

1984

1984: Abilene Christian University Lectures - Full Text

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**CALLED
TO BE
SERVANTS**

1984

**ABILENE CHRISTIAN
UNIVERSITY LECTURES**

ANNOUNCING . . .

The 67th Annual
Abilene Christian University
BIBLE
LECTURESHIP
February 17-20, 1985

Theme:

"What the Church Needs to Hear"

About:

- * The Gospel
- * Unity
- * Righteous Living
- * The Family
- * Priorities
- * Secularism
- * Church Growth

**CALLED
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being the

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1984

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PREFACE

When Jesus' disciples argued about which one of them was the greatest, the Lord settled the dispute by laying down a new standard of greatness — the greatness of being a servant (Matthew 23:11).

This is true for all those who would claim to be followers of the Master. He has called us to be **SERVANTS** — not **CELEBRITIES**. If we are to become like Him, we need to listen again and again to His words about Himself:

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

The theme speeches and other special lectures and classes presented in this volume challenge us to probe again the basic commitment of our discipleship — the commitment to become “like Him.” The Lectureship Committee chose this theme because of its conviction that this is one of the pressing needs of Christians in every generation.

This volume goes forth with the fervent prayer that the messages it contains may be helpful to everyone who reads, in his own determination to follow Him who came to serve and to call us to imitate Him in all of life.

CARL BRECHEEN
Lectureship Director

Main Speeches

Jerry Rushford

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Other fields of special interest: Editor of the *Pacific Church News*, and serves on editorial boards of the *Restoration Quarterly* and the *20th Century Christian*. Taught at Michigan Christian College (1969-72), and in Pepperdine's year-in-Europe program in Heidelberg, Germany (1981-82). Presently writing a history of the Churches of Christ in California.

THE SERVANT IN ADVERSITY

Jerry Rushford

There is nothing in the journey of life that so accurately reveals the character of a man or woman as the manner in which they stand up to adversity. Hardship is one experience which all of us have in common. It runs through the long centuries like a crimson cord, binding all mankind into one bundle. It respects neither race nor color nor social station. It treats the person of faith precisely as it treats the person of no faith.

Oftentimes the Christian is stronger in times of adversity than he is in times of peace. "When I am weak," writes Paul, "then I am strong." This is one of the things about the Christian message which people find very difficult to comprehend. To admit weakness, in the world's viewpoint, is the worst possible thing a person can do. But from the standpoint of the Christian faith it is the first necessary thing to do. It is as if God's strength cannot be ours so long as we lack a sense of our need for it.

Paul speaks out of his own experience. As long as he labored under the delusion that his own strength was sufficient, he went from failure to despair. The vision on the Damascus road dissolved his confidence in his own strength. That was the beginning of his salvation.

"Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God," Paul told the Corinthians. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our sufficiency is from God." The strength of the Christian servant is not to be found in his own

resources, but in his reliance on God's unchanging faithfulness.

There is faith in the goodness of God when we look at the blessings which have been showered upon us. There is the same faith in the goodness of God when the shadows fall and we see no blessings. There is faith when we look into the tiny face of a newborn child. There is the same faith when we look at the still form of someone we loved dearly. In the words of John Greenleaf Whittier:

Yet, in the maddening maze of things,
And tossed by storm and flood,
To one fixed stake my spirit clings,
I know that God is good!

To cover up our weakness is failure. To pretend to a power we do not have is tragedy. But to face our weakness and hand it over to God is to find a strength we did not know was there. How many great books, for example, have been written in prison! Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians in prison, Samuel Rutherford and Dietrich Bonhoeffer penned their famous letters in confinement, and John Bunyan wrote *Pilgrim's Progress* in Bedford Jail.

The truth of Paul's insight on strength and weakness is also evident in the history of our hymns. Many of the hymns that communicate great strength to worshippers were written in dark and difficult days when their authors were beset with hardship. This is true of the following lines composed by Charles Wesley in 1739:

Jesus, Lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly

While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high;
Hide me, O my Savior, hide,
Till the storm of life is past;
Safe into the haven guide,
O receive my soul at last.

Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee,
Leave, O leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me;
All my trust on Thee is stayed;
All my help from Thee I bring;
Cover my defenseless head
With the shadow of Thy wing.

There are many interesting accounts of the origin of this hymn, but unfortunately none of them can be proven. The most that we can say is that it was written shortly after the author underwent a great crisis in his life.

With Sorrows Surging Round

George and Elizabeth Prentiss were enjoying the sunshine of life in the autumn of 1851. Their children, Annie and Eddy, were healthy and happy, and a third child was on the way. But Eddy contracted a disease in November, and in January the little three-year-old boy died. Bessie was born three months later, but in the following month she died suddenly after an illness of a few hours.

One evening when they had returned from the cemetery, Elizabeth talked about her "unutterable long-

ings to flee from a world that has had for me so many sharp experiences." When she questioned the reality of the love of God, George replied softly: "But it is in times like these that God loves us all the more, just as we loved our own children more when they were sick or troubled or in distress." He encouraged his wife to return God's love.

That night, in the stillness of her living room, Elizabeth Prentiss gave expression to her faith by writing this prayer:

More love to Thee, O Christ,
More love to Thee!
Hear Thou the prayer I make on bended knee;
This is my earnest plea:
More love, O Christ, to Thee,
More love to Thee, more love to Thee!
Once earthly joy I craved,
Sought peace and rest;
Now Thee alone I seek: Give what is best;
This all my prayer shall be:
More love, O Christ, to Thee,
More love to Thee, more love to Thee!

Many years later, following the death of his wife, George Prentiss published a memoir of her life in which he commented on her response to the tragedies of 1852:

Although the death of these two children tore with anguish the mother's heart, she made no show of grief, and to the eye of the world her life soon appeared to move on as beforetime. Never again, however, was it exactly the same life. She

had entered into the fellowship of Christ's suffering, and the new experience wrought a great change in her whole being.

For years we maintain the even tenor of our way through life. Everything goes well with us, goes so well that we take it all for granted: health, happiness, work, the ability to do our work. And then, sometimes with appalling suddenness, we are in deep waters and sorrows like sea billows roll.

What we need in such an hour is an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, something we can hold on to, something that will keep a strong hold on us and not let us go or let us down, something stable, dependable, its foundations firm and immovable. The need can be supplied. We are not alone. We are never alone. We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

Long ago a wise and good man said, "This is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith." His belief in God, what he believed about God, enabled him to rise above every adverse circumstance and master it.

Another great soul, no stranger to trouble, plagued by a crippling, humiliating handicap which he called "a thorn in the flesh," "a messenger of Satan," volunteered this testimony: "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed . . ."

How courageous men and women are made by faith in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! How strong and calm and resolute! Doubt paralyzes. It drains the energies, depletes the resources, takes the

heart out of us. On the other hand, faith vitalizes. It supplies energy, increases resource, puts heart into us.

The servants of Christ give evidence of their faith in the stability with which they live through the alternating circumstances which confront them. Life moves through many changing situations. Some barely brush us, so that we are hardly aware of them. Some tear us up by our very roots and leave us stranded as though a tornado had ripped through our souls. Today it is joy. Tomorrow it is sorrow. The sky is gray; the world is dead; and the earth brings nothing but hurt. But even in the presence of such adversity, the servant of Christ continues to serve.

One Sunday afternoon in August, 1875, while vacationing in the city of Harrogate, England, Edward Bickersteth provided comfort for an aging relative who was frightened at the approach of death. Sensing how troubled the man was, Bickersteth looked for a way to help him. Taking a sheet of paper from a nearby desk, he quickly composed a poem which he read to the dying man. Included in the poem were these comforting lines:

Peace, perfect peace,
in this dark world of sin?
The blood of Jesus whispers peace within.

Peace, perfect peace,
with sorrow surging round?
On Jesus' bosom naught but calm is found.

Peace, perfect peace,
our future all unknown?
Jesus we know, and He is on the throne.

The unusual form of question and answer given to each stanza was striking. The questions formed a series of challenges to the dying man's faith, and in each case Jesus was the key that resolved the dilemma.

Ye Fearful Saints, Fresh Courage Take

The second epistle to Timothy is regarded by most as Paul's last letter. It was conceived in the midst of fierce persecution and written in the dark confines of a Roman dungeon. The letter is a touching document, written while the apostle was awaiting execution.

On what charges Paul had been arrested we do not know, but it is clear that he had no expectation of being released. He had been placed in confinement and "chained like a criminal." It was dangerous for fellow Christians to identify with him publicly, and many of them had turned away from him in terror.

At his first appearance before the imperial court, Paul had looked in vain for some Christian to testify on his behalf. "At my first defense," he confided to Timothy, "no one took my part; all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength to proclaim the word fully, that all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth."

But Paul was aware that this rescue was temporary. "I am already on the point of being sacrificed," he informed Timothy, "and the time of my departure has come."

As Paul neared the end of his remarkable career he was almost bereft of Christian fellowship. Only Luke

had remained with him. One of Paul's trusted fellow workers, Demas, had deserted him when he needed him most. And the apostle had been crushed to hear that "all who are in Asia turned away from me, and among them Phygelus and Hermogenes." He had counted on their loyal devotion continuing to the end.

In sharp contrast to these defectors was the courageous example of a visiting Christian from Ephesus. Paul was filled with gratitude and prayer as he told Timothy about the unwavering service and friendship of Onesiphorus. "May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus," he wrote, "for he often refreshed me; he was not ashamed of my chains, but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me eagerly and found me."

Onesiphorus had expended great energy in trying to locate Paul. It would have been easy to have made excuses for not seeing him. To openly seek Paul was to attract the attention of the very officials who were responsible for carrying out Nero's policy of persecuting Christians. Yet Onesiphorus had persisted in his search. It must have been a beautiful moment when the aged apostle looked up to see this brother approaching his cell.

The visitor might have limited himself to this one visit, comforted that he had fulfilled the obligations of friendship. But when he insisted on making repeated visits, it was clear proof to Paul that "he was not ashamed of my chains."

Paul deeply valued the visits of the courageous brother, and was "often refreshed" by them. This is the

only New Testament usage of the verb "refreshed." It conveyed the image of a cool, reviving breeze coming over one who was on the verge of fainting. Paul's trial and imprisonment had left him physically spent, and he was bent by loneliness and discouragement when Onesiphorus came to him with his ministry of refreshing.

Perhaps the visitor brought food, drink, and clothing — but the gift of Christian fellowship was valued most. Paul was refreshed by the invigorating presence of one who demonstrated the courage to care. In the course of these frequent visits, the weary apostle rallied. The oppressive surroundings of a lonely imprisonment gave way to the refreshing breeze of renewed fellowship. The visitor from Ephesus, at considerable personal cost, had faithfully exercised the ministry of refreshing.

Although our circumstances may be different, we can be assured that this kind of service in the presence of adversity is as essential today as it was in the first century. We are confronted daily by those who are in need of a friendly voice and a comforting hand. Into each of our lives come troubled persons who are about to faint from the burdens and afflictions of life. Are we ashamed to be associated with their suffering? Or do we diligently seek them out?

As servants of Christ let us be faithful to the ministry of refreshing. To "refresh" another in the darkest hours of life is one of the most crucial ministries to which we are called. We might discover, too, that we will come away from the experience equally refreshed.

William Cowper struggled with mental illness

throughout the year of 1773, but the awareness that God knew and understood the burden he was carrying prompted him to write these famous lines:

God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill,
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His gracious will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread,
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Courageous servants like Onesiphorous are confident that they are being led day by day into forever-enlarging tomorrows. When the city of Dothan was surrounded by the Syrian army to capture Elisha, the prophet's servant despaired, but Elisha prayed that his eyes might be opened. Then he saw on the mountains the horses and chariots of God. This is the hope which comes to the servants of Christ. They see the unseen allies of the human spirit, and the future shines with promise.

Our Helper He, Amid the Flood

But what do you do when your deepest faith is troubled and the face of God is clouded? Where do you turn when you know within yourself that you lack the courage to challenge the adverse conditions that sur-

round you on all sides? When the writer to the Hebrew Christians wanted to reassure and strengthen his listeners, he offered this counsel:

. . . let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

This practical advice is three-fold. When your faith is troubled, you should: (1) draw near to God; (2) hold fast to the faith you have previously confessed; and (3) consider how you might share your faith with others. In other words, when your faith is shaken, you should feed it, affirm it, and share it.

The first part of this counsel is critical. Faith can only be revived when it comes in contact with its Source. "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you" is the gracious exhortation from James to those whose faith is shrinking. The Hebrew writer gives us the reason for this advice: "for He who promised is faithful." When in doubt, draw near to God.

Such was the conviction of Martin Luther in the spring and summer of 1530 as he paced restlessly around the mighty fortress at Coburg. Opposition to his reform movement was increasing on all sides. Both the pope

and the emperor had intensified their antagonistic efforts against everyone who supported the principles of this movement. While awaiting word about the proceedings against him at Augsburg, Luther drew near to God and poured out all of his anxieties and fears. Out of this experience, Luther wrote this great hymn:

A mighty fortress is our God,
A bulwark never failing;
Our helper He amid the flood
Of mortal ills prevailing;
For still our ancient foe
Doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and pow'r are great,
And, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not His equal.

Did we in our own strength confide,
Our striving would be losing,
Were not the right man on our side,
The man of God's own choosing;
Dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is He!
Lord Sabaoth His name,
From age to age the same,
And He must win the battle.

A Scottish preacher named George Matheson understood keenly how sufficient the strength of God is in times of hardship. Handicapped from childhood by exceedingly poor vision (he was almost completely blind at 18), he nevertheless completed his training for the ministry at the University of Glasgow and was assigned

to the parish church at Inellan. In the seventeenth year of his ministry at Inellan, Matheson wrote the hymn for which he is best known:

O Love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in Thee;
I give Thee back the life I owe,
That in Thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.

O Light that followst all my way,
I yield my flick-'ing torch to Thee;
My heart restores its borrowed ray,
That in Thy sunshine's glow its day
May brighter, fairer be.

O Joy that seekest me thro' pain,
I cannot close my heart to Thee;
I trace the rainbow thro' the rain,
And feel the promise is not vain,
That morn shall tearless be.

Many conjectures have been made regarding the cause of the mental distress which prompted Matheson to write these words. Because so many people became interested in the hymn, the author finally gave an account of how the text was written:

My hymn was composed in the manse of Inellan on the evening of June 6, 1882. I was at that time alone. It was the day of my sister's marriage, and the rest of my family were staying overnight in Glasgow. Something had happened to me which was known only to myself, and which caused me the most severe mental suffering. It was the

quickest bit of work I ever did in my life. I had the impression rather of having it dictated to me by some inward voice than of working it out myself. I am quite sure that the whole work was completed in five minutes, and equally sure that it never received at my hands any retouching or correction.

This triumphant hymn, written out of “the most severe mental suffering,” has provided comfort and strength to Christians for more than a century. As surely as the world presses in upon us, as surely as the questions rise and trouble us, as surely as doubt assails — so surely must we draw nearer to God.

It Is Well, It Is Well With My Soul

Although he was reared in poverty and obscurity, Henry Francis Lyte always believed that one day he would write something immortal. At Trinity College, Dublin he completed his training for the ministry and honed his gift for writing poetry. For three years in succession he was awarded the chancellor’s prize for English verse.

Lyte moved to the fishing village of Brixham in 1823. This was the beginning of a productive 24-year ministry which was cut short by Lyte’s untimely death in 1847. Brixham was a picturesque town on the coast of England with a population of about 4,000 people. Henry Lyte was convinced that God had led him to this place, and he threw himself wholeheartedly into the challenging new ministry. He organized a Sunday school of 800 students and personally trained the 70

teachers who taught in the school. He soon became "a power for good and a person much-loved."

Lyte started a Bible school for fishermen, and he made sure every ship that put out to sea from Brixham had a Bible on board. He even compiled a special book of hymns and prayers for the sailors to use at sea.

In 1831 the Lyte family moved into Berry Head House. A former hospital, it was given to the family for use as a parsonage by King William IV when he visited Brixham. The new residence was dramatically situated on a cliff overlooking the sea, and the terrace gardens ran right down to the shore.

After 24 years of labor in Brixham, Henry Lyte became seriously ill with tuberculosis in the early summer of 1847. It was a sad day when he had to relinquish his pulpit; the townspeople feared they would never hear him preach again. But on the first weekend in September the 54-year-old minister rallied. He announced to his family that he felt well enough to preach a farewell sermon to his people the next Sunday.

Word spread quickly, and the church building was filled to overflowing. The historic date was Sunday, September 5, 1847. Several conflicting stories about what happened that afternoon and evening have circulated through the years, but the most probable account was published in *The British Weekly*:

Charles Potter, the gardener of the parsonage "Berry Head" from his youth to a ripe old age, asserts that after tea on that last Sunday, Lyte walked in the valley garden in front of the home, then down to the rocks, where he sat and com-

posed. It was a lovely, sunny day, and the sun was setting over distant Dartmoor in a blaze of glory. On the left lay Brixham harbor like a pool of molten gold, with its picturesque trawling vessels lying at anchor. After the sun had set, Lyte returned to his study. His family thought he was resting, but he was putting the finishing touches to his immortal hymn.

As the dying preacher walked by the sea for the last time, he was composing a prayer in his mind. While sitting on the rocks at eventide he put his prayer on paper. That evening in the parsonage, surrounded by his family, Henry Lyte read eight stanzas which began:

Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide!
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me!

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou who changest not, abide with me!

Henry Lyte never preached again; he died two months later while visiting in Nice, France. When the news of his death reached Brixham, the fishermen who loved him so much asked that "Abide With Me" be sung at his memorial service.

There have been many comforting hymns written through the centuries, but perhaps the lines that best describe the heart and soul of the Christian servant in adversity are the ones written by a Chicago businessman

named Horatio Gates Spafford.

Spafford planned a European vacation for his family in 1873, but at the last moment he had to remain behind to attend to some unexpected business developments. He sent his wife and four daughters on ahead as scheduled aboard the S.S. Ville du Havre. Early in the morning of November 22, the S.S. Ville du Havre was rammed by an English iron sailing vessel, the Lochearn.

Only 12 minutes after the luxurious French liner was struck, it sank with all on board. Maggie, Tanetta, Annie and Bessie — the four Spafford daughters — were among 226 who lost their lives that night. Nine days later when the survivors landed at Cardiff, Wales, Mrs. Spafford cabled her husband these two words, "Saved alone."

As soon as he could, Horatio Spafford booked passage on a ship to Europe to join his wife. On the way across the Atlantic the captain called Spafford into his private cabin and said, "A careful reckoning has been made, and I believe we are now passing the place where the Ville du Havre was wrecked."

The grieving father was passing through the "valley of the shadow of death," but his faith came through triumphant and strong. That night on the high seas, near the place where his children perished, he wrote the hymn that was to give comfort and strength to so many:

When peace like a river attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say,
"It is well, it is well with my soul."

So we come at last to these words of Paul: "We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope." In that knowledge we grow strong — stronger than the storms that beat about our heads.

Even though there be a pounding in our hearts we shall stand up to adversity, and use it as those who have a deep and abiding faith in God.

Joe Beam

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Family: Married, and has two children.

Education: Alabama Christian College (A.A.); Alabama Christian College School of Religion (B.A., Bible); University of Evansville (worked toward M.S. in Clinical Psychology).

Work and ministry: Formerly served as minister for: Highland Church of Christ at Carriage Hills, Montgomery, Alabama; Washington Ave. congregation, Evansville, Indiana; Childersburg congregation, Childersburg, Alabama; and Park Avenue congregation, LaGrange, Georgia. Has participated in numerous radio and television programs, while also conducting weekly religious question and answer newspaper columns. Speaks for numerous lectureships, youth conferences, schools, clubs, and for special groups each year. Has conducted seminars for the Illinois State Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, for personal growth of counselors and clients.

Other fields of special interest: Was invited by WGBF radio station in Evansville to represent the Christian community in debating Madelyn Murray O'Hair. Worked with Ron Willingham Courses in training men to teach *Adventures in Christian Living* and *Men's Leadership Training Class*. Taught *Adventures in Christian Living* classes. Served as chaplain for the Montgomery District of the Alabama State Troopers.



PERILS OF A SERVANT

Joe Beam

Isn't it sad? No sooner do we start convincing people that real Christianity is a life of serving than we have to point out that even this lifestyle has its perils. It would seem that a life dedicated to giving should bring only blessings. But no lifestyle is without peril. There appears to be no such thing as a blessing without its attendant curse.

Beautiful women have to deal with the jealousy of others as well as often being treated as an object rather than a person. The rich deal with envy and priority struggles. Whatever the blessing, it seems to bring its own set of perils.

The blessings of servanthood bring their own set of perils. What are they all? I'm ashamed to admit that I don't know. I suppose that one would have had to have been a servant for quite a long while to have faced all its perils. Since I am not qualified nor would I have space or time to present all the perils, allow me to address just three.

The Demands of Those Served

One of the most notable aspects of the life of Jesus is the demands made on Him by others. When He would flee the multitude for much needed rest, others would be waiting at His place of refuge. Only in the late night hours did He find time to be with Himself or with His Father in prayer. He was the ultimate servant. His meeting the needs of those around Him, both spiritual

and physical, made Him the quest of each hurting person who could find Him. Each time an individual was served, another filled his place. There were so many of them and only one of Him.

Today's servant doesn't find himself in too dissimilar a situation. Who among us who has attempted to serve has not found himself surrounded by those who seem so desperately in need of his service? Often as I travel I am asked by some brother or sister about how to disengage the clinging, suffocating attention of some other brother or sister.

Somewhere along the line a servant has to finally stop and wonder when his own needs will be met by some other servant. Several years ago a young minister allowed me to read a poem he had written about his ministry. One line has haunted me since, "Where are those who have taken me from me and gone away?" He had given until he felt he had given out. When he looked for some of those to notice his needs and return the favor, they had all gone their own ways, made happier by his service. Meeting their needs had depleted him.

That had to be similar to the emotions Jesus felt when He tried to tell the apostles of His impending death. Even after Peter, James, and John had witnessed the transfiguration where Jesus had met with those from paradise to discuss His death, they made their discussion the next day about their positions in the coming kingdom. They weren't really heartless men. We know that from later events. But it really seems little wonder that Moses and Elijah had to return from the dead to minister to Jesus. Those on earth around Him were still

too interested in what ministry He could do for them. Even in the garden His closest friends among the apostles failed Him and angels had to be dispatched from heaven to comfort Him as they could.

One of the most quickly realized perils of servanthood is the demands made by those served.

The Pride of Great Service

Even though the multitudes may not have the capability of serving, they do have the capability of praising the servant. Even though by the grace of God there are other servants within the multitudes who can fulfill our needs, there can be a great attraction in the applause of the masses.

Every great servant eventually attracts the attention of those around him. They may selfishly take what he has to offer but they will also reward him by telling him what a tremendous servant he is. The crowds who followed Jesus for His miracles were there when He entered Jerusalem with their "Hosannas." He knew not to trust the adoration of the masses. Within days the same masses would be shouting, "Crucify Him! May His blood be on us and our children." The same thing would later happen to Paul. The same city that wanted to sacrifice to him later stoned him and left him for dead.

There should be ample warning in such examples to forewarn every servant that fame, although somewhat fleeting, can come with servanthood. To some degree it is a blessing, to be sure. Its curse comes with the servant's liking it too well. It would probably be im-

possible for a human being not to enjoy popularity. But to come to need it for fulfillment or satisfaction is fatal, both spiritually and emotionally. As it has always been, "pride precedes the fall."

Criticism by Those Who Don't Understand

In his attempt to stop Jesus, Satan wanted Him killed. Again with Paul he tried the same. Today in our American society he seems to be content with death of relationships and the burial of abilities.

When those who make no secret about their service in Satan's army attack with their verbal barbs and vicious criticism, the servants of God stand firm. A few years ago I was invited by a local radio station to debate Madelyn Murray O'Hare. While listening to her poisonous tongue was difficult, even anger-provoking, little damage was done to me or my emotional or spiritual state. For years I have done a live call-in question and answer program on radio. When those in the world choose to attack, it is unpleasant but bearable.

When those who are supposed to be on the Lord's side attack, it is quite a different story. Have you ever noticed that when Satan couldn't lure Job into denying God by any other measure, including the death of his children and his own terrible disease, that the devil used his last and most powerful tool — critical brethren. If at any time in his life this great servant Job needed to be served by his brethren, it was now. But when the three arrived, their initial empathetic silence was finally broken by the affirmation that Job must be an awful sinner. The proof was too powerful to refute. God

would never let these evil happenings befall a righteous man. The evidence was visible to all and the verdict was in. Job was beseeched to repent. In his continuing debates with these brothers, Job almost fell prey to Satan by his questioning of God. If he had not been defending himself to his brethren, this would have been a much less likely event. If they had come to offer service, he would have been comforted. Instead, he fell victim of their misguided theology and resultant criticisms of him. How terribly sad!

Does not even the same happen today? Read Acts and notice that when Satan couldn't frighten the apostles into silence, he tried to raise dissension within the church. First it was lying brethren, Annanias and Sapphira, but the Spirit quickly handled that. Then it was those critical because of the neglect of the Grecian widows. The problem was real. They did need to be cared for along with the other widows. But then, as now, Satan tried to use a real problem to divide brethren rather than unite them. The apostles had been risking their very lives for these brethren. Now rather than simply handling the problem, the murmuring arose. How easy it would be for the apostles to simply throw up their hands in disgust. Instead they allowed the Spirit to lead them in wisdom. They patiently guided those complainers into the very action they should have taken in the first place.

It takes quite a bit of spirituality to handle criticism and murmuring in that manner. It is especially difficult when it comes continually. As one wag stated, "I'd rather be swallowed to death by a whale than nibbled to

death by minnows.”

How many good elders have simply given up because of the continual criticism and complaining that comes from those who simply don't understand the difficulty of servanthood? How many preachers have been accused of everything from impure motives to not meeting the demands of current orthodoxy until they cry in anguish, “No more!”? I dare say, even with my scant decade and a half in the ministry, that I have seen these things happen with some degree of regularity.

It's hard to give oneself in service to those who seem to take far more than they give, who sing your hosannas one day and scream for your blood within the week, who love you when things fit their scheme of understanding but have no doubt about your having left God as soon as something doesn't fit their set of beliefs. While we will never know the anguish Jesus felt in the garden, one who serves for a length of time will soon understand the hesitancy to hurt anymore for those who seem to not even appreciate what he does for them. They need what he has to give. They want what he has to give. They simply, at least not in the masses, do not understand the pain and ultimate selflessness of servitude. Their misunderstanding can actually cause them to attack those who are the greatest servants among them.

Conclusion

If the picture seems to be painted too dimly, remember that my task was to speak of the perils of the servant. Others will speak to the work of the servant, the blessings and joys of servanthood, and those other

topics that show it all to be worthwhile. But we would be remiss if we made it sound as if there were no peril in service. Without a doubt there is.

Perhaps being forewarned will prevent the perils from being so discouraging so as to cause us to quit. Perhaps if we talked more about these perils, some of those among us would begin to speak up on behalf of mistreated servants and help spare them some of these difficulties. Maybe even we would become less likely to be the cause of the pain of some of God's servants.

The pain is there. But as in the example Jesus left for us, "Not our will, but God's be done." Those we serve may not understand. Perhaps they will even ignorantly participate in our crucifixions, but they very desperately need what servants have to offer. For the glory of our God, for the needs of those we serve, may we always minister for our God.

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“NOT TO BE SERVED, BUT TO SERVE”

John D. Gipson

In the distance is a road. Everyone knows where it leads; it will take you up to Jerusalem. Of course, it is customary to speak of “going up” to Jerusalem, regardless of the direction you are coming from, because Jerusalem is the holy city set upon a hill.

At first glance we see a solitary figure walking along the way. His strides indicate purpose; His face is set. Boldly, without fear, He marches resolutely toward the city. It’s hard to take your eyes off Him. He knows where He is going and what He is going to do. He is a man with a mission. The one we have fixed our eyes on is Jesus of Nazareth. His “aloneness” is evident, and we begin to wonder where His disciples are. Have they forsaken Him? No, there they are. They are traveling at some distance behind the Master. What a contrast there is between Jesus and His followers. With just one glance we detect both amazement and fear etched upon their faces. Jesus must sense their bewilderment because suddenly He stops, and taking the twelve to Himself again, He begins to tell them what is getting ready to happen to Him.

Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they will mock Him, and spit upon Him, and scourge

him, and kill Him, and after three days He will rise (Mark 10:33,34).

This is not a new message. He has told them of His approaching death upon two other occasions, but never with such forthright speech.

At such a solemn moment you would think that everyone's attention would be focused upon the Lord, and the suffering which He was going to endure. But to reach such a conclusion would not take into account the tendency of men to think in a selfish manner. Instead of dwelling on the coming passion of the Lord, their thoughts turn to ambition, power, greatness and honor. They have been with Jesus for over three years, and have not yet learned some of the most basic principles of the kingdom of God.

With amazing abruptness Matthew recounts what happened after Jesus made the announcement of His coming death.

Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to Him, with her sons, and kneeling before Him she asked Him for something. And He said to her, "What do you want?" She said to Him, "Command that these two sons of mine may sit, one at Your right hand and one at Your left, in Your kingdom." But Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?" They said to Him, "We are able." He said to them, "You will drink My cup, but to sit at My right hand and at My left hand is not Mine to grant, but it is for

those for whom it has been prepared by My Father.” And when the ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers. But Jesus called them to Him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be first among you must be your slave; even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:20-28).

Before we condemn the mother of James and John, let's give her credit for a few things. It's obvious that she had confidence in Christ. She believed that He was a king and possessed a kingdom. Therefore, could not Jesus do as He pleased? He could appoint His favorites to positions of power and influence. As most good mothers, she was concerned about her children. She doesn't ask anything for herself, but she does desire eminence for her sons. To her, the request seemed perfectly natural.

Judging from the information we have, Salome (though her name is not given here by Matthew) seems to have been the sister of Christ's mother (Mark 15:40; Matthew 27:56; John 19:25). What could be more natural than keeping the positions of prominence in the family? If Jesus is going to appoint someone, why shouldn't He appoint His first cousins? Isn't blood thicker than water?

As understandable as her motherly instincts are, we

are a little surprised by her lack of courtesy in making this request in the presence of the other disciples. After all, James and John are not the only ones who have left all to follow after Jesus. Isn't she being more than a little selfish to make such a request?

Jesus does not deny that there will be positions of honor in the kingdom. But they are certainly not going to be obtained in the manner in which Salome thinks. She is overlooking the fact that Jesus has constantly taught that the least should be the greatest, and that service is the way to advancement. The last will be first, and the first will be last.

