brought! I AM A CHILD OF A KING! How wonderful to be a member of the family of a heavenly king! When I was born into that family, I was given a name—child of God, Christian, saint, disciple. I wear the name of Christ because I am in his family. He has a right to expect me to honor the name which has been worn by others he has loved: the dedicated Paul, the serving Phoebe, the hospitable Philemon, the penitent apostle Peter, the loyal Christians in Caesar's household. My name is one with theirs—CHRISTIAN.

Yes, I know who I am—but what do I know about life? Here I stand, in the beautiful world God has made, and I think I know at least three things about life:

### 1. *LIFE IS BRIEF.*

I have long been familiar with quotations from the book of Job:

Man, that is born of a woman,  
Is of few days, and full of trouble.  
He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down:  
He fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.<sup>1</sup>

But man dieth, and is laid low:  
Yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?<sup>2</sup>

The 90th Psalm makes a suggestion about the length of life:

The days of our years are threescore years and ten,  
Or even by reason of strength fourscore years;  
Yet is their pride but labor and sorrow;  
For it is soon gone, and we fly away.<sup>3</sup>

Yes, we know life is brief, but the younger we are, the less we seem to think about its brevity. One of my granddaughters once asked me how long I thought I would live. Realizing that her concepts of numbers were limited, because of her age, I said, "Well, I don't know. Some people live to be one hundred years old." A tender look—almost of pity—crossed her face, and she said, "That's not very long, is it! I guess I'll live to be about . . . about a million!" We all know she was wrong. We all know, too, that few of our friends or relatives live one hundred years on this earth. When the Psalmist mentioned fourscore years—eighty years, he said, "it is soon gone." Time flies!

## 2. *I AM A WONDERFUL WORK OF GOD.*

The psalmist David, in considering his humanity, and the part God had in bringing him into the world, broke into a song of thanksgiving:

I will give thanks unto thee;  
For I am fearfully and wonderfully made:  
Wonderful are thy works;  
And that my soul knoweth right well.<sup>4</sup>

Fearfully—and wonderfully made! When I came into the world, it was a joy to my parents to know I had two feet, two hands, two ears, two eyes, a sound heart, strong lungs, and a mouth, tongue, and lips. I was wonderfully made. There are differences in the physical make-up of human beings. Some are male, some female. A variety of facial characteristics and physical structures are evident everywhere, even within



family groups. In Bible examples, Saul was tall, Zacchaeus was a short man, and Ehud was left-handed. Changes in natural characteristics are few, although a person's stature may change in appearance by the kinds of clothes he wears, but he is still tall, or still short. There are many things in our wonderful make-up that we adjust to, compensate for, and tolerate because we can do nothing about them, much as we would like to.

It is the word "fearfully" in the quotation from Psalm 139:14 that needs a second look. All of these wonderful physical organs God has given us can be put to good use—combined to make life meaningful and filled with a definite purpose. Jesus said to his disciples:

Ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under the bushel, but on the stand; and it shineth unto all that are in the house. Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.<sup>5</sup>

A healthy, normal child, born with a tongue and lips, is watched closely by his parents and caretakers to see what his first sounds will be, what word will be his first word, and how his first sentence will be spoken. The same organs of speech can be used to bless God and curse man. James said:

So the tongue also is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how much wood is kindled by how small a fire! And the tongue is a fire: the world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire by hell. For every kind of beasts and birds, of creeping things and things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed by mankind: but the tongue can no man tame; it is a restless evil, it is full of deadly poison. Therewith bless we the Lord and

Father; and therewith curse we men, who are made after the likeness of God; out of the same mouth cometh forth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth the fountain send forth from the same opening sweet water and bitter?<sup>6</sup>

Yes, I am wonderfully made, but also fearfully made. My physical body that can bring joy and blessing to the world, and glory to God, can be changed into an instrument of evil. The apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians:

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties, envyings, drunkenness, revellings, and such like.<sup>7</sup>

We understand the meanings of these words. Some of them are sexual acts, some are acts of false worship, some are social sins so that when indulged in, they separate families, businesses, communities, and churches, and some of them refer to indulgences of fleshly appetites, which often result in a combination of the first three mentioned. What can I do with this body of mine which is “fearfully and wonderfully made”?

### *3. I HAVE A PATTERN.*

Paul said to the Corinthians:

I beseech you therefore, be ye imitators of me.<sup>8</sup>

In the same letter to the Corinthians, Paul added a little more to his statement in the 4th chapter:

Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ.<sup>9</sup>

To the church at Philippi, Paul wrote:

Brethren, be ye imitators together of me, and mark them that so walk even as ye have us for an example.<sup>10</sup>

Now we have the pattern. We are to follow the example of a godly man, Paul, as he followed the pattern Jesus set up for us. We think of Jesus as being without sin, and without guile, but Jesus spoke of a man who was without guile. Perhaps this will help us to understand that the pattern can be followed:

Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him,  
Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.<sup>11</sup>

What does “guile” mean, and is it something that one must keep out of his life in order to fit into the pattern Jesus honored in mankind? Guile means insidious cunning, duplicity, or artful deception. We would say: “It is a person who says one thing, and does another.” Synonyms of the word guile are trickery, fraud, and deceit. We all know the meaning of the word deceitful, which is considered by some to be a real art—the concealment or distortion of the truth for the purpose of misleading another. My father once said: “If one ever acquires a reputation for deceit, he will never be trusted again.”

Jacob said to his firstborn son, when he had called all of his sons together:

Reuben, thou art my first-born, my might, and the beginning of my strength; The pre-eminence of dignity, and the pre-eminence of power. Unstable as water . . . !<sup>12</sup>

Reuben would not stay in his rightful place of responsibility. He was filled with guile, and cunning and deceit. He fit into places where he was called by his weaknesses of the flesh and his carnal passions.

The apostle Peter spoke of people who were having an exciting time in their lives of deception and dishonor:

Revelling in their deceivings, while they feast with you; having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstedfast souls; having a heart exercised

in covetousness; children of cursing; forsaking the right way, they went astray.<sup>13</sup>

We have the pattern of life, but we must keep control of our hearts—our minds—our thinking—our determination—our goals. The psalmist David said:

Do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men?

Nay, in heart ye work wickedness;

Ye weigh out the violence of your hands in the earth.

The wicked are estranged from the womb:

They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.

Their poison is like the poison of a serpent.<sup>14</sup>

Yes, I know myself. I know who I am. I know life is brief, I know I am fearfully and wonderfully made, and I know I have a pattern set for me by Jesus that will make my life on earth one-hundred fold more worthwhile than if I choose another way to go. Added to this one-hundred fold life, is the promise of eternal life. Is it worth putting away the deceit, the evil speakings, the railings, the jealousies, the loves of the carnal man? God has given us the right to choose, and we can make our own choice to do good or evil. The ways of the world are sometimes sparkling and glamorous. The enticements of the pleasures of sin for a season often have an extended season, and fill the entire life with debauchery, despair, and death.

I am glad I know this. I am glad God has given me view of Bible people who started off well, and were pleasing to God, but who failed to resist evil when strong temptations were presented. It is not easy to be steadfast and true to God at all times, and if I am aware of this fight to the finish going on within my mortal body, I am better able to recognize the difference in the joys and penalties involved in my choice of right or wrong.

We like examples of people who have struggled and overcome, and we can be thankful we have the Bible record

to give us boosts of courage. The writer of Hebrews gives us a long list of people who overcame in the face of many and great obstacles, and he gives us courage to use such patterns to maintain our integrity:

Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, . . .<sup>15</sup>

### **“WHO FOR THE JOY THAT WAS SET BEFORE HIM!”**

We have already discussed the brevity of life. Jesus had a very brief life, according to our estimates of brevity. He lived only thirty-three years on the earth, but he knew a great joy had been set before him—reunion with God in heaven. The Bible says: “For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, . . .” (Hebrews 12:2). And what was the result of his enduring? His mission was accomplished, his goal realized: “. . . and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2).

The word “endure” is a strong word. It means to remain firm under, to sustain, to undergo. It means to bear something with patience or steadfastness, such as pain or misfortune. It also means to tolerate something, or to put up with disagreeable situations. Jesus remained firm and steadfast throughout his life on earth—because there was great joy ahead of him . . . before him.

I know who I am! I am a child of the king! I believe, as I am following in Jesus’ footsteps, I can be firm and steadfast through everything that happens to me. One of my friends was going through a particularly difficult time in her life, and receiving many cards of sympathy. As I looked through the

cards, a little personal note at the end of one encouraging sympathy poem read: "We know that nothing can happen to us that we cannot bear!" That little note, written in a moment of great faith, with a steady and controlled pen, flashes into my mind along with my studies of great men of faith through trials—Abraham, Job, Moses, Jeremiah, and Paul. I repeat the impressive words, because they are words based on the word of God: "We know that nothing can happen to us that we cannot bear!"

As I attempt to teach myself, I know that I would like for every moment of my life to be pleasant, filled with laughter and song. Can this be true? No! It will never be true while time lasts, but there are three things that will help me to be steadfast—to endure—and to endure with joy. I ask myself three questions:

1. *WHAT ARE MY VALUES?*

I made a list just now of a few temporal things I consider valuable. The list contained a house, an electric stove, a king-sized bed, a maple grandmother clock with Westminster chimes, a wastebasket at the end of my desk, a new white baker's shelf for houseplants, and an electric typewriter. These things are valuable to me—because they are all useful. The house keeps me out of the sun and the rain when either would be distressing, and it gives me security from unforeseen dangers in the night. The electric stove does not require matches, and I can switch the oven on as I walk past on my way to the mixing bowls. My king-sized bed has plenty of room for me, with extra room for dozens of books, paper and pencils within easy reach. The clock keeps me company if I am wakeful at night, but does not disturb me if I am sleeping soundly. The wastebasket at the end of my desk is ready when I sort my mail, and dispose of envelopes and unsolicited mail. My shelf for houseplants keeps my flowers and fern off the floor, and inside, protected from the winter weather. My typewriter makes my workload lighter.

Yes, these things are of value to me, but in rechecking my list, I find not one of them is indispensable. At one time, I had none of them, and the time may again come when I will have none of them—nor even consider them important. At my last count as a child, I had twelve dolls; because I valued them highly, I took good care of them. One was a Kewpie doll, and I made clothes for all of them. They vanished—with the years—and change—but I am not distressed. My sense of values has changed. If we have an inordinate love of the things that can be purchased, we may have pride of life—conceit, which is an exaggerated estimate of one's own ability or importance. Solomon had something to say about such a person:

Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit?  
There is more hope of a fool than of him.<sup>16</sup>

There is no real safety in the amount of material wealth we accumulate, the numbers of houses, lands, clothing, ribbons, and rings that we buy, although these things often give a feeling of false security. Again, Solomon said:

The rich man's wealth is his strong city,  
And as a high wall in his own imagination.<sup>17</sup>

I know, as a follower of Jesus, I am of value. Jesus told his disciples they were valuable. They were going to have a great work to do in the world, and it seems his encouragement would strengthen their self-image:

Are not two sparrows sold for two pence? and not one of them is forgotten in the sight of God. . . . Fear not: ye are of more value than many sparrows. And I say unto you, everyone who shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God.<sup>18</sup>

Luke said in the beginning of Chapter 12 that many thousands of the multitude were gathered together,

insomuch that they trod one upon another. It is interesting that in the press of the crowd, in the presence of the scribes and Pharisees who were provoking Jesus, vexing him, exasperating him, stirring him up, laying wait for him, to catch something out of his mouth, Jesus took the time to tell his disciples they were of value, and God was watching them. What could be of as great worth as having their names confessed before the angels of God? We must re-think our values often, to see that they are not based on money, position, popularity, beauty, fashion, or fame.

The story is told of an actress on the deck of the sinking Titanic, who, as she was ready to step into a lifeboat, turned suddenly and ran back toward her stateroom. Someone caustically said: "I suppose she has gone back to get her jewels!" She returned, with three oranges—three oranges! What a sense of value she had! There were children in the lifeboats. No one knew when help would come, or whether they would ever be rescued from the wild sea, the dark night. Move away from the doomed ship—take something along that can be used! Yes, I know who I am, and I must make my life of some use in the world.

## 2. *WHAT CAN I FORGET?*

I will forget to want the best place for myself! Jesus spoke to his disciples of the Pharisees, who wanted to be first, and told them why they did it!

But all their works they do to be seen of men: for they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the chief places at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the salutations in the marketplaces, and to be called of men, Rabbi.<sup>19</sup>

The Pharisees wanted to be noticed, to be considered important, to sit in the chief places. How much better to have a becoming humility that lets one take a lower place until



someone says "Friend, come up higher"! Fair competition in games and play is not out of order, but a spirit of competition often leads to a manifestation of jealousy and envy in families, neighborhoods, the church, and among races and nations.