How will Jesus answer such a bold request? Rather than reply directly to this presumptuous mother, He turns to James and John. They are grown men. Perhaps they will be courteous enough to ask Jesus to forget the request which has been made. Moments pass . . . but no disclaimer is made. It's obvious that the brothers want positions of greatness. Therefore Jesus turns to them and says:

“You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?” They said to Him, “We are able.” He said to them, “You will drink My cup, but to sit at My right hand and at My left hand is not Mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father” (Matthew 20:22,23).

Greatness carries with it a price. These boys don't seem to understand. “Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?” The answer they give, “We are able,”

shows that they didn't know what they were talking about.

Greatness in any field extracts a price. One will not become a Mozart with little or no effort. Shakespeare did not rise to the top of the literary world by luck. Abraham Lincoln did not have greatness conferred upon him. Michelangelo did not become a sculptor, painter, architect, and poet of the High Renaissance by accident. One cannot have such honors placed upon him by even his dearest friends and relatives. Thus the Master in a very straightforward manner says, "To sit at My right hand and at My left is not Mine to grant."

Jesus does not rebuke the desire for greatness. He only points out that there is a price to be paid by the very searching question: "Are you able to drink the cup . . . ?" Can you make the sacrifice? Can you endure the hardships?

Many cry out for greatness . . . but precious few are aware of the cost involved. Many clamor for the prize, but few are willing to pay the price. The road to greatness is not traveled in an air-conditioned Cadillac driven upon a completely new interstate surrounded by snow-capped mountains, sparkling waterfalls, and singing birds adorning the way. It is more like a mountain climber clinging to the rocks, scraping his arms, banging his knees, holding on for dear life while gusts of wind slam him around against the unforgiving surface of the mountain. If at last one reaches the top it will be through pain, sacrifice, toil and exhaustion. The road *will* exact its price. And Jesus wants His followers to know it.

A False Standard of Greatness

We may not always like what Jesus says, but He doesn't try to deceive us. To these disciples who wanted position and greatness conferred upon them, Jesus says:

“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you” (Matthew 20:25,26).

What kind of kingdom is this going to be? Doesn't a kingdom always have a king and subordinates? And how can a king rule if he doesn't have princes and governors? Surely there are many levels of authority in any kingdom. Hasn't it always been this way? Who ever heard of politics without plots, intrigue, pushing and shoving, and sometimes even murder, so that one might become Top Dog? And if one cannot dominate and control others, what advantage is to be gained in reaching the top? It's the boss who calls the shots, and woe be to the man who hasn't learned where he is in the pecking order. Surely anyone knows that it's better to be at the right hand, or the left, than it is to be at the foot of the table. And if you happen to be at the head of the table there is no question about who is the greatest.

Jesus had a hard time getting through to His apostles in the first century. They couldn't think of His kingdom without thinking of an earthly kingdom with its hierarchy of power. They had observed the rulers of the Gentiles. There was no question about their position. Rank had its privileges. Great men exercised authority. Rulers of the Gentiles lorded it over their subjects, and

that's what these men were striving for.

Now before we come down too hard upon them, it might be well for us to take a look at ourselves. Are we free from such tendencies? Is there never any political maneuvering in the church? Remember Diotrephes, who liked to put himself first (3 John 9)! Is not Diotrephes legion? Sometimes he assumes the shape of a preacher. At other times he is clothed as an elder, and sometimes he may be wearing my clothes, using my name, and getting mistaken for me.

I am thankful that it doesn't take long for most of us to be brought back down to size. Many a time, with all of the authority of a preacher, I have walked up to a house to knock on the door only to discover a dog who had more authority in his office than I did in mine. I'm not complaining, I believe that kind of experience has helped me. And I think it would be good for at least 98% of the preachers I know.

Unfortunately, even missionaries are not exempt from this authority syndrome, and sometimes need to be whittled down. In fact, one brother suggested that every young missionary should be made to spend a couple of years in a local work under an eldership before he is permitted to go abroad. His comment was, "It just takes something out of them which needs to be taken out."

And as much as I would like to think otherwise, it is not an unheard-of thing for some sister to try to seize "the power" in the church. When that happens even the elders have to wait until their next meeting to really know what the decision is they have made.

It is unfortunate; but, "The thirst for prominence and power nullifies Christian usefulness and negates spiritual power." Political standards and materialistic measures have no place in spiritual endeavors. No wonder Jesus said, "It shall not be so among you."

The Nature of True Greatness

True greatness does not depend upon appointments, intellectual achievements, or the amount of money one is able to acquire. Christ doesn't ignore these things. Certainly they can become instruments of good. But regardless of your educational training, the financial strength you have, or don't have, whether you possess one or five talents, in the kingdom of God every man has an equal shot at greatness. The door is barred to no one.

Let Jesus tell you how it can be accomplished:

" . . . but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave . . . " (Matthew 20:26,27).

There you have it. Greatness in the kingdom can be achieved by anyone who is willing to serve. That means me, and that means you.

For example, I am persuaded that some of the greatest preachers of our day are those who are relatively unknown by the brotherhood. They do not appear on prestigious lectureships, have their names in print, or host television programs. They serve week in and week out in a quiet, effective way. They are unknown by the brotherhood, but known by the Lord.

And the same may be said of countless members of the body of Christ. They go about their tasks without fanfare of publicity, but *how* they serve! God alone knows their true worth, but I am persuaded that they are at the front of the line. Who can estimate the value of a godly woman who leads her household in the way of the Lord, and ministers to every need? Who can judge the worth of a loving father who provides for his family, meets the needs of the unfortunate, and sets a worthy example for his children? They may not be men and women of note, but they do great deeds, speak great words, and suffer noble sorrow. They are obscure heroes, philosophers, and martyrs. We may never know who they are until that hour when many that are great shall be small, and the small great.

How many of you know of C.W. Peacock? His name is not a household word. He died in April of 1975, at the age of 90 in Little Rock. For many years he had been a faithful member of the body of Christ at Sixth and Izard, but looked forward to the time when he could retire from the Missouri Pacific Railroad, and devote his full time to Christian works. He received no salary from the church, and didn't expect one, but from the day of his retirement until the day he died 25 years later he was the best hospital visitation program I have ever seen.

Each day Brother Peacock would get on the city bus and ride to the four major hospitals of Little Rock, averaging 100 visits per week. This 110-pound Christian became a familiar and welcome sight to hospital workers, as he diligently ministered to the patients'

spiritual needs.

At St. Vincent Hospital the records of patients and their room numbers are reserved exclusively for ministers. When someone once asked to see the record book, a hospital receptionist responded, "This book is reserved just for ministers and Brother Peacock."

After 25 years of faithful service, and approximately 130,000 visits, he passed on to his reward.

Remember the words of Jesus. "But whoever would be great among you must be your servant." God has "proposed" greatness for those who fit themselves for it. It is not a matter of just asking for an elevated position.

Unfortunately some people are finicky. They will not serve except in the highest of offices. If asked to take a lesser position, you can count on hearing a resounding, "No way!" They are so constituted that they will either rule or ruin.

You know the type. "If I can't be an elder, then count me out." "I'll start coming to Bible class when they give me a class to teach, but not until then." "Sure, I will work in the personal evangelism program, if you will let me head it up." And, some of us who preach would rather die than work with a church smaller than the last one we preached for. We often have not learned the first thing about service.

But let me tell you about another man. Two years after he completed his term of office as the sixth President of the United States, John Quincy Adams took his seat in the House of Representatives. He was the son of the distinguished second President of the United States.

Most people would have stepped into retirement, but not John Quincy. He left Quincy, Massachusetts, and went back to Congress in the District of Columbia as a working member of the House of Representatives from 1831 until he died in that building in 1848. People were amazed. They felt the same way people do today. "It's just not done. One does not become the President of the United States and then go back to the lower hall of Congress. What will people think?"

But John Quincy Adams was more concerned about service than he was position. He said, "I shall do patiently what I can for liberty and justice." Hooray for you, Mr. President. That's the spirit!

Service! That's the ticket to greatness.

One of these days all of us will be judged according to the deeds done in the body. Some have no fear of this day because they have been orthodox in all of their views. They pride themselves on their "soundness" in the faith. They have refused to compromise on the smallest point of doctrine. They have observed all religious ordinances with meticulous precision. They know exactly what they will say in the hour of judgment. Their defense will be based on such things as:

1. I was baptized (immersed) for the remission of my sins.

2. I observed the Lord's Supper every first day of the week.

3. I gave at least 10% of my income to the church.

4. I attended Bible class, Sunday morning worship, Sunday evening worship, and prayer meeting on Wednesday night.

5. I didn't smoke, chew, drink, dance, use drugs, or profanity.

6. I was involved in the work of the local church, and even taught a Bible class.

7. I always worshiped without the use of the instrument.

8. I was zealous in teaching my denominational friends the error of their ways.

9. I always said my prayers before each meal and again when I retired at night.

10. I always tried to be a good person.

Some of us are going to be surprised, however, when the Lord asks a set of questions we may not be prepared for:

1. Why didn't you feed me when I was hungry?

2. Why didn't you give me drink when I was thirsty?

3. Why didn't you take me in when you saw that I was a stranger?

4. Why didn't you clothe me when you saw that I was naked?

5. Why didn't you visit me when I was sick?

6. Why didn't you come to see me when I was in prison?

Are you prepared to answer this set of questions? We are all going to have this opportunity on the Day of Judgment (Matthew 25:31-46).

We shouldn't be proud of the fact that this has become the "me" generation. Countless books have been written telling us to look out for number one, and forget about others.

The trouble with this concept is that it is just exactly

the opposite of what Jesus did, and what He wants us to do. His entire life was given in service to others, and that is what He demands of us.

Paul and Timothy, disciples of Jesus, understood. In writing to the Corinthians they referred to themselves as "your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Corinthians 4:5). That phrase covered a wide stretch of territory. It was a genuine expression of the last full measure of devotion of life in self-giving to others, and the path that leads to greatness. Upon such things we are going to be judged.

The Model of True Greatness

"The Son of man came not to be served, but to serve." This example is of immense importance. He sets the pattern for us. Note the significance of the phrase, "The Son of man came." Here in capsule form we are reminded of the pre-existence of Christ and His willingness to take upon Himself the fleshly nature. What an act of condescending love and service it was to divest Himself of the glory which He had with the Father before the world was. How can we ever understand the Servant-Christ until we understand what He gave up in order to be of service to us? In some of the most august and moving words of the New Testament, the apostle Paul says:

Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form He

humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:5-11).

“The Son of man!” That’s what Jesus calls Himself. A man among men, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. He is co-equal with God, infinite and eternal, yet He condescends to our estate to serve us. He “came.” Leaving behind the highest throne of glory, He was born in a manger in Bethlehem. It was voluntary on His part; a mission of mercy to sinful men. Let it sink into your mind. He who was King of kings, Lord of lords, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, cheerfully came to dwell among us, share our sorrows, experience our temptations, undergo our hardships, bear our sins, and yield Himself up as a sacrifice on our behalf. The Infinite became an infant. The Eternal, who was life in Himself, and which no man had power to take away from Him, was willing to die! What a rebuke this is to those who view greatness in the context of power to be used in arrogance or insolence.

“The Son of man came not to be served, but to serve.” Can’t you see it? Jesus serving in the carpenter’s shop? Jesus touching the eyes of the blind? Jesus making the lame to walk? Jesus preaching good news to the poor? Jesus making the lepers clean? Jesus walking among the outcasts, the Samaritans, the publicans, the

sinner, and offering His friendship? Can't you see it? Jesus kneeling down and washing the dirty feet of His disciples? It's all becoming so clear: Jesus came to **SERVE!**

And now we come to the final act. Let all doubt be removed. Jesus was still thinking service. He would take the jeers, the taunts, the stripes, the crown of thorns, the spittle, the shame, the death by crucifixion, and "give His life as a ransom for many." He came to **SERVE!**

Even in glory He still thinks of us, and with an eye to service. He is our High Priest, living to make intercession for those who draw near to God through Him (Hebrews 7:25). He is the pattern for every Christian, and His life continues to shout the words: **SERVICE! SERVICE! SERVICE!**

Do we have ears to hear? Or is it possible that we react like one man who finally understood, and in anger hit the table with his fist and said, "I see what it is to be a Christian, and I don't really want *any* of it."

How about me? How about you? Do we really want any of it?

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He Who Would Be Greatest, Let Him Serve

Dick Marcear

In Gail Sheehy's popular book *Passages*, she outlines periods or times in the lives of people when they undergo crisis and changes. These include:

Teens to 18 — period when people are trying to establish identity and independence.

20's — period when people are doing what they should (i.e., education, marriage, etc.).

30's — period of crossroads crisis. Are you going to stick with your mate, job, etc. The reason is often that if you don't make a change now, after 35 you are stuck.

40's — in here you sometimes experience the "last chance crisis."

45 — balance often develops, feeling is "I'm O.K.," and am going to make it.

50 — fear often sets in that you have "lost it." So there is often a change in dress, often chasing after younger women, etc.

I liked the cartoon of the man who said, "As a boy of 5 they sent me off to school; at 10 they sent me to camp; they drafted me when I was 19; got married when I was 23; was a father at 24, 25, 26, and 27; now I'm 50 and running away to do what I want to do."

Life's greatest questions have always been: Who am I? Where am I going? and Why am I here?

In John 3:23-26 we find that John the Baptist is confronted with that same series of questions. The way he

handled the situation convinces me that he understood what life was all about and can provide some direction for us. The story is as follows:

A. "After this . . ." (3:22)

1. Jesus had cleared the temple
2. Talked with Nicodemus
3. He is now baptizing (4:2)

B. A reporter comes to John. He asks, "Do you know what the competition is doing? He is baptizing more than you. What do you have to say about that?"

1. Wanted to create a feeling of jealousy. Wanted him to feel that he was being left out, passed up.
2. Gail Sheehy would definitely say this was a "passage" in his life.
3. John's reply was, "A man can receive only what is given him from heaven" (v. 27). In other words, "Why are you so shook up about this, I'm not. I'm just trying to live my life for God's glory as He planned."

C. John further explains himself with the illustration of the bridegroom and the friend of the bridegroom.

1. He was much more than the best man in a wedding today.
2. He was in charge of planning the wedding, keeping the bride safe during the engagement, and then he'd bring the bride to the groom at the wedding, then fade from the center of attention.
3. John knew his life was one of a servant, not the star.

D. We hear a lot today of the "Mid-Life Crisis." It arises because many have not found the answer John

had. Our purpose on this earth is to be servants of the Lord.

1. William Carey, Englishman known as the "Father of Modern Missions," went to India and served for 41 years. Though he was never a well man he translated the Bible into 40 languages. Before his death he called together his friends and said, "When I'm gone, don't talk about William Carey, talk about Jesus Christ, his Lord and Savior, for it is for Christ that William Carey lived and died."
 2. Of Jesus John said, "He must increase . . ." As long as one is defending his own ego, seeking to have his name honored, and looking for the praise of others he'll never know who he really is. But when you truly make Jesus the Lord, honor and serve Him, then you'll find peace, joy and true happiness.
 3. Paul wrote, "For we preach not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Corinthians 4:5).
- E. Our true state is described in Revelation 5. We are to take off our crowns and lay them at His feet. Thank you Lord for the privilege of serving you. You are Lord, we are happy to have the opportunity to serve You. Our greatest joy is to serve you.

Jesus Was a Servant

To help us understand what we should be, Jesus was Himself a servant. He said, "For the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve . . ." (Matthew

run everywhere in between . . . We must clearly understand the radical nature of what Jesus taught on this matter. He was not just reversing the “pecking order” as many suppose. He was abolishing it.¹

Greatness will come only when we recognize what we are — servants, and start doing what servants do — serving.

Dr. Chic Coop is an internationally known surgeon. Recently he achieved notoriety for separating siamese twins. The publishers of a national magazine that were trying to do a special feature on him were disgusted because he would not let them center in on him. He kept bringing others into the pictures. He said, “This is a team effort.” Then he was flown to the little country from which the twins had come and received every honor they could bestow on a hero. But at the end as he rises to speak, he says, “I am very, very grateful to you, but I want you to know that the real credit, and the real honor goes to Jesus Christ and I am merely His servant.”

A Time for Us to Get Busy

There is a lot of talk about being servants. Some of the best selling religious books of recent vintage have dealt with the subject of service (e.g. Charles Swindoll, *Improving Your Serve*). But when the air has cleared, all the talk produces nothing. Christ is not glorified, men are not helped and the kingdom has not grown. Brethren, it’s time we stop talking and start serving.

A. The Church That Serves Grows.

1. God's plan was for men to ever glorify Him in the church. Paul said, ". . . to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever" (Ephesians 3:20).

2. But the Lord's church is not growing, in fact it may be dying. The most accurate study that has ever been done is the one by Dr. Mac Lynn at Harding. He did a county by county survey of Churches of Christ. He found that we now number just less than 1,000,000 to 1,250,000. And that's it. Why?

Some had rather fight than serve. Ever lift up the lid of a garbage can? Every fly in the neighborhood flocks to it. They know the sound and the smell. Some people are just like that. They want to be where there is fighting, criticism, and judging. And yet I read, "And the Lord's servant must not quarrel . . ." (2 Timothy 2:24).

Those who have set themselves up as judges can often strike fear into the hearts of those really serving. One man who was an education minister said, "The only thing that scares me is that people will begin to think we are unscriptural because we are growing."

You show me a church that's growing and I'll show you a church that's serving. When one is aware of people's needs is seeking to serve them by taking the Gospel's solution to them, they'll grow. The church in the New Testament was a serving church. From the first I read:

" . . . Praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people" (Acts 2:47).

“Then Peter said, ‘I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give to you . . . ’” (Acts 3:6).

“No one claimed that any of his possessions were his own, but they shared everything they had” (Acts 4:32).

Cornelius was a good prospect because he was a servant. “He and all his family were devout and God-fearing: he gave generously to those in need . . . ” (Acts 10:2).

Some of the greatest preachers in our brotherhood are men whose names no one here would recognize. They may not be great orators, have advanced degrees from a university, or have invented some ingenious way of doing personal evangelism. Yet year after year they win people and the church grows because they are servants. Many of them are supported by wives who’ve sacrificed and done without many of the luxuries that others in the congregation have had — and they’ve done it gladly and without complaining because they were servants.

My father-in-law is a faithful gospel preacher. Yet he is now approaching retirement age and has no home of his own, has saved only a small amount because he’s never been in a church that has paid him a large salary. Yet everywhere he’s been the church has grown. And I know they have never regretted their decision to enter the ministry. Their home is open, they visit, teach, baptize and disciple people and the kingdom grows because they are servants.

In Luke 18 Jesus told a parable about two men who went to the temple to pray. One stood up and confessed other men’s sins. But the second would not even lift his head, simply saying, “God be merciful to me a sinner.”

And the Lord said, "Now that's My man. I can do business with a fellow like that." The Lord's servant is not a quarrelsome man, but "instead . . . is kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct . . ." (2 Timothy 2:24,25).

Brethren, let's get out of the judging, criticizing, witch-hunting business and start serving so we can really be the New Testament church.

B. The Family That Serves Each Other Stays Together.

1. Did you realize that "nearly half of all children born today will spend some time in single parent families," this according to an item in the "Tomorrow" section of a recent issue of *U.S. News and World Report*. "Since 1972," the item continues, "the number of families headed by one parent has doubled. And the number of families headed by women increased over 300%." The reason for all this is "the U.S. divorce rate, which is now hovering at the 50% rate."

When courting, the boy thought of how he could best serve his girlfriend. He'd not let her handle a big old heavy chair by herself. No sir! And it would not be the servant thing to do to let her tackle a big 25-lb. car door by herself either. He was prompt to see that she was served. And the girl, seeing herself as his servant would never wear any perfume but his favorite. And when she invites him over for a meal she would never serve what all women love but all men hate — casseroles. She'd serve something he liked because that's the way servants act.

But somewhere along the line they quit serving each

other and expect to be served. But Paul tried to make it clear that we are servants of each other:

But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourself to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control (1 Corinthians 7:2-5).

In the marriages that have lasted for 50 or 60 years this spirit is still alive. Last year an uncle of mine died. He was about 80 and passed away during the night. I was gone and did not get to visit my aunt at the time of death or attend the funeral. But several weeks later I got to see her. She told me that they had played dominos for about an hour the evening before. She awoke about 6 a.m. the next morning and he was still asleep. Usually he would bring her a cup of coffee each morning to awaken her. She had asked him when they went to bed, "Lloyd, do you want biscuits or waffles in the morning for breakfast?" He had said, "Biscuits." Seeing him still asleep she thought he was tired and had slept in. She got up, made the biscuits and when the coffee was made took him a cup to bed. It was then she discovered that

he was not going to wake up because he had slipped away during the night. But the thing that struck me was that here were two people, after nearly 60 years of marriage, still having fun because they were both trying to serve one another.

Selfishness rules supreme in most marriages where there is trouble. Either one or both parties has forgotten what it means to be a servant. If we are going to save our families we have got to start serving one another again.

C. Real Service Is Often Only Small Things.

Self-righteous service is concerned with the "big deals." But true service does not measure the size, only the need. Dorcas made "coats and garments for the widows" (Acts 9:39). To some that would be a small thing. But to those ladies in need it was very big. Probably no one was aware of what she had done until after her death the widows showed Peter the fruits of her service. But what a blessing she had been to their lives. And I'm sure she was blessed too. Sister Phoebe was called "a servant of the church" (Romans 16:1) and I'm sure the same could have been said of Dorcas.

I'm thankful that many understand this principle:

1. I received a letter from a lady in Shamrock praising our ladies for serving such a delicious meal when they came to a funeral in Amarillo. Those ladies had cooked, served, and cleaned without those who ate even being aware of who they were. So why did they do it? I'll tell you why, because they are servants.

2. I attended a gospel music program on Saturday night and several rows in front of me was one of our

ladies interpreting the music for a deaf girl. I thought, "Why is she spending her Saturday night here doing this instead of something for herself?" Then I realized, she was there because she was a servant.

3. People who are unhappy with the church are almost always people who are not involved in serving. A servant does not have to be told what to do — they'll find ways to serve. An 82-year-old lady came to me and said, "Dick, I cannot get out and visit like I once did, but I've found something I can do. I call each new member and welcome them to Central." Why does she do that? Because she's a servant.

Conclusion

When Col. James B. Irvin was returning from his successful moon walk he started thinking that some would think of him as a "superstar." So when he got up to address the National Convention of Broadcasters he said: "As I was returning to earth, I realized that I was a servant not a celebrity. So I am here as God's servant on planet Earth to share what I have experienced that others might know the glory of God."

The truly great people, the ones who are genuinely happy are those who have learned the truth of Jesus' words, "He who would be greatest, let him serve."

¹See Foster, Richard J., *The Celebration of Discipline* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), p. 110.

²See *Family Helps*, Vol. 4, No. 8, published by Pulpit Helps, 6815 Shallowford Rd., Chattanooga, Tn.

³Ibid.

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PORTRAIT OF A SERVANT

Lynn Anderson

George Washington often signed his letters, "Your most humble and obedient *servant*." No offense, Mr. President, but do you really expect us to believe that?

We are skeptical about such claims.

We have lost hope of seeing many real servants.

Politicians often only sloganeer as "public servants." Money-grabbing corporations frequently only claim to "provide service." Religionists hock all sorts of dubious "ministry" (service), till the word "servant" is losing its content. It often seems little more than a bland public relations buffer to soften the hard facts of money and ego.

We pay little attention to most words these days. We have so many of them. Thirty thousand book titles per year are published in America. The average reader, reading 24 hours a day, would take 17½ years just to read one year's output, not to mention newspapers and magazines.

Compound this with *electronic* information technology. Satellite telecasting soon will make 50 channels available — anywhere. Texas Instruments has a "magnetic bubble" that will store up to 92,000 bits of information on a single microchip — six times that of any semi-conductor memory device previously marketed.¹

Add radio AM/FM, sign boards, digital printouts, Xerox, intercom, printed T-shirts, and a thousand other

ways we are drowning in data. However, rather than being better informed, we are closing our intake valves in self-defense. Result: We are increasingly difficult to reach.

Beyond this, *religion* has lost credibility. Religious commercialism has sapped us. Sectarianism has sidelined us. Institutionalism has positioned us as self-protective, insensitive bureaucracies. Professionalism distances the pulpit from the street. Add hypocrisy, over-familiarity, and in-house religious jargon. What real chance *does* a quiet, homely word like "servant" stand in such a cynical and over-communicated scenario?

Could this be why God gave us more than a word? Instead, He paints a *portrait of a servant*.

Portrait in the Past

Long before calendars and far beyond space — God was dreaming. Can you envision Him staring with "God-eyes" into cosmic midnight — conceiving His dream?

It began from His own heart — a servant God, envisioning line, form and color for His portrait of a servant. Then, the darkness and silence are shattered by the blinding light of His glory. The voice of God says, "Let Us make man in Our own image . . ."

Immediately, upon our creation, He began serving us. While from His fingertips had tumbled worlds, planets, stars and constellations, the couple in His garden were the focus of His servant dream. He was continually filling the garden with good things, and flooding it with the

presence of His glory. His longing was that we should reflect that glory.

“He gives to all men life and breath and all things . . . so that men might seek Him, and perhaps reach for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us, for in Him we live and move and have our being.” (Acts 17:25-28 NIV)

His glory filled our world. “Shekinah,” the Rabbis would call it later, the pure light of His holiness and love, His *undiluted servanthood*. It is at once unapproachable and yet irresistible.

But the creatures He served did not respond with love and gratitude. Their focus was on themselves, and they were driven from the presence of God. Yet, the “heavens kept on declaring His glory.” His dream did not diminish.

When His *law* was delivered, it also pointed toward His dream. It was concerned with our treatment of others. It contained ingredients for the portrait of a servant. His glory was *there* too.

Moses was drawn to His glory.

“Then Moses said, ‘Now show me Your glory.’ And the Lord said . . . ‘You cannot see My face, for no one may see Me and live.’ Then the Lord said, ‘There is a place near Me where you may stand on a rock. When My glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove My hand and you will see My back; but

My face must not be seen' ” (Exodus 33:18-23 NIV)

Moses couldn't handle the full force of God's attributes distilled in blazing glorious light. He wasn't wired for that. He was only exposed to the “after-glow.”

Even that put such a “God-mark” on him that, “when Moses came down from Mount Sinai . . . he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with God . . . All the people were afraid to come near him” (Exodus 34:29,30 NIV). So he put a sack over his head.

“But whenever he entered the Lord's presence to speak with Him, he removed the veil until he came out. And when he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, they saw that his face was radiant. Then Moses would put the veil back over his face until he went in to speak with the Lord” (Exodus 34:34,35 NIV).

It seems that as the Glory dissipated, he would return to the presence of the Lord to get his face “all gloried up again.”

God needs servants today with faces “gloried up” from being in His presence.

The Glory of God was in the pillars of fire and cloud too. “While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the Lord appearing in the cloud” (Exodus 16:10 NIV).

Finally, His Glory filled the temple.

“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the

Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above Him were seraphs, each with six wings: with two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory.' At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke" (Isaiah 6:2-4 NIV).

But, even the temple was dishonored by His ungrateful and self-consumed people.

"The Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and in visions of God . . . and He said to me, 'Son of man, do you see what they are doing — the utterly detestable things the house of Israel is doing here, things that will drive Me far from My sanctuary?" (Ezekiel 8:3b-6 NIV).

The glory of God cannot long stay side by side with idolatry and corruption. So, a sad note was struck: Ichabod. God's Glory departed.²

"Then the glory of the Lord rose from above the cherubim and moved to the threshold of the temple. The cloud filled the temple, and the court was full of the radiance of the glory of the Lord . . . Then the glory of the Lord departed from over the threshold of the temple . . ." (Ezekiel 10:4,18 NIV).

We spurned His glory, but He kept sharing its picture: a portrait of real servanthood. To the prophets He

gave a rough sketch. It was the silhouette of His suffering servant:

“Here is My servant, whom I uphold, My chosen one in whom I delight; I will put My Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out” (Isaiah 42:1-3 NIV).

But who was His servant? Was this a way of describing Himself? Is it the people of Israel?

“He said to me, ‘You are My servant, Israel, in who I will display My splendor. . . . I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring My salvation to the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 49:3,6 NIV).

What does the prophet mean when he says:

“I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting” (Isaiah 50:6 NIV).

The portrait becomes clearer, the colors more vivid:

“He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him” (Isaiah 53:2b NIV)

Is this His portrait of glory?

“He was despised and rejected . . . like one from whom men hid their faces —.”

Is there Glory in rejection?

“A man of sorrows and acquainted with suffering . . . ”

Where is there glory in tears and hurt?

“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5 NIV).

This is beautiful classic literature. Its lines sing through our veins. But, while the elements of God’s portrait dream are here, they seem as remote to us as heaven. Who is the suffering servant? Could it have been the Messiah? Messiah! “On all hands it is agreed that whatever was the original of the servant, none except Christ was its fulfillment.”³

The servant-God of glory is drawing closer. He is preparing the canvas of human history for His self-portrait.

Portrait in a Pattern

We are ready now. We are at the fullness of time. “The *Word*,” the glory that was there beyond time and space when He first was dreaming His dream, would “become flesh and dwell among us.” We would see “His *glory*, glory as of the only Son from the Father” (John 1:14,15 NIV).

No longer is the glory of God in unapproachable light. No longer is the portrait of a servant in sketchy, abstract language. The Word and the glory are both present in the flesh of One who chose to walk with us.

In John's gospel, we are kept in touch with Jesus' agenda, "My will is to do the will of Him who sent Me." God's Glory no longer is theoretical and abstract. He is a servant. His number one agenda item is *people*. He is available to people. He is sensitive to people. He is helpful to people. He sees each person as unique, different from the last one. He does not force His way into our hearts. He does not blitz us with words.

He serves. And in His service, He "reveals His glory" (John 2:11 NIV). While "many other signs are not written in this book," one event gathers all of Jesus' ministry together in a graphic picture. It is a vignette where "*the Word*," the glory and the dream of God can be *seen* and *attained* by anyone here.

In John 13, Jesus gathers His loved ones, "whom He loved to the limit of His love," intimately around Him. He wants them to see the portrait of a servant in high drama.

He is on His way to the cross. "He knew the time had come for Him to leave this world" (v. 1).

He is conscious of His glory: "He had come from God and was going to God" (v. 3).

The portrait of a servant becomes larger, clearer than one person at one place in one time. We, too, are included in the picture. The portrait shows: the purpose of His coming, and the point of His call.

The Purpose of His Coming

Our brother, Joseph Shulam from Jerusalem, who is a Jew come to Christ, tells this bizarre story. The son of a Rabbi had severe emotional problems. One day he

went into the back yard and carefully took off all of his clothes, assumed a crouched position and began to gobble like a turkey. This behavior persisted, not just for hours, but days, even weeks. No pleading would dissuade him. No psychotherapist could help him.

A friend of the Rabbi, having watched the boy and shared the father's grief said, "I think I can help."

He, too, went into the back yard, and took off all of his clothes. He crouched beside the boy, and he, too, began to gobble like a turkey. For days nothing changed. Finally, the friend spoke to the son, "Do you think it would be all right for turkeys to wear shirts?" After a time, and many gobbles, the son agreed that it might be all right. So they both put on shirts.

Days later, the friend asked the boy if it would be all right for a turkey to wear trousers. The boy agreed. And as time passed — the friend gradually got the boy in clothes again. At the same time, the boy was rediscovering his sanity. As the story goes, finally the boy became healthy and normal once more.

This is what God has done: coming into our back yards, stripping Himself of His "Robes of Heaven," and hunching down and making noises like us, so that somehow He could lead this bunch of turkeys to discover our Glory again.

"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human

likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross!” (Philippians 2:5-8 NIV).

John depicts it very clearly:

“He got up from the meal” — as He had left His throne in heaven’s glory (v. 4).

“He took off His outer clothing” — as He had divested Himself of God-likeness.

“He wrapped a towel around His waist” — as He had wrapped Himself in our humanity.

“He poured water in a basin and began to wash His disciples’ feet” — as He had died to bring us cleansing, forgiveness.

“Drying them with a towel” — even His humanity was put at our disposal.

“He put on His clothes and resumed His seat” — as He has taken His place again in glory at the right hand of God.

As the Hebrew writer says,

“The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word. After He had provided purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven” (Hebrews 1:3 NIV).

This divinely provided visual aid contemplates the majestic sweep of this perspective, and should leave us filled with wonder and with praise. His lofty claims and

lowly conduct are compelling evidence for His unique deity.

The Point of His Call

The scene also depicts the point of His call. His disciples had lost the point. They were pushing for places of prominence. Consumed with self, we, too, can behave as if the whole scheme of redemption was for us alone: to make us feel important and to get things going our way.

He reminded them again that He was not only Savior, but "Teacher and Lord" (v. 13). In other words, "I am God. I live in glory unapproachable. I spoke the universe into existence. My footprints are in the Milky Way. But I am a servant. Now, if you are to be gilded with My glory — you will serve like Me."

The Rabbis could expect their student/disciples to carry their belongings, maybe even pay some of their bills, but wash their feet? Never! Footwashing is the work of a slave. All of history stoops to ponder the picture of God Almighty, whose Glory no man can look upon and live, on His knees, with a towel in His hands, doing slave labor.

God's glory is here. His "servant" is here. His law is here. His prophets, His word. All focus in on this scene. God *is* a servant, not in abstract remoteness, but in our world.

Jesus said, "Such is the glory of God."

"Jesus called them together and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over

them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave —” (Matthew 20:25-27 NIV).

This is the *portrait* of a servant.

In this, no Christian today is at liberty to disagree or to disobey the Lord. And if we would reflect His glory this is what He calls us to.

The Portrait in People

There are those, across history, who have side-stepped the force of this call by an unimaginative literalism.

In 1530 Cardinal Wolsey (not ordinarily noted for his humility) washed, wiped, and kissed the feet of 59 poor men at Peterborough, England.

At the Holy Sepulchre, the Patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church annually washes the right foot of 12 “senior clergy,” representing the apostles. Roman Popes do a similar thing.

English royalty have had a similar tradition. From King John, who in 1213 at Rochester “washed the feet of the poor,” to James the First, who on Maunday Thursday, 1685, washed, wiped and kissed the feet of 52 poor men.

Now Maunday Thursday has become a royal tradition on which day the Queen distributes purses of specially minted silver coins to elderly people who have served greatly, but who are in need of financial assistance. This is called the

“distribution of the Royal Maunday.” At this ceremony dignitaries wear white aprons — or “towels.” All of them, including the Queen, carry “nosegays” of herbs and flowers (as they did in the days of the plagues, to ward off infection and the odor of dirty feet).

All of this may be touching — but it misses the point. This is not the way to carry out the call of Christ today. The portrait of a servant is not a first century “church rite” or an annual Medieval tradition. Rather, the Glory of God specifically asks us to be, above all things, genuine servants *every day!*

What about the church? Does it look like a portrait of Jesus on His way to the cross? Is it on its knees before the world, with a towel in its hands?

Have we been wondering how we can recapture the attention of an over-communicated world — how we can again find our lost credibility?

We need good preaching like never before, but we likely can’t preach our way back into it. Already, the world does not see preachers as servants, but as celebrities!

Can we talk of “being a servant” while we are standing in the spotlight, with 10,000 eyes on us, holding microphones, dressed like executives? No! We must listen and *serve*. We must listen long enough for our communities to tell us what they need. Then we must meet those needs and serve our way back toward credibility. This will cut through cynicism and over-communication like words never could. It will put teeth in our preaching!

If Jesus, when here in the flesh, was on His way to a cross, the church, where He left a portrait of His true nature, will be on its way to a cross. Robert Greenleaf, former Director of Management Research at AT&T, says, "In some ways the churches may be judged more harshly than the others because their role could be so pivotal in the regeneration of what many regard as a sick society."⁴

The church must not be planning for its own future grandeur. It must empty itself in service. It needs to avoid vested interests and ignore the flatteries of the world. "If Jesus was a public relations man's nightmare, it ought not to be one's dream." Rather than pompously affirming its own importance, it must be busy washing feet, forgiving sinners, accepting the rejects of society and loving the lonely.

Some of these things sound great, until we start doing them. At Highland, since we have opened our building — at all hours of the week, to all kinds of people — from bus ministry, to day care, to divorce recovery groups, to alcoholics anonymous meetings, to who knows what, the climate has changed. There are hundreds of people in some part of our facilities each week. Some of the romantic idealists who wanted the building used more are having a difficult time getting used to graffiti in the washrooms, torn and dirty carpets, and scuffed furniture. Some are embarrassed when retarded people have wet some of our padded theatre seats. Some Sunday school teachers liked things better when classrooms were left vacant all week.

Lights and utilities get left on. Janitorial service is

more costly. It seems so unfair sometimes, trying to do so much for so many, yet having a hard time just paying the bills.

In addition, there will always be misunderstanding and criticism. "Why should we not only have to fight the world, but the brethren too?" But in the portrait of a servant, reflecting God's Glory and on the way to the cross, defensiveness has no place. Survival is not top priority. Let the world see a church whose meat and drink is to do the will of the Father. Let the world see a church that is willing to die in order to meet needs and to be true to its calling. Broken bottles on the parking lot and missing projectors are not so significant. These are part of the portrait of a servant church. They translate the Glory which once only dwelt in light unapproachable, into street language.

Am I in the Picture?

The portrait at last is of one person. You! Me! The basin and towel I can grasp. More important, it is something I can *do*! To be a portrait of His glory doesn't take something high and mighty. It doesn't take scholarship. It doesn't take gifted preaching. It doesn't take looks, brains, or talents to get in on the action. Not even money!

God has painted His portrait in human servant colors. *Anyone* can serve!

At this point, however, the footing becomes slippery. There is a life and death difference between *do-gooders* and genuine *servants*. A French maxim says, "We would be ashamed of our most beautiful actions if the world knew all the true motives that lie behind them."

Do-Gooders vs. Servants

A *do-gooder* does good things, but on human energy and personal force of character and as a duty. "Service that is duty-motivated breathes death. Service that flows from our inner person is life, joy, and peace."⁵

A *servant* serves out of divine energy generated in relationship with God. He has a face that is "all gloried up!"

Do-gooders gravitate toward big things — because big things make the doer appear big. *Servants* simply do what needs to be done. Frances de Sales says,

"Great virtues and small fidelities are like sugar and salt. Sugar may have a more exquisite taste, but its use is less frequent. Salt is found everywhere. The great virtues are a rare occurrence; the ministry of small things is a daily service. Large tasks require great sacrifice for a moment, small things require constant sacrifice. Small occasions return every moment. . . . We should a hundred times rather make some great sacrifices to God, however violent and painful, on condition, that we be freed with liberty to follow our tastes and habits in every little detail."⁶

Do-gooders always have one eye to the reward. If affirmation and applause are not forthcoming, enthusiasm declines. Sometimes even bitterness sets in. *Servants* delight in anonymity. They serve for the love of people, of serving, of God.

"The flesh whines against service but screams against

hidden service. It strains and pulls for honor and recognition. It will devise subtle, religiously acceptable means to call attention to the service rendered.”

Do-gooders are preoccupied with results. They study statistics and make comparisons. “So what if we reflect God’s nature faithfully! What if we don’t grow like the church down the street?”

Servants serve. Their priority is not that they be considered by the brethren to be successful, but by God, to be faithful.

Do-gooders pick and choose whom they will serve. They want folks they enjoy being around or those who will reciprocate by giving them strokes or status.

The one who is touched by “the Glory” and upon whom Jesus is painting the portrait of a servant, is “servant of *all*.” Notice who gets his time. You can spot him with the lonely, the reject, the retarded, the helpless, the disenfranchised — as well as with those of other walks.

The *do-gooder* serves when he feels well enough, feels led to — in short, when he feels like it. His “service” fluctuates with his moods.

The *servant* serves because there is need. He disciplines his person to function, regardless of his moods or feelings. In fact, he often becomes so absorbed in those he serves, that he forgets that he doesn’t feel good. What freedom! “Most of the good that is done in this old world is done by folks who don’t feel like it at the time,” says Wendell Broom.

For *do-gooders*, service is done at their convenient times. It is usually in temporary programs or tasks that don’t interfere with personal priorities pressing at the

time.

For *servants*, serving is not temporary. It is a life-style, ingrained in every attitude, relationship, and situation life should send them.

Do-gooders are insensitive. They are going to do their "service" whether it is welcomed or not. They are often pushy, inappropriate — sometimes hurtful.

Servants listen. They are sensitive to what people want as well as to what they need.

Do-gooders create dissension in the long haul. *Servants* enrich relationships.⁴

Servant is the heart of God in a person. And, yes, some real servants still walk our streets. Any one of us can be one.

Ray McGlothlin, and his wife Kay, respected businessman, chairman of the Board of Abilene Christian University, with their own hands and in their own house caring for a dying man for many months.

Danny Sims, a college sophomore, not only was at the bedside all hours of the day and night when his friend was ill — but with his own hands holding the bed pan, and cleaning him up afterwards.

Ed and Kathryn Witherspoon, in a tiny secluded room, standing for as many as 40 hours a week — year after year — faithfully copying taped messages and sending them to strangers in quiet corners of the globe.

Bill and Audrey Nash — tirelessly caring for wheelchair-confined people; not only bringing them by van to church (25 at a time some Sundays), but year after year being involved in sadness and joy of each handicapped person.

The portrait is big. There is room for all of us in the picture. There is the service of small things — a cup of cold water, or caring for the dog of a vacationing neighbor. There is the service of guarding the reputation of others — not only by saying only the best, but also refusing to participate in negative conversations about “George” when he is not present. Having the courage to say, as one of our elders does frequently, “What did ‘George’ say when you spoke to *him* about that?”

There is the service of being served. As Earl Nightingale says, “On Christmas morning, our joy or our happiness can be at a very high level, not because of our anticipation of what we might receive but, rather, in anticipation of watching our loved ones open our gifts to them. . . . Sometimes we’re so anxious for them to open something we’ve given, we’ll tend to pass over the things they’ve given us. Have to watch that, especially where the children are concerned. They’ve spent days, perhaps weeks, thinking of the moment when we’ll finally open the present on which they’ve lavished so much thought and love and care.”

There are the services of courtesy, hospitality, burden bearing. The world cannot contain the list. Always there is a way to serve!

Most of all, there is the service of sharing the word of life.

Conclusion

Could you be called to a hidden background job, rather than to the limelight? Could it be a lonely visit to

an emotionally unstable anonymous person, when you would rather relax with friends? Could you be a genuine friend to someone who is struggling with an addiction to drugs, alcohol, immorality — or money?

Could the Lord be calling you to the inner city or to an underdeveloped country as a lowly doctor or preacher or nurse or secretary — with a less “respectable” profile and less lucrative salary? Could He be expecting you to help your mother with the dishes, or your wife with the housecleaning?

But you ask: Isn't this risky? Won't people take advantage of this “servant vulnerability”? The answer is, Yes! Oh, yes! But that is what it means to be “a man of sorrows” and “acquainted with grief.”

Quite often when we become involved in service, genuinely caught up in other people's lives, we quite literally “work through grief.”

“To grieve is to take two coffee cups from the cupboard in the morning, only to remember that one's wife is dead or separated . . . and to have to put one cup back. . . . To grieve is to be delighted with the snapshot prints at the drugstore counter and impulsively to order duplicates to share with one's mother, only to remember that she died six months previously . . . and to say to the clerk, ‘Never mind.’ . . . To grieve is to wake up on a brilliant sunny morning with spontaneous, unbidden anticipation of playing golf, only to be reminded instantly by heavy limbs that one has had a stroke . . . and to close one's eyes, now moist. . . . To grieve is to invest prime energy and love into a sermon for a much loved people, only to be reminded that it was not heard:

'I enjoyed your sermon.' 'That was a cute illustration.' . . . To grieve is to pour one's energies for months and years into the struggles of a beleaguered minority group or a beleaguered marriage or a beleaguered teenager . . . and indeed making a crucial difference . . . only to have (them) shun you as a threatening enemy.'¹⁰

Most people experience this kind of grief two or three times in a lifetime . . . a promise broken by a trusted parents or teacher, or being jilted by a lover, divorced by a spouse, betrayed by a friend. A "servant" may well experience this kind of grief two or three times in a *single week*.¹¹

Paul said, "For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for Him" (Philippians 1:29 NIV).

How can I live up to such a lofty call? This portrait of a servant could never be a portrait of me! Right! On our own, we can't, but there is a way.

Max Beerbohm tells the story of "The Happy Hypocrite." George Hell was debauched and debased — a real bad news character. He used people and discarded them like Kleenex till he met a girl who was the essence of innocence and virtue. He really fell for her, but why would she marry a rascal like him? So he covered his face with a mask, won her hand and married her. They were deliriously happy for a while, until out of his past came an old, spurned lover. She was determined to expose him. She publicly challenged him to take off his mask. He didn't want to, but he was cornered. So he took it off — but lo and behold, under the mask was the face . . . of a saint. He had become good,

by wearing the mask of goodness *in love*.¹²

Let's just serve in love. God can change us, motives and all, into the servants we want to be. The glory of God Almighty will begin to reflect itself in us. Could this be what the apostle means? "And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18 NIV).

Samuel Langhorn Brengal in 1878 was a respected professional American clergyman. He was attracted to William Booth's movement in England (the beginnings of the Salvation Army). He wanted to be a part of it. But he was accustomed to having a huge staff under him. When he arrived in England, Booth said, "Brengal, you have been boss too long. You will have to learn to serve."

Booth sent him out on the streets to polish the boots of the people who were serving others. Brengal said at first he was smoldering with anger. The audacity! But then he got down on his knees, with that rag in his hand, in front of that line of dusty, shabby boots and got out the polish. It seemed to him in his mind's eye, he could see Jesus on His knees before the feet of the ragged fishermen. In his heart he said, "He washed their feet. I'll black their boots."

Lord, help me live from day to day
In such a self-forgetful way
That even when I kneel to pray
My prayer will be for others.
Others, Lord, yes, others,

May this my motto be.
Help me to live for others
That I might live for Thee.
This is the portrait of a servant!

Endnotes

¹Al Reis and Jack Trout, *Positioning: The Battle for the Mind* (New York: Warner Books, 1981), p. 8.

²1 Samuel 4:21.

³*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), Vol. 4, p. 294.

⁴Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), p. 80.

⁵Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1978), p. 114.

⁶St. Frances de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1955), p. 84.

⁷Foster, p. 114.

⁸I am indebted in this section to Richard Foster, author of *Celebration of Discipline*.

⁹Earl Nightingale, *Insight* (Chicago: Nightingale-Conant Corporation, 1938), p. 23.

¹⁰James E. Dittes, *When the People Say No* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1979), pp. 4,5.

¹¹Dittes, p. 2.

¹²Max Beerbohm, "The Happy Hypocrite," in *The Travelers Library*, Maugham, ed. (Garden City, New York: Garden City, New York Publishing, 1933), pp. 201-226.

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The Servant Leader

Art McNeese

Colonel James B. Irwin is a former astronaut who was a part of the crew that made the successful moon walk. He recently talked about the adventure of traveling to the moon. He mentioned the thrill of leaving planet Earth and watching it shrink in size. He began to realize that when he returned, many would consider him a superstar, a celebrity. But soon he was humbled in the realization of God's goodness in his life. He described his feelings in these words:

“As I was returning to earth, I realized that I was a servant, not a celebrity. So I am here as God's servant on planet Earth to share what I have experienced that others might know the glory of God.”¹

Irwin realized that the only real greatness is found in service. For most of us, that's a very difficult lesson to learn, because the prevailing attitude in our society is that we get to the top by serving ourselves. The motto of our time is this: leaders are those who get others to serve them.

But Jesus reverses every notion of human greatness. He calls us to be servant leaders. He says the only real leaders are those who serve others. Every Christian is called to be a servant, not a celebrity.

The Call to Servant Leadership

The call to servant leadership is found in Mark

10:35-45. Christ says to James and John: "Ask not what the kingdom can do for you. Ask what you can do for the kingdom."

The encounter of Jesus with the sons of thunder is charged with emotion. Christ has just announced to the twelve that He is on His way to Jerusalem to die (10:34). He describes His execution in vivid detail. But in the wake of that announcement, the only concerns of James and John are the placecards at the Messianic banquet. They want to be sure they are given the places of preeminence. They probably thought Jesus was going to Jerusalem to restore the glory of the fallen throne of David. So they say, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask" (v. 35). They wanted a *carte blanche*, unlimited agreement from Jesus to do whatever they wished.

Jesus Answers the Two

In verses 36-40, Jesus answers the two, James and John. "What do you want Me to do for you?" They replied, "Let one of us sit at Your right and the other at Your left in Your glory" (vs. 36,37). We want the inside track. We want positions in the Oval office.

"You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?" (v. 38). James and John were so obtuse. They wanted to be a part of His glory, but didn't realize that pain was the prerequisite. Jesus uses the images of the cup and baptism to refer to His sufferings and death. Sharing someone's cup was a recognized expression for sharing in his fate. In the Old

Testament the cup of wine is often used to refer to the wrath of God's judgment upon human sin.²

Jesus will drink the cup of death and suffer the baptism of death, and if they are serious about following Him, they must do the same.

"We can," they answered (v. 39a). James and John are so naive. "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with" (v. 39b). Jesus knows that James and John will die for the sake of the kingdom. James will be killed by the sword at the hand of Herod. John will die in exile on Patmos. But that isn't, of course, what they had in mind. In verse 40, Jesus reminds them that the places of honor are the prerogative of the Father.

Jesus Answers the Twelve

Jesus' answer to the twelve is found in verses 41-45. Mark says that the ten had been eavesdropping, and became indignant. We normally castigate James and John, but the other ten were no less selfish and ambitious. "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all" (vs. 42-44). Jesus' reference to the rulers is ironic: those who are supposed to rule and lead, exploit the people. The rulers of the Roman empire were tyrants. Jesus says, your leadership style must not be the style of the despots.

Those who aspire to greatness must be a servant

(*diakonos*) and a slave (*doulos*). A servant (*diakonos*) was one whose service was often menial and undesirable. He frequently served meals and ministered to physical needs. Greatness is derived from serving the most basic needs of others.

The servant leader is also to be a slave (*doulos*). He is one who has lost his own will to become the slave of all — the slave of God, the slave of the Lord Christ, a slave in the Spirit, and a slave to his brother. He is both *diakonos* and *doulos*, servant and slave.

The model for his service is Christ, who “did not come to be served, but to serve” (v. 45). He is the ultimate servant leader.

Is the Call Heard Today?

All too often, the call to service is not heard today. The call often falls on deaf ears, even for those in the church. Rather than serving others, we are prone to be self-serving.

The major preoccupation of man in the eighties is the search for self-fulfillment.³ Daniel Yankelovich has documented this search in his important work, *New Rules in American Life: Searching for Self-Fulfillment in a World Turned Upside Down*. Yankelovich argues that Americans have not returned to discipline and self-sacrifice, in spite of other signs of conservatism in our society. Instead, they are engrossed in the desire to fulfill themselves. He says, “In place of the traditional ethics of self-denial and sacrifice, we now find an ethic that denies people nothing.”⁴ The paradox is that because of the strategies people employ, they do not

find themselves. Because they focus on their own needs, they find that the inner journey leads to loneliness and depression.

Yankelovich says there are two forms of the search for self-fulfillment: 17% of the population is involved in the strong form of the search — they are extremely intense in their pursuit; 63% participate in the weak form — they pursue new meanings, but with less intensity.

Mark and Abby Williams are an example of the strong form of the search. They are both in their thirties. He works for a public interest law firm. She is the assistant editor of a magazine published for a large chemical company. They delayed having children for five years so that they could establish themselves. They are still delaying. They are torn between a multiplicity of wants.

Abby describes her feelings in these words:

“Sometimes I feel I really am part of the me-generation, too preoccupied with my own needs and wishes. I know you can’t have everything. But I’m not sure what to give up and what to hang on to.”

Mark and Abby find themselves presented with an abundance of choices about what to do with their lives, without knowing how to make the right choices. Their financial ability and value system give them the opportunity to have almost anything. But every new choice becomes a threat to their freedom. The question of what to be committed to and what to sacrifice for remains forever open, leaving their lives very unsettled.

They think of themselves as people who must have all of their cravings fulfilled. Their lives are like an ice cube tray — and every section has to be filled to the brim. One of the problems is that many of their needs are contradictory. For Mark and Abby, self-fulfillment means having a career and marriage and children and sexual freedom and sexual fidelity and having money and insisting on social justice and enjoying city life and country living, and the list goes on and on.

They assume that the self is the sum of all of one's needs and desires. But as Yankelovich points out,

“Suppression of desires is not always bad; in fact, some suppression is required if one is to avoid becoming a blob of contradictions. The injunction that to find one's self one must lose one's self contains a truth any seeker of self-fulfillment needs to grasp.”⁶

The Answer of Christ to the Search for Self

What is the response of Christ to this quest? First, Jesus says, we are called to a life of service, not a life of being served. Mark and Abby assume they will make it to the top when all their wants are met. They believe they will have “arrived” when the tray is full. But Jesus says that greatness is defined by service. Could it be that we, like Mark and Abby, have been influenced by the self-seeking ethic of our society? Could it be that we will miss the mark of greatness because we see ourselves as a collection of needs, rather than servants? The words of Christ need to be etched into our hearts: “Not so with you.”

Second, Christ says, life demands that we make certain choices. Jesus said, "No man can serve two masters" (Matthew 6:24). Though He is speaking in the context of riches, the principle has a much broader application. We cannot serve the masters of sexual fidelity and sexual license. We cannot serve the masters of discipline and self-indulgence. Nor can we serve the masters of friendship and seclusion. Some things in life are mutually exclusive, and the person who tries to choose everything winds up with nothing.

Maybe we want to have it both ways. We want the good warm feeling that comes from giving of ourselves, but we also want the security of lots of money and things. We want the kind of teaching that will keep our kids on the straight and narrow, but also the license to do whatever we want in our personal lives. We want other people to dispel our loneliness, but also the right to retreat into our private cocoons. We want the esteem and belonging that come from marriage, but also the right to look around. We want the joy of raising children, but freedom from the responsibilities that parenthood implies.

Third, Jesus reminds us that if we want to find ourselves, we must lose ourselves. "He who would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it" (Mark 8:35). The leader is one who finds his life by losing it. He discovers life by giving it away. The irony is that we must die in order to live, and serve in order to be great. We never find life by hoarding it, but only by giving it away. "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it

bears much fruit" (John 12:24). The fundamental principle of life is that we must die in order to live. But most are living in order to die, rather than dying in order to live. Most are leading in order to be served, rather than serving in order to lead. Albert Schweitzer said, "I don't know what your destiny may be, but one thing I do know. The only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve."

Implications for Servant Leaders

These principles are crucial to the development of servant leadership in the church. First, there are serious implications for those who would aspire to lead. The message of Christ is unmistakable: Only those who serve are leaders. Purported leaders are not leaders unless they serve.

Robert Greenleaf has researched the concept of servant leadership in America for 25 years. He assesses the lack of servant leadership in these words:

"The real enemy is fuzzy thinking on the part of good, intelligent, vital people, and their failure to lead, and to follow servants as leaders. There is . . . too little preparation for and willingness to undertake the hard and high risk tasks of building better institutions in an imperfect world, too little disposition to see 'the problem' as residing *in here* and not *out there*. In short, the enemy is strong natural servants who have the potential to lead but do not lead, or who choose to follow a non-servant."

Reuel Lemmons argues that we do not need leaders who do nothing but call the shots. Instead, we need leaders who by their shepherding and modeling of service stimulate the church to develop a servant mind and a servant heart. This is the key to church growth and spiritual maturity.

Lemmons has described the need for servant leaders in these words:

“Why is it that out of thousands of congregations arise less than a dozen mighty churches? While we freely admit that there are many factors involved we are convinced, after some study at least, that the one ingredient that they all have is servant leadership — not only among the elders, but among their preachers, deacons, teachers, and members. Their mighty dreams are hammered into plans for greater service.”⁸

Second, there are strong implications for the larger body, the core of the church. We must not have the mindset of Mark and Abby, and conduct a lifestyle that consists in being served. We must constantly remind ourselves that greatness is derived from service. Who are the greatest in the kingdom? The mother who cares for her children with love, the Christian who changes the bedpan for the hurting patient, the friend who visits the elderly brother and gives him a bath, the disciple who takes the time to befriend and teach a lost soul.

Ira North put it so well: “You take the compassion out of a leader, and what do you have left? An empty shell.” God help us to be servant leaders.

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THINKING LIKE A SERVANT

Harold Hazelip

Even Paul's "Joy in the Lord," his ideal congregation, contained difficult people. The closing verses of Philippians 1 include the appeal, ". . . stand firm in one spirit contending as one man . . ." (Philippians 1:27). The opening verses of chapter 2 indicate that disharmony exists in the Philippian church. Paul suggests a remedy: Forget yourselves, think of your neighbors' needs, be humble as Christ was. Think like a servant!

This problem in the Philippian church provides the occasion for what I think is the most moving paragraph Paul ever wrote. It is the "servant song" of Philippians 2:5-11. Paul urges his readers to have the mind of Jesus — to assume His way of looking at the world, His way of feeling, His way of approaching life.

It is striking to note the times when the Bible suddenly leaves off narration and bursts forth in song. Only poetry seems capable of catching the emotion of such moments. I think of the song of Moses when Israel had safely crossed the sea (Exodus 15). Hannah's prayer after she had delivered Samuel to Eli at Shiloh is in poetic form (1 Samuel 2). Also in poetic form are Jonah's prayer from inside the fish (Jonah 2), Mary's song as she visited Elizabeth (Luke 1:46-55), Zechariah's song after John was born (Luke 1:68-79), and Simeon's praise when he had seen the Messiah (Luke 2:29-35).

Paul's "Song of Christ" is also set in the midst of a

prose text. Its stirring appeal is at the heart of Philip-
pians.

The Interests of Others

In the preface to the servant song, Paul gives four motivations for unity. "If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ": "encouragement" implies calling in a helper, as one would do in a court trial. It is from the same root word Jesus used to refer to the Holy Spirit — *Paraclete* (John 14:16).

"If any comfort from His love": "comfort" is derived from *fortis*, meaning "strong." We are not always easy to love, but we derive strength from His love.

"If any fellowship with the Spirit": "fellowship" implies participation, not merely human association.

"If any tenderness and compassion": If we are Christians only with our intellect, we need to recall the mercy we have received from God. Only the person who knows his own temptations and weaknesses can understand the needs of others.

Based upon these four factors, Paul appeals for the Philip-
pians to set aside selfish ambition and conceit and to begin looking beyond their own interests to the needs of others.

Watchman Nee tells of a Chinese believer who was a poor rice farmer. His fields lay high on a mountainside. Every day he pumped water into paddies of new rice. Every morning he returned to find that an unbelieving neighbor who lived down the hill had opened the dikes surrounding the believer's field, allowing the water to fill his own paddies. For a time the believer ignored the

unjust conduct of his neighbor, but eventually he became desperate. What could he do? His own rice would die if this continued. How long could he allow it to go on?

He prayed about the problem, first by himself, and then with other believers. Eventually, he reached a decision: He rose early, pumped water to fill his neighbor's fields, and then filled his own. Nee tells how the neighbor subsequently became a believer, his unbelief overcome by a genuine demonstration of "thinking like a servant."

The Song of Christ

Paul's hymn is divided into two sentences, one describing the descent of Christ, the other His ascent. In the first sentence, Jesus is the subject: He humbled Himself. In the second sentence, God is the subject: He exalted Christ.

The descent begins with Jesus' preexistence: "He was in the form of God." Our English word "form" is usually associated with the outward shape of objects. It is used this way in the Bible. But we also have another use: "Are you in good form today?" The word points inward and asks about concerns that cannot be detected on the surface.

Jesus existed in the form of God. This does not necessarily refer to a physical shape; God is described as fire, as light. Jesus was in the form of deity before He passed to the form of humanity. He had a glory with the Father before the world began (John 17:5). He was with God in the beginning and was Himself God (John

1;1,2). The Father put all things under His power; He came from God and He returned to God (John 13:3). If we are to appreciate the mind of Christ, we must begin with His diety.

Unlike Satan and the first Adam, Jesus did not attempt to “seize” or hold on to the prerogatives of deity at all costs. Rather, He “emptied” Himself, made Himself nothing. “The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us” (John 1:14). Jesus grew up as other boys did, learned a trade, became hungry, thirsty, and tired enough to sleep in a storm. He became sad on occasion, used a pillow because the wood hurt His head (Mark 4:38), and was touched by temptations. He really cares. He understands our situation.

Soren Kierkegaard tells of a young king who really cared for his subjects. But the king was not sure his subjects realized his care because their daily lives were so remote from his palace. To the dismay of his court, one day the king laid aside his royal clothing and put on the garb of a peasant. He went out for a whole year to live among his people as one of them. This revolutionized the spirit of his kingdom. Not because of what it did for the king — he already knew the conditions under which his people were struggling. But because of what it did for the people — they had not been aware of the king’s love and concern. This is a parable of what Jesus did for us.