I will forget the ill-will of people to whom I have done no harm. Jesus told his disciples people would accuse them falsely, and he told them what to do about it:

Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you.<sup>20</sup>

We have examples of men of God who showed the spirit Jesus told his disciples they should have in such cases. Stephen, while being stoned to death, "kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge'" (Acts 7:60). The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy: "Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord will render to him according to his works" (2 Tim. 4:14). Jesus, dying on the cross, said: "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Forgetting injustices and unkind words will make room for love, forgiveness, good-will, and self-control.

I will forget whatever is behind. Have I done a kindness to someone? No cause for boasting! Have I contributed to the Lord's cause? My responsibility—my blessing! David rejoiced because he saw God give to his people, then saw his people give back part of their earthly possessions to the work of the Lord. A great cause for rejoicing! Have I suffered physically? Been mistreated? Gone hungry? Paul had endured all of these, and he said: "I know how to be hungry, and I know how to be filled." He would never have known how wonderful it could be to have good food, had he not

known want. It is encouraging that Paul told us all that he was forgetting the things that were behind, and pressing on to the things that were before (Phil. 3:13).

### 3. *WHAT CAN I REMEMBER?*

I want to remember the children God has given me. I want to remember their innocent faces, their requests for food, their prayers as we knelt by our bedsides, their urgent voices as they begged for a story, or a song. I want to remember that “Children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward” (Psalm 127:3). I know who I am! I am one blessed to bring life into the world.

I want to remember the blessing it was to work for a family, to launder shirts for my husband and sons, to design, and sew, and launder dresses for my daughters. I want to remember the aroma of baking bread in my kitchen, the hard work of canning peaches and berries, but the compensations that came when we gathered around the table.

I want to remember as my children take their places in the world that theirs is a time of great responsibility, sacrifices, and sometimes heartaches. I must remember to pray for them, to love them, and to add nothing to their day-to-day existence that makes life harder, their loads heavier.

I want to remember that a merry heart doeth good like a medicine (Proverbs 17:22). Solomon said: “There is a time to weep, and a time to laugh” (Eccl. 3:4). Once a man in England received word a relative in the United States had died. As he packed his bag in his hotel room, preparing for a flight home, he noticed a picture in a magazine of a man laughing—not just smiling—but breaking into a hearty laugh. It cheered him so, he tore the picture out of the magazine, and propped it up on his dresser as he finished his packing. On his return to America, remembering the brief cheer that laughing face had given him, he decided to make simple notebooks of laughing people, to take to children’s wards in hospitals. He made no effort to find poems to fit the pictures,

or to write any captions underneath—simply filled pages with collages of things related in only one way—all were of laughing people. Nurses told him afterward those notebooks did more good, and caused more joy, than any books that had been brought to the hospital.

I know who I am! I am a child of a king! And I must remember to tell others about God, as Jesus told people about his Father when he lived and walked with men. In Jesus' prayer in John 17, he prayed:

O righteous Father, the world knew thee not, but I knew thee; and these knew that thou didst send me; and I made known unto them thy name, and will make it known; that the love wherewith thou lovedst me may be in them and I in them.<sup>21</sup>

God said of himself:

I am Jehovah, that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise unto graven images.<sup>22</sup>

When God spoke to Moses from the burning bush, and told him to go to Egypt, he said he should tell the people: "Jehovah, the God of your fathers . . . hath sent me unto you: this is my name forever, and this is my memorial unto all generations" (Ex. 3:15). God said in Egypt: "For this cause have I made thee to stand, to show thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth."

What can I remember? I can remember that when Jesus prayed for his disciples, he prayed for all who might believe in him through their word. Glorious thought that Jesus remembered me in his prayer! Could I ever be less than grateful for what I am—a woman—a child of the king? Could I ever be dissatisfied because on a far-away February morning, the doctor said: "Your baby is a girl?" Join with me, oh, women of God, in rejoicing! I know who I am! God has been gracious!

## I AM A WOMAN

### WHERE AM I?

I am everywhere:

In the heart of a child,  
In the pages of books,  
On the lips of the dying.

### WHAT AM I?

I am today:

A recaller of memories,  
An eraser of heartache and hurt,  
A dreamer with blueprints.

### WHO AM I?

I am tomorrow:

A singer of songs in the night,  
A weaver of tapestries of hope,  
A lady with a lamp.

<sup>1</sup>Job 14:1-2.

<sup>2</sup>Job 14:10.

<sup>3</sup>Psalms 90:10.

<sup>4</sup>Psalms 139:14.

<sup>5</sup>Matthew 5:14-16.

<sup>6</sup>James 3:5-11.

<sup>7</sup>Galatians 5:19.

<sup>8</sup>1 Cor. 4:16.

<sup>9</sup>1 Cor. 11:1.

<sup>10</sup>Phil. 3:17.

<sup>11</sup>John 1:47.

<sup>12</sup>Gen. 49:3, 4.

<sup>13</sup>2 Pet. 2:13d-15a.

<sup>14</sup>Psalms 58:1b-4a.

<sup>15</sup>Hebrews 12:1, 2.

<sup>16</sup>Proverbs 26:12.

<sup>17</sup>Proverbs 18:11.

<sup>18</sup>Luke 12:6-8.

<sup>19</sup>Matthew 23:5-7.

<sup>20</sup>Matthew 5:11, 2.

<sup>21</sup>John 17:25, 26.

<sup>22</sup>Isaiah 42:8.

**I WANT AN ABUNDANT LIFE!**

I want an abundant life! A mediocre life? A hum-drum routine? A “ho-hum, another day!” existence? I want none of that, although I know it is good to be organized and well-prepared for whatever I attempt, whether it is baking a cake, writing an article, or ministering to the sick. Jesus, the Great Giver, spoke of the difference in the way his sheep could be taken care of when he said: “I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly” (John 10:10). Because of Jesus’ statement, I realize that an abundant life is possible for me—it is not too much to expect that my life have an overflowing fullness, ample sufficiency, and great plenty. This abundance need not be an affluent life of riches, but I believe it is the abundance of experiences, realities, capabilities, responsibilities, sowing, and reaping that Jesus has promised. Believing this will give me the feeling that every day I live is a day the Lord made for me.

There is work to do, and I have a hand . . .  
Give me the wisdom to understand  
The days of my life, and lengthened years  
Bring abundant laughter, abundant tears.

How good it is for a Christian to know that he has a “goodly heritage.” The Psalmist said:

Jehovah is the portion of mine inheritance  
And of my cup:  
The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places;  
Yea, I have a goodly heritage.  
I will bless Jehovah, who hath given me counsel;  
Yea, my heart instructeth me in the night seasons.  
I have set Jehovah always before me:  
Because he is at my right hand,  
I shall not be moved.  
Therefore my heart is glad, and  
My glory rejoiceth.<sup>1</sup>

What is the first thing one must do to be assured of an abundant life? I believe the secret is found in the verse from Psalms that I just read: "I have set Jehovah always before me." It was said of Jesus one time that he had his face set as to go to Jerusalem. He had made a decision. He had "determined" to go. He had made up his mind. The Psalmist David, after naming various pitfalls his enemies had set for him, and the calamities that had awaited him, enough to vex a righteous soul and almost swallow one up in grief and danger, said:

My heart is fixed, O God,  
My heart is fixed;  
I will sing, yea, I will sing praises.  
Awake up, my glory.<sup>2</sup>

"Fixed" — securely placed, or fastened. Someone described the word "fixed" as "set in concrete." My son has a swimming pool in his back yard, and when the concrete steps leading down into the shallow end of the pool were being laid, my son's three children, a teen-age boy, a teen-age girl, and a four-year-old girl, planted their bare feet into the pliable concrete for a moment, to leave their footprints side by side — fixed — set in concrete. One cannot step down into the pool, or even look down as he stands by the side of the water, without seeing the footprints. This example from our own lives helps us to understand what David meant when he said: "I have set Jehovah always before me." Without a conviction of heart, without a determination not "to be moved," there would be little reason to expect the glad and rejoicing heart David said came as a result of such determination.

Another verse of Scripture that gives courage as a result of having a fixed heart reads:

For he shall never be moved:  
The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance.

He shall not be afraid of evil tidings:  
His heart is fixed, trusting in Jehovah.  
His heart is established,  
He shall not be afraid.<sup>3</sup>

In summary, what do we have as a result of this unswerving conviction, this having our hearts fixed, having God always set before us? Several things! We have a feeling of security in not being moved; we have a lack of fear of evil tidings, so we do not borrow trouble; we have a feeling of belonging—being established so that we are not afraid; we have a constant feeling of joy that gives us a singing heart. Security, confidence, joy—does that sound like a trio of feelings that might make an “abundant life”? Do the three words somehow fit into the Scripture that assures us that “all things work together for good to those who love the Lord, and are called according to his purpose”? (Romans 8:28.) I think they do. Two synonyms for the word “determine” are “resolve” and “adjust.” We make a determination to serve God, a “resolution” to do his will, and we “adjust” to changes in our lives because we believe all things are working together for our good so long as we continue in our fixed pattern of love and devotion.

There seems to be a natural longing in the heart of man to “live life, and see good days.”

Peter began to say unto him [Jesus], Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or mother, or father, or children, or lands, for my sake, and for the gospel's sake, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions: and in the world to come eternal life.<sup>4</sup>

We have the promise! We have Jesus' statement that he came that we might have life, and have it abundantly. We

know the word abundant means “great plenty,” and I am reminded of the words of God on the fifth day of creation:

Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creatures that hath life . . . and God created great whales . . . and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly.<sup>5</sup>

The Revised Standard Version reads: “And God said, Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures.” A swarm, a multitude, a crowd, a throng of blessings are mine in my abundant life—not a constricted, diminished, deprived life, but a one-hundredfold life of confidence, security and joy. Jesus promised it to his apostles, inserting the words “with persecutions” because persecutions were certain to come, but persecutions could not take away the joy in the hearts of those who followed Jesus. We can feel with certainty the same is true for us today.

One day on a mountain near Capernaum, Jesus sat with his disciples. Jesus may have looked quietly and tenderly at each of those devoted men, looked at them in the way a loving parent looks at the members of his family, loving each child separately, loving each one for a special reason, loving them in such a way that each child feels singled out, and individually embraced. So must Jesus have shown his love. He said: “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6).

If I hunger and thirst after physical food, I go into a kitchen, a restaurant, a store where food is sold, or a garden or orchard where fruits and vegetables are grown. I know the sources of food. When I want to learn where I can satisfy my hunger and thirst for righteousness, I go to the word of God:

Let my tongue sing of thy word;  
For all thy commandments are righteousness.  
Let thy hand be ready to help me;  
For I have chosen thy precepts.



I have longed for thy salvation, O Jehovah:  
And thy law is my delight.<sup>6</sup>

“Thy commandments are righteousness!” While reading Psalm 119, I counted nine requests to God—requests for one specific thing—to be taught! There may be more than nine, but after a few words of praise, the Psalmist apparently realized how much he needed to know about the God who is not far from any of us. “Blessed art thou, O Jehovah: Teach me thy statutes” (Psalm 119:12). “The earth, O Jehovah, is full of thy lovingkindness: Teach me thy statutes” (Psalm 119:64). “Thou art good, and doest good; Teach me thy statutes” (Psalm 119:58). “Deal with thy servant according unto thy lovingkindness, and teach me thy statutes” (Psalm 119:124).

I hope you will take a notebook and a Bible concordance, and research the many times men of God asked to be taught. They were hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and they knew the satisfaction for their hunger and thirst lay in the word of God. We read because we want to be stronger Christians, better wives, mothers, teachers, neighbors, employees, counsellors. The answer comes: “Wherefore, be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is” (Eph. 5:17).

Victor Hugo, a great novelist, once said: “I need a thousand years to accomplish what I want to accomplish.” Perhaps every dedicated Christian feels the same way. He has an abundant life ahead of him every day he lives on the earth, and his words and actions can help make abundant lives for others. There is a reason behind every success story, but no one person can make up a list of items that will guarantee an abundant life. Some have listed punctuality as one of the first requirements for success, but others have been late for an appointment because of an emergency encountered on the way, and that delay made an abundance of living. Some have said success comes if one “follows

through” with everything he starts, and others know they are better off when they throw away letters they have started to write, or filled a wastebasket with discards of clutter that could benefit no one at all. Each will have to make a private listing of the things considered important, putting at the top of the list the determination to build a hearty appetite for the word of God.

I once heard a professional storyteller from the Winston Publishing Company as he talked with teachers about children’s difficulties in reading. He said: “Teachers should be concerned with changing a child’s personality so that he **WANTS** to read!” Could it be that when we begin filling our lives with thoughts of others we are taking a step toward reaching the ideal of “hungering and thirsting after righteousness?”