Jesus also took the “form of a servant”: Paul’s language reminds us of Isaiah’s Suffering Servant songs, particularly the second (Isaiah 49:1-6). With the humility of a servant (Isaiah 42:2,3), He suffers (Isaiah

50:6) and bears the griefs of others (Isaiah 53:4,6). The bondsman in the Roman empire had no will, no property, no rights of his own. Jesus became a bondsman to the Father's will (John 4:34; 6:38; 8:29).

He was born "in the likeness of men": C.S. Lewis (*Mere Christianity*) asks whether we ever thought when we were children what fun it would be if our toys came to life. He imagines a child having the power to turn a tin soldier into a real man. Suppose the soldier did not like the change. He was not interested in flesh. He only saw the tin being spoiled and thought he was being killed. He would do all he could to avoid becoming a real man.

Lewis is not sure what we would have done about this tin soldier. But what God did about us was to send the Son, Himself deity, to become human flesh. He was born into the world as a real man of a certain height, hair color, speaking a particular language, weighing so many pounds. The result is that now we know One who really was what all people are intended to be. One "tin soldier" — real tin, just like the rest — became fully alive. Then Lewis argues that other tin soldiers could become real by a "good infection." Jesus became like us so we could become like Him.

"He humbled Himself and became obedient": John Milton has Satan say, "Better to rule in hell than to serve in heaven" (Matthew 26:39). From the cradle to the grave, Jesus' spirit was, "I have come to do your will, O God" (Hebrews 10:7).

"Unto death, even death on a cross": Three types of execution were practiced in the Roman empire of the

first century. When condemned for a capital crime, the Roman citizen was beheaded, the free man was beaten to death and the slave was crucified. Crucifixion seemed to embrace the pain of all three forms of death: dread, body cramps from an unnatural position, inflammation of wounds. And to the Jew, crucifixion implied a curse (Galatians 3:13).

Paul's hymn has moved from the pre-existent deity of Jesus to His death in shame. He urges the Philippian Christians to follow Jesus' example, set self aside, and maintain harmony among themselves. But who seeks humiliation? We want success, exaltation. Paul follows with the "ascent" stanza of the hymn.

"Therefore God exalted Him": Merrill Tenney tells of an incident at the close of the Civil War when General Sherman was organizing his victory parade for Pennsylvania Avenue. Sherman came to General O.O. Howard on the morning of the parade with a strange request. Howard's predecessor wanted to lead Howard's men in the parade. Sherman appealed, "Since you're a Christian, would you step down and allow him to lead them?"

Howard was understandably reluctant. He had lost an arm in battle with those men. He finally replied that, since he did mean to be a Christian, he would step down. Sherman responded with pride: "I thought that's what you would say; now would you come and ride with me at the head of the army?"

God has a way of rewarding us if we are willing to take our eyes off the reward and become servants. He exalted Jesus to the position of universal Lordship.

Paul's Application

“Therefore . . . continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling”: Christ’s action is the basis of our salvation but we must apply His salvation in our lives. This is not the equivalent of earning a medal or purchasing a ticket. Paul especially appeals to their responsibility to represent Christ before the world.

Paul then forbids complaining and arguing, while urging blamelessness and purity. In this way we “shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life” (Philippians 2:15,16). Ancient cities did not have our street lighting system. If one ventured out to visit with friends at night, he had to carry a lamp or torch, or fall into the company of someone with such a light. The Christian who imitates the attitude of Jesus in His relationships with others becomes a torch in a world of darkness.

Thinking like a servant: The mind of Christ is the model for the mind of the Christian. His enfleshment tells us what His mind was like. His cross describes the measure of His dedication. And His exaltation points to the goal of our servanthood.

Afternoon Sessions



Paul B. Faulkner

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riage Enrichment Film Series (eight 45-minute 16mm films) by Faulkner and Brecheen, New Day Productions, 1980; and cassette tape series, *Family Enrichment Series, Vol. II*, Sweet Publishing Co., 1982.

VITAL SIGNS OF THE ABUNDANT LIFE

Paul B. Faulkner

As the physician looks for four vital signs to determine if the patient is alive, those of us who are concerned with abundant living are looking for the vital signs of the good life. If we possess the abundant life Christ promised (John 10:10), it should spread to the family that surrounds us.

Following are eight signs of the abundant life. You might think of others that could be added. Note that all of these are Biblical principles which, interestingly enough, are also predicated by research in the scholarly journals and the storehouses of common sense.

Vital Sign Number 1 A Positive Mind Set

Being positive doesn't mean that there should be no correction whatsoever, else we could not even caution children about playing in the street. Criticism is known to carry a lot of weight with the receiver (sometimes 46 times more powerful than affirmation), yet it is too often taken lightly by the deliverer. Despite many Biblical warnings and cautions the *central* theme of the gospel of the New Testament is GOOD NEWS! Victory, not doom, is the theme of the book of Revelation. Be positive, have faith, and why not, we have read the final chapter and WE WIN!

Vital Sign Number 2 Bless Others

Thomas Carlyle once said that "Doubt, whatever kind, can be ended by action alone." A past president of the American Psychological Association said: "It is easier to *act* yourself into a better way of feeling than to feel yourself into a better way of acting." Action is the key word — in good relationships (and in good mental health), especially behavior that blesses others, selfless good behavior toward others. This is really a short definition of *agape* love. Specifically, this is seen in the life of Jesus, who went about giving the blind their sight, healing the lame, cleansing lepers, giving hearing to the deaf, even raising the dead (see Matthew 11:5).

Losers are those who are too much in love with themselves and fail to see others in need. When losers do good it is usually with a string attached. They always "keep score" of the amount of good they have done. Practically, they operate under the motto: "It is easier to blame than to bless."

Vital Sign Number 3 Know Where You Are Going

Not having a goal is more to be feared than not reaching a goal set. Winners know where they are going. In the most important things of life winners have made decisions. Losers are still wondering what they are going to do with life.

Several important things are accomplished by having specific goals set, especially spiritual goals. First, goals give one a sense of identity — your goals tell others who you are and what you think is important in life. Second, they also determine your destiny because what you "shoot for" is usually what you hit. Third, goals focus

your planning. With specific goals you can more easily set priorities. Fourth, they help you evaluate your progress. Assessment of progress is necessary in all walks of life. If you have no goals then assessment is difficult, almost impossible. Goals bring together our energies, thus developing power. Like a laser beam of light, when we focus our energies on one specific area, we concentrate power otherwise unavailable. Because of these benefits, specific godly goals will reduce frustration and bring an inner sense of purpose — the stuff out of which peace is made.

Vital Sign Number 4
Act As If It Is True

Don Quixote, using the modern concept of “positive imaging,” *acted as if* this tawdry bar maid named Aldonza was a sweet young lady named Dulcinia. He continued to imagine her as such despite the tavern community, who knew her to be quite sinful. He continued even when Aldonza herself corrected him — freely telling him he was wrong. But he continued . . . and continued against all odds proclaiming her to be beautiful, pure and good . . . and then somehow (perhaps unconsciously) the effect took place and she really became Dulcinia.

The play mentioned above is fiction, but the stories of the woman at the well (John 4) and the woman taken in the act of adultery (John 8) are true. Women whom Jesus projected would “sin no more.” I believe that they lived up to His expectations of them.

Winners believe that the best is yet to be, that tomorrow will be better than today even when common sense

tells us that tomorrow will be the pits. So they start acting like tomorrow will be better. Losers are those who (to avoid what they call hypocrisy) let the world see, feel, and know they are feeling bad, sad, and angry. They want the world to sympathize with them with NO change on their part.

Vital Sign Number 5 Work at Relationships

In relationships, communication is everything, whether it be between nation and nation, husband and wife, or any two individuals. Thomas Scasz, a famous psychotherapist, once said: “. . . there is no such thing as psychotherapy. It is only a name we use for people speaking and listening to each other.” Words have such power — to build up or rip apart. Good relationships are so difficult to form, we must be very careful not to destroy them with ill-chosen words.

Winners watch their words, expressions, and body language, making sure they don't contradict. When angry, winners have learned how to process anger, not letting “the sun go down on their wrath.” Losers let it all hang out. They are going to tell it like it is, and demand their “rights” even if it “harelips Aunt Gertie.” When they have to pay Aunt Gertie's husband for damage done, they deny responsibility in the name of “being honest.” Most losers are naive — they “just don't understand why people don't like them anymore.”

Vital Sign Number 6 Live Today

General Oglethorpe once said to John Wesley: "I never forgive and I never forget." To which Wesley responded: "Then sir, I hope you never sin." To never forgive or forget is to live continually in the past, and not just the past, but the critical, negative past. When we so live, we are no joy to be around; furthermore, we create a negative present and negative presents create negative futures — quite a bleak existence. Living today joyously is quite a task by itself without incorporating any of the resentment and bitterness of the past. Jesus said to one desiring to look back: "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:59-62).

One marriage expert said: "A problem is greater with a married couple than with individual clients because marital partners are experts at debating past issues." Too many married couples ruin the joy of marriage by reliving old regrets, guilts, grudges and resentments. They have not learned the lesson of living one day at a time with the Lord. If the past could be changed then there might be some wisdom in analyzing the past. Other than learning from the past what works and what doesn't, there is not much sense in living in the past — it just infects the present.

Losers live in the past and postpone the present, which encourages grudges, resentments and bitterness. Winners live today joyously, one day at a time. It is the only way to insure pleasant memories and positive direction for the future.

Vital Sign Number 7
Keep Moving

Most of life is marked by growth. The first step, the first tooth, the first bicycle, the first date, etc. Each is a milestone that is looked forward to and often worked for with relish. It is tragic if we stop growing and reaching for new learning experiences. Losers have lost the desire to live on the cutting edge of life. They are satisfied to sit passively in front of a window (or more likely in front of a T.V.) and let the world go by. For example, most husbands see their marriage as static, but marriage is not static. It isn't the same marriage as it was five years ago — much water has gone under the bridge. The children are not the same as they were five years ago — thousands of things have taken place in their lives that call for recognition. A psychiatrist recently said, "Couples need a refresher course because they're not both changing in the same direction." To see life, job or marriage as static when so many things in this world are moving swiftly past us — is to be a loser, a *big* loser. As Jesus grew in "wisdom, stature, and in favor with God and man" He left us a growth model. Common sense says gardens and minds must be cultivated if they are to yield fruit.

Vital Sign Number 8 Taking the Initiative

If we are going to wait until others respond to us perfectly before we initiate good in their direction — we have a long wait coming. No one is perfect. It is foolish to expect others to respond to us perfectly when we are imperfect as well. Under these impossible conditions,

human relations would forever remain a "Mexican standoff."

The big difference between paganism and Christianity is in "who takes the initiative." In paganism man takes the initiative. Man seeks the gods of his life. When he finds "him" (or thinks he has), he builds a temple or idol to worship the god. In Christianity God seeks man. Christ came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). While we were lost and rejecting God (Romans 5:6), God was seeking us. The world is saying, "I will if you will . . . maybe." Christ is saying, "I will if you *won't*." A winner follows God's example. He takes the initiative in blessing the lives of those around him, regardless of whether they seek his good in return. A loser is so interested in his own pursuits he is oblivious to the needs of others, much less does he take the initiative in resolving some of the problems they might have.

Finally, we must add that attempting the eight "vital signs" will be a feeble attempt if the user has a bad heart or attitude. An ugly spirit is more than enough to kill the good that could be accomplished by the application of these helpful hints for abundant living in Christ. So do all you can to clear up your biases before you attempt the abundant life or it could be fruitless. But with a sweet spirit, every attempt, no matter how small, will bring a blessing.

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MARITAL PRESCRIPTIONS

Tom Milholland

When my son was much younger he described my profession as, "The kind of doctor who can't help anybody." He was quick to add, "But he doesn't give shots." His first point may be debatable, but the second is sadly true. Mournful wishes and fervent prayers have yet to produce an injection to cure marital ills.

A cursory examination of marriage statistics indicates that one-half to one-third of all first marriages since 1945 will end in divorce. Over the last twelve years the divorce rate has doubled in the United States. Every child born in 1983 must face the odds that one-half will live in a family with Mom and Dad separated at some time, and one-third will be the innocent victims of divorce. Transfer these percentages to an infectious disease affecting our population and we have an epidemic. Realistically then, we live in a society consumed by a subtle yet destructive epidemic . . . the Divorce Epidemic.

Marital ills are as old as man himself. Moses was unable to find a cure and some would suggest that even Christ left no clear solution. One interesting fact about Christ, however, is that He was a "healer," not a "surgeon." For the ills of His day, Christ became a balm; a healing ointment; or the miraculous Great Physician. Jesus never severed the infirmed parts, but brought about a healing union. Concerning marriage, His prevailing attitude was this: What God has joined man should not separate.

The legal process of divorce as it is practiced in our society is actually a type of relationship surgery. Divorce simply removes the troubled, sick, diseased, dysfunction, unloved or unwanted part from the entity created by the uniting of two people. This is similar to amputating a limb rather than healing the infected area. Thus, the implied questions become, "Is there a cure for the common divorce? Can we discover a miracle vaccine?" This lesson is an attempt to stimulate the curative powers that already exist in your marriage and provide new ideas or descriptions that will prevent many marital ills from ever developing. My father was fond of saying, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Read each marital prescription and do the brief activity accompanying each one. Remember, "The medicine doesn't do any good sitting in the bottle."

MARITAL EXPECTATIONS: FACT OR FICTION?

When you are young, the days are filled with dreams of how life is going to be. These hopes and aspirations prove to be the necessary nurturants for our growth and development into adulthood. On the journey from adolescence to adulthood the truly wise are able to discern the difference between their dreams and reality . . . wishes and the way it is . . . expectations and experiences . . . maybe even between fact and fiction.

The marriage dream is perhaps the most difficult dream to fulfill. We enter marriage knowing so little while at the same time wanting so very much. What we expect marriage to be is often our greatest weakness.

When life clearly places before us the facts of our marriage, we tend to discount it because it does not measure up to our expectations.

We expect to "fall in love" with the "right person" and "live happily ever after" eternally entwined in a "match made in heaven." The stories of our youth tell of love and romance in tones of a new wonderland in which the grim realities of life will be of little significance. Alice in Wonderland slipped into a hole and discovered a new and mystifying world. You, on the other hand, fell into a hole and it has ultimately become your prison. The infatuation so easily described as "falling in love" may in reality be one of the most unreal and unhealthy aspects of romantic love. The Harlequin romance concept of love and the fact of marriage are incompatible. To the hopeless romantic marriage brings reality, thus putting an end to the lover's romantic quest and leaving the relationship colorless and insipid.

As Karl Menninger says it, "We do not fall in love, we grow in love and love grows in us." Be quick to remember that the love necessary to bind a relationship together must be cared for and nurtured or it will wither and die. The prescription for a chronic case of overzealous marital expectation is a healthy dose of coming to grips with the way life and marriage really are, combined with dreams enough to ensure the growth of your marriage. We must all be alert to the fact that marriage is the most complicated yet rewarding relationship there is, and most marital fiction is useless in solving life's problems.

The prescription is to look squarely at your expectations for marriage and learn to realize both their shortcomings and their merits.

Don't waste your life trying to live out some fanciful story line only to discover you cannot make fantasies become realities no matter how hard you try, and no matter how many husbands or wives you cast in the role of spouse.

Storybook romances fill a very real need in a young person's heart, but the cold, hard fact is that storybook romances simply do not exist and never have. They are youthful ideas born of inexperience. Why not resolve to pack them away with your scrapbook and old snapshots. Step into a marital future that is clearly framed by mature vision and is accessible to all.

Activity: Complete the following and then share them with your spouse. For best results, have your spouse do this also and share your lists with each other.

A good husband is (or does):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

A good wife is (or does):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

HOW TO FIX YOUR HUSBAND

The title of this section blatantly suggests that something about your husband is broken or may need to be changed. Many wives have dedicated their whole lives to "husband fixing." Some have suggested that a woman is not total until she has remodeled her spouse. This whole concept of changing another's behaviors, attitudes, and/or life goals raises some interesting questions.

Literally hundreds of books have been written on the subject of husband fixing. It seems everybody has an opinion about how to "whip the old boy into shape." If you have found THE answer and completed your remodeling project, skip to the next section. If not, perhaps the following ideas will prove useful.

Idea Number 1. Choose one aspect of your husband's behavior you have been trying to change for some time and write it down on a piece of paper. Be sure to define it clearly. Next, list the things you have tried in this vain attempt to change him. Did they work? Did he change or is he still the same? If he is unchanged, it is accurate to assume that (1) your strategies are not working; (2) doing more will not work either; and (3) they may have actually perpetuated the behavior you were trying to change. Therefore, you need to choose a fresh approach.

Idea Number 2. Since your husband has refused to change in a certain area, perhaps he is just stubborn. He may have no real bias against the new behavior, but he simply does not like being "told what to do" and is making the whole situation a showdown about power in

the marriage. Your tenacious spirit will not allow him to get away with not changing, so you have “dug in” and the battle lines have been clearly drawn. The key to change is like a judo match. The most power and control comes by using the power and strength of the other. Thus, your real power is in knowing when to give.

Idea Number 3. Have you ever had a good day ruined by someone’s harsh word or thoughtless action? Have you ever been warm and cheerful only to be confronted by an individual’s rudeness and un-Christian behavior? Life has been characterized as being too short to allow any part of it to be soured by an outsider. Decide right now that you are going to remain positive, in control, diplomatic and Christ-like in all situations, especially those which are difficult. When your spouse does or says something that usually “sets you off,” stay in control of the situation and return right for wrong; positive for negative; cheer for gloom; a healing word for an intended cut. Don’t allow others to dictate your behavior.

Activity: Using what you have learned from each Idea, write one way you will put each idea into practice.

Idea Number 1 _____

Idea Number 2 _____

Idea Number 3 _____

WAITING UNTIL YOU FEEL LIKE IT

It was a warm summer morning when my father

asked me to mow the lawn. My respectful reply was, "Yes, sir; but I'll do it when I feel like it." This is not the place to discuss his technique in helping me "feel like it," but I DID mow the lawn. Many individuals are making major decisions that affect themselves, their marriage, their children, and even their grandchildren based solely on their emotional state. Emotions are not to be ignored, rather they are to be placed in their proper perspective and given a logical priority.

The yearnings of our heart . . . our emotions . . . always exist in the context of life's experiences. Emotions flow from our interactions with others and then return full circle to influence our reciprocal actions. Thus, our feelings affect our actions and our actions affect our feelings in a never ending circular process. The circularity of feelings and behaviors is much broader than just another chicken and egg story.

Individuals who choose to wait for the feeling to precede any action have discovered a powerful technique to avoid ever changing their behavior. People who state, "I'll do it when I feel like it" have actually decided to allow their purely subjective emotional reactions to dictate their present and future course of action. Lawrence Crabb characterizes this pattern as problem feelings leading to problem behaviors which ultimately becomes problem thinking. The process is then perpetuated as the problematic thinking influences both behavior and feelings. As this process develops, a fatal whirlpool forms and blindly sucks everything into its dark abyss.

This prescription begins by studying God's word to

gain Biblical enlightenment designed to clear clouded thinking. This new way of thinking exhorts us to seek new behaviors, goals, and conflict resolution skills. New thinking coupled with a new way of living encourages us to choose more positive feelings. Marriages that survive are populated by individuals who understand the cynical dictatorship of negative thinking, behaving, and feeling. Gain freedom and independence by having the faith and courage to risk choosing to bless others with positive, caring actions . . . even when you don't feel like it.

Activity: Fill in the following blanks.

Behaviors/Actions Others Want Me to Do:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Feelings I Use to Prevent Action:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

I NEVER FORGIVE ANYTHING

Even the casual student of human behavior will admit that individuals generally have a good memory. Marriage therapists would hasten to add that couples have excellent memories . . . of "bad" things. It is amazing how long we can remember the presumably accurate details of all the old wounds. One bride of 32 years recently confessed through choked tears, "I've never forgiven you for what you said to Barbara at our wedding reception. It has been with me every day."

Most husbands seem to have the common task of opening the household garbage. Imagine the stench of opening 32-year-old garbage! Also try to grasp some idea of the enormous amount of personal energy needed to carry and maintain anger and hurt for so many years. One is obviously faced with the question, "Why?" Why keep all that hurt trapped inside to fester and grow? Why not let go and forgive?

One possible answer is that by forgiving we must give that person another chance . . . we must clear the board and release the grievance . . . clear the docket and free the accused. When we remove the list of offenses and pronounce the offender innocent, the possibility of punishment and retribution vanish. Society frowns on punishing the innocent, but champions the cause of the victim. Perhaps you have difficulty forgiving because you've been victimized in your marriage and are crying out for justice.

A second realistic answer to the forgiveness dilemma is power. That's right. There is power in being the victim, the one who is downtrodden, misused, abused, and taken for granted. As the victim we have the right to demand justice and punishment for our persecutor. If we forgive, we would have to relinquish some of our newly-acquired power.

A final answer to the forgiveness question relates to what we choose to remember. The events we choose to remember are a function of the power we wish to maintain in the relationship and the "case" we are trying to make based on our evidence. You may have said, "I never forget anything." My question then becomes,

“Why is it that you have forgotten all the good things? Where is the list of all the positive experiences that brought you together and sustained you through the years?” The buzzard and the eagle both fly over the same landscape but look for entirely different things. As you review your marriage, are you fair enough to balance the scales of your memory with both marital strengths as well as weaknesses?

Thus, the key prescription for forgetting and forgiving is letting go and remembering. Letting go of the belief that our happiness is in the control of our spouse. Freeing ourselves from the notion that our personal inadequacies can be “cured” by the love and devotion of a loved one. Move on from a world filled with dark yesterdays to a future of enlightened todays.

Activity: Make a list of the three major events, behaviors, or situations in your marriage that you have been saving as part of your “marriage garbage.” Do *not* share it with your spouse. Now decide to “empty the trash” by writing an explanation entitled “What I Get out of Saving This Garbage.”

Next, make a list of your marital strengths. Share this list with your spouse.

IF I HAVE TO ASK FOR IT . . . FORGET IT!

Think back to when you were a small child and the time was quickly approaching for your birthday or Christmas. One of the first things you did was make a list of all the gifts you hoped to receive. Do you remember the joy and excitement you experienced when

you got what you wanted? Had you *not* gotten what you wanted, those days could have become opportunities for dejection, depression, and resentment.

Once more, go back in your memory to a place where you were trying to help someone or meet a particular need of theirs. Perhaps you are thinking of a time when a child asked for your help or a friend came to you for suggestions or solutions to a particular problem. The young child asks, "Mommy, I'm bored. What can I do?" The friend mournfully states, "My life is empty and unhappy. What do you think I should do to be happy?" The resulting conversation usually followed some variation of the theme "Yes, but . . ." where you gave suggestions and they refused to accept them. Finally, in frustration, you said, "Well, what DO you want?"

Sooner or later everyone takes time to evaluate their marriage and place it somewhere between "totally satisfactory" and "totally unsatisfactory." This evaluation process necessitates a comparison between the way you think your marriage, husband, wife, children, etc., should be and the way you perceive them to be in actuality. The greater the difference between "the way it should be" and "the way it is," then the greater the chance you will label your marriage unsatisfactory. It is interesting to notice that before you could make any comparison you had to make a list of your expectations.

This list of expectations is your marital Christmas list. These are the things you want to be present in your marriage. Remember: The way we get what we want is to ask for it. It would really seem silly to reject a "marriage gift" only *because* you had asked for it. Help your

spouse know what and how to “give” by (1) being specific; (2) being positive; (3) choosing the “little things” of your relationship; (4) listing things that can occur frequently; and (5) making sure you acknowledge both the gift *and* the giver. Marriages are comprised of two individuals who must simultaneously be gift giver as well as gift receiver . . . How are you doing at both?

Activity: Make a list for your spouse that includes five things he/she could do that would indicate he/she cares about you. These caring deeds must be positive, small, inexpensive, able to occur often and not related to any major relationship difficulty.

“I feel cared about when you . . . ”

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

CONCLUSION

“Marital Prescriptions” is written to infuse your marriage with the strength and resistance to withstand the ills infecting so many marriages. The suggested key factors which will ensure having a quality relationship are first, deciding that dynamic, strong, growing marriages are the result of acquired learned skills and hard work. Second, marriages are much easier to build than to rebuild. Third, husbands and wives must openly share their hopes, dreams and desires with each other. Fourth, if you wait until you feel like it, you may wait forever.

And fifth, any constructive relationship change must begin by changing ourselves.

And finally, please remember that the cure to a troubled relationship is not surgery but a mutual healing.

Royce Money

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GUARANTEES FOR GROWING HEALTHY FAMILIES

Royce Money

It seems as though everybody likes a guarantee in these times. We want to be assured that the results will be predictable or that the product will do what it is supposed to do. When it comes to growing stronger families, we may not be so sure that anything works all the time, especially if we are in the middle of raising one or have done so in the past. Only those who have never done it or who have just begun are sure.

Yet, in the midst of all this confusion and unpredictability about raising families, there can be some certainties — guarantees, if you please. In recent years, there have been a number of studies conducted that examine the characteristics of strong families.¹ From this research we are able to identify common traits that appear in a surprisingly large percentage of strong families. As you will see, the traits are interwoven. Yet for purposes of discussion we will separate them.

I am going on the assumption that if we in our families adopt the common traits of these strong families, we, too, will become strong. Here are 10 of the outstanding traits that I believe are most important.

I. The Healthy Family Communicates and Listens

That trait is just about number one on everybody's list. It is a basic thread that runs through all the other qualities. To some extent they all take their strength

from the ability of family members to communicate clearly.

Even strong families have squabbles and disagreements. But they are able to work through the issues that divide them and keep them from becoming full-blown problems. So the difference between healthy families and failing families is not the presence or absence of conflict, but the way in which conflict is handled.

What or who is the key to the development of healthy family communication patterns? All the family life experts agree on this one. *The adults in the family set the tone for the entire family.* In most American families, that is the parents — the husband and wife. But the principle holds equally true in single parent families. Children will key off the significant adults in their lives, and especially their parents. The relationship that spouses have (even in circumstances of separation and divorce) will have a marked effect on the parent-child communications.

Since the husband-wife relationship is so pivotal, doesn't it make a lot of sense to spend time evaluating that relationship and working on it and spending time with it?

II. The Healthy Family Has a Deep Religious Conviction

For a number of years we have known through research that there is a positive relationship of religion to marital happiness and successful family relationships. These findings, then, are no great surprise, but

the degree to which a religious core was found in these families is indeed encouraging. They don't necessarily mean that people who aren't religious cannot have happy marriages and good families. But I believe the potential for satisfying family relationships is far greater among the religiously-oriented families than among those who do not share a faith. The alternative to faith in a transcendent God is faith in self. Our ailing society turned in on itself is testimony enough that the answers to life's perplexities do not lie within ourselves.

If the Christian faith is passed on to our children, it will be because they see some direct benefit in improving the quality of our life together. Does it work? Does it make a difference in daily life? These are legitimate questions worthy of our investigation. Strong families answer an enthusiastic "yes" to these questions. Here are five areas that I believe are central to the building of strong religious elements in Christian families.

1. The strong family is sensitive to the various developmental stages of growth and faith its members go through.

2. The strong family practices its faith in some form constantly.

3. The strong family sees the church as a larger support system — a "greater" family.

4. The strong family assumes its own responsibility for spiritual training, using the church as a supplement.

5. Strong families don't overreact when children test their faith or even reject it.

III. The Healthy Family Affirms and Supports One Another

One of the most significant qualities discovered was that strong families continually express appreciation for one another. They build one another up psychologically and make others feel good about themselves. This practice of affirmation was found to be pervasive throughout the families studied and was the basic cohesive factor in a family.

Communication experts say that verbal content in the home should be at least 80 percent positive. The negative cannot and should not be completely eliminated, but it can only produce maximum results within a greater context of frequently expressed positive affirmation. Encouragement builds self-respect and a sense of accomplishment.

Does the Bible have much to say about people expressing appreciation to one another and building up and encouraging one another? It certainly does. Remember, these scripture admonitions apply equally to family relationships as well as to our dealings with people in general. The first one that comes to mind is a favorite of mine found in Ephesians 4:29. "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for *building others up* according to their needs." What a powerful verse! Here is one of those passages that, if it were applied in earnest by every member of the family, it would revolutionize that family. What if your family decided today to say only what built others up and to respond to one another on the level of what was really needed? Would the future be any different from the past? For nearly all of us we would have to say yes, it most certainly would.

The Thessalonian correspondence is one of encouragement from Paul. On several occasions Paul encourages them and admonishes them to encourage one another. That spirit is exemplified by his comment in 1 Thessalonians 5:11, when he says to them, "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."

IV. The Healthy Family Deals With Crisis in a Positive Manner

Even in the darkest of situations these families see hope and do not despair. Somehow, when difficult times come, they manage to pull together, when weaker families would have been fragmented.

Why do some families make it through a crisis and some don't? I believe there are some components that when developed will help all of us through those rough times.

1. How the crisis is interpreted is a major factor in a person's reaction to a crisis. They accept what is inevitable and begin to focus on the elements that can be changed.

2. The degree of support system the family has is another factor. A family can withstand even the most severe kind of crisis if the system of support around them is of sufficient quality.

3. Because strong families know who they are and what they believe, they can weather the crisis. They may waver temporarily, but in time their period of adjustment is easier because of the anchors in their lives.

4. Strong families have a deep religious grounding that helps them interpret and survive a crisis. The quality of perseverance is refined.

5. A past record of dealing successfully with crises is a positive factor in dealing with future ones.

6. One of the major factors in the family's capacity to deal with loss is the ability to be open with feelings. Those families who can share openly their painful feelings encourage a sense of being together.

7. A key to all the adaptability factors is the family's ability to change and be flexible. The healthy family makes constant adjustments to time and the inevitable changes it brings. Crisis can produce growth in families. Often in troubled times we learn to rely on one another more.

V. The Healthy Family Spends Time Together

Several of the family experts I have read say that lack of time may be the most pervasive enemy the healthy family has. No doubt you have heard Dr. James Dobson say that he doesn't know any families that aren't over-committed. What a struggle! About the time we feel we are making some progress, something else comes along and complicates things all over again.

I have listed eight things that can help us in this constant struggle.

1. Prioritize! Prioritize! Prioritize! . . . Again. It has to be done over and over.

2. Monitor your level of involvement in organized activities, especially involving the children. Most of us are over-involved.

3. Control your work schedule. We men especially

need to learn how to say, "No."