### *THREE THINGS TO START*

1. *Start taking a genuine interest in the world about you.* What about your neighbors’ ability to grow flowers, the broken lightglobe on the street corner that needs to be reported, the elderly in your congregation who are seldom remembered on birthdays? Helen Keller once said: “See what you see!” You will not see people, and things, and needs unless you are interested.
2. *Start always wanting to know the truth.* What is going on in the mission fields? What about the success of the gospel on radio and television? Take your Bible to church services, and practice note-taking. If you don’t have time during the service to read along with the minister or teacher, make a note of the scripture used and read it as soon as you can afterward. Investigate what your children are studying in public school, and in Bible school.
3. *Start being more willing to admit mistakes.* Saul, on the Damascus Road, was humble enough to say:

“What shall I do?” David said: “I have sinned.” A boy came home from a life of sin and debauchery, saying, “I am not good enough to be called thy son. Make me as one of thy hired servants.” By freely admitting errors, they changed from stained lives to lives of abundant living.

### *THREE THINGS TO KEEP*

1. *Logical and clear thinking.* Temptation will come, for Satan hopes to confuse us, and often does. A little girl said: “Every time I hear Satan knock, I send Jesus to the door!”
2. *Moral integrity without prudishness.* The Pharisee was religious, but he said: “Thank God I am not like other men.” Perhaps you have never robbed a bank, or committed adultery or murder, but you must still pray: “Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner!” “All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God.”
3. *Habit of thoughtful meditation.* Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a woman who listened, and meditated. She “kept these things, pondering them in her heart.” Discretion and sobriety will cause one to think carefully before speaking or acting, and the joys of abundant living can be increased.

### *WHAT CAN YOU DO?*

What can you do to make life more abundant? You have been given a mind, a body, hands, feet, fingers, eyes, a voice, muscles, and sometimes a little money to go along with all of these natural treasures. What can you do? It is easy to say: “I cannot do one single thing more than I am doing now!” Perhaps not, but we might think of some of the things we will be able to do when we find the time!

Can you type? Cook? Drive a car? Baby sit? Read aloud? Clean house? Offer a guestroom to a visiting preacher? Telephone shut-ins? Call a Bible school teacher and offer to

help with handwork for a week? A month? Make up little packets of noiseless things of interest to give a mother of small children, such as a few pieces of colored ribbon, balls of cotton, a shoelace and card with holes punched in it so a child can thread the lace in and out? A few of some of the things I have listed can be "thrown in" to a routine day of homework, caring for children, or working at a business office, or in the schoolroom. We often have the feeling that we get so little done, and there is so much to do! Everyone must have "a starting place" in an effort to make a more abundant life.

### *GLADNESS IN THE HEART*

With our various talents, we begin to put our talents to use because we have trust in God. Depressions, perplexities and persecutions come, but the apostle Paul had them all, and gave us the answer:

We are pressed on every side, yet not straitened; perplexed, yet not unto despair; pursued, yet not forsaken; smitten down, yet not destroyed.<sup>7</sup>

Paul could write from a Roman prison and say to Christians in far distant places: "Rejoice . . . and again I will say rejoice." He had great faith in God, but think of the things he could do with his physical body before his imprisonment. He made tents, he walked, he talked, he spoke several languages, he studied law and poetry, and understood the rules of Grecian games. No doubt he helped unload the doomed ship of its cargo on the way to Rome, and he helped gather sticks to build a fire when the shipload of wet and cold men stood in the rain on a strange beach, "Perplexed, but not unto despair." No doubt worthwhile activity helped.

### *WHAT ABOUT CRISES IN OUR LIVES?*

What is a crisis? We recognize a crisis as a stage in a sequence of events at which the trend of all future events

especially for better or worse, is determined. A crisis is a turning point. We often apply the word "crisis" chiefly to serious illnesses — the point in the course of a disease at which a decisive change occurs, leading to recovery or death. In social, economic, political or international affairs, we apply the word crisis to a condition of instability, leading to a decisive change.

Two synonyms may help us to understand the word better, and help us to see events in the lives of Bible characters that marked a great change in their lives and circumstances

1. *JUNCTURE*. There was a famine in Bethlehem, and Naomi and Elimelech were faced with a great decision. Should they stay in Bethlehem, with the certainty of hunger and possible starvation, or should they go across the River Jordan to the land of Moab, a land of unbelievers in the true God? Perhaps Elimelech said to Naomi: "At this juncture, we must decide whether to stay or to go!" It was a turning point in their lives.
2. *URGENCY*. The apostle Paul was on his way to Rome, with two hundred and seventy-five other people aboard ship. Nearing an unknown island, they let four anchors go from the stern, and prayed for the day. The sailors were about to flee from the ship, and had lowered the life boat into the sea. Paul, ever watchful, said to the centurion and to the soldiers: "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved. Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off" (Acts 27:31,32).

The situation demanded prompt action or remedy, since everyone on the ship would be needed to get the shipload of people safely to land. It was an emergency.

Now that we know that the words juncture, emergency

and crisis agree in the idea of an important or crucial point of time or combination of circumstances, let us devote a little time to examining some of the crises in our lives.

Sometimes facing a geographical move is a time of great crisis. There are changes in employment, housing, children's schools. New friends have to be made, in the school, the community, and the church. New doctors have to be recommended and contacted, and there is the sadness of being separated from friends and relatives, breaking life-long ties of companionship, and even assistance. Abraham and Sarah went out, not even knowing where they were going, but they had faith in God to believe in the joys in a new location.

Again, we are confronted constantly with the high cost of living, the lack of enough money to "go around," and certainly the lack of enough to buy some of the luxuries our hearts long for, and our children retreat into fantasies because they cannot have the material things some of their friends have. When faced with such a crisis, we need a strong family communication that can help us in two ways: somehow make more money, honorably, and somehow, spend less. I am impressed with the apostle Paul's letter to Timothy, in which he said:

The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, bring when thou comest, and the books, especially the parchments.<sup>8</sup>

Clothing and books were important, and Paul knew where his things were, and asked others' assistance in keeping up with them. If our homes should be destroyed by fire tonight, and we lost every dish, every dress, every piece of furniture we have in this world, we would not consider our lives a total failure. We would begin immediately to replace some of the things we lost, but we would be surprised to find how many things we would not have to replace! An open discussion with children regarding prices of food and clothing,

adherence to a budget, and less emphasis on affluent living might help us all find a better answer to the question: "Of what does an abundant life consist?" Jesus himself gave us the answer to this question:

Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.<sup>9</sup>

An abundance of things that can be bought with money do not make an abundant life.

There are crises in loneliness, crises in illnesses, and crises in old age. We are aware of all of these, and sometimes feel prepared to meet such crises with activity to avert loneliness, with help from good doctors to take some of the distress from illnesses, and with the realization that one of Job's particular blessings from God was that he lived to be old — to see his family even to the fourth generation.

There is one type of crisis that we seldom think about as being of great importance. What about the crises in everyday living? We feel we can adjust fairly quickly to the big changes, but it is the daily grind, the fault-finding and bickering, and the family feuds, that often keep us from realizing the joy of abundant living.

When I was a child, my family frequently discussed the issues of minor importance that sometimes grew in magnitude by discussion and repetition until families were upset, frequently completely disintegrated. For instance, after the death of elderly parents, two sisters my parents knew refused to speak to each other for a year because one daughter was willed a cut-glass bowl the other sister prized and coveted. Again, two brothers held a lifelong grudge because a dying father said he wanted one son to have his horse's bridle, and the other son to have his saddle. Each son wanted what he did not get, and so a crisis arose in everyday living. To illustrate the point better to us as we were

children, our parents quoted a short poem by an unknown author:

Molly, my sister, and I fell out,  
And what do you think  
It was all about?  
She liked coffee,  
And I liked tea,  
And that is the reason  
We couldn't agree!

Since we have the promise of an abundant life, would it not be worthwhile to make every possible effort to diminish the annoyances of daily living, to do all we can to realize this one-hundredfold life we are promised? My husband once wrote out ten rules he considered pertinent to good living:

#### *TO GET ALONG WITH OTHERS*

Here are ten rules by which you can get along with people. These rules are based on Bible principles, and are absolutely dependable. They are guaranteed to do the job of cultivating good friendships in the most efficient manner. Faithfully apply these ten rules to your daily life, and see how much more real cheer and happiness you have to enjoy and pass on to others. Some real Christianity can be found in so doing.

1. Keep skid chains on your tongue; say less than you think. "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19).
2. Make promises sparingly and keep them faithfully, no matter what it costs you. "Lie not one to another" (Col. 3:9).
3. Never let an opportunity pass to say or do a kind thing to another. "All things ye would that men do to you, do ye also to them likewise" (Luke 6:31).
4. If criticism is merited, criticize helpfully, never



destructively or spitefully. "But we do all things for your edifying" (II Cor. 12:19).

5. Be interested in others, their pursuits, their welfare, their problems, and their burdens. "Rejoice with them that rejoice, weep with them that weep." Let everyone you meet, however humble, feel your sincere interest in him. "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2).

6. Be cheerful. Keep the corners of your mouth turned up. A soured person is not a good representative of Christ or country. "Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice . . . In nothing be anxious, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:4-6).

7. Don't complain about your pains, your worries and disappointments. Be long-suffering. "Let your forbearance be known unto all men" (Phil. 4:5).

8. Preserve an open mind on all debatable questions. "They searched the scriptures daily whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

9. Be consistent. No one admires a Christian flirting with the world any more than did the chief priests and elders admire Judas for betraying Jesus into their hands. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (I Cor. 15:58).

10. Nothing is wrong with the mind of the man who minds his own business. "For let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters" (I Peter 4:15). A person usually tries to run another's business after he has lost his own.<sup>10</sup>

What do we want in our abundant life? We want hope and confidence. Humanity lives by confidence — an exultant faith in the stability of God's universe, and its intelligent ordering of steps in everything that exists. There is confidence in the falling rain, in the dawning day, and loud roaring of the sea. From confidence is born a life without haste, with planned action, zest for life, and love of fruitful labor. It is a deep-seated confidence in the mysterious spring in our hearts that sets in motion the energy within us. It is by this energy that a man lives, much more than by the bread he eats. In our abundant life, we have true liberty. What does this liberty mean? It is an atmosphere of the higher life, and it is only by a slow and patient inward transformation that one becomes capable of breathing it.

#### *WITH THE LIVING, THERE IS HOPE*

One of the saddest statements in the writings of the apostle Paul is the statement he made about Demas, who had been one of his co-laborers in the gospel. He said to Timothy: "Give diligence to come shortly unto me: for Demas forsook me, having loved this present world, and went to Thessalonica" (2 Timothy 4:9,10). People who had worked together in the Lord's work, who had taken joy in hearing people name the name of Christ, in seeing the borders of the kingdom spread, were separated in two ways — by geographical distance, and by the distance Satan's devisings created in the heart of a man who listened. Demas' love for the world made him deaf to the call of the abundant life, blind to the joy and gladness that would attend it here — and hereafter.

Jesus' story of the young man who went away from his father's good home is a story that touches us all. Most of us can identify with the father in his grief that his son had chosen an evil way, and forsaken his early training, the abundant life of service, security, confidence and love.

Many of us can identify with the young man himself, who

yielded to strong temptations and went astray, and even with the moment when the starving, lonely soul “came to himself” and said “I will arise and go to my father.”

Is it possible that some of us can identify with the older brother, who lacked some of the elements necessary in the abundant life to forgive, and forget his brother's failures and sins? Can we be filled with enough confidence and love to believe our wayward friends and loved ones can change their habits of life, and begin again? Working in his father's fields was not enough to make an abundant life. It might have created an abundant harvest in the field, but his attitude wrecked, for a time at least, the possibilities of abundant living.

With the living, there is hope. Keep loving those who have gone astray! Fill every day with prayer for their return to the abundant life! “I came that you may have life and have it abundantly!” Believe it! Help others to believe it!

*HOLD HIGH YOUR HOPE!*

Today may be the day he comes back home  
Hold high your hope  
Prepare for what may be.

Let others know your plan . . . a robe, a ring,  
Speak of his shoes . . . think of the shoes he loved,  
Remember those dear feet, think how they grew  
From infant feet to feet that walked your paths,  
Strode through your fields, climbed trees,  
Washed at your well.

Think of those feet again at your fireside,  
Beneath your table,  
Climbing your loved hills,  
Walking to prayer,  
Standing once more to view  
The sunset with you  
From your sheltered door.