4. Develop a family "philosophy" of leisure and together time, allowing for some individual differences. Talk it over and let the family decide.

5. Commit to regular family times together. While it's hard, the rewards are great.

6. Don't do everything together, but do *something* together. Aim for a balance.

7. Be prepared to meet resistance. Particularly with adolescents in the home, scheduling may be a problem.

8. Slow down and live! Evaluate who you are and your purpose for living and why you may be killing yourself on things that don't really matter.

VI. A Healthy Family Has a Sense of Loyalty, Commitment, and Tradition

In a world that is hesitant to commit to much of anything, this quality stands out. Let me make two suggestions as to the direction your commitment should take.

First, *commit yourselves to your marriage*. With a deep mutual commitment, many problems can be worked through successfully where those of less commitment would have given up. We have already noticed that the husband-wife relationship is the primary relationship in the family by God's design. It sets the tone for the entire family interaction. Attention to this relationship supersedes the parent-child relationship, though neither need be neglected.

The second suggestion is like the first, except broader. *Commit your family to unconditional permanence*. It

concerns me that some families I see — Christians included — tend to accept or reject their children, based on their performance, or parental expectations, or acceptable behavior. I think of that story of the prodigal son in Luke 15, which should be called the loving father. The point of the parable is to show us that God is like that waiting father, whose love for his son was great enough to let him go and strong enough to welcome him back. Of course, that's the story of you and me and our wanderings from God, whose steadfast love never fails!

Unconditional love. Permanent love. Two words that capture the very essence of Christian *agape* love. "Our family will be here and love you and accept you, no matter what." I don't think a lot of people in the world give or receive that kind of family commitment. But you can.

There's a lot of security in family traditions. The older I get, the more I cherish traditions and good memories. They give us a warm feeling and a sense of family.

VII. The Healthy Family Has Balanced Interaction, Including a Sense of Humor

This trait connects particularly with our previous one on spending time together. Balanced interaction refers particularly to the amount of time spent with individuals within the family. A balance of time is spent so that each can get to know, love, and appreciate the others.

The research on strong families shows that when they found their lifestyle fragmented by work or social schedule, they made their families the top priority for

awhile. They tried to relieve themselves from as much outside stress as possible.

Dolores Curran sees two hallmarks identifying these families. First, the family does not allow work and other activities to infringe routinely upon family time. They don't automatically accept the fact that work comes first. Curran flatly states that work, more than anything else, gets in the way of strong family relationships, whether on the part of father, mother, or the kids. Control of work is the bottom line factor in balanced family interactions.

Second, the family actively discourages the formation of coalitions and cliques within the family. Naturally, the parental coalition is a healthy and desirable one. But when a mother and a child side against a father, or some other combination the results can be disastrous. Obviously, the best situation is where each family member feels free to interact with all the others in the family.

VIII. The Healthy Family Trusts and Respects One Another

It doesn't take long for me to observe a family's interaction to know something about their level of mutual trust. I can tell by their tone of voice and their general treatment of each other, as well as by the content of the messages. Healthy families can be trusting in their relationships because they have learned to be secure in sharing their individual thoughts and feelings. Trust is likely to be present at all levels of human encounter, or not present in any of them. Trust provides openness in a family, and openness is an integral factor in the

development of family commitment.

Family trust is delicate in that when it is broken, it may not easily and quickly be replaced. But the good news is that it can be built back with effort. Strong families have a way of giving each other another chance when trust is violated. In families, the tone of trust is set by the parents in their own relationship. It's easy to be committed to a family who trusts.

Like Rodney Dangerfield, some families "don't get no respect." Dolores Curran, in listing respect as one of the major traits of a healthy family, reports that families usually all have respect for people or none of do. Rarely are they mixed. That's interesting, isn't it? Apparently, respect is either taught, modeled, and accomplished by the parents, or it isn't.

IX. The Healthy Family Teaches a Sense of Personal Responsibility and Values

By responsibility, I mean more than merely doing the chores, although that is certainly included. Responsibility stems from feeling respected and discovering how much people need each other. These families gear responsibility to capability and reward it with recognition. It is not necessarily linked to orderliness or perfection but is characterized by a sensitivity on the part of the parents.

The family expects members to live with the consequences of irresponsibility. Since irresponsible children grow up to be irresponsible adults (unless they are taught otherwise), these strong families do not hesitate to make their children responsible for the logical conse-

quences of their actions.

The healthy Christian family functions from a definite set of values that have a moral base. From this base comes a sense of right and wrong. We need that in order to make sense out of this world. I believe that parents should not be ashamed to talk values with their children. I noticed lately in some literature I received from James Dobson that he suggests for parents to write down family values and encourage their children to commit them to memory. That may not be your way of doing it, but the teaching of values still needs to be done in some fashion. Of course, the Golden Rule is not a bad place to start. In a culture that is so self-centered, the value that cultivates a sensitivity to other people and serves their needs is right at the heart of the Christian faith.

X. The Healthy Family Values Service to Others

An interesting observation was made about these families. There was a significantly higher degree of contentment and a simpler life style, brought on primarily because of their involvement in the lives of others. They were not the ones addicted to the pursuit of wealth. The characteristic of empathy and altruism that existed in the lives of the parents was quickly caught by the children.

There's a false idea that some of us who are Christians have bought into. It says that in order to be successful parents, they should be at the top of their career fields so they could give their children better neighborhoods, more goods, and higher prestige. The

research shows the opposite. The healthy parents are generally *not* at the top of their career fields. They often turn down promotions simply for their family's welfare. They get more pleasure in giving than accumulating and in living for others instead of for themselves.

While these families are generous and hospitable, it must be said that they also keep their volunteerism under control. Too much giving on the part of the parents may cause resentment from the children. Even church work, as noble as that is, needs to be balanced with a proper attention to one's family. They have learned that when commitment to others is balanced with family needs, both the family and others are blessed.

There are a lot of good families out in our society that are making it. They are positive and hopeful. Instead of ringing our hands over the troubled ones, let's praise those who are doing a good job. No matter what the situation in your family today, the good news is that it can be better. We know what makes strong Christian families. We know how they act. We know that God wants us to have better family relationships. We know that He will give us the power to change. May God now help us to translate that knowledge into action.

¹Dolores Curran, *Traits of a Healthy Family* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1983).

Jerry M. Lewis, *How's Your Family? A Guide to Identifying Your Family's Strengths and Weaknesses* (New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1979).

Nick Stinnett, et al., "Strong Families: A National Study," in *Family Strengths 3: Roots of Well-Being* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981).

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THE EPISTLE TO TITUS — A MISSIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Carroll D. Osburn

I. The Cretan Dilemma: Gnostics or *Entrepreneurs*? (Titus 1:1-5; 3:8ff)

One autumn day, nearly 2,000 years ago, an evangelist on Crete received a brief letter from an aging and experienced missionary named Paul. This "epistle to Titus" was originally intended to make a difference in the missionary endeavors of the man to whom it was addressed. Later included in the New Testament canon, it would continue to influence Christianity through the centuries, although not so powerfully as other letters by Paul. However, owing to the fact that the letter was written under other skies, in another language, concerning people whose cultural aspects are far removed from those of twentieth-century America, modern readers not only find much in the letter to be obtuse, but diverge widely on their interpretation of it.

Grouped with 1 and 2 Timothy by D.N. Berdot (1703) and P. Anton (1726), Titus has subsequently been discussed in terms of the "Pastoral Epistles." Critical scholarship has generally concluded that these epistles are not genuinely Pauline,¹ but reflect a later period characterized by Gnosticizing tendencies. However, as Earl Ellis² has observed, a growing number of scholars are now inclined to accept the letters as genuine.³ Assuming genuineness, two basic factors must be considered constantly if the epistle is to be understood pro-

perly. Both factors were underscored for Restoration thinking long ago in the opening pages of A. Campbell's⁴ *The Christian System*. First, any text must be understood in terms of what it contributes to the flow of thought through the letter. Unless the writer's overall point is kept constantly in mind, there exists the serious danger of reading verses out of context.⁵ Second, the text must be understood in its historical milieu as well. This letter was produced within and for an historical situation and it invites historical analysis. It must be read in terms of the situation of the recipient as the writer conceived it, and any reconstruction of that historical situation must be based upon explicit information within the letter itself.⁶ Understood properly in its first-century setting, the letter to Titus can yet speak powerfully to Christianity today.

A. Crete and the Cretans

"There is a land called Crete in the midst of a wine-dark sea. Therein are many men, past counting, and over 90 cities," wrote Homer in his *Odyssey*, XIX.172-174. However, by the first-century A.D., Pliny the Elder would write of only 40 cities and "50 others of which only the memory remains" (*Nat. Hist.* IV.12.58,59).⁷ Lying in the Mediterranean Sea just south of Greece and Turkey, Crete is about 150 miles long and 15-35 miles wide. A rugged island, it has five mountain ranges and countless gorges and ravines which made travel difficult. Due to the rocky coastline and prevailing southwesterly winds from the Sahara (Acts 27:3-26), shipping was treacherous and cities few.

The north side of Crete, however, was favored with several deep-water harbors conducive to the development of sizable cities and commerce.

As early as the Early Minoan (2800-1800 B.C.) and Middle Minoan (1800-1550 B.C.) periods, life on Crete was quite advanced, rivalling the outstanding civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt. Politically, militarily, socially, economically, religiously, the Cretan people were at the height of Mediterranean civilization. However, internal dissensions led to the collapse of Cretan government, decay of the economic situation, alterations to the social order, and general decline of the civilization. By the time Greece was reaching its zenith under Pericles in the fifth-century B.C., Crete had degenerated considerably from earlier years. During the last century B.C., Crete had become the stronghold of pirates and brigands, and life there was as deplorable as anywhere in the Mediterranean. Subdued by Quintus Metellus in 67 B.C., Crete became a senatorial province under Pompey, but the life-style of the Cretans was distinctly *not* Roman.

During the centuries preceding Christ, the Cretan people had become known widely as a despicable people. Gone were the old respect for law and order, truth and honesty, manners, and gentility. In the place of characteristics which once made the Cretans powerful and noble, there came to dominate characteristics destined to bring the scorn of all people. Life there was more like what one would expect in a Caribbean pirate-den of the nineteenth-century, including the murder, hot-headedness, fighting, prostitution, robbery, and

deception.

This radical reversal of ethic evidences itself in economics, for instance. Diodoros of Sicily wrote, "So much do the the lust for wealth and underhanded gain prevail among them that they are the only people in the world among whom no stigma attached to any sort of gain whatsoever" (37:18). As a matter of fact, Polybius (8:21) mentions a phrase, "to out-Cretan a Cretan," which underscores their deception in business affairs. Plutarch (23:4) says that "Cretans are as devoted to riches as bees are to a honeycomb." Yet they had no concern for ethics. Cicero, *Rep.* III.4.15, says that "Cretans even consider highway robbery to be an honorable profession." Diodorus (37:18) tells of a Cretan who came to the consul Julius (c. 90 B.C.) with an offer to betray his own army. Asking what reward he would receive, he convulsed with laughter upon hearing only that he would be made a Roman citizen. Pulling himself together, the Cretan said, "Gain is what we aim at, and as we range over land and sea, every arrow is for ourselves and for the sake of money. So, I too am come here now to get money." Being then offered a thousand drachmas, he betrayed his army. Moral principles were so lax that, as Livy, the Roman historian said (44.45.13), the Cretans did literally everything "in hope of cash."

In this connection, piracy raged in the Cretan waters.⁸ By the fourth and third centuries B.C., piracy was common in the Mediterranean, with the Cretans as undisputed leaders. By the end of the second century B.C., piracy had become a major source of income on the

island (Strabo, *Geography* X.4.9). With the subjugation of the island by the Romans in 67 B.C., piracy subsided. Unfortunately, the life-style characteristics built into the fabric of Cretan culture by centuries of piracy did not.

Cretans were likewise widely known in the first century A.D. for their insolence, insubordination, and rebelliousness. With the collapse of Cretan government as far back as 1450 B.C., the various cities and villages fought incessantly among one another (Polybius, *Hist.* IV.53-55). They fought as mercenaries in the armies of Egypt, Syria, Greece, Turkey, and Rome. A well-known Cretan drinking song composed by the Cretan poet Hybrias⁹ says

My wealth is in my sword and spear,
and the fair bucklet that protects me from harm;
With these I plough, with these I reap,
with these I press the sweet wine from the grape.

Polybius (*Hist.* IV.8.11) says of these mercenaries, "The Cretans both by land and sea are irresistible in ambushes, tricks played on the enemy, night attacks, and all petty operations which require fraud." Cretan youth were trained from an early age in athletic and military pursuits, but homosexuality became a serious problem in the training camps, and eventually in Cretan society as a whole. Strabo, *Geography* X.4.21), complains that homosexuality had become held in high esteem by the Cretans during the first-century A.D. Anger, hot-headedness, fighting, and rebelliousness continued as major social problems during the New Testament era.

Women on Crete came to have major roles in life on Crete. While men were away at sea or in bands of robbers, women began to acquire freedom in domestic and social life. They often did men's work and took part in sports, such as bull-fighting. Monogamy prevailed, but adultery was taken for granted, as in the Law Code of Gortyn.¹⁰

For rape:

- 1. Against a free person 1200 Obols
- 2. Against an *apetairos* 120 Obols
- 3. Against a free by a slave 2400 Obols
- 4. Against a serf by a serf 60 Obols
- 5. Against a serf by a free 30 Obols
- 6. A free against a household slave
 - a. virgin 24 Obols
 - b. non-virgin 1 Obol

For adultery:

- 1. With a free woman 1200 Obols
- 2. With the wife of an *apetairos* 120 Obols
- 3. A slave with a free woman 1200 Obols
- 4. Slave with a slave 60 Obols

Concerning this scale, Willetts¹¹ makes the point that,

It should be explained that rape, seduction, and adultery were dealt with as offenses of like category. That is to say, they were not looked upon as criminal, public wrong-doing, but as matters to be settled by private monetary compensation.

Needless to say, family life on Crete was in great

disrepair during New Testament times.

Along similar lines, it became proverbial that "to Cretanize" was "to lie," the Greek verb *kretidzw* meaning "to play the Cretan." The Latin proverb, "Cretizare cum Cretensibus," meant to be false, to deceive the deceiver.

Too, Crete was known for its wine (Juvenal, *Satire* xiv.270; *Aelian, Varia Historaea* xii.31; Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* xiv.9). While much was exported, much was consumed, creating a serious problem of alcoholism on the island. There were laws against drunkenness, but seem largely to have been ignored.

Raising children on the island was fraught with difficulty, as the passing of generations presented a lifestyle which grew progressively worse. Babies were born into a civilization which seemed to turn them into animals. They were not always loved. For instance, if a free woman had a child after a divorce, she was obligated to take the child to the household of her former husband. If he rejected the child, the mother could opt to raise the child or kill it. If she killed the child before taking it to the former husband, she paid a small fine. Children seemed destined to anger and incivility, homosexuality, drunkenness and murder, lying, and lack of trust.

Ancient writers are in concert in presenting Cretan character as despicable. Some, such as George Findlay,¹² feel the ancient writers over-stressed Cretan ignominy. He writes,

It is to be found that there is scarcely any nation,

ancient or modern, often referred to in literature, which could not be made to appear in a painfully unfavorable light, if a collation were made of all the bitterest censures passed on them by poets and satirists.

The textual evidence, however, presents an unmistakably dark picture of Cretan character. Polybius, *Hist.* xxiii.16.5, did speak of a certain Antiphates as being "not at all Cretan in character, but had escaped the contagion of Cretan ill-breeding." However, this young man seems to have been more like the proverbial "needle in the haystack." Generally, the old Greek proverb seems to be fairly descriptive which reads, "There are three K's (i.e., Greek *kappa*) that are the worst of all," namely, the Cappadocians, the Cilicians, and the Cretans (each beginning with *kappa* in Greek). Ancient Crete is a "text-book case" in degeneracy.

B. Christianity on Crete

Just when Christianity was introduced to Crete or by whom is unknown. In the 40 or so villages on Crete, though, small churches exist, comprised mainly of people who grew up in an extremely pagan atmosphere. Not having had the benefit of the great truths which once thundered from Sinai, they come from a very pagan background. The Jewish people had been admonished to "teach them diligently to your children, and talk of them in your house, and when you walk by the way" (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). But for several centuries the Cretans have been passing down to their children attitudes and life-styles which are just the opposite. Lying,

anger, adultery, etc., on Crete are not considered wrong, but normal. There has been a reversal of virtue. Truthfulness is not a sign of virtue, but of stupidity. Marital faithfulness is not a matter of honor, but of unconcern. Yet, some have heard of Jesus of Nazareth and the open tomb, and have become Christians.

Now the story of Jesus (Matthew 12:43-45) concerning one who throws out an unclean spirit, but does not replace it with something better, and finds seven worse spirits taking over, is important just here. Some Cretans have accepted Christ, but remaining immature in the faith, they are involved in syncretism. Coming out of a pagan background rooted in centuries of degradation, they do not suddenly become mature Christians. They tend toward syncretism.¹³

Paul has been dealing with syncretism for nearly two decades. Following his conversion (Acts 9) ca. 33 A.D., he was asked by the church in Antioch to undertake a missions effort in Asia Minor, which he began in 46 A.D. (Acts 13,14). Following the frustrating encounter with the Zeus cult, he returned to Jerusalem, where a conference of Christian leaders convened to discuss the matter of Jewish cultural "baggage" and essentials of the Christian faith. His second missions tour to the Aegean began in 50 A.D. (Acts 16-18), and involved the establishment of churches in Asia Minor as well as Greece. In 53 A.D., yet a third trip was undertaken. On these trips Paul wrote 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Romans. From 57-63 A.D., Paul was imprisoned (Acts 21-27). Apparently released from prison, he returned to his beloved Aegean to visit

works in progress by his associates, such as Timothy at Ephesus and Titus on Crete. The letters of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus date from this period.

Paul has a strong interest in the Cretan situation and has left Titus there to work among the churches.¹⁴

A situation of serious dimensions has arisen which evokes this letter. It is a missionary treatise, dealing with syncretism.

Titus 1:5 clearly indicates the two-fold basis for his activity on Crete: (1) "straighten up" certain things, and (2) establish leadership in the villages. But note the emphatic, "like I *told* you to!" It is obvious that Titus has been spending his time doing other than these two things he was left there to do. But what? Has he simply been wasting his time? I think not. In the conclusion of the book, 3:8-11, Titus is admonished to speak what Paul has written in the epistle, and he is specifically told to "avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, strife, and quibblings about legalistic matters." But to what does that refer? Reference to 1:10-16 clears up the matter. "Many rebellious, empty-talking, deceivers (especially Jewish) must be silenced, as they are upsetting entire households of people." These intruders, however, are not said to be Gnostics and the frequent references to Gnosticism in commentaries on Titus are without foundation. While we must avoid the sweeping overstatement of Casey¹⁵ that "the New Testament requires no explanation, either as a whole or in any of its parts, in terms of an hypothetical primitive Gnosticism," it is true that attempts to locate traces of Gnosticism in the opponents of Titus have attributed significantly more to

them than is warranted by the text. In view of the difficulties encountered in linking these intruders with Gnosticism by other than ingenious composites of their character based upon tempting inferences and vague possibilities, it seems hazardous to rely overly-much upon the terminology "incipient Gnosticism."¹⁶ In fact, in 1:11 Paul specifies that the problem is not so much a *theological* one, but *economical*. That, you see, is where Titus has been missiologically unwise. The intruders are "teaching things not necessary, for the sake of gain."

In 1:5 Titus is strongly admonished to get on with the tasks of establishing leaders on Crete and of straightening up certain matters that need attention. Titus 1:5-16 treats the former; 2:1-3:7, the latter. He is definitely to cease quibbling with these intrusive teachers over legal matters and foolish controversies. Typical Cretan greed has led certain enterprising Cretans to infiltrate the immature and ill-trained congregations and to palm themselves off as Christian teachers. They are not so vitally involved in theology as they are in making money. So long as Titus tries to counter this economic problem with theological answers, nothing of any substance happens in the Christian mission on the island. According to 1:9, though, Paul envisages that the troublemakers will be dealt with, but by the elders, . . . if Titus will develop them. One "circuit-riding preacher," however, could not possibly deal with problems like this all over the island.

And since the role-models on Crete are diverse and so very foreign to Christian models, the people need to understand clearly the life-style to which they are called

as Christians. Titus is the one man on Crete who knows that calling, and the Biblical basis for it. If he wastes his time fussing with the false teachers, not only are no leaders developed, but the members remain entrenched in the despicable pagan mind-set of their Cretan forefathers. When the missionary leaves, what then happens to immature Christians who have no leaders and no deeper understanding of the Christian calling? Are they not even greater prey to charlatans?

In 3:12-15, Paul tells Titus that he is to follow this directive until winter comes, when he is to meet Paul in Nicopolis. As soon as Artemas or Tychicus arrives, Titus is to leave the mission on Crete, apparently to go on to Dalmatia (Yugoslavia; see 2 Timothy 4:10). The letter, then, was intended to assist Titus in making better use of his limited time until then. So, "straighten up the things yet to be straightened up and establish leaders city by city, *like I told you to!*"

II. Churches in Crisis:

The Leadership Factor (Titus 1:5-16)

Titus 1:1-4 constitute the literary introduction to the epistle, and the progression in verses 1,2a is important for understanding Paul's point throughout the epistle. Basic to the mission on Crete are two items, faith and good information. Those two things lead to godliness, which in turn leads on to the hope of life eternal. Reversed, one might say that if the hope of life eternal is to be meaningful, it must be based upon godly living, and if godliness is to occur, it must be based upon faith and solid thinking. This is what Paul says God has commanded him to preach among the Gentiles, and this is

what he stresses initially to Titus.

The body of the epistle consists of three parts: 1:5-16 treating the second aspect of 1:5; 2:1-15 treating the first aspect of 1:5; and 3:1-7 providing a missiological model for Titus to follow during the brief period until winter. The conclusion of the book is driven home in 3:8-11, and 3:12-15 is a postscript.

The appeal for the development of leadership has two elements: (1) the criteria for leaders on Crete (1:6-9), and (2) the reason such leaders are vitally needed (1:10-16).

The "for" in 1:10 is important, because it relates the situation in vs. 10ff to the qualifications in vs. 6ff. "Many rebellious, empty-talking, deceivers" have crept into the churches, "teaching things not necessary for the sake of gain." As they are "upsetting entire families" with their teaching, "they must be silenced." Notice that Paul does not accuse them of teaching "error"; only "things not necessary." One does not have to teach error to be a detriment to the church; all he has to do is to deprive the listeners of vital information. Two types of deceivers are mentioned in the text: (1) those of Jewish background (v. 10), and (2) others (v. 14). The activity of these persons mandates the presence of leaders fully able to counter their unproductive input.

Supposing certain Jewish intruders to have been drawing from their heritage certain information they might teach to young Christians, what might that be? Exemplary of the almost countless Jewish regulations concerning prayer at meals, for instance, is Berakoth 6:1-8:8, in which it is specified that if one eats an

amount of food equal to an olive's bulk, prayer is mandatory. A later rabbi revised the requirement to "as much as an egg's bulk." Also, if two groups are eating in the same house, one prayer will suffice for all if some in one group can see some in the other group in an adjacent room, but if not, each group must say a separate prayer. Regulations such as these were as countless, it seems, as the sands of the sea. As the early Christians worshipped the Jewish God, honored the Jewish Messiah, read from Jewish scriptures, and met frequently in Jewish synagogues, it is not unexpected that on Crete, certain Jews would find the gullible Christian groups easy prey. By instructing them in such "non-essentials" as regulations on prayer at meals, etc., they not only made money, but omitted major aspects of Christian doctrine such as the atonement, Christian life-style, and salvation.

Not all such teachers were Jewish, as 1:14 makes clear. Cretans had their own religious customs and feasts which provided fertile information which might enable them to pass as Christian instructors. Those who would not deign to show visitors the "very cave in which Zeus was born" on Mt. Ida, for a fee of course, would not hesitate to teach certain rituals and beliefs common to Cretan religious heritage.

In 1:16, Paul calls them "detestable." While they "profess to know God," their lives clearly demonstrate that they are ungodly people whose insidious input to Christian thought on the island must be put to an end. "They must be silenced" (1:11). In 1:12, Paul quotes Epimenides, a Cretan who lived about 500 B.C., who

wrote a poem, part of which has been recovered by Rendel Harris.¹⁷

A grave have fashioned for thee, O Holy and
High One,
The lying Cretans, who are all the time liars, evil
beasts, idle bellies,
But thou diest not, for to eternity thou livest and
standest,
For in thee we live and move and have our being.

The quote itself is designed to drive home the observation that the people who are posing serious threats to Christian thought on the island are from a long heritage of disreputable behavior, as even one of their own poets stated in no uncertain terms. Indeed, 1:13a underscores that fact. One must keep in mind that the letter was not addressed to the Christians on Crete, but to Titus himself.

In 1:13 Paul stresses that the intruders are to be convinced thoroughly ("reproved strongly" is possible in Greek), so that they will be "sound in the faith." It appears that Paul is not so much disturbed with their teaching, as with their teaching misleading, unfortunate information. As he said in the introduction, faith and good information are basic to the Christian enterprise. If Titus can teach them correct information, the churches will be stronger. Teachable Cretans, then, would become an asset; unteachable ones, however, would be detrimental both to the churches and to Titus' mission (3:9).

Teaching Jewish "myths," such as the aforemen-

tioned regulations on prayer, etc., and other "commandments of men turned from the truth," is bad enough. But to do so from motives of greed is abominable. Paul seems inclined, as the paragraph continues, to view the intruders as almost hopeless. To them, he insinuates, nothing is pure. Even their minds and consciences are defiled, in typical Cretan style. As such, they are not even close to being "good," much less "noble."

This, then, is the situation which necessitates the development of strong leaders in local congregations. If the divisive work of these intruders is to be countered effectively and people on the island encouraged strongly in Christian life-style, it is mandatory that leaders exist.

Now the leadership characteristics in Titus 1:6-9 have often been lifted from this context, joined artificially to the similar list in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, and explained in countless ways foreign to the original context. No basis exists for removing either list from its context. Certain requirements were enjoined for being an elder in Ephesus, a city of 250,000 people with all the urban character and problems of any major metropolitan city. Certain requirements were enjoined for being an elder in the rural and problematic island of Crete. The two lists are similar in certain respects, yet very different in others. If the twentieth-century reader would understand Titus 1:6-9, he must leave the list in the literary context of Titus and the historical context of Crete. Further, it is vital that the notions added to the text by the preaching tradition and the debating tradition be stripped away, and that meanings be assigned to the

texts which are firmly supported by exegesis.

Titus 1:6 treats family matters, and 1:7-9 treats other concerns in the daily life of the men involved. The one over-riding characteristic is "blameless."

With regard to one's family life, he is to be the "husband of one wife." Countless real and hypothetical situations are posed very often to Greek teachers in which people wonder, for instance, if one qualifies whose first wife was unfortunately killed in an accident and he has remarried. Commentaries frequently mention "polygamy." Can one be said to be the "husband of one wife" whose wife has died, and he has remained unmarried? These, and others, are good questions, but are not addressed in Titus. The phrase in Titus 1:6 merely means that one is to be faithful to his wife, rather than involved in typical Cretan adultery. Polygamy was not even a problem on Crete. From this meagre information, one must carefully arrive at implications for contemporary living, and be ever so careful not to bind upon others what is not explicit in the text.

The reference to having "faithful children" has been a complex matter over the years due to the Greek word *pista* meaning either "faithful to parents" or "faithful to God." The latter meaning is prominent in TEV, which renders, "Children must be believers," and in Living Bible Paraphrased, "their children must love the Lord," and in Phillips, "children brought up as Christians." However, the KJV renders the former, "having faithful children not accused of riot." The adjective often occurs with reference to faith in God, as in 1 Timothy 4:3,10; 2 Corinthians 6:15. However, the lat-

ter occurs very often in the New Testament, as at Titus 3:8, "*trustworthy* is the word," and Matthew 25:21, "Well done, good and *faithful* servant!" See also Luke 16:10,11 and 1 Timothy 3:11. While having children who are Christians seems desirable, there is no reason to take Titus 1:6 differently from 1 Timothy 3:4,5, where faithfulness "to the parents" is the specified meaning. The sentence in Titus 1:6 is followed by a qualifying statement, as in KJV, which specifies the meaning. The children of elders on Crete must not be riotous or unruly, but respectful to parents.

The question raised by some concerning the plural, with a one-child or no-child man thereby qualified for the eldership, is ridiculous. The qualification is not a biological one, but one of family leadership.

Titus 1:6, then, specifies that churches on Crete need solid family units, led by genuine fathers and husbands, to serve as role-models. Leaders of the churches on the island must be "blameless" with regard to their marital and fatherly tasks if Christians there are to mature in Christ. Some must be developed who can show the way to others.

Verses 7-9, then, specify a range of characteristics typical of Cretans which must not be prominent in the lives of Christian leaders, and other characteristics which are very desirable. For instance, one must also be "blameless" with regard to arrogance, the number one Cretan characteristic. Rather than being hot-headed, drunken, belligerent, underhanded, etc., men are to be selected and trained by Titus for leadership who can become hospitable, sensible, just, etc. That is to say,

they must leave behind the "old man" of their Cretan heritage, and put on the "new man" modelled after Christ.

Now finding such men, or even one such man, on Crete might seem to pose a problem for Titus. Doubtless, such was the case. However, Paul is apparently telling Titus to do more than search for the "needle in the haystack." He seems to be encouraging Titus to seek out those who can be taught and led to become this type of individual.

In view of the Cretan heritage and of this particular problem of insidious teachers infiltrating the Christian churches with inappropriate teachings, the development of such individuals is of paramount importance.

Let's put it this way. Not long ago in the highlands of Guatemala, an evangelical missionary had a little mission with a handful of Indian converts who enjoyed the charismatic experience. When they were sufficiently "in the Spirit," he would conduct a communion service. As each Indian came forward for the sacraments and prayer, one would be selected "to have a demon cast out." This is a matter of no little importance to the Mayan Indians, who have a tremendous fear of the demons. As this particular Indian bowed for prayer, the missionary would slip an emetic drug into the communion wine, designed to make the man vomit. Placing his hands on the Indian's head, he would pray loudly that God would "kick the demon out" of the man. When he sensed that the man was about to vomit, he would pull out a "baggie" containing a little frog and catch some vomit in it. Now Indians of Mayan ancestry think that

frogs are demons and are deathly afraid of them. So, when the missionary holds up before the congregation the "baggie" containing the vomit and the little frog, all praise God for having "kicked out the demon" from their friend. The missionary then proceeds to nail the "baggie" to the wall of the little church, along with all the others there. And the Indians see all this as true Christianity.