And, while you watch,  
Give freely of your love;  
Fold others in your arms,  
Speak words of cheer,  
Kiss others . . . that you do not lose the touch  
Of warmth and welcoming . . . and some glad day  
A spray of dust on some far distant hill  
May mark the moment he is coming back . . .  
  
Home from his wanderings . . .  
His night . . .  
His load . . .  
And you . . . and hope . . .  
Will meet him on the road!

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## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Psalm 16:6.<sup>2</sup>Psalm 57:7,8.<sup>3</sup>Psalm 112:6,7,8a.<sup>4</sup>Mark 10:28-30.<sup>5</sup>Genesis 1:20,21. (KJV.)<sup>6</sup>Psalm 119:172-174.<sup>7</sup>2 Cor. 4:8.<sup>8</sup>2 Timothy 4:13.<sup>9</sup>Luke 12:15.<sup>10</sup>See Oler, Gayle., *Just A Moment*, (Quinlan, Texas: Just a Moment Publishing Company, 1945), p. 73.

## **I WANT TO SEE GOD!**

I am thankful for my eyes! I am glad I have been able to see the beauties of God's world. I love trees — green trees, yellow, orange, and red trees. I even love the brown and grey trees of winter. And flowers! Bluebonnets on a Texas hill, Indian paint brushes, sometimes mingling their red into the field of bluebonnets, a yellow stretch of wild flowers along California highways, and sprinkled about in canyons and deserts in the west. I planted sunflowers, as a child, and marveled to watch them turn on their stems to face the sun in the morning, at noonday, or when the day was almost at an end.

Dallas, as well as other cities I have visited, has beautiful rose gardens — show places of beauty. I have gone on automobile trips through dogwood trails, through azalea trails, or to see the colorful fall foliage of the northern and eastern parts of the United States. Often, I saw theatre marquees in small towns fairly screaming the advice: "GO OUT — AND SEE THE COLOR!"

Last year, I visited a cousin — a blind cousin, ninety years old. I had never seen him before. He was my mother's first cousin — their mothers were sisters — but our paths had never crossed. One day, in an East Texas newspaper, a brief article inquired if anyone knew any of the descendants of Fanny Rabe Kelly. She was my mother. I immediately established contact to locate him, and drove to west Texas to find him and other cousins, who had been lost to our family for a lifetime.

After we visited for awhile, I knelt by his chair, and placed his hands on my face, my eyes, my hair. He said: "You have a voice just like my mother's voice! You sound so much like her it is as though she were kneeling here beside me!" And he wept for joy! We were both quiet for a moment, while he wiped his tears (I helped him, then wiped my own, too!), and

then he said: "I wish I could see your face!" And he wept again!

Oh, how the eyes long to see the faces of those they love! This cousin had never seen me, but we had a kinship, a strong blood tie, and a flood of memories engulfed us both in a moment of unexpected joy.

And oh! How I do want to see God — my creator, my Father, the one in whom I live, and move, and have my being! I am his child, his beloved, his chosen! To think of one day being able to kneel by one who loved me enough to shine a light for my dark path, to make himself known so I could seek him out!

I am not the first one who has had a great longing to see God. Moses talked with God, seemingly reasoning out his call to lead the Israelites from Egyptian bondage:

And Moses said unto Jehovah, see, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people; and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found favor in my sight. Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found favor in thy sight, show me now thy ways, that I may know thee, to the end that I may find favor in thy sight; and consider that this nation is thy people. And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein how shall it be known that I have found favor in thy sight, I and thy people? Is it not in that thou goest with us, so that we are separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth?

And Jehovah said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken; for thou hast spoken; for thou hast found favor in my sight, and I know thee by name. And he said, Show me, I pray thee, thy glory. And he

said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will show mercy. And he said, Thou canst not see my face; for man shall not see me and live. And Jehovah said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand man shall not see me and live. And Jehovah said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon the rock; and it shall come to pass, while my glory passes by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand until I have passed by; and I will take away my hand, and thou shalt see my back; but my face shall not be seen.<sup>1</sup>

One time God called Moses, and Aaron, and Miriam, and said to them:

Hear now my words: if there be a prophet among you, I Jehovah will make myself known unto him in a vision, I will speak with him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so; he is faithful in all my house: with him will I speak mouth to mouth, even manifestly, and not in dark speeches; and the form of Jehovah shall he behold.<sup>2</sup>

After Moses' death, it is said of him: "There hath not arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom Jehovah knew face to face" (Deut. 34:10).

Yes, there is a strong and strange longing to look into the face of a loved one, even though we have never seen him. There is a mystery to the unknown, also. The mystery is not mere curiosity, but a mystery surrounding someone we have heard about from comparative strangers, possibly read about, received letters from, or seen warm lovelight shine in the eyes of another as he mentioned the absent one's name. I want to see God — I have heard so much about him!

Jesus talked with his apostles about God a great deal. He talked to them about God's power, about how long he had existed, and how they could honor his name in prayer. With all his teaching, they were finite beings, and it was hard for

them to understand all of the things he wanted them to know about the eternal God. One day, after the feast of the Passover was finished, and the end of Jesus' life on earth was very near, his apostles still had many questions to ask. Peter said: "Lord, whither goest thou?" Thomas said: "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; how know we the way?"

Philip drew his question a little closer to a statment such as a child might make: "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." It will be enough, Jesus, if you will just let us see God. You've talked about him, you've told us you are going away, and now show us the Father and it will be enough.

Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I say unto you I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me doeth his works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me.<sup>3</sup>

Early in Jesus' ministry, he saw great multitudes following him, and he went up into a mountain: and when he had sat down, his disciples came to him and he began to teach them what we call "The Beatitudes." He taught them ways to have a good life on earth, how to conduct themselves in their daily lives, how to keep their hearts and emotions under control; and he taught them the blessings that were certain to follow such actions. We have all probably memorized these favorite verses of Scripture, and could say them right this moment with ease:

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.



Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the sons of God.<sup>4</sup>

In the next paragraph of the same chapter, there are several other verses that begin with the word “blessed,” but I have only listed the shorter ones — the ones most often committed to memory. Did you notice that I failed to read one of the shorter verses? It was not an oversight on my part. I left it out because it is the verse I want to emphasize.

“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God”  
(Matt. 5:8).

All of those other verses we can obey, and see some fulfillment in our lives on earth. We are sons of God; we are members of the kingdom; we are comforted; when we are hungry and thirsty for God’s word, we can be filled; and God’s mercy and goodness remain with us every day to give us the peace that passes understanding.

The one verse we need to know more about, because we want nothing to happen to keep us from seeing God, is the 8th verse of Matthew 5: “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” It is my promise! I can expect it! I desire it earnestly! I have things to do to make this hope a reality!

### *LET’S LOOK AT THE WORD “PURE”*

My dictionary’s definition of the word “pure” reads as follows: “Separate from all heterogeneous or extraneous matter; without alloy, taint, or stains; clear; unmixed; sheer.”

Now let’s see what “heterogeneous matter” means. It means “differing in kind; having unlike qualities; dissimilar.” Now what does “extraneous matter” mean? It means “not essential; foreign.” It seems that we have a fairly

coherent idea of what the word “pure” means. It is something “without” impurities, or qualities unlike an original state.

However, the picture is not all negative — not all just being “without” something. For instance, pure water is classified as having no germs, disease, or death in it, but it is also good for something. It is good to drink, to use for cooking, to quench thirst, and to be used for cleanliness of the body. Pure food has no germs, disease, or death in it, but it is also good to satisfy hunger, please the taste, tickle the palate, adorn tables, and satisfy guests. Pure gold has nothing in it to make it worthless or counterfeit, but it is also used to make things of beauty for the home, as personal adornment, and as a medium of obtaining other worthwhile things. A pure girl is chaste, but she is also ready for love, courtship, marriage, and motherhood.

#### *WHAT ABOUT THE PURE IN HEART?*

The pure in heart are those with hearts purged of sin and evil, washed clean by the blood of the Lamb, but also hearts capable of loving, working, and relishing life. They are hearts of vision, with capabilities, hearts attuned to the needs of the world. They are hearts of action! The word “pure” almost seems to be symbolic of activity — of accomplishment of good — of bringing joy and beauty to the world.

#### *WHAT ARE SOME PURE THINGS?*

##### **1. GOD’S WORD IS PURE.**

- a. “The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes” (Psalm 19:8).
- b. “The words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace of earth” (Psalm 12:6).
- c. “Thy word is very pure; therefore thy servant loveth it” (Psalm 119:140).
- d. “Every word of God is pure” (Proverbs 30:5).

It is almost as though these four Scriptures tell a story. The pure words of the Lord open our eyes to things we would not otherwise see, and they have been tried and found worthy of praise. The words are pure, and have caused God's people to love him because they know every word is pure and filled with wisdom for the walk of a child of God,

***BOTH GOD AND MAN LOVE THE WORD AND WORKS OF THE PURE.***

1. "The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord: but the words of the pure are pleasant words" (Proverbs 15:26).
2. "The way of man is forward and strange: but as for the pure, his work is right" (Proverbs 21:8).
3. "Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right" (Proverbs 20:11).

In a person's strong desire to someday see God, to be pure in heart, he converses in a manner that both God and man consider pleasant. He becomes a better conversationalist, a better employee. People are close observers of children, as a rule, and most can tell even when a child's behavior is filled with "unessential" and "foreign" actions. Certainly such things show in the life of an adult, and if impurities are present, the Christian influence is hindered.

***IS IT POSSIBLE TO CONSIDER OURSELVES PURE AND BE MISTAKEN?***

We have some Bible verses regarding people who considered themselves pure in their own eyes, but their lives were entirely different:

1. "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness."
2. "There is a generation that curse their father, and bless not their mother."

3. "There is a generation, Oh how lofty are their eyes!  
And their eyelids are lifted up!"<sup>5</sup>

Notice the statement: "They are pure in their own eyes." We often find ourselves believing what we want to believe, and justifying ourselves by saying, "I am not as bad as so-and-so. I have never committed murder or some other grievous sins." Is that not about what the Pharisee included in his prayer? Not humble — not obedient — not clean, but "pure in their own eyes."

#### *OUR WAY OF LIFE MUST BE PURE.*

Honesty is a symbol of purity.

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God . . . are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable? Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?<sup>6</sup>

#### *OUR OFFERINGS MUST BE PURE.*

Whatever we give must be given gladly and willingly.

For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered to my name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathens, saith the Lord of hosts.<sup>7</sup>

#### *OUR TEACHING AND EXAMPLE MUST BE PURE.*

The apostle Paul sent for the elders of the church in Ephesus, to come to meet him at Miletus, and he said: "Wherefore, I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men" (Acts 20:26).

Paul knew the elders realized what kind of man he had been, and he was not ashamed to tell them he had served the

Lord with all humility of mind, with many tears, enduring temptations, but he kept back nothing that was profitable unto them. Oh, what a teacher of God's word he was! He told them he had shown them Jesus by his example, he had taught them publicly, he had taught them from house to house; and told all the people, both Jews and Greeks, what they needed to know about repentance toward God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. As a result of his being pure of the blood of all men (he had done his best), he could say: "Bonds and afflictions await me, but none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy." Oh, that we could all say we are pure from the blood of all men! Have we even tried to teach our neighbors? Our relatives? Our children? Ourselves?

### *THREE THINGS WE CAN TAKE THOUGHT TO KEEP PURE:*

#### 1. OUR THOUGHTS MUST BE PURE.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.<sup>8</sup>

#### 2. OUR CONSCIENCES MUST BE PURE.

- a. Some have their consciences "seared as with a hot iron" (1 Tim. 4:2).
- b. Paul said: "I thank my God, whom I serve from my forefathers with a pure conscience" (2 Tim. 1:3).
- c. Paul gave admonitions to deacons, that they should not be greedy of filthy lucre, but "holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience" (1 Tim. 5:22).

#### 3. OUR LIVES MUST BE PURE.

- a. We cannot go out of the world, but we are not to be

influenced by the wickedness around us. "Neither be partakers of other men's sins: keep thyself pure" (1 Tim. 5:22). Paul realized the temptations that would be lying in wait at every turn, but he told Timothy to keep himself pure. It was not an impossible thing to do!

- b. What about our carping, critical natures? What about our sensual, selfish spirits? What about our fault-finding, faithless days and nights? Is there an answer to this in God's sword? Does this Scripture sound like some of the people we know or read about today?

Unto the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.<sup>9</sup>

It is not difficult in any age — any period of time — to find men and women who have their minds centered on everything base and defiled. Their lips speak evil, and their works even deny the existence of God. To such people, nothing is pure.

### *IS THERE A PURE RELIGION?*

The answer to the question is a very simple answer, a simple pattern of life.

Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.<sup>10</sup>

Uncomplicated, we need ever be watchful of the needs of others, and we need to watch our own way of life. The wisdom from above will help us to meet every need as it presents itself.