Now, suppose that I am in that situation and have two weeks to spend in that particular village. If I spend my time arguing with the evangelical missionary, trying to convince him that he is wrong, what happens when I leave? He simply picks up where he left off. To him, you see, it is not a theological matter, but economic. He is being *paid* to make converts, and any member of his sponsoring group would only see converts if a visit were made to the mission.

Suppose, on the other hand, that I spend those two weeks teaching the Indians in the village a more appropriate understanding of the Christian message, all the while keeping an eye out for the leaders among them, . . . those with whom I might spend even more time in concentrated teaching. As opportunity arises, a conversation or two with the evangelical might be appropriate, but nothing that might be a waste of time which would detract from the more important work of teaching a better alternative. At the end of my two weeks, I then leave behind a group of people no longer susceptible to the misinformation of the charlatan. And I leave behind a few who are trained better to serve as models and leaders for the others.

III. Life-Style, Doctrine, the Missionary's Task (Titus 2:1-3:7)

As Paul intimated in the introduction (1:1-2a), if one is to develop a godly life-style, he must base it upon faith and good information. To put it another way, if talk about "gold streets" is to mean anything to the Cretans, they must first learn how to walk the "cobblestone streets" of Crete as genuine Christians. Christianity was designed for the streets. It does not center in Gabriel's proverbial horn, but in centers such as Gortyn, Hagia Triada, Knossos, as people commit themselves to the life-style of Jesus and live out their lives before their Creator "in His image." This is the essential missiological task, and Paul calls it vividly to Titus' attention.

When those who do not readily grasp Christian doctrine can come to see Christianity in action among their leaders (1:1-16), they see through the fog, gain clearer perspective, and grow in Christ. "Urging people in healthy teaching," you see, was equally important with "rebuking the disputers" (1:9). Pillars were needed in each community who could be examples worthy of emulation. Serving as an elder is not easy in a context such as Crete, and doubtless much training was needed beyond what Titus could give in his brief sojourn. Yet, communal leadership was thought possible by Paul. It provided a vital element to the missiological task. Experience has proven Paul right. Where strong local leaders are not developed, immaturity dominates and religious syncretism abounds. Godliness is of paramount importance, and these leaders for whom Titus is

to search are crucial to the task on Crete.

In 1:5, Paul had mentioned two tasks. In 2:1, he brings up the second, *viz.*, "straightening up things yet to be straightened up." This figure of speech is used to refer to the providing of Christian life-style perspective to these people who for generations had been deprived of anything substantial in this regard. Actually, the Cretans had come to place premiums upon certain characteristics despised by the Judaeo-Christian heritage, and vice versa, they had come to disparage certain things Christianity viewed as virtuous.

The people are grouped for discussion purposes by Paul into five categories. Starting with the older men, he writes that Titus is to get their attention and tell them in no uncertain terms just precisely what sort of things are now expected of them. For instance, they are to be sober, sensible, acting their age, and very careful concerning what they put their trust in and make a life-style of. Some might think that it would be best to "write off" the older generation as being "too set in their ways." Several seem to think that beginning with the youth is the proper procedure to renew a flagging Christian commitment in churches. However, Paul seems to start off with the older people. "You cannot teach an old dog new tricks," would not have been much of a maxim for Paul's approach to missions on Crete. He strongly urges Titus to tell the older men to get their lives in order. As such they would be good examples to an oncoming generation.

This is exactly what Paul specifies for the Cretan older women, beginning in 2:2. In order that they might

train up an oncoming generation of younger girls to be better wives and ladies, the older women are to become themselves what they would that their daughters become. As life-style role-models, these older women set trends, change attitudes, and turn the tide of centuries of degradation among the women of Crete. The term "train the younger women" in 2:4 is not a term meaning "teach a class for younger women." The term is used of training a horse, for instance. "Telling" is not "teaching." Women in the church actually *train* much more by what they do than by what they say. If the sinister forces which turn the lives of young girls on Crete into such quagmires are to be overcome, much more will be required of the Cretan women than mere classes. *Lives* are required; renewed lives which can serve as proper role-models. The last term in 2:3 is important in this regard. If the women are to be teachers of "good," they must themselves become "good." Yet the term for "good" here is not the same as in 1:16. There the intrusive teachers were said not to be capable of any "good" work (*agathos*), meaning "basically good." But in 2:3 the women are said to be teachers of *kalos*, meaning "beautiful, noble, excellent, outstanding." Not only are the Cretan Christians to aim for being "good" (*agathos*), but "good" (*kalos*). The alternative to Cretan ignominy is not to be merely good, but excellent, or shall we say, "in the image of God." Women, like men, are not likely to convey to an oncoming generation what they themselves are not.

In 2:6, the young men are urged merely to be "sensible." Apparently this is not the only area of concern for

the Cretan youth, if Diodorus, Polybius, Strabo, etc., are to be trusted. It is probable that the situation was so deplorable that Titus was merely told to start at this point. After all, if one is not able to get a young boy to listen, nothing much can really be done. Missiologically, this is the responsible place to begin.

Titus himself is told to watch his own behavior, for the poor behavior of the evangelist would threaten the entire mission, causing such a scandal that generations might pass before people began to listen again to the Christian message. The minister is to aim for the most excellent behavior and thinking, lest critics have reason to substantiate their vilifying accusations.

Finally, in 2:9f the slaves are encouraged to honor their masters and take no opportunity to filch things from the master's possessions. Doing this, they are like the proverbial "apples of gold in settings of silver" (Proverbs 25:11).

The section of 2:1-10 constitutes the major portion of what Paul meant in 1:5 by "straighten up things yet to be straightened up." Life-style characteristics need clarification.

In 2:11-15 Paul inserted the first actual doctrinal teaching of the letter, observing that God intervened in Christ to bring salvation to mankind. Notice what Paul calls "salvation": "instructing us that denying ungodliness and worldly pursuits, we might live godly, rightly, and soberly in this present generation." Salvation was NOT to be presented to the Cretans in terms of golden streets, angels' wings, and Gabriel's horn. To the contrary, Paul tells Titus that it is of great importance

for the Cretans to hear that God has certain things in store for them as they walk those troubled streets that can give them an outlook on life called salvation.

True, salvation has its "otherworldly aspect." But it also has its "nowness" aspect, and it is this latter to which Paul makes reference in 2:11-15. It does little good, as 1:1,2a had inferred, to preach "heaven" and leave people's lives in "hell." In modern idiom, a minister's wife who comes into my office and says that she has been running around on her husband for 10 years, struggles with "hell." A Guatemalan mother who has to decide whether this child or that will die because there is not enough food to feed them both, struggles with "hell." "Hell" tears up people's lives. It has a "nowness" and a "thenness" about it. To live "godly, rightly, and sensibly in this generation" was one of the grandest things the Cretans could ever encounter; it could take them from the hellaciousness of their Cretan heritage and make them outstanding men and women, remade in the image of their God.

The "hope of everlasting life," mentioned in 1:2a, now resurfaces as an important Christian concept. Even here, however, it is closely linked to godly living, as it was in chapter 1. In fact, the entirety of chapter 2 is really an expansion of 1:1,2a. Good information and trust in it provide the basis for godliness, which in turn provides the basis for the hope of life eternal.

Rooted in the resurrection of Jesus, the atonement was for Paul at the heart of the missiological message to Crete. As long as the doctrine of the cross remains separate from the daily ethic of the people, there can be

no Christian renewal. In 2:11-15, Paul relates ever so carefully the meaning the cross must have for daily ethic. Subsequent generations of Christians will ignore this at their peril. While 2:1-10 would provide, in itself, a useful alternative to the Cretans, the actual basis for such an appeal is given in 2:11-15. The ethical demands grow out of the doctrinal considerations. As long as ethic and doctrine are treated separately, the Cretans are relegated to their past, . . . and their sin.

In 3:1-17, Paul sets out a missiological model for Titus to follow as he visits the various villages on Crete. Making his way into homes and small circles of Christians, he is first to tell them explicitly what is required of them by way of life-style and attitude. He is to lead off with commands to be "obedient to the authorities." Now remember that these are among the most rebellious, insolent, and difficult people in the Mediterranean. So difficult were they during this period that the Romans moved their governing body to North Africa and "ruled" Crete from across the sea. Paul underscores this directive with, "Tell them to be obedient!" Then, he also directs them to be "prepared to do the good." Keeping in mind that to most Cretans "good" was not "good," the genuine Christian message was not likely to be all that pleasing to many. In 3:2, Paul continues with this barrage of commands pertaining to life-style with, "Tell them to stop blaspheming people and being contentious, but to begin being *gentlemen*."

Now Cretan men would have no eagerness to be "gentle," for they considered that to be a weakness. But

the term used by Paul denotes no "meek" nor "weak" behavior. Quite the contrary; both terms used at the end of 3:2 denote strength which has been harnessed. Aristotle, *Nich. Eth.* II.7.10, says, that the term *prautes* means not too much anger nor too little, both of which were considered undesirable, but "anger on the right grounds, against the right persons, in the right manner, at the right moment, and for the right length of time" (IV.5.1f). The call to be men of strength, not upon force of arms or brute behavior as was so common at the time, but by controlled behavior was seen by Paul as a responsible ethic which would both retain strength and manliness, but channel it in distinctly Christian directions.

Apparently Paul did not expect most Cretan audiences, even if Christian, to respond with enthusiasm to such strong directives which cut so cleanly across traditional Cretan ways. In 3:3, Paul suggested that when the Cretans began to react negatively against such strong directives, Titus might then frankly admit that he, along with others, had formerly been enmeshed in such typically pagan ways, and that he knew full well the tragedy of being detestable, ignorant, deceptive, hateful, and hedonistic. But, in 3:4-7, Titus could then advance that God had intervened in his life through Christ, opening up for him a new and living way which radically altered his life. This radical alteration was, according to 3:7, the basis for the hope of life eternal.

Using such an approach, Paul suggests to Titus, might better enable him to make maximum advantage of the times in which he was visiting among the Cretan

brethren, "straightening up the things yet to be straightened up."

The conclusion of the letter occurs, as we have said, in 3:8-11. This which Paul has suggested is fully worthy of being taught boldly all over the island, especially (v. 8) so that those who believe in Christ might be more careful to practice "good" (*kalon*) and "truly understanding" ways of conduct. Yet, they are profitable for a much wider audience as well. Speaking these things boldly (3:8; 2:15), Titus would make much better use of his time than if he merely fought with the intrusive teachers, leaving leadership and life-style matters unattended. Hence, the directive in 3:9 to avoid the senseless quibblings and argumentation in which he had been engaged. When people tried to bind on the Christian community the genealogies and myths and legal matters of their Cretan heritage, Titus was to continue his concentrated effort on building leadership and strengthening life-style perspective until winter. The elders would then be better able to pick up the struggle and to encourage the Christians in true Christianity. These "factious" people were simply to be avoided if, after a conversation or two, they evidenced no sincere quest for the truth.

The letter to Titus, then, was a missiological directive from an experienced missionary to a younger one, encouraging the wise use of time and effort. Far better, he writes, to avoid theological quibblings, and to concentrate upon developing adequate leadership and conveying proper concepts of Christian life-style. This is, according to Paul, at the heart of the missionary task, and

must not be forgotten under the duress of the moment by Titus. This perspective has value for modern missions. It has, also, great value for our own shores.

Ancient Crete never really listened and remains essentially pagan even today. The missionary task also remains essentially the same.

¹The most recent survey of critical opinion is Peter Trummer, *Die Paulustradition der Pastoralbriefe* (Beitrage zur biblischen Exegese und Theologie, 8; Frankfurt: P. Lang, 1978).

²Ellis, "The Authorship of the Pastorals: A Resume and Assessment of Recent Trends," *Paul and His Recent Interpreters* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1961), pp. 49-57.

³See discussions in D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1970), pp. 584-634; and P. Feine and J. Behm, *Introduction to the New Testament* (ed. W.G. Kummel; ET A.J. Mattill; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), pp. 258-272.

⁴Campbell, *A Connected View of the Principles and Rules by which the Living Oracles may be Intelligently and Certainly Interpreted* (Bethany, VA: M'Vay & Ewing, 1835), p. 97; 2nd ed. entitled *The Christian System* (Pittsburg: Forester & Campbell, 1839), pp. 16,17.

⁵Useful in this regard is E.D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1976).

⁶See Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft* (New York: Random House, 1953).

⁷See R.F. Willetts, *The Civilization of Ancient Crete* (Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1977).

⁸M. Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), I,2; and William Tarn, *Hellenistic Civilisation* (3rd ed. rev. G.T. Griffith; London: E. Arnold, 1952), p. 92.

⁹E.H. Bunbury, "Crete," *Contemporary Review*, I (1866), p. 554.

¹⁰R.F. Willetts, ed., *The Law Code of Gortyn* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1967), p. 40.

¹¹Willetts, *Ancient Crete*, p. 49.

¹²Findlay, "The Reproach of the Cretans," *The Expositor*, 2nd ser., 4 (1882), p. 402.

¹³See Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1970). On syncretism in modern missions, see T. Yamamori and C. Taber, *Christopaganism or Indigenous Christianity* (South Pasadena, CA: Wm. Carey, 1975), and L.J. Luzbetak, *The Church and Cultures* (South Pasadena, CA: Wm. Carey, 1970).

¹⁴See C.K. Barrett, "Titus," *Neotestamentica et Semitica: Studies in Honour of Matthew Black* (eds. E. Ellis & M. Wilcox; Edinburgh: T & T. Clark, 1969), pp. 1-14.

¹⁵R.P. Casey, "Gnosis, Gnosticism, and the New Testament," *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology: Studies in Honour of Charles Harold Dodd* (eds. W.D. Davies and D. Daube; Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1964), pp. 79,80.

¹⁶See, among others, R. McL. Wilson, *Gnosis and the New Testament* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1968).

¹⁷J.R. Harris, "St. Paul and Epimenides," *The Expositor*, 8th ser. 4 (1912), pp. 348-353. See also his "The Cretans are Always Liars," *The Expositor*, 7th ser. 2 (1906), pp. 305-317.

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“HAVE THIS MIND IN YOU . . . ”

Jan McCoy

The Submission of Self

In considering the “servanthood” nature of the Christian life, it seems important to begin with the Christian’s relationship to God, through Jesus Christ. In the process of becoming a Christian, the person goes through a “rebirth,” that being baptism in the likeness of Jesus’ death, as depicted in Romans 6. In the beautiful language of the apostle Paul, we are shown that this rebirth process involves dying to our “selves,” buried in water (the answering of a good conscience toward God, because it was His idea! 1 Peter 3:21), and raised to walk in “newness of life” (Romans 6:4 RSV). It is the purpose of these lessons to examine what kind of “new life” God intends us to walk in after we have initially obeyed His command that we be born again.

We talk a great deal in our brotherhood about “commitment” to the cause of Christ, and it is crucial that we be committed Christians. But trying to begin our walk of faith and obedience to God at the level of “commitment” could be compared to inadequately laying a foundation for a house. If the house is to be built strongly and to endure a lifetime of usefulness, the foundation must be dug deeply into the ground and made of strong material that will be virtually “unseen” once the house is erected. But the underlying strength is there. If a person is content to pour a thin slab of concrete on the surface of the ground and proceed to con-

struct his house upon that weak foundation, he can expect that his house, not having the support needed, will crack and be much less than adequate for its purposes.

In suggesting this as an illustration concerning the Christian life, the foundation that is dug deep and strong is the person's submission of his will to that of God, his Maker. When he decides to become a follower of Christ, he chooses (or should) that his own willful self will no longer be central to his life, but that he will willingly replace it with the will of Christ. As his Christian life is being built daily upon this type of foundation, he is not constantly plagued with questions and doubts as to the strength and soundness of that which is holding him up: a right relationship with God through Jesus, to whom He has "given Himself up" as a willing servant.

Another illustration that might be made to help us picture what it means to truly submit our wills to Christ is to compare the choice of a Christian life to that of the jump of a parachutist.

In stories many of us can recall, we are impressed with the thrill and excitement of the jumping out of an airplane from great heights. There is that moment of what we might call "delicious" fear before the chute opens up. Then the folds of the parachute billow upward and the jumper is safely carried down to the ground. But we know that "behind the scenes" it was urgently necessary that the one who "packed" the parachute be extremely careful that it was packed correctly. All the cords and folds must have been placed in the proper position inside the parachute pack. An error

in packing the contents of the parachute neatly into the pack could be the difference in a successful jump and a fatal one.

In our comparison, think of the individual's self-centered will as that which is being packed neatly into the pack. All the loose ends of our selfishness must be packed into it carefully: our ego, excessive pride, resentments, jealousies, anger, our clinging to "our rights," these must all be tucked tightly and neatly into the pack. As we make our "jump" . . . right out into the world, but as a Christian, the wonderful parachute of God's promise unfolds above us and carries us safely to our destination. That destination is a life of blessed, happy service to God on earth and an eternal home with Him when our human life is completed.

It is so very important for us to realize the happiness that is to be found in the total submission of our will to God's, as revealed through the words of the Holy Spirit in the Bible. It is as the soul's finding its rightful place in life: life as God made it to be lived! It is when we rebel against God's intended place for us, that of submitting ourselves to Him, that we take ourselves out of the "natural element" that He intended us to live in. We then become truly like a "fish out of water," which is the title of one of Lottie Beth Hobbs' study books showing that only as we choose to obey and live in right relationship with God, through Jesus, can we be in the natural element that He created for our abundant life! (1 John 10:10).

To make our study of submission more helpful in our understanding of Christian servanthood we will con-

sider scriptures supporting the idea of submission, and particularly some relating to women. We will look at the meaning of submission and related descriptive words, with some practical suggestions to aid in surrendering our selfishness to God. Then, hopefully, we will reflect on the blessedness of total surrender to God's will.

Scriptures Supporting the Idea of Submission

Toward the end of Jesus' ministry on earth He taught by word and example the importance of submitting or surrendering one's own sense of importance to the care and services of others. This was done when, during a meal with His disciples, He girded Himself with a towel and washed each man's feet. Following this favor He explained to His disciples, as read in John 13:14-17,

"If I, then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."

This action of Jesus bears out what was later testified of Him in the book of Philipians.

"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness

of men. And being found in human form He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:5-8 RSV).

To a person who is a believer in Jesus and is daily choosing to walk by faith in Him, there are no passages of scripture much more moving than this one quoted and that great one of prophecy found in Isaiah 53. There we find a candid description of the compassionate, merciful, sacrificing Jesus. And we observe that long before Jesus was born as a man on earth it was in God's plan that He should be the epitome of love: the giving up of a life for others.

"Surely he has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows, yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten of god, and afflicted; but he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:4-6 RSV).

For our major consideration in this study we need to look at several verses of scripture found in Romans 6. This entire chapter gives great enlightenment upon the subject of dying to self and walking a new life. It is here that we find the use of the word "yield," which gives us a broader description of submission.

"Do you not know that all of us who have been

baptized into Christ Jesus 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 RSV).

“We know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin” (Romans 6:6 RSV).

“So you must also consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Romans 6:11 RSV).

“Do not yield your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but yield yourselves to God as men who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments of righteousness” (Romans 6:13 RSV).

“Do you not know that if you yield yourselves to any one as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?” (Romans 6:16 RSV).

“For just as you once yielded your members to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now yield your members to righteousness for sanctification” (Romans 6:19 RSV).

Implied in all these passages is the privilege of CHOICE. When we yield ourselves to something, we choose to give way to it. Certainly, often there is great

pressure to yield to certain things, but ultimately, the individual does so by his own choice.

Basic to all these passages in Romans 6 is the idea of yielding up oneself, or submitting oneself, or surrendering oneself . . . to a choice of either sin or righteousness. So we see that no matter which we choose we do so by yielding.

Some discussion concerning the word "will" might be in order. When we talk about submitting our will to God, we are referring to the self-concerned core of our mental makeup. But, by submitting our "will" to God we do not lose our capacity to consciously choose, select, decide, etc. But, rather we act according to our understanding of what God's will is in certain matters. In the words of Philipians, we choose daily to have "the mind of Christ in us," that mind being one of unselfish commitment to the good of others. The fact that we choose to do this is in itself an act of our "will," but a will that is enlightened by God's word!

In Hannah Whitall Smith's famous book, *The Christian's Secret to a Happy Life*, this wise lady gives us a simple formula for the way in which we may have a working, happy relationship to God in this matter of yielding, or obedience, or submission: any of which words might be used interchangeably. She states that most people want to come to God through their emotions first. Then, and only then, can they think they have really gotten "religion." But, she responds, that Biblically we must first believe that fact stated in scripture, then with our minds we must act by faith on this fact, and then the feelings of the emotion will follow.

So, hence, her formula, simple to remember: (1) facts, (2) faith, (3) feelings.² In acting upon this formula we learn more how to yield our wills to Christ, thereby growing more in His likeness day by day.

To help clarify the meaning of a number of different words related to the submission of our wills, let us consider the following definitions, as described in W.E. Vine's *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*.

Yield (Greek word: *paristemi* or *paristano*): to present, is translated to yield in Romans 6:13,16,19.

Submit (Greek word: *hupеiko*): to retire, withdraw (*hupo*, under; *eiko*, to yield).

Subject, subjection (Greek word: *hupotasso*): to subject oneself, to obey, be subject to, as in Ephesians 5:21,22,24; also Titus 2:5,9.³

With these definitions in mind let us prayerfully consider some passages of scriptures related to women and their relationship to their mates.

“Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, His body, and is Himself its Savior. As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands” (Ephesians 5:22-24 RSV).

“And so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be sensible, chaste, domestic, kind and submissive to their husbands that the word of God be not discredited” (Titus 2:4,5 RSV).

“But I want you to understand that the head of

every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God" (1 Corinthians 11:3 RSV).

These passages teach that it is the will of God in Christ that women yield up their self-centered "will" to the leadership of their husband, and that to do so is a credit to the word of God. This is a beautiful case of the "Creator" knowing what is best for the "created." When God's order for the human family is honored and upheld, the relationships in that family function smoothly and productively. It is when we see a breakdown in the order as He intended that we most often find a breakdown in the marriage itself. So we begin to see here, as in other areas, the divine intelligence behind the scheme of orderliness for our lives.

It is not the intention of this lesson to be a study on the subject of marriage. But it would be foolish indeed to try to understand the underlying requirement of a committed life of service to Christ, that being the surrendered will, and not apply it to the place where we daily live. If we are married women, then that place is in a home with a husband at its head. We must then prayerfully look at that, if it is our circumstance in life, and give it close scrutiny:

1. God created us "female and male." He had a role in mind for the two from the beginning. Moses, "for the hardening of your heart," allowed some things out of line with what God had in mind from the beginning (Matthew 19:8 RSV).

2. Many scriptures bear out the truth that women are in a right relationship when they are submissive to their

husbands. (Consider Sarah and Abraham, and the blessings of their life together because of her submissiveness.) Also, when women were rebellious and not subject to their husbands the results were that they were punished by God. Example, Jezebel. "There was none who sold himself to do what was evil in the sight of the Lord like Ahab, whom Jezebel incited" (1 Kings 21:25 RSV).

"And of Jezebel the Lord also said, 'The dogs shall eat Jezebel within the bounds of Jezreel' " (1 Kings 21:23 RSV).

By reading and observing women of the Bible, we conclude that when a woman is submissive to her husband, whom God has given her as her rightful authority, she pleases God and is thereby submitting to Him by being in the order He has intended her to be. When she willfully takes herself out from under the authority of her husband, she is rebelling against God's intended place for her and brings reproach upon herself and God. In the words of Titus 2, she brings discredit to the word of God.

3. We must be, oh, so careful that we do not "wrest" the scriptures to make them say something they do not say in this matter of submission. We must examine our thinking to see if we accept the Bible as God's inspired word. Or are we only going to accept the parts we are "comfortable" with? If we are truly going to surrender our selfish wills to Christ, we must surrender in every place He requires it of us.

4. Wives know in their hearts if they are submissive to

their husbands or not . . . and certainly the husband knows it! We might fool outsiders, but we cannot fool ourselves, our husbands, and our Maker!

5. Why is an unsubmitive wife discrediting to the word of God? If it doesn't matter whether a wife submits to the husband as head of the home, then why would it have any reflection at all on God's word? Think about it! The answer, of course, is seen in the natural orderliness of a home that is structured according to God's plan, as outlined in the scriptures previously quoted.

6. A lovely rendition of Titus 2:5,6 is given in the Phillips Modern English version of the New Testament:

“So that the younger women may learn to love their husbands, and their children, to be sensible and chaste, home-lovers, kind-hearted and willing to adapt themselves to their husbands — a good advertisement for the Christian faith.”

7. I would admonish you, then, to believe that a unified home with the husband as head, wife under his authority, and the children under both parents, is the rightful order that God has given! Be happy in it, knowing you are in right relationship with God in the matter. Be thankful for such a “covering” that is given you by your Maker! Pray for your mate and be the help to him he needs in becoming a strong but tender leader of your family. The rewards will be great . . . here as well as in eternity.

Also, as you learn to submit your will in the area of your marriage you are learning much about the total surrender to Christ in all other areas of your life!

The Principle at the Heart of Christianity

“Then Jesus told His disciples, ‘If any man would come after Me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it’ (Matthew 16:24,25 RSV).

Jesus here seems to be telling His followers that the natural instinct to save oneself is contrary to His will. It would seem a difficult teaching to understand, or to know how to carry out!

A most illuminating book concerning the surrendered life is entitled *Victory Through Surrender*, by E. Stanley Jones. Dr. Jones spent many years in the mission field as a denominational evangelist, and has authored numerous books which have been translated into as many as 30 languages. In a comment about the scripture just stated he wrote:

“This law of saving your life by losing it is not based on God’s whim, nor even upon God’s will . . . it is based on God’s character. That is the way God is, and that is the way God acts, and if we act otherwise we are at cross-purposes with God and consequently get hurt, and get hurt automatically. For you cannot be at cross-purposes with reality and get away with it. You don’t break this law, you break yourself upon it. It registers its consequences within you. You are paid in your own person the fitting wage of such perversion, the perversion of making yourself

God instead of surrendering to God.”⁴

In this matter of “losing our lives for Christ’s sake,” it is ours to discover what He meant that we should find it. When we surrender up our own “rights” or what we deem to be our right, we find that alignment with God’s purposes. This is done as we act by faith on His will as revealed through the word. In this giving up of ourselves we begin to realize what the apostle Paul meant when he admonished:

“Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” (Romans 12:1 RSV).

and also,

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who lives, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20 RSV).

In living as a submitted follower of Jesus we realize that the dying to self, the being crucified with Him is a daily thing. Though in our baptism we were buried in the likeness of Christ, each day we must realize the “crucifixion” of our self and the living of life by faith in Jesus.

“The surrender which seems downward, laying down your arms, is actually a surrender upwards. It is a surrender to creative love. This is not acquiescence. It is cooperation with the power that raised Jesus from the dead — that

power when surrendered to and cooperated with will raise us from a dead noncontributive life to a creative fruitful one . . . in surrender you align your will to an almighty will, and you begin to do things you can't do, to accomplish the unaccomplishable, a surprise to yourself and others.”⁵

God does not ask us to make a sacrifice that doesn't reflect His own sacrificial nature. We see that sacrifice in the atoning blood of His Son, Jesus Christ. He asks us to “lay down our lives” in reflection of His laying down His, at Calvary. What comfort and what assurance that in this walk we are led by His loving example!

“Self-surrender, then, is to surrender to the perfect person and the perfect purposes of the God who illustrates in Himself the wonder of self-surrender. But is this self-surrender in God a fact or a fiction? It is a fact. But we could never have seen it, for He is an eternal Spirit, unless we have seen it in the incarnation — in Jesus Christ. If Jesus is the human life of God, then the attitudes and acts of Jesus are the attitudes and acts of God. He is the Word of surrender become flesh.”⁶

Sometimes I believe that in our attempt to live the Christian life we are very like the “one-talent” man. We are so fearful that we will do something the wrong way we end up doing very little at all! (That is my own personal interpretation of the “one-talent” man's dilemma.)

ma!) But, when we enter into the life in Christ we must, with boldness, plunge into living each day in good-will toward our fellow man, and trust God for His promises to sustain us.

I wonder if we are often like the little boy in this story: on this particular night the family members were all in their beds, sleeping soundly, when the mother was suddenly awakened by a loud thump from her little boy's bedroom. She quickly got up and went into his room, where she found him lying in the floor by the side of his bed, rubbing his eyes and looking around questioningly. "What happened, dear?" she asked, to which he sleepily replied, "I don't know . . . I guess I must have stayed too close to where I got in!"

Let's make it our daily goal to move onward in our quest to grow into a likeness of Jesus, so we don't make the mistake of "staying too close to where we got in!" To do this we must step out in faith to act on our understanding of God's will for us.

How do we submit our wills, after we choose to do so?

What are some practical ways we might think of to help us in the doing of the thing?

1. Tap the greatest resource, your Maker, through the two ways He has made available: the reading regularly of His Word and praying daily, without ceasing, for His cleansing and guidance. Find those passages that strengthen your conviction that surrender to Christ is God's will. Pray every day that you might receive help in yielding up to Him your selfishness, that you might give place in your life to the "mind of Christ."

2. Be conscious of, and accepting of, His grace! Be thankful every day, in every way, for this priceless blessing! When we cultivate an attitude of awareness of what Christ has done for us, it becomes more natural every day for us to respond from a heart gladly bent to His will.

3. Look for the good in people! As we move on into a discussion of servanthood, we must remember that every person is created in the image of God and there is innate worth in him. As a surrendered servant we will become ambassadors for Christ, going about the business of reconciling others to Him! To begin with, then, we must look for the good in them, with tenderness help to bring it out, and then point them to Jesus.

4. Obey the things you find asked of you in God's word, trusting Him for the promise that it is best for you. Remember, in "losing" your life, for Christ's sake, you will find it!

5. Seek strength and encouragement in the fellowship of other Christians. As you go about your surrendered life, remember the word to the Hebrew believers, as they were told to "stir one another up to love and good works" (Hebrews 10:24 RSV).

6. Exercise daily the great gift God has given you: the power to CHOOSE. By choosing to overcome your own selfishness and bending to the will of Christ, you may trust God that the result will be abundant blessings now and in the life to come (Mark 10:30 RSV).

One of the more touching things written concerning self-death is an analogy given by Keith Phillips:

“Let’s suppose that on January 1, I was flying over Kansas when the plane exploded. My body fell to the ground and I was dead on impact. Before long a farmer discovered my corpse. There was no pulse, no heartbeat, no breath. My body was cold. Obviously I was dead. So the farmer dug a grave. But by the time he placed my body in the earth, it was too dark to cover it. Deciding he would finish in the morning he returned home.