*WHAT IS THE WISDOM FROM ABOVE?*

"The wisdom that is from above is first pure . . ." Let's make this into a list that can become a part of our daily examination of our own lives:

1. Pure.
2. Peaceable.
3. Gentle.
4. Easy to be entreated.
5. Full of mercy.
6. Full of good fruits.
7. Without partiality.
8. Without hypocrisy.<sup>11</sup>

*WILL LIFE ALWAYS BE EASY?*

No, life will not always be easy. But if we have the hope of heaven, the hope of seeing God, the trials we endure will be but for the moment. "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 1:3). There is the answer! We have a pattern. We purify ourselves, even as "he is pure." We follow in the steps of Jesus.

Paul said, in looking back over his life:

But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings, by pureness . . .<sup>12</sup>

That is the way Paul endured all the things he had to endure. He did it "by pureness." Trials? Yes! Many! Easy? No! Change, illness, imprisonments, desertions, mistreatments, loneliness . . . Paul had them all, but he was approved as a minister of God "by pureness." Is it a marvel to you that Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God"? A determination to one day meet God face to face, to live with him throughout eternity, can make one face each day with a sense of exhilaration and the pledge that he will keep himself pure.

I once made out a list of twelve things the Bible says about heaven. It was a list for primary children, but the simplicity of the wording makes the wonders of eternal life seem more real and more wonderful:

### **TWELVE THINGS THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT HEAVEN**

1. God wants me to go.
2. Jesus is getting a place ready.
3. If I decide to go, angels will be happy.
4. Good people want me to go.
5. It will always be daytime.
6. No one will cry.
7. No one will be sick.
8. No one will die.
9. We will see God.
10. No one will be afraid.
11. We will see the one we are like (Jesus).
12. We will sing.

### **AMAZING GRACE**

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound,  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now I'm found  
Was blind, but now I see.

When we've been there  
Ten thousand years,  
Bright shining as the sun,  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we've first begun!

### **FACE TO FACE**

Face to face shall I behold him!  
Far beyond the starry sky!  
Face to face, in all his glory,  
I shall see him by and by!



Let's repeat Philip's words again: "Lord, show us the Father, and it will be enough for us." Jesus' answer: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," leaves us with the understanding that the more nearly we imitate Jesus, follow his pattern, the nearer we are to the great white throne of God.

### I SHALL SEE GOD

When I am miles away from my dear friend,  
And longing fills my heart to see his face,  
I feel each day, each moment, we will meet,  
Without formality of strangers . . . or reserve  
At having been apart . . . for in all truth,  
We never are apart . . . but his warm hand  
Is reaching out to me. I wander far,  
To east and west, on desert, mountain, sea,  
But tender love follows me there . . . breathes peace.

I bear exhausting heat . . . wild, scorching winds,  
Chill winter's bite . . . the rush of sudden storms,  
With strong belief my friend is holding me  
Within his mind . . . his longing for my good,  
And when we meet, I will with one glad cry  
Go to the shelter of my friend's strong arms.

My confidence in him . . . and his in me . . .  
Will bind us in a glad eternity.

### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Exodus 33:12-23.

<sup>2</sup>Numbers 12:6-8.

<sup>3</sup>John 14:8-11.

<sup>4</sup>Matt. 5:3-9.

<sup>5</sup>Proverbs 30:11,12 and 13.

<sup>6</sup>Micah 6:8; 6:11.

<sup>7</sup>Mal. 1:11.

<sup>8</sup>Phil. 4:8.

<sup>9</sup>Titus 1:15,16.

<sup>10</sup>James 1:27.

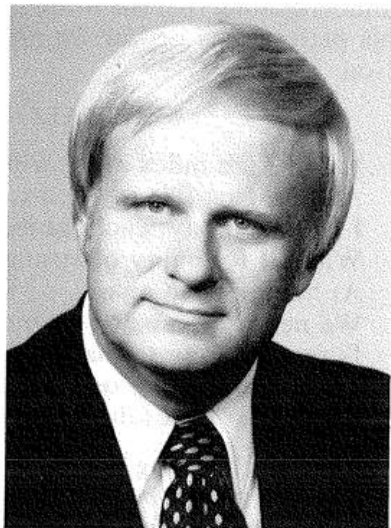
<sup>11</sup>James 3:17.

<sup>12</sup>2 Cor. 4:10.

# SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

Bob Barnhill

Bob Barnhill, minister of the Southside Church of Christ in Fort Worth, holds the B.S. Degree in Bible from Abilene Christian University, 1955; the M.Ed. Degree in Counseling from North Texas State University, 1961. In addition, he has done a year's post graduate study in Speech at Midwestern University. He graduated from Abilene Christian University magna cum laude.



Active in Christian education, Barnhill served as a member of the Bible Department of Fort Worth Christian College for four years, and Lectureship Director for the school for two years. He is presently a member of the Board of Development at Oklahoma Christian College and Lubbock Christian College. He also has served as a member of the Board of Trustees of Amarillo Christian Schools and Dallas Christian Schools.

Barnhill has held meetings and spoken in a number of states as well as in several foreign countries. He has been the featured speaker on lectureships and has spoken on the campuses of Abilene Christian University, Fort Worth Christian College, Pepperdine University, Oklahoma Christian College, Lubbock Christian College, David Lipscomb College, and Alabama Christian College.

He frequently teaches church leadership seminars and has helped organize visitation programs in more than fifty churches.

In seven years with the Central Church in Amarillo, he preached weekly on the KGNC radio program "The Story That Never Grows Old." During his ministry at Central, the congregation built on to the physical plant twice, adding over one-third to the size of the building occupying two city blocks in the downtown area.

Barnhill served two years as minister of the 1400 member Garland Road Church in Dallas, which is the largest and the oldest congregation in that city. During the two years there, the weekly contribution increased from an average of \$5,600, to \$8,000 per week. He began work at Southside in July of 1977.

He has served as guest editor of *20th Century Christian* magazine, and contributes articles occasionally to *Firm Foundation*, *Gospel Advocate*, *Power For Today*, *Ministers Monthly*, and *Christian Bible Teacher* magazines.

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The Lord's Church has a fantastic future! Of course it always has had one. Christ issued a divine insurance policy on the future of the church when He said He would see to it the gates of Hell would never destroy it (Matthew 16:18).

Of course, there have been times when the growth of the church has been retarded. As recently as the last three decades, the changing fortunes of the church have been apparent. In the 1950's, churches of Christ were in the "top ten" numerically among religious groups in the United States. Yet, to our dismay, in the 1960's, we dropped in growth rate so dramatically, we barely stayed in the top twenty.

Two of the groups who supplanted us were the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons. What's shocking about this

is—both groups have to work much harder to gain disciples than we do. They must teach something *more* than the Bible to gain converts! In fact, a potential convert to these groups must accept some fantastic claims to join their ranks! In spite of this, these groups still grew faster than the Lord's Church.

Things are now changing. We are waking up. God's ship of state is moving forward again. Through such efforts as bus ministries, evangelistic workshops, campaigns, deaf outreach, etc., gains are becoming apparent. Some churches are now attempting at least one baptism a day and are coming close to accomplishing it. Moreover, contributions in six and seven figures on a Sunday by one congregation are being recorded.

The unusual growth now taking place is coming from a new source—the larger churches. Larger churches are growing—more often than not—much faster than smaller congregations. If this trend continues, by the year two thousand, we'll have a number of massive churches numbering in the thousands. This is exciting. This trend is not only desirable, it is Biblical. The two churches most responsible for evangelizing the world in the first century were Jerusalem and Antioch—both with memberships numbering in the thousands.

### **Spiritual Leadership Believes God's Promises**

Obviously from the New Testament, to succeed, we must do more than "know the Book"—we must believe what it says! "God works in you to do his will" (Philippians 2:13). "He will reward those who seek Him diligently" (Hebrews 11:6). "If we have only a small amount of faith we can move mountains and accomplish impossible tasks" (Matthew 17:20). The issue is: Do we believe these words as "facts"? Is our faith deep enough to try to succeed in doing, with God's help, the impossible?

The key is leadership! But not negative "hold that line"

leadership brethren have been accustomed to. The type of leadership needed is a spiritual variety spoken of by the Lord—“*The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light*” [emphasis mine] (Luke 16:8)! Regrettably, we have relegated this sad observation by Jesus to “a mere commentary on brethren’s behavior.” It is time we take the Lord’s advice. We should use the *wisdom* we can gain from the “sons of men” in our work as “children of light”! In His statement, Jesus was giving us a formula for dynamic, spiritual leadership! Let’s not overlook it any longer.

In over twenty years of preaching, it has become evident to me, brethren leave their good business sense at home when they come to a “business meeting” of the church. Many an elder became a successful businessman due to: his willingness to take common sense risks; his wisdom to invest heavily today for a successful return tomorrow; his vision to try innovative ideas; and his good judgment to forge ahead regardless of his critics. Sadly, however, when he is in an elders’ meeting, he leaves all this know-how behind. Common sense, vision, good judgment, and innovation are all left at his business office. His goal often becomes “saving money, avoiding criticism, and sitting tight in the boat!”

One elder summarized it all in one sentence—“If I ran my business like we run the church, I would be bankrupt in a month!”

A graphic example of this paradoxical behavior Jesus was commenting on in Luke 16:8, is seen in the approach used in hiring of preachers. In hiring personnel in a business, successful leaders define a job; then, they look for the best man for the job. Once they’ve found the man, they make the job as attractive as possible for him to come to work for them. One over-riding principle which industry uses is, “You can’t pay a qualified man too much, because he more than pays his own way; while if you pay an indifferent,

mediocre worker a dime, you pay him too much!" Many a company has an employee who, though highly paid, is regarded as the "cheapest" investment because of the increase in profits the company enjoys due to his work. It's business common sense to operate on such a principle.

Businessmen, who believe these principles strongly in the business community, then come as elders to select a preacher! Suddenly the first considerations are, "What preachers are looking for a job?" and "Which one can we get for the least support?" The well-worn phrase is—"We don't want to approach anyone who is not seeking a change!" Indirectly, mediocrity is encouraged. Malcontents or job hunters are the first considered! The best, most dedicated men are ruled out! What folly! Truly the "sons of men" are often wiser than the "children of light."

### **Use Common Business Sense!**

Jesus expects his people to profit by the wisdom, expertise, and methods of the world. In fact, His statement implies we would do well to use *any* method, philosophy, or good judgment used by men of the world—provided no ethical, moral, or Biblical principle is violated. For too long we've ignored business techniques in management, selling, public relations, and financing. We've called the church "The greatest business in the world—the business of saving souls," but we scarcely have treated it that way. That the Lord's Church has grown in spite of this is, to me, further evidence of the Gospel's power. Let's learn to use good business sense!

*THE GOOD BUSINESSMAN PAYS A PRICE TO BE A LEADER IN HIS FIELD.* Few things outside of salvation are really "free." (Even "free salvation" is paid for . . . by Christ's blood!). Sooner or later a price must be paid. Any successful businessman is successful because of the

time, patience, and effort he expends. He pays a price to become a leader.

The same holds true in the church. The Master said leadership in His Kingdom has a price too. When the disciples said "Grant us to sit on your right and your left," the Lord replied "You don't know what you ask! Are you able to partake of my cup?" (Mark 10:37, 38). His "cup" was the suffering and the giving of His life. Jesus was reminding the apostles they would pay a price for Christian leadership. Any leadership has a price tag. Examine pictures of presidents of the United States as they enter office and then, later, as they leave office. Roosevelt, Truman, Nixon, Carter, all aged overnight! Slumped shoulders show leadership's burden is heavy.

Spiritual leadership is not any different. No man should desire to lead unless he will pay the price. The office of an elder is called a "good work" (I Timothy 3:1). This price of "work" is not paid in a lump sum; it's paid in installments. If the day ever arrives when a leader of God's people does not honor the next "draft," then leadership suffers. In a sense, the eldership is more of a "process" than it is a "position"—a process that never is completed. It's possible to build a house and finish it. But, building a church is not that easy. Building the Kingdom never ends.

There is a cross to bear in spiritual leadership. "He lay down His life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (I John 3:16). A successful leader gives up self, forfeits his time, and even his own personal preferences for the interest of others. "But whosoever will be great . . . , shall be servant of all" (Mark 10:43-44).

It's precisely this lack of self-denial in congregational leadership that impedes the progress of the church. Instead of denying self, leaders have said, "Lord, we know the world must be reached. It will demand new ideas and new methods, but we won't change. We will not spend the time,

energy, nor the money to try out new ideas. It's easier to go on like we have for the past fifty years!"

Change sometimes requires sacrifice and effort. It will demand a fighting of battles. Battles produce scars. "Scars" though, are one of the few legitimate badges of leadership. Leadership has scars! Paul was successful because he fought the battles. His scars were his credentials. "I bear on my body the marks of Jesus" (Galatians 6:17). Leadership's price is: service, vision, uncompromising dedication, vigor, a pioneer spirit, co-operativeness and a love for the Lord. Truly the price is heavy.

*SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSES TRY NEW IDEAS TO REACH THE PUBLIC.* Wise business leaders realize as customs, life-styles and habits change, they must adjust to meet these changes. Who has not witnessed the death of a small community store, put out of business by competition that provided better facilities, parking, prices, and advertising! The methods the small store used successfully forty years ago no longer worked. Consequently, the small store died. In the world of today, the modern consumer will drive past neighborhood stores to find better selections and prices. It's a different world!

The Lord expects His people to have as much sense as the wise businessman. Adjusting to a mobile society, however, frightens many brethren! Shedding old methods that no longer work well and adopting new techniques is difficult to do. We comfortably sit tight in the boat. The "sons of men" are wiser than the "children of light"!

As an example of resistance to change, some oppose youth outreach, youth ministers, and an emphasis on reaching the young. "We didn't used to cater to youth!" Amazingly, preachers have even gone into print condemning working with "a special group" in the church—our youth. (While condemning working with youth exclusively, these



same preachers use methods, vocabulary, and the bulk of their time on "adults." They have been teaching "one group"—the adults—for years!)

It's true when I was a teenager, the church didn't cater to the youth. There was a reason. When I was a teenager, I didn't know what a marijuana cigarette was. I didn't know what an X-rated movie was, because there weren't any. I didn't hear teachers in schools ridicule the Bible. We even had Bible reading and prayer in the public school! I also heard sermons against dancing. Such sermons are still needed, but that is child's play compared to the temptations our young people have to face in the 1970's! When half of our youth are being lost to the church by the end of high school years, it is evident this *is* a major soul-winning area. A generation that would ignore such a drop-out rate and not do anything about it will be held accountable before the Lord. This is why Jesus expects us to have new ideas to reach the lost in every generation.

Bus programs, Children's Hour, campaigns, full-time counselors, jail ministries, etc. may not be "deviations from the faith" at all! They may not be "frills." It really depends on how they are used. Such may be ways to reach a dramatically changed society—a society radically different than a few years ago.

Paul conveyed the spirit that should always be a part of real Christian leadership "I become all things to all men that I might by all means save some" (I Corinthians 9:22). He adjusted to his environment. As he traveled to different places, Paul conformed to the life-styles he found. Yet, he never compromised the truth in his adjustments. He was willing to consider change. Paul knew reaching souls was worth it. It is common sense, and it is Biblical.

*MODERN BUSINESSES SEE A VALUE IN SIZE. A neighborhood store is a thing of the past. To a nation now on*

wheels, today's market place is a large shopping center with acres of parking. The larger the shopping center, the more people are attracted to it! As more stores are added to a shopping center, the volume of customers increases.

This apparent fact, seen by the "sons of men," has scarcely dawned on the "children of light"! Traditionally, we have advocated small neighborhood churches. Swarming to establish new congregations has been a brotherhood policy. We assumed larger churches were ineffective and dangerous.

This feeling goes deep into our roots in the Restoration movement. We lived through the instrumental music apostasy. When the inevitable division came, most of the larger churches went with the digressives. Brethren ended up in small frame buildings across the tracks. Larger churches taught error; smaller churches taught truth. The inevitable resulting lesson we learned was—"large churches had to be wrong!"

Size, however, was not the problem! God's word does not support efforts to remain small in size. In fact, Biblical examples never are given of "swarming" to create neighborhood churches to hold down congregational size! The Bible does not directly speak of churches establishing other churches in the same town. Instead, efforts were made toward building the Kingdom in other cities!

Being the first formed, it's fitting that the Jerusalem church gives the lie to the "smallness philosophy." In its first minute of existence, Jerusalem was "bigger" than any modern congregation. Adding in the women and the Christian teen-agers with the "five thousand men," conservatively, the Jerusalem Church of Christ had fifteen thousand members! The group's size is more impressive when it's remembered they didn't divide up into "Northside, Southside, Eastside, and Westside Churches of Christ." They stayed together! Large numbers created problems, but

the problems were solved. Consider how they solved four problems created by a large, growing congregation.

1. *Jerusalem Christians worshiped together.* “They were all with one accord in Solomon’s porch” (Acts 5:12). Solomon’s porch was a roofed, colonnaded porch that surrounded the Temple Courtyard. It was available for public gatherings and could accommodate thousands of Christians in one assembly. Crowds attract crowds. Little wonder there was constant addition to their number (Acts 5:14). By worshiping together rather than dividing, they grew.
2. *Jerusalem Christians used fellowship to solve the problem of bigness.* Large churches can be warm and friendly. Small churches can be cold and clannish. You can’t tell by size. The factor making the difference is the frequency and openness in fellowship. Jerusalem Christians stressed fellowship far more heavily than most twentieth-century New Testament churches do. By “continuing daily” (Acts 2:42) in fellowship they got to know one another. Instead of “swarming” into dozens of congregations throughout the city, they spent their time going from house to house in fellowship (Acts 2:46) and remained a large, powerful church. It’s possible to have the advantages of a large congregation and the warmth of a small group at the same time.
3. *The Jerusalem church realized all needed to work in the Kingdom.* Most common among criticisms of large churches is, “I don’t have anything to do.” What is meant is, “I can’t take a *public* part in ushering, teaching, presiding, etc.” Being seen of men or taking a public part at a church service is not the “work” of the church! Such may be a part of the worship but not a part of the work. Worship is not the “work” of the

Kingdom. Saving souls is the work of the church (Mark 16:15)! The first Christians “ceased not to teach in every house” (Acts 5:42). Realizing this, size has nothing to do with whether one works in the Kingdom or not! In fact, the larger the group the more contacts are available.

4. *Because they were large, the first church was able to carry the gospel everywhere.* More missionaries can be sent out by a larger congregation. By staying together, utility bills, building payments, and maintenance are not endlessly duplicated. More money is available for outreach. Hence by not dividing, Jerusalem was able to evangelize the world. Jerusalem sent out Philip (Acts 8:5); Peter and John (Acts 8:14); and Barnabas (Acts 11:22). These men did not go throughout the same town to create many churches. They went where churches were not located. Dividing up creates more local expenses. They reached the world because they avoided this. Jerusalem established other churches, but never in Jerusalem.

While there is no absolute virtue in size, modern life-styles and modern business techniques indicate a terrific advantage is found in a larger congregation. Like the neighborhood grocery, the neighborhood church seriously limits its potential for effectiveness. Sheereconomic reasons such as building costs, utilities, the shortage of preachers, and a higher education of the people in the pew, who expect quality in the pulpit and classroom, have greatly slowed down the “swarming” habits so prevalent among brethren in the forties and fifties.

*SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSMEN OF THE WORLD ARE ALSO WISE ENOUGH TO USE PROVEN RETAILING PRINCIPLES.* It is tragic that we have spread ourselves so thin in the twentieth century, due to our

obsession with establishing congregations instead of saving souls. Because of the past tendency to flee to the suburbs, we have lost strategic locations and power bases of influence for Jesus. In Dallas I preached for the Garland Road Church, the largest Church of Christ in that city. Garland Road was the original church of *any kind* in Dallas—established in the 1800's, fifteen years before the Baptists arrived! Over the years the congregation "spawned" other congregations and failed to make provisions for future parking. Thus, a few decades ago, the church was forced to flee to the suburbs on Garland Road to avoid disbanding entirely. At the Garland Road location, it successfully grew to twelve hundred members.

At the same time, the First Baptist Church stayed in downtown Dallas. It has subsequently become the largest Baptist Church in the world! (In January 1977, First Baptist of Dallas took up, on a Sunday, a two million dollar contribution!) Instead of leaving, they decided to stay in their strategic location and solve the problems of growth and parking. Now when their leaders speak, the city listens. The whole metroplex is considered by them to be their "diocese"! Parking and program, the twin keys to church growth today, were managed well by them.

While the Gospel of Christ offers greater rewards than any soap or Madison Avenue product, church leaders have ignored basic principles of retailing that are absolutes to any successful business venture. Some factors are so basic, a textbook on retailing would never ignore them. Each factor has an application that could be used in selling the gospel. Consider a few—

*Ease of accessibility is a must in marketing.* The first thing a businessman thinks of is accessibility! Without it he's dead! This is why large shopping centers are located on major thoroughfares or on main highways. A business may

have space, good prices, and ample parking, but if it isn't accessible it will have difficulty.

Directly across from the church building where I preached in Dallas was a large shopping center. It is boarded up. Motorists could see the shopping center, but they couldn't get to it. Although in full view of busy Garland Road, it was located on a side street. The entrance to the parking lot was difficult to negotiate. Stores in the shopping center died because of the puzzling turns necessary for cars to get to it. Surely church leaders can see the message! A church building, off the beaten path, in a neighborhood, will never grow far! It can never become a large, mighty force for good because the rule of accessibility has been violated. Such a church building is convenient only to a neighborhood it serves, thus limiting its drawing power!

*Successful retailers always provide a large variety of products.* Modern man is concerned with time. When shopping for clothes for the family, you don't want to go to a store that has only one color and one size. You want a selection, for you don't have time to go elsewhere. An inventory with a host of styles, sizes, and prices meeting the needs of all is essential.

This "lack of inventory" is the Achilles' heel of a small congregation. A new family in town looks for a church that can meet the needs of the entire family. Any audience has a variety of needs. On a given Sunday, visitors to services may be: a single adult; parents looking for a good youth program; an older couple seeking an attractive, working senior citizens' group; someone seeking quality in teaching, or parents with a deaf child. If a church cannot meet these different needs, she cannot hope to hold all the visitors. The greater "inventory" a congregation has, the greater its chances are for growth! Thus congregations who offer outreach in a variety of areas will have the brightest future. Many Christian businessmen have known this for years in

the commercial world. They often fail to apply it where it really counts the most—in the outreach for souls!

*Successful retailers provide plenty of parking.* Today's businessman knows his business is dead without parking. He is aware his customer—volume is in direct proportion to the amount of parking he can provide. (The parking problem has killed many downtown department stores in the past twenty years. It was easier to go to the shopping center where you could park your car easily.) All other things being equal, a store that provides parking for one hundred cars will have more customers than a similar store that provides parking spaces for ten cars.

Far too long, brethren have ignored the parking problem. "After all, we got along in the 1930's and the 1940's without parking!" But this was before America went to double garages! Of course, the faithful have a high tolerance level. They will come in spite of parking problems. If the gospel is to reach out, however, the non-Christian visitor must be considered! If a non-Christian faces a filled parking lot with cars on the curb in all directions, he will not likely return.

The non-Christian's body and mind, like ours, is conditioned by the life-style he lives all week. If we go to a restaurant to eat and find the parking lot full and curb spaces jammed, we'll go elsewhere so we can park our car and not have to wait! The church, like the business community, needs to discover that as parking space increases, attendance increases! Brethren need to see that while it is costly to buy houses, clear the lots, and hot-top the area for parking, the price for *not* doing so is even higher.

*Successful retailers all realize the value of service.* Some discount stores have good prices, ample parking and a wide selection, but many customers will not return because they can't get good service. (Who hasn't had the experience of trying to find a clerk who knew where something was in a discount store!)

Successful churches realize service makes the difference. Ushers are available to help visitors find the classes. Seating in the auditorium is convenient. Some provide help in parking cars. Members are kept informed through a good bulletin. Elders are in touch with members to help them with their problems. After all, Christianity is service!

*Successful businessmen see the value of advertising.* They realize people need to know they are in business and have a good product. Products with the largest sales volume generally have large advertising budgets. Advertising put "Coke" in the dictionary and made Dr. Pepper the "misunderstood" soft drink.

In contrast, few churches spend much on advertising! A congregation will allocate a few dollars for an ad in the paper for a gospel meeting—this comprises the total advertising budget for the entire year! Since God's people have the most important product in the world, it becomes an impossibility to over-advertise. Marquee signs, regular church ads, spot announcements on radio and TV, and door-to-door canvasses should be a part of any congregation's outreach. A non-Christian needs to know God's people are in town and they have something needed by all. A four or five figure advertising budget each year might do wonders over a period of time in opening doors that traditionally have been closed.

*Successful businesses stress the positive customer-profit-investment ratio, too.* Small companies become large ones when the leaders of the company regard additional facilities, additional parking, advertising, etc. as an *investment* which will reap customer *profits* instead of looking at such expenditures as liabilities. The first thought of a good business is "Will this help us grow? Will it increase revenues in the future, and will it work?" Even if the investment costs one million, it's a wise expenditure if there is a profit of a million and a half. The cost of the investment is always secondary.