Then Christ came to me and said, ‘Keith, you are dead. Your life on this earth is over. But I will breathe into you a breath of new life if you promise to do anything I ask and go anywhere I send you.’

My immediate reaction was, ‘No way! That’s unreasonable. It’s slavery!’ But then I realized I was not in a good bargaining position, and I quickly came to my senses. I wholeheartedly agreed!

Instantly my lungs, heart, and other vital organs began to function again. I came back to life. I was born again! From that point on no matter what Christ asked me to do or where He asked me to go, I was more than willing. No task was too difficult, no hours too long, no place too dangerous. Nothing was unreasonable. Why? Because I had no claim to my life. I was living on borrowed time, Christ’s time. Keith died on January 1 in a Kansas corn field. Then I could say with Paul, ‘I have been crucified with Christ;

and it is no longer I (Keith) who is alive, but Christ (who) lives in me.' ””

Another young man, Milton Jones, sums it up in this way:

“Christ’s call to take up a cross was a command to partake in His death and totally deny one’s self in order to experience a new birth where one is totally committed to Him.””

The call of Jesus to be a servant is a high calling. Isn’t it unique that words like “greatest,” and terms like ‘high calling,’ are used to describe the outcome of a life of service? And doesn’t the promise of a fulfilled life give us joy in the laying down of our own? It is only through this “laying down” of our life that we are able to move on into the heart of servanthood as Jesus taught and lived it.

In the Old Testament there was a law given concerning slavery that is applicable to our lesson. In Exodus we read:

“If the slave plainly says, ‘I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,’ then his master shall bring him to God, and he shall bring him to the door of the doorpost; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for life” (Exodus 21:5,6 RSV).

Someone has put these thoughts into a beautiful song that likens this life-indenturement of a slave to that of ours to Christ:

Pierce my ear, O Lord, my God
Take me to Your door this day
I will serve no other God
Lord, I'm here to stay!

For You have paid the price for me,
With Your blood You've ransomed me!
I will serve You eternally,
A free man I'll never be!

—Anonymous

In Quest of a Servant Heart

Cruden's Concordance gives as a note under the references to the word "heart" this definition:

"The word heart is used in scriptures as the seat of life or strength; hence it means mind, soul, spirit, or one's emotional nature and understanding. It is also used as the center or inner part of a thing."

We hear the word heart used in many ways . . . "let's get to the heart of the matter," "my heart's not in it," "he died of a broken heart," "heartache," "spoken from the heart," "heart-felt religion," etc. The very fact that the word is used in these different ways defines its usage as something other than the physical organ that pumps the blood through our bodies. When we speak of our heart in any of these ways we know it definitely is tied up with our emotions.

As we consider our lives as servants in the Kingdom, we probably could individually recall certain occasions we did something for someone when we either said or thought, "Well, I'll do it, but my heart just isn't in it!"

But, to carry this idea even further, we likely could each one testify that in going ahead and doing the thing, the result was that our "hearts" later felt good about it! Which goes to prove that action based on faith in something being the right thing to do usually results in a feeling of well-being. And this further confirms the rightness of surrendering our own will to that of the Lord! We sing the song, "Where He leads me I will follow," and how sweet it is we are rewarded with a peaceful feeling when we *do* follow by faith in Him!

In such matters it might do us good to remember the admonition many of us have given our children when they were very young . . . "Mommy knows best!" But, we must see ourselves as the "child," and our heavenly Father is saying . . . "Father knows best!" The same trust that we required of our children, we must give to Him who indeed does know what is best for us. And we must praise Him for His instructions left for us in His word, and the example He gave us in Jesus!

Someone has said, "Christianity commenced in caves, but it is dying in cathedrals!" Could this be because men and women have failed to grasp the meaning of servanthood as Jesus taught it? And have we failed because we have not spent time in the word finding out just what Jesus did to show us the way?

In order to get "into the heart of Jesus" and through our submission be willing to be molded by our Maker into His likeness, let us consider this enlightening scripture once again:

"So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit,

any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:1-11 RSV).

Please, at this moment, if you are reading or listening, take time to thank God for the great sacrifice of His Son! Pray that you might have an understanding of this great passage of scripture and its practical application to your life!

We see from this scripture the compact description of Jesus' life and what He intends His followers to do. We believe that Jesus lives on today in us, His disciples (1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19). Embracing this belief, then what manner of people ought we to be? Notice these

motivational words found in the above passage: encouragement, incentive, love, participation in the Spirit, affection, sympathy, joy, and these are culminated in the glorious outcome of Christ's sacrifice, the glory of the Father! In submitting our lives as servants, in the likeness of Jesus, we are supported by all these encouraging "side benefits."

It is my belief that as American Christians, living in a society of abundance, we are in spiritual jeopardy. Very few of us suffer from any form of physical deprivation. And I wouldn't wish for deprivation! But, I believe these circumstances make it even more crucial that we study the word with dedication, and follow Jesus' example of reaching out to people, so that we don't become complacent. Because of our "comfortable" circumstances, we may be in danger of complacency regarding the urgency of the Gospel. This complacency, then, prevents us from getting into the "heart" of Jesus and learning how we are to *be* . . . seeing as how He lives in us!

There are many things we may reflect upon, in considering this great message in Philippians depicting Jesus' life. These reflections might help us in seeking to have the servant "heart" of Jesus.

The "theme" or "tone" of Jesus' life and ministry was one of humility. Consider how this affects "status" as we know it is regarded in the world. Is there any place for such a ranking in the body of Christ as to "levels of society," "life-style," "upper-class," "middle-class," and "lower-class," etc.? Jesus was in the form of God, but did not count equality with God a thing to be

grasped; He was not a "hanger-on" to God because of the greatness that could be reflected on Him. But He was willing to lose that identity in order to identify with all humanity. Are we willing to do the same? It is this that the apostle Paul had in mind when he said, "I became all things to all men, in order that I might win some" (1 Corinthians 9:22). In this same passage Paul states, "For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more" (1 Corinthians 9:19 RSV).

The New Testament is dotted throughout with admonitions that we must give up ourselves and be like slaves or servants, in order to be like Jesus. This is our manner of life that enables us to be about the Father's business of reconciling men to Him.

"Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us . . ." (2 Corinthians 5:17-20 RSV).

Is our life "appealing" for God? Are we finding the true joy that comes from relenting our selfishness in order that we might win some to Him? Someone put this idea of reconciliation in these words: as a Christian woman it is most important that I be the connecting link

between Jesus my Lord and my fellow man. What kind of "connecting links" are we?

I want to encourage you to read the passage of scripture found in Ephesians 6:6-8. This concerns instructions given to servants who had become Christians in the early days of the Church. But as the instructions progress we see the relationship of the servant to his earthly master fuses into the likeness of "servants" to Christ. Because of this fusing of the two, we gain insight into what our "heart" should be like as servants of Him today. The latter part of verse 6 says "as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to men." Keeping in mind that the word "heart" in the Bible refers to the inner being or the center of our being, we then begin to realize that this call to give "heart" service necessitates a giving of our "all" to the thing. And I would point out again that sometimes it is a case of doing the thing out of a conviction that it is God's will, and trusting Him for the emotional support that will follow as surely as daylight follows dark! Recall the pattern, facts, faith, feeling!

A short verse describes the way we develop this "heart":

"You said to go, but I feared to take the step.
For the way was dark, the road I could not see!
But, knowing I could trust You, I haltingly
stepped out,
And my eyes adjusted . . . You supported me!"

(J. McCoy)

One of the characters of the New Testament who gives us great hope and incentive about our possibilities in developing a "heart" of service is the apostle Peter. While Jesus was alive and associated with the apostles, no one could be found with greater and more outspoken devotion and zeal than this man Peter. His faith in Jesus seemed so complete and real! Even to the point of believing *almost* completely that he could walk on the water to Jesus! We would say that Peter's heart was truly in his calling as a follower of Jesus. We admire his spontaniety and his impetuous ways in the days leading up to the trial and crucifixion of Jesus. But as we look at his life we hear Jesus saying to the impetuous man:

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren" (Luke 22:31,32 RSV).

The King James translation renders the phrase "turned again" as "converted." So we know that Jesus could foresee that, though Peter was fervent and zealous, his "conversion" wasn't complete. Peter had not learned what it meant to "deny himself," and showed that when he denied his Lord! When the going got truly tough, at the time of Jesus' trial, we see that Peter had not yet learned what total surrender to the Lord would mean to his life. This was later confirmed when Peter, as well as the other apostles, were thoroughly confused and disappointed when their Master, whom they had thought to be the promised Messiah, was put to death and buried.

You might say the scriptures indicate that the

apostles' "heart" had gone out of them at the point of Jesus' death and burial. But then the glorious fact of Jesus' resurrection comes to light and these same downhearted men are empowered by this triumphant resurrection!

It was the impetuous Peter who ran to the tomb to see for himself if Jesus indeed was risen. Then, we see him standing boldly on the day of Pentecost, filled with the powerful Spirit, and preaching Christ to the multitude. We know that throughout his life he grew into one of the leaders of the early church, but one who had the heart of a servant. It is such an encouragement to us today to follow Peter's progress in developing a "heart" set on service to Christ. Secular history indicates that Peter gave of himself even to the point of a terrible death at the end of his ministry. We can be sure that he was willing to do this because he had truly gotten into the "heart" of Jesus! And he realized that the joy that was set before him was worth anything he might suffer! Oh, that we today can keep this same motivation before our own eyes!

We are challenged to become servants from the heart when we study the life of men like Peter. Then, as we think of women of the Bible, who depicted this servanthood, we think of Dorcas, whose untimely death was mourned by her friends. They testified to her servanthood as they showed the garments she industriously made for the needs of others (Acts 9:3).

We remember Mary and Martha and their service and hospitality to Jesus Himself (Luke 10:38-41). We recall the spontaneous service of the woman who appointed

Jesus' feet with precious oil and wiped them with her hair (Luke 7:37,38). We read that there was a group of women who traveled with Jesus and His apostles, ministering to their needs (Matthew 27:55,56).

Have you ever imagined yourself living in the days of Jesus' ministry and being a part of those women that knew Him? Haven't you caught yourself thinking, "If I had seen Jesus do His miracles I would have had complete faith in Him as God's Son! There wouldn't be anything that could shake my faith in Him. I would have done anything on earth that He asked me to do!" I'm sure that we all feel certain that we would have had this kind of a loving and obedient heart! But let's consider the possibilities open to us right now in the present day.

Jesus told Thomas, who expressed doubt that Jesus had really been resurrected, that he was blessed in his belief, after seeing and touching Jesus' wound for proof. But he further promised in John 20:29, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe." Yes, we think we would have had unparalleled faith in Him if we had lived with Him. But today, we have the great blessedness of believing on Him, even though we haven't seen Him with our own eyes, but view Him by the eyes of faith, through the revealed word!

I believe that part of this "blessedness" comes in the happy feeling of being "right with God" when I step out in faith in obedience to His teachings. When I follow the impulses of my "heart" to do good to others I am blessed with this happiness. When I treat people in the right, Christ-like, considerate manner they deserve,

I am blessed with this happiness. When I rise above the selfishness that is deep in my subconscious where my “unsundered self lurks,”¹⁰ and respond in love to someone’s need, then I am blessed with this happiness. All these things indicate a willingness on our part to die to ourselves and live for Jesus. E. Stanley Jones so aptly phrased it:

“We have never lived until we have gone to our own funeral. Then we come back singing.”¹¹

This “coming back singing” is the blessedness that Jesus promised for those who believed “having not seen.” At least it is part of that blessedness. For we know, of course, that His promises to the obedient offer the wonderful gift of eternal life with Him! So, in the unique way that only Jesus provides, we are blessed (happy) now, and promised eternal existence with Him in perfect happiness!

Turning from examples of people who lived in Jesus’ time and how they developed servant “hearts,” let’s think of some practical examples today.

I feel that many of you had good, hard-working Christian mothers like I did. Many of yours are still alive and active in the service of the Lord. My mother has been gone on to her reward several years, but her philosophy about Christian service was a very simple one. She just did what was at hand to do. But, the thing I remember is that she was always ready to help anyone who was in need, if she could. We were very poor people as financial standards go. But I learned that you don’t have to have money to meet people’s needs most of the time. You need a hospitable heart. You need a compas-

sionate heart. You need the understanding that it doesn't take a lot to make people happier than they were before you came into their lives and extended kindness.

One of the greatest lessons I cherish that my mother taught me was so very simple in its application. She taught me (and lived it for herself) that when I got to a place where I was feeling sorry for myself, perhaps because I wasn't feeling well, then I should get out and find someone who was in worse condition than myself, and do something to help them. She knew that by taking such action you were likely to forget about your own little worries, and in fact would begin to appreciate your blessings more properly. We might call this today taking "evasive" action, but whatever it is called, it is a practical idea that works!

In attempting to further describe a "servant heart" we might each think of a person we know who seems to fit so naturally the role of a loving servant. To some people it just seems natural that they are warm, loving, always ready with a dish of food, an extra hour or two to help transport someone to a doctor's appointment, or any number of other things. She seems so at "ease" doing these things, and we look at her and think, "How can she be like that all the time? It seems so easy for her. Why is it I have to juggle all my jobs and make such an effort to be helpful to others, when it seems so effortless for her?"

If we examined that person's daily routine we might find that she has learned to make more effective use of her time than we have. Or that, on the other hand, she just devotes herself to this type of service, and feels

some of her other responsibilities are less important. Whaverer the case might be, there are some practical ideas we can consider that will help us in our determination to become servants in a natural, heartfelt manner.

1. Organization. We should take an honest look at our daily responsibilities and put them in their right priority. If we want to be a follower of Christ, changed into His likeness, we certainly need to put at the top of our list of priorities a quiet time in Bible study and prayer, daily. I firmly believe that our days go smoothly in direct proportion to how much time we spend in the word. If we take a certain amount of "prime time" during our day and spend it in prayerful study of the Bible, we will grow more into His likeness, and reaching out to others will become more natural as a result.

As Christian mothers and wives our next responsibility lies with our families . . . to the care of our mates and children. Young mothers should not burden themselves with feelings of guilt when the proper care of their immediate family seems to steal time from ministering to those on the "outside." Her first responsibility is with the family God has given her. The training of those little lives in following Jesus is too important to neglect for the purpose of going outside that home in search of helping others. As time permits, part of that training so valuable to children may be enhanced by letting them be helpers in doing good things for others outside the home.

The next step we need to take in organizing our time is to eliminate the unnecessary things that steal valuable time and energy from our days. We waste so much time

in just not having a plan, but in a scattered fashion our work is done in a “hit-and-miss” manner. If there are some things that are stealing away our time and our energies, then we need to learn how to deal with them, eliminating them. If that thing happens to involve people, then we want to deal with it in a kindly way. The constant demand that the “telephone” makes on our days is a good example of this. We must learn how to kindly but firmly end a conversation that is going on and on and taking time away from more important things.

You can think of other things that steal time and energies. Deal kindly, but effectively with them, praying for guidance!

2. Think on these things. I would encourage you to consider the importance of what you feed your mind upon in relation to the kind of servant you are. The Bible says, “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flows the springs of life” (Proverbs 4:23 RSV). We all know that “we are pretty much what we think.” This is a saying that we confirm in our daily actions, generally speaking. The apostle Paul wrote,

“Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things” (Philippians 4:8 RSV).

If from the heart springs of life are to flow, and our “heart” is the thing at the center of our being, our mind, then isn’t it tremendously important that we put

only good things in there? Then it will be more natural every day that only "good things" flow out!

3. **Trust God**, actively, for His promises regarding service and the blessedness of it.

4. **Others-consciousness:** Consciously develop "others-consciousness." Make yourself look for the good in everyone you meet, and develop an awareness of their needs that you might be of some help with. Above all, **BE FRIENDLY!** If you are a "cool" person toward others this growing of a heart that is naturally helpful is going to be far more difficult! We must cultivate a spirit of friendliness. (If friendliness is not natural to you, try the experiment that says if you do anything daily for three weeks it will become a habit! Reach out in some small way every day for three weeks to someone, and see if it doesn't become natural to you by the end of that time! After all, we all have to begin somewhere! So why not at the beginning?)

5. **Thankfulness:** Dwell daily (by Bible study, reflection, and prayer) upon the grace given to us in Christ Jesus our Savior! When we come to a fuller, deeper realization of how lost we would be without Him, and how full our salvation is in Him, then we will want to show our gratitude in every way we can. We will be eager to show Him to others in our lives. Only as we love others and touch their lives can we draw them to Him!

6. **Gladness:** Give yourself a wonderful gift by planning something good for someone else! Then you will find out what is meant in the scripture that says, "My

servants shall sing for gladness of heart” (Isaiah 65:14 RSV).

Compassion’s Part in the Servant Heart

There may not be another word concerning Jesus’ treatment of people that is as touching as this word compassion. This compassion was what made it easy for Jesus to serve those around Him. The Bible says repeatedly of Jesus, “He was moved with compassion . . .” (Matthew 15:32; 9:36; 14:14; Mark 6:34; Luke 7:13; and others).

Cruden’s Concordance defines compassion: “Literally, suffering with another; hence having pity or sympathy for another.”¹²

Jesus, being God’s Son, and having a knowledge of what was in people, could see their needs more poignantly than we are able to do. But, still, because of the feelings of good-will that are brought out in followers of Christ, we are all touched by people’s needs. Probably the thing Jesus saw first of all was their lost condition. He referred to them a number of times as being like “sheep without a shepherd.” It was His great and deep yearning for all people to be in the fold of God, in a saved condition, that prompted His great compassion. As best we can, we need to feed our feelings of compassion for all people.

We all know the feelings of our heart that go out to a small child who we recognize is helpless when he is in need. We don’t have difficulty with this type of compassion, though sometimes even where children are involved we may harden our hearts! But, when it comes to adults who we deem should be able to help themselves,

should *know* better, should have better sense, more pride, etc., etc., we tend to be more judgmental and harsh in our treatment. Especially today, with our welfare system the way it is, we have let ourselves become coldly calculating about people. I wonder what Jesus' reaction to people would be today, when He might view the welfare lines, those using food stamps, the groups of able-bodied men and women sitting idle, not seeking work because the government is "keeping them up." I believe He would still be moved with "compassion" because people are still misguided and lost. Many of the young people of today have lived all their lives in the "welfare" state, and know little or nothing of what we might call the "work ethic." Still, they are made in the image of God. They have a spark of eternity in them, and as Christ lives in us, His only way of showing His compassion and reaching out to them today is through us.

But, we needn't confine our thinking about people in need of compassion to those in the category of welfare recipients and such like. There is another need that is rampant in our communities, and that is found in the lack of purpose, or loss of identity with anything important in the lives of countless families. Average families are characterized by going after bigger and bigger salaries, acquiring better homes, bigger and better automobiles, boats, lake cabins, etc. In other words, most people are in a frenzy just acquiring more things, and along toward the latter part of middle-age, if they would admit it most of them get the uneasy feeling that they are going nowhere. This is not to deny the pleasure

and the comfort, physically, that is found in these material goods. But, deep inside every human being is a core containing that seed that will live on eternally somewhere. I believe that seed in people yearns for the true-value goal of being right with their Creator!

When we, who bear Christ in our bodies, meet the person whose dissatisfaction with his life is showing, even in the most minute, shutter-speed fashion, we need to reach out in tactful, loving response through the compassion of Jesus, and meet their needs, if we can. Often, meeting this type of need will involve a form of "counseling" or simply being a good listener. As our friendship progresses then Christ, through us, may be able to draw that person into a consideration of his relationship to God. As we have sown the "seed" we leave the harvest to God, whose word is able to convict people of their sin and need of Christ as Savior.

The people we see from time to time who are obviously in genuine need, physically, mentally, morally, socially, spiritually, we have the least trouble with in showing compassion. Praise God for hearts that are touched by the needs of other human beings, no matter what their status in life! Pray for a compassionate heart! And please remember that our Savior said, "And whoever gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is My disciple truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward" (Matthew 10:42 RSV).

In the personality of woman this matter of the "heart" has tremendous effect on how she deals with people. Anne Ortlund gives us pause to stop and evaluate our hearts by writing:

“There are two kinds of personalities in this world, and you are one of the two. People can tell which, as soon as you walk into a room: your attitude says either “Here I am,” or “There you are.”¹³

How insightful this is! By our manner of greeting when we enter a room of people we show whether we are centered in ourselves or have given ourselves up for the sake of Him who died for us!

In final consideration of developing a loving servant “heart,” let us remember Jesus’ response when asked the most important commandment:

“And He 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’ (Matthew 22:37-39 RSV).

Serving With Gladness

In the preceding lessons we have used many scriptures that show that we followers of Christ are called to be servants. On the occasion when Jesus washed His apostles’ feet, he taught them the valuable lesson that the greatest among them would be their servant. On another occasion He told them to deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Him.

In 1 Peter 2:16 we are told to “live as servants of God.”

Of course, the strongest incentive to servanthood is the passage in Philippians 2 that we spent a great deal of

time on in the other lessons. What greater challenge to servanthood can be had than that loving example of Jesus Christ, Himself, who was equal to God, yet gave Himself up as a servant! We are told there to "let this mind be in you . . ."

Another passage of scripture that is so very inspiring to one who seeks to follow after the likeness of Jesus is found in 2 Corinthians 3. There the apostle Paul speaks of the confidence we have through Christ toward God, who has made us competent to be ministers (servants) of a new covenant written in the Spirit. He speaks of how much more glorious the new dispensation of the Spirit is, with splendor surpassing that of the dispensation of Moses. In verse 11 he speaks of the new dispensation as permanent. And he says that the hearts of the Israelites were hardened and only through Christ the veil of hardness could be lifted. But, he says, when a man turns to the Lord the veil is removed. Then the scripture I want us to consider regarding becoming like Jesus:

"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; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (1 Corinthians 3:18 RSV).

Oh, dear friends, when we behold the glory of the Lord, as revealed to us by faith in the scriptures, what do we see? We see Jesus denying Himself! We see Him living in uncomfortable conditions, with nothing of the security we think is so important! We see Him tiring out His physical body meeting people's needs. We see Him spending endless hours healing people of all kinds of

ailments, and according to Isaiah 53, "taking them upon Himself." And as we behold Him, how is it that we are being changed into His likeness?

I believe the answer is in Philippians 2. Have the same mind in you as Christ, become a servant, looking not on your "own things," but on the things of others, carrying out the Lord's advice to treat others the way you would like to be treated.

This denial of self is not a stark, pale, pious state of living. But it is a joyous, even colorful, whole-hearted giving of ourselves, that lands us smack in the element we were created for: that of joyful devotion to God through the imitation of His Son, Jesus Christ!

We have discussed the basis of Christian commitment, that being the surrendering of our wills to that of God. We have delved into how we develop a natural "heart" of a servant. Now we come to the practical doing of the thing! And as a springboard for this lesson I want us to read a statement that Jesus made at the close of the thirteenth chapter of John. The gospel according to John is built upon, banked around with, and supported by the theme of love. Do you suppose that because John seems to have been a recipient of a closer love relationship to Jesus that this is why his version of the gospel story discusses love more in detail than do the others? You know, when someone lavishes love upon us, aren't we more apt to return it in kind?

But, to go one, in verses 34 and 35 John quotes Jesus as saying:

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that

you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34,35 RSV).

Jesus could not have said a more constructive and helpful thing to His followers than to say simply that by your love men will know you are My disciples!

The evangelistic implications in the statement are tremendous! Especially for women, because women so often are called upon to do the things that show our loving fellowship; preparation of food for times of illness and death; caring personally for those needing some nursing, using their talents with the sewing machine, also their artistic abilities; these things all show our love for one another! And Jesus says “by this” men will know we are His disciples!

We know that “love” comes from the “heart” as we have come to understand the Biblical meaning of the word heart. Therefore, we conclude that servanthood must begin in the heart. How we treat people on a daily basis is where our servanthood begins. Every person is made in the image of God and has intrinsic worth as a human being with a soul that is eternal.

Outwardly each one is clothed in a body uniquely his or hers. Sometimes that body is beautiful or handsome. Many times it is average or mediocre. Often it is ugly. All the same, each is valuable and capable of rising to the best that is in him! As servants of Christ we can bring out that best by the way we treat (serve) that person, no matter how appealing or unappealing his outward appearance or nature. The incredible thing about this bringing out the best in people (a form of servan-

thood) is that the person usually blooms into a beauty not seen before . . . he becomes transformed because Christ has been able to touch his life through the ministry of His servant!

We should pay close attention to the phrase in Christ's statement . . . "by this." He is saying that the things we do for others out of love are the indicators of our discipleship to Christ, and demonstrate (witness, if you will) to the world that we are his followers, or disciples. Another phrase within His statement is "one another." There is a "one-anotherness" in Christianity that is unique from other religions of the world. That is one of the greatest facets of the nature of Christianity: it is a "redemptive" religion. Of course, we know it is redemptive in relation to our sins being forgiven through Christ. But I refer to the value it places on the lives of all men everywhere. Its evangelistic, caring nature is based on belief that every human being is a person of worth. This is the basis for Jesus leading us to become servants of others, because only through this type of caring and reaching out can we touch their lives with the redemptive powers of Christ.

As a Christian body, the church of Christ is often misunderstood concerning the matter of Christian "works." We have taken to heart so deeply the teachings of the book of James and emphasized the importance of "works" in our walk as Christians. And I believe the basic place of Christian works is definitely a part of Christ's teachings. But I believe we should have long ago recognized these "works" as the practical mode for our servanthood as Christ taught in so many

other places in the Bible. Then we can more easily see how our actions of love are motivated by Christ's examples, rather than an attempt to "earn" our salvation! "I, by my works, will show you my faith . . ." Faith in what? In God, as revealed to us by His Son, Jesus Christ! "I, by my works" in James 2:18 might possibly be a disciple of Christ's personal application of Jesus' "by this . . ." in John 13. As long as the "I, by my works . . ." is not a boastful, self-glorifying kind of statement then the person is humbly justified. In fact, the words would never need to be spoken. The principle is lived out in the life of the servant whose faith (discipleship) is shown by his love for others.

There are many ways, too numerous for a thorough discussion here, that we reflect Christ by our servanthood. These fall into many different categories relating to the physical, mental, moral, and social needs. The church itself should be characterized by members who are functioning in "helping relationships." Just as there are many varied personalities in a congregation, just so there are as many varied types of "helping relationships" that should be going on. One person's ability might lie in simply being a good listener with the assuredness of secure confidence, or trust. Another may be less inclined to "listen" but may be wonderful at going into someone's home and adeptly putting things in order, cleaning, laundering, cooking, doing what is needed. Still another might be short on both those qualities, but be a good driver and willingly transport others in need of lifts to appointments, etc., who are unable to transport themselves.

Anything at all that we do for someone else that gets us "outside" ourselves, shows a sacrificial love that says "there is something more important than my own personal needs at this time." And, though we are doing it for another human being or group of human beings, we are doing it for Jesus, because He leads us in it! And by following His leading we become more in His likeness, and we show our love, thus our discipleship. Beautiful, isn't it?

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:5:

"For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

Jesus called His followers the "light of the world." In the same passage He further went on to say that our light should shine so that men might see our good works and give glory to God our Father (Matthew 5:14-16 RSV). In a way, we see that the light shone in our hearts reflects Jesus as the glory of God. We show Him by our following, by being "servants," as Paul said to the Corinthians.

We have already discussed Jesus' compassion at some length. But it would be good for us to remind ourselves to do everything we can to be open to people's needs. We must guard against becoming "hardened" to the needs we see around us. It is so easy for this to happen, because we find all kinds of excuses to put off following

up on our impulses to do some good. When we do put these things off one time, the next time it comes easier, and so on, until we aren't touched or moved by that particular need any more. We should pray for eyes that see and ears that hear and feet that move in response to needs around us! We should be unashamed of tears that spring to the eye in response to a feeling of compassion for others. Then, let those tears sweeten the path over which our feet carry us to reach out with helping hands.

When it comes to our neighbors, oh let it never be said of us that we hardly know our neighbors! The love that is shed abroad in our hearts must flow over onto all who live around us. A smile, a friendly wave, a gesture of thoughtfulness, will open the way for our getting acquainted with our neighbor. Of course, we know in the Biblical sense our neighbor is anyone we meet. Jesus defined the "good neighbor" as the one who helped the person in need, in that particular case the wounded man lying on the side of the road (Luke 10:29-37 RSV). But, in our hurried-up society today, it is possible to live in one neighborhood across the city from the location of our employment, our church building, in other words, our places of activity. Thus, it is totally possible (and too often the case) that we come and go and never get involved with those neighbors who live right around us. All too often we are cheating ourselves of some rewarding friendships and experiences when this is the case. And certainly, we are missing the greatest opportunity we have afforded us to reach out on a daily basis to serve the needs of our neighbors. This need is so great! Even the telephone commercial speaks to it!

After all, the place where we dwell must surely be the place where quality times are spent! This quality should radiate to our neighbors and draw them into the circle of our homes whenever possible!

It is a beautiful thing that in most of our congregations there is so little difference made in people! No matter what their social and economic background is, all are one in Christ Jesus. Jesus is a wonderful "leveler" of us all. And what a joyous thing it is when wealthy, middle-income, and poor alike mix together in comradely fellowship! So, we see carried out in our lives one aspect of Jesus' example in becoming poor, that we might become rich! True riches in Christ on earth are to be found in His body, the church, where every believer is treated as a whole person, with special worth separate and apart from his status, as the world counts status!

A wealthy Christian woman who is not conscious of her wealth becomes truly rich when she makes everyone she associates with feel comfortable and worthwhile. On the other side of the "coin" (appropriate, wouldn't you say?) the poor Christian woman becomes truly rich when she can overcome her "embarrassment" in the presence of her more richly-dressed sister in Christ, and let the love of Christ they have in common be the equalizer. What a glow comes from a fellowship such as this among Christ's people!

What does this have to do with servanthood? you ask. EVERYTHING! It begins in the heart, remember? How we treat people.

When we come to consider "burden-bearing" as a trait of Christian servanthood we see Christians rising to

the challenge so beautifully. In most of our congregations such great love and concern is shown when we have a brother or sister in difficulties. I am so thankful that our churches are becoming churches of prayer. I am so thankful for ladies in our congregations who are becoming more aware of the need to band together as prayer partners, and following this with ministering to those for whom they pray. Isn't it wonderful when we let God use us to answer our prayers? As we pray, let us take on that wonderful attitude that says, "Here am I, send me!" I believe that our members all over the country are doing such a good job of "loving one another" in times of stress, crisis, illness, death, that their communities indeed are seeing that "by this" they are disciples of Jesus!