Paradoxically, church leaders forget their positive, aggressive business judgment when making decisions concerning the growth of the Lord's Kingdom! Everything is reversed! Instead of asking, "Will it work?" or "Will this reach more people?"—usually the first question asked is "How much does it cost?" New buildings and additional parking space are often regarded as "additional debt" rather than "an investment that will bring in more souls, and hence, more income." Seldom do congregations hear their leaders explain the "profit" to be derived from an expansion investment. "Profits" from expansion will be realized in the number of souls converted and the number of new members. Each new family gives money the church would not have had otherwise. The new income often offsets investment costs in a short while.

Take as an example the purchase of an additional parking area for a congregation. A church has reached a point where she cannot grow because the present parking lot is full. Additional space is available and for sale next to the parking lot. The price is fifty thousand dollars. The property will park fifty cars. If the new lot can attract fifty new families who will use the parking spaces, and each of these families gives one thousand dollars per year to the church (about twenty dollars per family per week), the lot would be paid for in only one year! Moreover, if the same families continue to worship with the congregation for a period of twenty years, the additional "revenue" for the body of believers would be one million dollars! On that basis is the purchase of a parking lot an investment or a liability?! Brethren rarely look at expansion costs this way.

Fear of indebtedness and negative thinking have plagued the church for years. Many a congregation has turned down opportunities for expansion which would have given that church many additional years of active, fruitful life. Instead of walking through the door of opportunity, the leadership

failed to use the wisdom of the “sons of men in their generation.” The “children of light” slowly died numerically, until the property was sold and the remaining brethren merged with other churches. How tragic!

### Spiritual Men Also Think Positively

*IT IS ALSO AXIOMATIC THE SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSMAN THINKS POSITIVELY.* Businesses that succeed assume their plans can produce growth. They know growth seldom comes by accident. Consequently, they are willing to plan and sacrifice in order to succeed.

Similarly, churches need to think positively as problems arise. Growth means problems. Financial, emotional, and physical problems are always present with an expanding body of believers. (The only church in the Bible that didn't have any problems was the church at Laodicea (Revelation 3). A problem might be the old stained-glassed-windowed auditorium which must be abandoned for a larger one. (“Surely we won't replace the auditorium with a bigger one! I was married there, and grandma's funeral was held there!”) Financially, fear of increasing indebtedness and unwillingness to sacrifice holds some back. (“We'd better not build now. I remember how hard it was in the Depression.”) Often a simple need of additional parking cannot be seen because people regard purchase of new parking space as a liability rather than an investment. (“It costs too much to buy those houses, tear them down, and hot-top the area—just for more parking!”)

In the final analysis, there's no substitute for aggressive, positive, inspiring leadership! Many have suggested the key ingredient of leadership is “the ability to think ahead”—to project into the future where a group of God's people *ought to be* five years from now. Leadership draws its inspiration from what can be done tomorrow rather than from

accomplishments of yesterday. The leader literally thinks longer thoughts than anyone else.

Jesus' example of thinking big was summarized by his declaration that real faith will enable us to move mountains (Matthew 17:20). Unlike the ten spies in Joshua's day, the Lord's leader sees the power available with God at his side. With the Lord's help, he knows he is far from being "a grasshopper."

To illustrate this principle, Robert H. Schuller suggested criteria for determining a reasonable area that a congregation with vision, outreach, and good location can expect to reach.<sup>1</sup> The real question is, what percentage of the population would be reached if we had a tremendous staff, marvelous facilities, ample parking and a program that meets the needs of all ages and interest groups. The two factors in reasonably expecting to draw people would be "twenty miles on a freeway or ten stoplights driving through a neighborhood." These two considerations are regarded by business planners as the maximum distance a person would regularly travel to a shopping center or to a place of business.

Considering these factors, many churches apparently have severely limited themselves by building in a neighborhood some distance away from a major freeway. The radius from which they can reasonably expect to draw members is seriously curtailed. To become a large congregation in such instances, moving to a more desirable location or merging is a "must." Businesses have adjusted to these factors and have been willing to move to another location because they realize it's the only solution to achieve growth. Once again, the businessmen of the world have often proven themselves wiser than the "children of light"!

One of the most vivid examples of limiting potential was illustrated in the parking lot example mentioned earlier. When a local church is at the point where all parking spaces are taken every Sunday, additional growth is hampered.

Few new people will attend if they must park a considerable distance from the building. The adjacent land for sale at fifty thousand dollars that would accommodate fifty cars is turned down by brethren because "We can't go in debt for another fifty thousand dollars!" But is it a debt or is the purchase an investment? Any wise businessman in a similar situation would seldom regard such a venture as a "debt." Why? The potential *income* of the congregation is *increased* by fifty families—potential income that would not be available otherwise. And, potential income that might be available for many years!

Such reasoning is not only business-like, it is Biblical. "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches" (Philippians 4:19). After all, the supreme question is not to be "How much does it cost?" but "How much good will this do for the Lord and His cause?"

### **Never Feed the Bears!**

Spiritual leaders of God's people have to be men that know how to handle negative thinkers. Inevitably there will be people in the family of believers who, like the opposition to Peter in Acts 11, do not want to change their way of doing things so more growth can be achieved. Often sincere, their resistance to new ideas still hinders growth. Concerning this, Schuller offers excellent suggestions people usually overlook when it comes to handling negative thinkers.<sup>2</sup>

Wise leaders avoid attracting negative people by not "feeding them." Negative thinking attracts negative thinkers! Birds of a feather do flock together. Churches have distinctive personalities much like individuals. Their personalities are molded by the people which comprise the membership. (Anti-cooperation preachers and elders get together and attract people sympathetic to such a cause, for example.) Consequently, it would be a wise practice to occasionally announce publicly "We're looking for people to

be members of this church who want to work for the Lord. We do not want complainers! If you aren't sold in doing more for the Master, then go somewhere else!"

If a person is hungry for negativism and seldom hears it, he soon will go where he feels there are sympathetic ears for his fears and complaints.

*A wise leadership never provides a stage for the negative person.* In a business, it is foolish to appoint to the job of sales manager a worker who does not want the company to expand! No wise businessman would make this mistake. Amazingly, when it comes to church work, many an elder has suggested the appointment of a malcontent to a committee or to a leadership position saying, "If we put him in charge, perhaps he'll come around!" That's like putting a car thief in charge of a parking lot, hoping this will reform him! It will not work.

Leaders of business are always ready to answer objections before they occur. *Following this advice, church leaders are wise to make plans to confront negative people when they present their objections.* Confrontations will necessarily occur whenever proposals of progress are to be made to the group. Knowing a congregation, an eldership can talk to a few well-liked, strong, highly respected members in advance and urge these people to be prepared to stand up and speak out positively on behalf of a worthwhile, proposed course of action. Often in business meetings, the moment the negative thinker raises an objection, one positive reply made by a dynamic respected member in response to this negative comment can completely kill the negative movement! Oh, how often good ideas have been tabled because of silence following a negative comment. God's men need to speak up immediately! "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so!" (Psalms 107:2).

Positive ideas are always stronger than negative ones. They generate enthusiasm. Enthusiastic people have more

energy. They do more; they generate more force than negative people; and their ideas usually will prevail. Great positive thoughts never die, they are only abandoned by their champions.

*Of course, love should always be shown to negative people.* Jesus was never vindictive to opponents. Occasionally one of the greatest satisfactions in the Lord's work occurs when, through kindness and demonstrated success, a negative obstacle-thinker is won over and becomes an enthusiastic supporter of a project. When this happens it's a great satisfaction to a spiritual leader. A negative thinker may not ever be won over; but kindness, together with firmness, at least will avoid his gaining further support.

### **Tenure of Leaders and Spiritual Growth**

*BUSINESSMEN REALIZE A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TENURE AND GROWTH.* In the professions, tenure tends to increase effectiveness. Likewise, in management of businesses, effective leaders are encouraged to stay with the company. Provisions are made through regular increases in income and fringe benefits to encourage workers and to prevent other companies from hiring them away. Even the United States Army encourages tenure! They see the cost of training a new recruit and the cost of his learning a job as far more than the extra cost of additional benefits needed to retain the trained soldiers they already have.

Denominational groups have illustrated the success of long tenure. In many large denominational churches there are proven examples. One of the most significant facts about the ten largest Sunday Schools in the United States was the long tenure of the pulpit men in those churches. The average length of stay in these ten denominational congregations was well over twenty years!

Examples in our own brotherhood indicate the same relationships of tenure and growth exist. Whenever a congregation is named with a membership of eight hundred or more, usually somewhere in the history of that congregation there was a minister who gave at least ten years of his life to its growth—Central in Amarillo (Robert C. Jones); Broadway, Lubbock (M. Norvel Young); Skillman Avenue, Dallas (John Bannister); University Church, Abilene (George Bailey); Garland Road, Dallas (Adair Chapman); Montgomery Street, Albuquerque (Harvey Porter). It might be noted that most of these churches also enjoyed a long tenure of a great eldership during the same period of time!

Common sense illustrates why a minister, staying with a church for years, increases his effectiveness. Some things necessary for effective work can't happen without the passage of time. People often will not accept necessary changes for growth until they learn to trust the leader who suggested the changes.

Moreover, churches can't build close ties, which increase a preacher's influence, unless time passes. It's easy to "rejoice with those who rejoice" the first week a preacher arrives. Charles Hodge observed that "a preacher receives more compliments in the first six months of his stay than he will in the next six years!"<sup>3</sup>

The real cement holding brethren together, however, is "Weep with those that weep!" (Romans 12:15). Time has to pass. A preacher must live with brethren through hard times, problems, and infirmities. These experiences build closeness. The preacher's influence does not grow until he has "cried" with brethren through death, distress, and difficulty.

Unfortunately, as a brotherhood, we have not realized the tremendous impact of turnover. I began preaching in the Fort Worth area. After staying with one congregation for

nearly seven years, I had become the “dean of preachers” in Fort Worth—(except for Leroy Brownlow, who had been at the Poly church for twenty-five years), even though I was a kid fresh out of college! In six and one-half years in thirty-nine churches in Fort Worth: thirty-four had changed preachers at least once; sixteen had changed preachers twice; six had changed preachers three times; and one had experienced turnover four times! Sadly, turnover in the brotherhood is a way of life. Expenses involved in moving preachers runs hundreds of thousands of dollars annually. That’s scarcely good business management.

In surveys of hundreds of preachers and elders, five basic factors can be given for frequent preacher turnover. (It also appears the five reasons preachers move may also be the five reasons preachers leave full-time work!) Wise leaders will recognize these reasons. Steps should be taken to offset them. Since the length of “stay” of a preacher is related to church growth, a recognition of the “causes of turnover” might help toward solving the problem—

1. *One reason preachers move is the opportunity for personal development.* This is not necessarily a bad motive. In fact, it’s a Biblical one. Paul moved because “a great door of opportunity” was opened to him (I Corinthians 16:9). There are times when, because of backward non-spiritual leadership and a constant “sit-tight in the boat” attitude of brethren, a minister spiritually outgrows a congregation! Barnett observed that a preacher will quit or move under such circumstances. Sometimes, however, he will conform and adopt a “why fight it” attitude.<sup>4</sup> Dedicated, aggressive leaders tend to go where brethren sacrifice and work.

Most well-versed brethren who know a wide number of ministers, can name at least five preachers this year who left the ministry! These are not always



malcontents. Often they have great ability, and they prove it by their later success in some other profession. These men become discouraged by a lack of commitment and sacrifice by many in the church. They were not content "to keep house" or "pastor" the brethren who would not work for the Lord!

2. *Pressure of supply and demand is the most obvious factor for preacher turnover.* With an estimated eighteen thousand churches and less than five thousand preachers, the pressure to move is always great. Usually the longer a preacher stays with a church the more contacts he receives from other churches. The longer he stays, the more offers to move he receives. A mediocre preacher can usually move any year he wants to. (It appears preaching is like coaching football—it is becoming an occupation where the "new man" coming in with no experience with a group receives more benefits than the older, experienced man!) Many congregations lose their minister only to discover hiring another one of equal ability requires more support. They were not aware of what was happening in salary increases in other congregations during the preacher's successful ministry with them. Because they did not make businesslike adjustments in his support, they lost the effective worker they loved. Moreover, they had to hire a new man they didn't know for substantially more support. How tragic!
3. *Preachers also move because of laziness.* While it is sad to contemplate, this is sometimes true. It has been suggested, like the teaching profession, there are only two kinds of preachers—either the dedicated and hard-working or the lazy who can do little else. Some preachers, unfortunately, build up a two-year supply of sermons. They learn these can be "reused" every

two years at a new congregation without further preparation or study!

In all fairness, by moving every two years and using the same sermons, some preachers find they can do a more effective job of wearing the “many hats” expected of them! Since the stereotyped role of the modern ministry includes visiting hospitals, visiting members, being a community participant, office management, counsellor, etc., there may be some merit in a preacher’s moving frequently. Since he has little time left for study, moving on enables him to have the sermons ready and do all other things expected of him, too.

Few have considered how this discourages tenure. After a few years, in a sense, the preacher ends up competing with himself! Unthinking church members reason—if the church has a slump one year and doesn’t grow as it did the previous year, “perhaps we need a change!” (The thought never occurs to them that the same preacher was there last year when the records were set! It also never dawns on them church growth is the responsibility of all!)

Generally speaking, the longer a preacher stays, the more jobs he is saddled with. Usually, old responsibilities the preacher has are never reassigned by elders when new jobs are added to his work. The load builds up. A move becomes the only way he can alleviate the increasing burden.

4. *Economic factors have also caused ministers to move.* Inflationary pressures are present in today’s society. A minister has as much responsibility to provide for his family as a deacon does to provide for his (I Timothy 5:8). Preacher’s families have the same needs other families have. A preacher has to educate his children, feed his family, and provide for retirement like anyone

else does. *The idea that he should not consider finances, while every other member of the church considers their finances, is both unfair and false!* In spite of customs of brethren to the contrary, I Corinthians 9 suggests that a preacher should not be “muzzled” but should be supported adequately.

Many church leaders, who consider themselves “spiritual,” allow years to pass without making adjustments in the support of their minister. They are in violation of I Corinthians 9. In such a situation, it never occurs to them if the preacher decides to stay with them another year, he has, due to inflation, elected to “give” an extra five hundred to one thousand dollars in lost buying power for the “privilege” of staying! Sadly, many preachers have moved to keep up with inflation. A raise each year would have been far less expensive than moving costs of a new preacher. The “children of light” are not very wise compared to the “sons of men.”

Paradoxically, in an age when preachers are paid well (often far better than many brethren), dropout rates are higher than at any time in the history of the church. If “money” were the motive to preach, then there should be *more* entering the ministry! Instead, there are fewer who want to preach. The dropout rate increases every year. This problem goes deeper than the dollar.

Economically, perhaps the greatest single factor that encourages preachers to leave the ministry is the problem of retirement. At the Abilene Christian University Lectureship each year, the preacher-elder fellowship dinner recognizes elders and preachers who have served the longest period of time. First-time attenders are startled to discover less than a dozen preachers in attendance with forty years of preaching

experience! In the business community, someone with forty years of experience is usually at the peak of his profession, with several years of leadership remaining. In the church, many full-time preachers have disappeared by the time this milestone is reached. They haven't died. Instead, many entered some business. They often continue to preach part-time, but the specter of facing retirement years without a home or income has removed them from full-time service. Somehow, churches have narrowed I Corinthians 9 to a point where they see no responsibility to the ox who has "trodden the corn" for an entire lifetime. It ought not to be so.

More and more, wise elderships are including retirement programs for their ministers (much like any wise businessman does) to encourage tenure and to fulfill a responsibility which has been given them.

5. *The cause most often given by church leaders for a lack of tenure is "a lack of effort by all to develop a long term philosophy."* In light of the proven growth connected to the church-preacher-tenure relationship, it is past time these views are reassessed. Growth potential through long tenure is too great to lose.

It takes years to build up rapport and influence in the church and community. The impact of becoming involved in the lives of people only comes with time.

Further, sheer economy is an issue. Waste through moving costs, running annually in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, should demand a reappraisal of the policy of mobility. Like the husband and wife relationship, there must be give and take on the part of elders, preachers, and congregations. All must adopt the attitude of "we must work together longer because of all that is involved!"

*SPIRITUAL LEADERS WISELY USE SUCCESSFUL METHODS TO ENCOURAGE GIVING.* There are no magical shortcuts to effective fund-raising in the church other than "laying by in store on the first day of the week" (I Corinthians 16:1-2). Nonetheless, Bible writers spent a great deal of time using motivational methods to inspire people to greater sacrifice. Paul, in II Corinthians 8 and 9, devoted himself to motivational techniques of giving. It is not surprising his inspired suggestions are proven methods used by successful fund-raisers in the twentieth century.

Paul did not use scolding or heavy negative preaching to raise the contribution. He spoke of giving and told them plainly what was expected; but he did not depend on constant, negative browbeating. Continuously stressing a negative "give or you'll be lost" approach works for a while, but not forever.

To achieve maximum response, Paul stressed he was depending heavily upon the Corinthians (II Corinthians 8:7). Successful fund-raisers suggest the same thing. A maximum response is best obtained when people realize they are being counted on. Appeals in the church should say "we are counting on you and you alone!"

*Successful fund-raising also stresses inspiring, human-need filling, problem-solving projects.* Paul pointed to the needs of impoverished saints in Judea and how the Gentiles could show these Jewish Christians their gratitude for sending the gospel (II Corinthians 8:13-14). Wise elderships emphasize new benevolence, evangelism, and mission projects to "sell" a new budget. After all, few people are inspired to give by utility payments! New challenges each year not only inspire—they say indirectly "We are growing; We have new ideas; We want to do more for the Lord!"

*Motivational giving also results from informing people of*

*needs in a visual, people-related way.* Any fund-raiser in business knows this. Paul would never have received the response he did had he used a mimeograph sheet giving a cold budget of a "list of dollars and cents." Paul tried to show the money would do something for people. Likewise, budgets of the church in the twentieth century need to illustrate what money represents. Pictures connect money to the real "bones and flesh" of the Lord's work. A pictorial budget brochure, for example, is an effective way of reaching the people. Unlike a slide presentation (which is far better than a mimeograph sheet!), such a brochure can be examined by each family at their own leisure. It also can be given to new families during the year who were not present at budget time.

*SUCCESSFUL CONGREGATIONS, LIKE GROWING BUSINESSES, USUALLY HAVE AN ELEMENT OF CHARISMATIC LEADERSHIP.* Many writers have recognized some churches seem to grow because of leaders, usually ministers, who seem to possess "extra power" to move masses of people. Often, people will follow such a person with unquestionable obedience. The phenomena is observed in all the largest denominational churches. It has not escaped the brotherhood either. Christians with a wide knowledge of preachers can name a few gospel preachers who are followed, unquestionably, on almost any issue!

This phenomena has been called by some observers "charismatic leadership." Charismatic has nothing to do with the tongue-speaking movement. Instead, it refers to the "charisma," "magnetism," or "drawing power" of a leader's personality. It has nothing to do with Pentecostal-type churches of tongue-speaking individuals. Brethren, generally, are oblivious to this phenomena. Consequently, many blindly follow a leader, not realizing the process that

has drawn them to such a person. As long as gospel preachers preach and practice the truth, this type of leadership may be somewhat harmless; however, since all human beings have flaws (Romans 3:23), blind allegiance to a charismatic leader is, at best, questionable.

Elmer Towns observed some basic traits in charismatic leadership all brethren need to be aware of.<sup>5</sup> Using charisma to motivate men is good. Church leaders can use some of the techniques! There is a danger, however, of developing "followers of men" rather than followers of Christ. Consequently, traits of a charismatic leader are valuable to remember in any study of truly spiritual leadership.

1. *Charismatic leadership is neither good or bad per se.* In a political arena, both Hitler and Churchill were charismatic leaders. Both elicited devotion and allegiance from their followers—but for dramatically different purposes. Charismatic leadership may be good or bad. It all depends.
2. *The charismatic personality has several distinctive characteristics which set him apart from the ordinary leader.* He usually believes he will not or he cannot fail. Quite often, even apparent failures are explained away. One denominational preacher, cited by Towns, advertised a goal of twelve thousand in Bible School. The goal was not reached. Unperturbed, the preacher announced, "This is the first time I've apologized for having 9,172 in Sunday School!"<sup>6</sup> He had, by this approach, made success out of failure.

A charismatic personality is willing to risk himself many times. He seldom takes the cautious, safe route in any undertaking. Ordinary leaders will not take risks that could mean either brilliant success or dismal failures. They are satisfied with safer courses of action. A charismatic leader always will try for spectacular success.

Because of his strong ego, such a leader seldom feels threatened by criticism. This is true in the brotherhood as well. One leader, criticized for driving a luxury car, explained, "I need my rest when I'm doing the Lord's work. Driving between appointments would be tiring in a small car."

Moreover, such a leader also has a high energy level and extraordinary vitality. He gives long hours to the work and expects others to do likewise. He often exists on little sleep and keeps a heavy schedule. He belittles others who may not be motivated as highly as he is.

He is strong-willed and firm in the decision-making process. His stubbornness is often the greatest source of strength to his followers. They rally behind his determination. On his favorite projects or programs (whether buildings, benevolence, busses, or Bible-individualized-studies) he is unmoved, and once a decision is made, he will not change from his point of view.

On the surface, the charismatic leader seems to have a lack of understanding on economic or financial matters. Underneath, however, he may be a shrewd businessman. It is his faith in God which causes him to constantly launch out. Charismatic leaders will urge a church to overborrow because of his faith in the future of the work. (Deep down, he may be quite "practical"! He knows money invested in outreach will come back in income through additional contributors.)

Leaders with charisma identify with all levels of society. While he may be highly trained, the charismatic leader leaves the impression of "a country boy who has made good." The "folksy" approach is something everyone can identify with; consequently he attracts a large following from all strata of education and society.



Such leaders usually arise because a deep need exists and because they have solutions to meet these needs. Often, ritualism and traditionalism are heavily attacked by them. They have new methods and ideas. They constantly stress, "My way is better." Often, special formulas are advocated that "will always work" if they are tried.

Obviously, such leadership-types seldom provoke neutrality or indifference! Charismatic leaders are centers of controversy. They are either well-liked, or they are disliked. Few regard them with indifference!

While charismatic leaders are different in approaches, lifestyles, education, etc., they do emerge as the well-defined leadership group. A few such leaders in the Lord's Church have produced some phenomenal results numerically and financially. At first glance it might appear such a personality is "inherited" by birth. Towns, however, feels such leadership can be learned. Of the seventy-five largest denominational churches in the United States, one-third of the preachers who preach for them came from *one* small Baptist college in Springfield, Missouri! This college over the years has featured successful charismatic leaders in their program. Since good results can be produced, brethren would do well to learn successful charismatic techniques and use them for good.

*TO SUMMARIZE, SUCCESSFUL SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP OVERCOMES OBSTACLES TO GROWTH.* Over the years, businesses that succeed always do so because of planning. Few companies can exist operating on the idea growth "just happens." Few companies succeed who plan only one year at a time. In the church, it is no different. God warned, "Where there is no vision the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18). Only when brethren see the value in long-range planning will growth be assured.

For too long we have maintained a separateness from the world to a degree God never intended. Jesus said we were not to be *of* the world. He also pointed out we were, at the same time, to be *in* the world! We are in the world, but not of the world (John 17:15). Regrettably, our church buildings have been meetinghouses serving as "fortresses" to cloister us from the predicament of the human world we live in. Preachers stress activities that are, for the most part, *totally* building-centered. Our lack of involvement with others to influence them for Jesus Christ has obviously hindered growth.

Boredom restricts growth, too. The misuse of Habakkuk 2:20 (which has no application to New Testament worship whatsoever-John 4:24) has caused an undue emphasis on "quietness" in our assemblies to a point where smiling or speaking to visitors or to brothers and sisters in Christ has virtually ceased. Early Christians continued steadfastly in fellowship as well as in apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42). Preachers, failing to relate the Word to today's problems, send many away yawning. Nods of sleepy heads have been mistaken for nods of approval! There is no excuse for bearers of the Good News to be anything but enthusiastic, exciting, and dynamic!

The Lord was right to encourage us to be as wise as the "sons of men." He did not ask for compromise. He only called for common sense. Let us ask for such wisdom; then, let us use it.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Schuller, *Your Church Has Real Possibilities*, (Glendale, California: Regal Books, 1974), p. 78.

<sup>2</sup>Schuller, *op. cit.*, p. 107-111.

<sup>3</sup>Hodge, Charles, *Your Preacher*, (Fort Worth, Texas: Star Bible Publications, 1972), p. 37.

<sup>4</sup>Barnett, Joe, *Lubbock Christian College Lectures*, (Lubbock, Texas: Lubbock Christian College Printing House, 1973), p. 120.

<sup>5</sup>Towns, Elmer, *America's Fastest Growing Churches*, (Nashville, Tennessee, Impact Books, 1972), p. 205-208.

<sup>6</sup>Towns, *op. cit.*, p. 205.