Now we come to a more "internal" quality that affects tremendously our external servanthood, and that is the matter of being a forgiving person! Christ has left us a perfect example concerning forgiveness, in that while we were sinners He died for us! And He says we must do the same . . . we must show a forgiving attitude toward others. Truly we do serve others when we have a forgiving spirit! When we hold grudges, bear resentments, refuse to "forgive and forget," we are jeopardizing our chances of salvation, first of all. But more than that we are short-changing ourselves, spiritually, because we cannot flourish as Christians with such sickness in our lives! There is no way I can be a loving person who draws people to Jesus, and have an unforgiving nature! No way! A Christian is to be easily approached. If I am known as an ill-tempered woman who bears grudges,

am I going to be approached very often by anyone? No, of course not! People are going to avoid me! And that is the opposite of what I should want, if I am to be a servant as Christ was. So you see, I serve you by being forgiving of you. I serve you by my attitude of love in all matters. It should be a characteristic of mine that I would go quickly to someone with whom I have had a difference and make it right. Personally, I cannot sleep if I know someone has something against me, especially a brother or sister in Christ. It just shouldn't be so. And if I step out in faith in what Jesus has taught about going to them (Matthew 18) I always find that His plan works. I've never talked to a brother or sister in Christ who did not want to get things straightened out just as much as I did. Praise God for His wonderful way of working these things out! And pray that He will use you as a servant in forgiving attitudes.

Our servanthood is certainly enhanced by having the quality of humility or child-likeness in our lives. With this kind of humble attitude no one is likely to be offended by our overtures of helpfulness.

In Isaiah 40:11 we read of Jesus:

“He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the young lambs in his arms. He will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young.”

How important that as followers of this wonderful Savior with the heart of a shepherd, we be gentle in our dealings with people! In Galatians 6:1 we find Christians told:

“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespasses, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness, looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted.”

As we reach out to people there is no place for harshness. And sometimes a judgmental attitude, or a self-righteous one makes us come across as being harsh, and certainly not gentle. And there is no place for the attitude that says by its manner, “I have arrived, spiritually.” And, too often, we have members whose manner says just that! Please, dear sisters, let’s have a spirit of gentleness in our dealings with each other! Our older members must certainly be aware of this need in dealing with young women who are new converts to Christ! They can misunderstand and become discouraged so easily! Gather them as young lambs in your arms and lead them gently!

Last year Camilla Becton spoke to these lectureship audiences of women concerning the Caring ministry that she and Randy and others have established here in Abilene. She very candidly and lovingly told us the ways that we may minister to those who have serious illness in their families. The Bible tells us that Jesus “took our infirmities and bore our diseases” (Matthew 8:17). Though we aren’t able to actually in our bodies bear the diseases of another person, we are certainly able to help them bear them by our ministry of caring. We have so very many people in all communities who are suffering with serious illnesses, and we must educate ourselves as to how to best help them. Camilla gave us many prac-

tical examples of how to help and the type of help most needed. But the most important thing we need to remember is that it is no help to them to say, "Call me if you need me!" That is probably the equivalent of the warning in James 2:16, "And one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needful for the body, what does it profit?"

To be of practical help to those who are ill or have an illness that alters drastically their family routine, ask yourself: "If I were in their place, what would I need done for me?" Then go and do it! In a quiet, discreet, loving manner . . . as my mother would say, "Go do what you can do, then quietly fold your tent and steal away!"

Many of you are called upon to give many hours of your time to one individual. Because you are a caring person, someone has singled you out to be their particular sounding-board and counselor. There are times when you would like to pull your hair out (and perhaps their's, too!) but you don't want to give up on that person, so you don't. What a servant you are! And so seldom do you get any credit or attention for it! But, please know that Jesus sees, and your reward will be great! Remember, He will reward such a small thing as a cup of water given in His name! Remember also that He, too, saw the value of the one lost sheep! So, if your particular lamb is sometimes a trial to your patience, and wearying to your soul, be of good cheer! Continue in prayer, and carry on!

And speaking of prayer, what about the servanthood

of prayer? Do you have a prayer list? If I am committed to pray for certain people, am I not serving them in prayer? and who can pray for someone daily and not be moved to do other things for them? Make it a part of your life of service to be committed to others in prayer, remembering Jesus' great promise in that regard found in passages such as James 5:16.

No matter what our circumstances are in life, wife, mother, business woman, teacher, nurse, doctor, or any other professional roles, we touch the lives of other people, and many times young people. As people-helpers one of our great opportunities is in the area of teaching the Bible, and helping young people to harmonize their lives with the teachings of Christ. In this area, helping young people to deal with temptations they face today is a great service. And as Christian parents, not only can we teach what the Bible says, but we may provide wholesome Christian forms of entertainment as well as opportunities for the young to serve.

Practical Suggestions

Upon a close, honest examination of our hearts as to whether we have yielded to His lordship in our lives, and given up our hearts to servanthood in the likeness of Jesus, we should individually recognize areas in which we best serve. We should make it our daily prayer that the Lord open our eyes that we may see where we may be of best service. And then pray for His guidance as we step out by faith and trust in Him in that particular direction, each step led by His loving, gentle example.

But, because we are a practical people, and we love

“for instances,” what follows is a “not nearly complete” list of suggestions to give our minds something to consider in the realm of service to others. There are more exhaustive lists available. These are suggested, of course, with women in mind. The first few suggestions come from a class taught a few years ago in these lectureships by Sister Mary Oler:

“Type . . . cook . . . drive a car . . . babysit . . . read aloud . . . clean house . . . offer a guestroom for a visiting preacher or others . . . telephone shut-ins . . . make handwork for Bible teachers . . . make up packets of noiseless things of interest to give a mother of small children (might contain bright colored ribbons, a card with holes punched in it and a shoelace to lace through the holes, etc.). These are little things, but a starting place.”¹⁴

Add to these ideas for consideration:

1. Preparing enough extra in your main meal of the day that you might take a plate to a widow neighbor or shut-in you know would appreciate and be comforted and inconvenienced by it.

2. Pick up the laundry of one who is ill, and do it along with your own.

3. Run the vacuum cleaner at least once a week for someone who is frail or temporarily unable to operate such a heavy appliance. Then take her to get a hamburger or pizza, if she lives alone.

4. If your congregation has a nursing home facility, go a few times and see if you feel that might be somewhere you could gladly be of service. If you have an extra hour or two in the week, visit the nursing home

and volunteer your services. Carry your own bottle of rubbing alcohol and nice fragrant soap, and carefully wash and massage the feet of some of the dear little ladies you find living there! (If this seems “gross” to you, as some of our teenagers would say, then I would say “Try it!” and you might find out the rewards are worth the effort!) I love to have my feet massaged after a tiring day and when I am old and in a nursing home (if that’s the Lord’s will) I hope there will be someone courageous and loving enough to do that for me!

5. We are so blessed to have automobiles that carry us conveniently and quickly places we want to go. Let’s use them to bless the lives of those unable to get around. Take an older friend for a ride on occasion, just to see the changing season, or give them a change from being closed up in their house. Take even your close friend, another time, for a ride, and share a time of “serendipity” with no particular goal in mind, except to enrich the friendship.

6. If you are gifted with the sewing machine, you might volunteer to use your talent in mending things for the nursing home or orphans’ homes, or Christian centers of service in your community.

7. If your ladies have a quilting day at your building, don’t overlook this opportunity to learn the fine art of quilting while at the same time growing in a loving relationship with those women, You serve in multiple ways in this activity! Of course, the quilts are generally given to someone who needs them. At our congregation in Merkel the ladies who quilt in the “Dorcas” room prepare and give quilts to each couple who marry in our

congregation, and usually have a baby quilt ready for every baby born. And the gratitude shown by the recipients is worth all the cutting, piecing, blocking and stitching, including pricked fingers!

8. If you don't take part in quilting save all your scraps of material and give them to those who do engage in this.

9. Consider volunteering your time in the clothing room for the needy, if your congregation has one. If you are in a small community and your congregation doesn't have a clothing room, a wonderful service would be to begin one.

10. If you have children in school, become involved in the P.T.O. and be helpful in their worthwhile activities. Your presence there acts as the salt and the light Jesus talked about. But, please, be most careful to let Him control your actions and reactions to all things involving your children at school! Sometimes I am afraid, that, as parents, when it comes to our children and their school activities, as well as sport activities, our Christianity is sorely tested! And too often we see results that are tragic as far as influence for Christ goes! Remember, where we daily live, that is, "Where the rubber meets the road," as the saying goes, we not only "serve" by actions, but as much by attitudes. "Have this mind in you that was in Christ Jesus!"

11. If you are particularly interested in foods and their preparation, make yourself available in the congregation's kitchen to help plan the foods for special functions. Put your abilities to work in planning the best and most attractive, yet economical way to serve the menus

for church suppers, suppers honoring your elderly, special things for teenagers and college age members, programs for leaders, ladies' functions, etc. Volunteer your services to a "meals-on-wheels."

12. Cultivate an "open home" environment about your own home. Learn to relax a little more about your house having to be just so-so before you feel comfortable about having someone over! Many women get so uptight about this that they just don't ever reach the point of having people over. This is sad . . . because many times a house really does become alive and more enjoyable when it is filled with fun and laughter and the sound of fellowship. Of course, this fellowship will also have its mellow times of prayer, discussion and meditation together, too, if your home is a place where friends feel welcome.

It is special to us to think of Mary and Martha and Lazarus opening their home to Jesus and His disciples. He must have felt at home there. And Martha felt comfortable enough with Him she could go to Him and fuss a little bit about Mary not helping! What a wonderful relationship they had with Jesus! Just think . . . if they hadn't been hospitable to Christ, they would have missed all that wonderful fellowship with Him! And we wouldn't have the special things we learn from them, either! Let the word speak on this subject:

"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Hebrews 13:2 RSV).

13. If your congregation supports missionaries

somewhere (and if it doesn't, please encourage them in a prayerful, submissive way to begin to!) make it a practice to correspond with the wives of the missionaries. Even a postcard occasionally will do wonders to pick up their spirits and let them know that the folks back home are thinking about them. You will probably be led to go on from there and do special things for them in the way of gifts, etc., during the year. As we reach out, tentatively, it seems the Lord opens up all kinds of ideas and opportunities for us to serve.

14. If you have received greeting cards or specially handwritten notes of appreciation from someone, you know what a warm and happy feeling it gives you. Keep your desk organized and keep a supply of all-occasion cards and note cards handy. Have stamps at hand, and you will find sending notes of encouragement and appreciation is a simple gesture of thoughtfulness that takes very little time, yet is so appreciated.

15. Do not neglect your own family to help others! (I just have to state this once again!) I am afraid there are women who try to justify an unkept home, poorly prepared (or not at all) meals, family's clothing in disarray, etc., by spending too much time outside the home doing things for someone else, or just getting caught up in activities that sometimes don't even have redeeming qualities! When you have a family at home to care for they are your most important "cause" next to your devotion to God. And your devotion to Him is shown by your loving service to them.

16. Then, on the other hand, do not use your family as an "excuse" for not ever reaching out to others, or

for poor church attendance. With all the wonderful gadgets and appliances we have today there is no reason for a woman's time to be totally consumed with her own work at home to the exclusion of others. There must be a "happy medium" found in making a good home, showing hospitality to others, and going outside the home to serve.

The list could be endless. When you consider your own talents, your interests, the abilities God has given you, then you should study His word and prayerfully consider how you may use them to bless the lives of those around you.

As a reminder in closing let's recall the things that seem central to this calling of ours to be servants.

Before we may be committed to service, we must be submitted to Christ as Lord, Master, and Divine Example of servanthood! With our selfishness carefully packed into the parachute pack, we may confidently jump into our world as servant Christians, with full assurance that the Lord will safely carry us home!

Having surrendered our selfish will to Jesus, we find that He makes us blessed and happy in our place of servanthood! Our hearts are made glad as we imitate His love and compassion toward our fellowman!

The practical side of being a servant finds us simply using the natural abilities God has given us in a way that blesses and touches the lives around us, and become the mode by which we may be about our Father's business of reconciling men to God, their Maker!

I would close by admonishing you: study His word daily! Be ready to give an answer for the hope that is in

you, for when you reach out in love and service and meet the needs of others they are going to be drawn to Christ, through you. Pray truly without ceasing! Let a prayerful attitude be yours in all you do! At the end of your life on earth this verse in Revelation 14:13 will characterize your life as a servant in Christ:

“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth. Blessed indeed, says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them.’ ”

Endnotes

¹Lottie Beth Hobbs, *Like a Fish Out of Water* (Harvest Publications, 1969).

²Hannah Whitall Smith, *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1942), pp. 43,44.

³W.E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Co.), pp. 246,86.87.

⁴Stanley E. Jones, *Victory Through Surrender* (Nashville, New York: Abingdon Press, 1966), p. 52,53.

⁵Jones, pp. 33,34.

⁶Jones, p. 55.

⁷Keith Phillips, *The Making of a Disciple* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell, 1981), p. 17.

⁸Milton Jones, *Discipling: The Multiplying Ministry* (Fort Worth, Texas: Star Bible & Tract Corp., 1982), p. 121.

⁹See *Cruden's Complete Concordance*, p. 290.

¹⁰See Jones, *Victory Through Surrender*, p. 93.

¹¹Jones, p. 37.

¹²*Cruden's Complete Concordance*, p. 104.

¹³Anne Ortlund, *Disciplines of the Beautiful Woman* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1977), p. 95.

¹⁴See Abilene Christian University Lectureship book, 1978, Mary Oler.

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LEARNING TO LOVE

Willard Tate

One afternoon I sat in the back yard dreaming that I was a famous, successful speaker and lecturer. A reporter was interviewing me. "Mr. Tate, you have lectured all over the world. What one thing have you learned that you would like to pass on to the world?"

Without hesitating, I took the microphone. "It's our relationships." The answer even startled me. It must have come from my subconscious. I do not remember asking myself that question before. But I think that is the answer: the ability to establish long-lasting relationships.

No amount of money or intelligence or good looks or achievements can take the place of three things that I will talk about here. Relationships bring happiness. Luke 10:27 suggests three relationships we need to develop in our lives.

First, *we need a relationship with our God*. God created us, and it is difficult to have an abundant life unless we are in touch with the Source of life. Only through this relationship can we know who we are, where we came from, and where we are going. Each of us needs to love and be loved by someone significant. And God loves you so much that if you were the only person living on earth, He would let Jesus die for you.

Many years ago sailors at sea near the Antarctic often saw a strange sight. They would see a giant iceberg towering high out of the sea moving *against* the wind. This, of course, frightened the sailors because their

ships were powered by the wind. Later they discovered that only a fraction of the great iceberg was visible and that its huge roots were caught in the great currents of the ocean. It was being driven purposely along its way regardless of the direction of the wind. Well, this is what we need. A relationship with God so rich and deep that we move along our way regardless of the winds on the surface of our life.

James 2:23 says Abraham is God's friend. You and I have many great friends, but just imagine being a friend of God. The kind of friends who walk and talk together.

My God and I go in the fields together;
We walk and talk as good friends should and do.
We clasp our hands, our voices ring with
laughter;
My God and I walk through the meadow's hue.

Both the Old and New Testaments picture for us the kind of relationship God desires with His people. The idea is Jehovah as the husband and the people as His bride. Isaiah 54:5,6: "For thy Maker is thy husband. For Jehovah hath called thee as a wife." Jeremiah 3:20: "Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband so have ye dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel."

In Ephesians 5 Paul talks about the relationship of the husband and the wife, but he says the great mystery is the relationship between Christ and the church. 2 Corinthians 11:2: "For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy; for I espoused you to one husband, that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ." The

Revelation letter speaks of the marriage of the Lamb and His bride that has made herself ready.

This means when we disobey God, it is like breaking our marriage vows. It means that all sin is sin against love. It means that our relationship with God is not a distant relationship between husband and wife. When we sin, we break God's heart.

We learn another aspect of our relationship with God when we see Him pictured as Father and His people as son. Exodus 4:22: "Israel is My son, even My first born." Isaiah 1:2: "I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against Me." Hosea 1:10: "Ye are the sons of the living God." The New Testament includes many references to a father/son relationship. The prodigal son broke his relationship with his father and went into a distant country. Only after he "came to himself" did the prodigal son return. Because of his father's love for him, the prodigal realized his true worth, and they reestablished their father/son relationship. Our relationship with God is determined by how gratefully we respond to how much He loves and values us. Only in God can we know our real value.

Second, *we need a relationship with other people.* What you do for others, not what others do for you, gives you a "feel-good-feeling" about yourself. A few years ago I was visiting with a good friend at the National Speakers Association. He has probably done more study and counseling about self-esteem than anyone in America. I asked, "What do you tell someone who comes in your office, tells you that he is hurting,

and says that he really doesn't like himself very well? What do you say? You don't have time for a 30-hour seminar." He said he first tries to get people to commit to help someone else. "Help someone else feel good and you will feel better yourself," he told me. And I think he is right. God made us so that when we reach out to others we actually heal ourselves. It is our relationship to others, not their relationship to us, that helps supply our self-worth. This relationship begins with love — seeing others as valuable. That is how we love our enemies. Because we see them as valuable.

Why is everyone valuable? Because they do great deeds? Because they have such pleasing personalities? No! Because Jesus laid down His life for them. That is the ultimate meaning of love. That is how we know what love is. That is the standard all love is measured against.

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers (1 John 3:16).

This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. This is love! Not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins (1 John 3:9,10).

1 John 3,4 explains very clearly that our relationship with God is first (3:23). It also says, however, unless we have an on-going, loving relationship with our brother that we nullify our relationship with God. Consider

these statements: "Love comes from God . . . We ought to love one another." "Whoever loves his brother lives in the light." "Whoever loves God must also love his brother." These scriptures tell us that establishing long-lasting relationships with others is not an option. You might call it "how to get along with people," "people skills," or "how to win friends," but it is all really the same. We need to be people who love and serve. We should be in love with all people God created and died for.

And third, *we need a positive relationship with ourselves*. All your relationships are influenced by what you think of yourself. You need a relationship with God, you need a relationship with others, and you need a positive relationship with yourself. Notice the order. It is God first, others second, then self. It really begins with the way that I talk to myself. What I say to myself about my relationship with Christ and my relationship with others makes a difference in my life. Probably as much as 80% of what we say to ourselves is about ourselves. We talk to ourselves with words, pictures, and feelings. Much of what we say to ourselves is nonsense. We often put ourselves down, or belittle ourselves. God wants us to love Him and to love others and to love ourselves, but we will never have a perfect self-image. Our inherent worth, or value, is perfect, but our image of that worth will always be distorted. Other people may influence how we see ourselves, but what we say to ourselves about ourselves has greater effect.

So rather than developing perfect self-esteem, we should merely try liking ourselves better. Develop

thoughts and beliefs that are self-enhancing, positive, and upbuilding rather than destructive and self-defeating. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). It is similar to a little chicken struggling to peck himself free from his shell. Our first response is to help him. But if we help him, it may kill him or leave him weak the rest of his life. We can do only so much for each other. We can provide an environment of warmth and love. We can show the way, and we can point to the light. But each individual must do his own "pecking."

Ten Ways to Become Your Own Best Friend

1. *Start watching the way you talk to yourself.* Watch what you say to yourself about yourself. Put a watchman at the gate, examine every thought and make it yield to the will of Christ. Instead of saying things like "I can't" and "I won't be able," say, "I can with God's help." "Because Jesus believes in me I believe in me."

The words we say to ourselves about ourselves will eventually make us or break us. Words are the most powerful tools we have to change and control our lives. We have complete freedom to choose our words. Words that run through our minds are doing one of two things. They build us up or tear us down. They have a positive or negative effect. They are self-enhancing or self-destructive.

Our mind is like a recorder, keeping every word that passes through our life. Words about happiness, peace, and love will eventually build positive effects in our

lives. Words about failure, conflict, hatred, and fear produce negative effects. Words of faith, hope, and love bring about an entirely different set of conditions than fear, doubt, and hate. Words that frequently run through the mind become reality. Value words and hold them in esteem because they shape our lives. They are the garments of our thoughts.

2. *Learn to accept yourself as you are.* If I always wait until I become better before I accept myself, then I'll always be waiting because I'll never be perfect. You must decide to like yourself. I must tell myself, "I'm going to like you, so just straighten up and begin to change because we're going to be good friends."

I have read many accounts about people who have had heart attacks, but believe that the best years of their life came after the illness. The doctor often says, "Unless you change your personality, you are not going to live." These people did not have to enroll in a self-improvement class or read any great books. They simply made a decision, and their personality changed immediately.

David made that type of decision. As long as his baby was living, he fasted and prayed to God that the baby would get well. But when the baby died, he washed and ate. The people did not understand his behavior. He was saying, "I cannot return the baby to me, but I can go to it." The power of a decision changed his personality.

3. *As a Christian, know who you are.* Bruce Naramore, in his book *You're Someone Special*, and other authors remind us of how special we are. We have a royal heritage, we are the culmination of creation, we

have a kingly calling, we are a pearl of great price, we have celestial guardianship, we've got a mansion waiting for us, and we are the salt of the earth. God hears and answers our prayers. It is difficult to think about those foundations and still consider yourself a nobody. The strongest force in your life can be repeating, "God loves me, therefore, I am valuable." I can rely on that. It is the greatest message I could ever give myself. and when you start giving yourself messages that say, "I am special; there will never be another person on the earth like me," your life begins to change.

4. *Recognize your special talents and uniqueness.* You have some talents that no one else in the world has. Build on those. Which do you emphasize — your strengths or weaknesses? During a seminar for a sales organization, I made this ground rule: if anyone said anything negative about himself, I would ring a bell. At first, they were astonished and surprised when the bell rang. They were totally unaware they were putting themselves down. Finally, they began to realize what was happening, and they stopped putting themselves down. They began to talk about their strengths and to build on them.

A famous baseball manager once asked a pitcher, "Son, what is your best pitch?" The young man said, "My fast ball."

"What is your worst pitch?" asked the manager. "I guess my drop," answered the young pitcher.

Then the manager asked, "Which one do you work on the most?" He answered, "My drop."

“No, no,” answered the manager. “Work on your fast ball. Spend at least 80% of your time working on your fast ball.” We also need to work on things we do best. Recognize your strengths and special talents.

5. *Learn to accept responsibility for your life*, your successes and your failures. Stop blaming other people. No one is a failure until they begin to blame others for their mistakes. It is necessary to accept responsibility for our mistakes because that is the only way we can change. As long as I blame someone else, then I will not go through the pain and hurt of changing and growing. Start using words that indicate you are responsible and in charge of your life.

How do you react when someone tells you that you must do something? You probably react the same way when you tell yourself the same thing. Besides, you are not telling yourself the truth. Is there anything you have to do other than die? Absolutely not. There may be certain things you have to do to obtain certain results or rewards, but you do not have to have those results or rewards. That is still a choice. So use *words* that reflect a choice or decision, and stop using words that cause you to rebel. Replacing those words with words like “I choose to,” “I have decided to,” and “I want to.” Whether you say it or not, that actually is what is happening. In effect, you are saying, “I am responsible. I am in charge of my life.”

6. *Keep your promises*. You will never feel good about yourself if you do things that make you violate your conscience. Keeping promises is the only way you can believe in yourself. If you cannot trust yourself, you

will never love yourself. Start with something simple. Write it down and do it for 10 days. This will give you self-reliance. Be faithful to yourself. Sell yourself on yourself and you will enjoy living with yourself. You will never get away from yourself, so be kind and gentle to yourself. You cannot feel good about yourself if you are insecure. Confidence comes from self-control. Self-control and self-discipline produce inner security that brings peace and happiness. We can fool others, but we really cannot fool ourselves.

7. *Learn to forgive yourself.* As far as your feelings are concerned, it does not matter if God has forgiven you unless you forgive yourself. Forgiveness is also a decision. You must decide to forgive yourself and accept the forgiveness that God has promised.

8. *Learn to accept reality.* Most of our unhappiness comes from being unwilling to accept reality. It is difficult to feel good about yourself if you believe that everything is going against you. We can resist what is happening at the moment, but that will not change it. We may change it the next moment, but at this moment it is reality. Say things such as, "Oh, God, help me find the rhythm of life and to adopt the pace of nature."

I have read these simple rules for handling the reality of life.

- Do not let little things bother you.
- All things are little things. (Only things which effect eternity are big things.)
- If you cannot fight and you cannot flee, flow. It is called "rolling with the punches."

I am not talking about surrendering our values and convictions. I am talking about:

The serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
The courage to change the things I can, and
The wisdom to know the difference.

9. *Learn to forgive others.* You cannot be “at odds” with others and feel good about yourself.

10. *Learn to become a “people builder.”* Learn to build long-lasting relationships.

Basic Needs

The number one need in everyone’s life is to feel loved and accepted. Many people scream inside, “Tell me I am someone special. Tell me I am important.” My definition of success is “feeling good about yourself,” and that is also my definition for happiness. Establishing long, lasting relationships — relationships with God, others, and self — helps me feel good about myself. Virtually every student that walks into my classroom is saying exactly what everyone else is saying, “Help me feel important. Tell me I’m someone special.” Understanding that, I try to never embarrass them or put them down. I promise on the first day of class, “I will never embarrass you. So relax and enjoy the ride.”

If we understand that this basic need affects every relationship we have, including our children and our mate, we will never be caught in a power struggle. We will never be concerned with who wins or loses or putting someone in his place. We will be interested in helping people feel good about themselves.

So how do you become someone special? We notice many things that do not give us a “feel good” feeling. We use these things to try to prove our worthiness. Society’s standards say you are somebody if you meet these four criteria.

1. *You are somebody depending on how you look.* Today we are constantly bombarded with the idea of glamour, fashion, and beauty. The message from society: to be someone worthy, valuable, and loved, you must be one of the beautiful people. How many beautiful people are there? It has been estimated that 80% of all people do not feel good about the way they look. But this standard will always fail because it is based on something that is temporary — something that fades and will not last. Most people have flaws, bumps, and scars. If their self-worth is based on how they look, they have little to draw upon.

We usually respond differently to beautiful children than we do to unattractive children. We respond in a warmer way, and the child feels it immediately. Many stories we read to our children include the idea that you are someone if you are beautiful. Stories such as *The Ugly Duckling*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, and *Cinderella* all tell us that some characters were worthy because they were beautiful. There are also indications that academic grades can and are often influenced by the attractiveness of children. Seldom will a teacher single out a beautiful child to suggest that he was the one causing a particular problem in the classroom.

2. *Society says you are somebody depending on what*

you know. Of all the things we learned in school, the thing we learned best was that we were dumb. We had 12 years to learn that we were smart and creative, but instead we learned that we were dumb. Will Rogers said that everybody is ignorant, just on different subjects. I once knew a man with a Ph.D. who attempted to put oil in his car engine by pouring it down the dipstick tube. Is he intelligent? He knows several languages, but he was dumb on that subject. Which is most important? It all becomes relative.

The school system, not by design, is a dangerous place for a child with a fragile ego. Other children who make fun and compare the competition and tests, and unwise teachers and their remarks, all contribute to a shattered, broken self-worth. In the film *Grab Hold of Today*, Eden Ryle reconstructs an experiment that had been performed several times. She took a northern pike and put him in a 50-gallon tank. After he became acclimated to the 50-degree water, they placed minnows in the tank. A northern pike loves minnows like you and I love chocolate ice cream. He would slip up behind a minnow, getting within two or three inches of him, and with one swift motion the minnow would disappear, quicker than the eye could see. Then they removed the minnows and placed a special one-gallon glass jar with minnows inside it in the tank. The pike could not see the glass jar because of the reflection in the water. He would take aim at a minnow, slip up behind it and then would hit the glass. He hit the glass again and again. Eventually, three things happened. First, he began to hit the glass less frequently. And second, he began to hit the

glass with less intensity. And finally, he no longer hit it at all. He just swam by. When the pike was convinced that he could not get the minnows, they removed the gallon jar and the minnows began to swim around freely. They swam so closely that one even rubbed his gill. But the pike was convinced that he could not get them, so he died of starvation while they swam in front of his mouth.

Like the northern pike, many people have given up. They no longer try. They are convinced that they are dumb and no longer important. We must help them understand that their self-worth is not measured by what they know. A high school superintendent once told me about some minority students who worked in the fields and enrolled in school later than other students. He had to place them in their proper grades. It distracted teachers from their regular rhythm and upset the classes. He took a little boy to a classroom, opened the door and heard the teacher say, "Oh no, not another one." That teacher probably did not remember that incident very long, but that child may remember those words the rest of his life.

A person can lose his self-worth so easily, but regaining it is a long, slow, difficult process. Teachers often give students the idea that "I'm not going to care about you unless you are a good student in my class." But knowing or not knowing should not affect our self-worth and our being loved.

3. *Society says you are important if you have money.* That is the standard by which we judge almost everything. The size of the house, the kind of car, the

brand of clothes we wear. In a society where worth is determined by how much money you have, how do you think most people feel?

4. *Society says that you are somebody if you are a great athlete.* Our third and fourth points could be combined into one — that which we achieve or accomplish or do. The system says that you are somebody based on what you do. That is the first question we ask people. “What do you do?” It is another way of asking, “What is your worth? How valuable are you?” But what you do does not equal who you are. If our worth is determined by what we do, what happens when we are no longer able to do anything? Ask most retired people how they feel, and check the statistics of how long they live after they retire. This standard will not help us feel good about ourselves because, regardless of how much we do, it is never quite enough. Do a little more; perform a little better. But we never do enough to satisfy others or ourselves.

Haven't you noticed that many people from all walks of life who have met these three standards — beauty, knowledge, and achievement — still have not found happiness, success, and peace of mind. We have been led to believe that the “feel-good” feeling is there if we can accomplish and achieve what we want. Many of us admit, “No, I do not feel good about myself, but I would if I could just achieve more.” So we assume that those who have “arrived” feel good about themselves and love themselves.

Society keeps probing us with guilt because we have not arrived and have not achieved. Most of all it tells us

we cannot be quitters. So the only alternative is to keep trying harder, spinning our wheels more, and hoping somehow that we will land on some fantasy island that really does not exist.

Is there a way that an ordinary person without a college education who has bumps and freckles on his face and does not look like Charles Atlas and who has never made any significant contribution to society can really be somebody and feel good about himself? Yes! But the only way is to *stop comparing*. This simple truth is tucked away in the Bible:

Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without *comparing* himself to somebody else (Galatians 6:4).

We do not dare to classify or *compare* ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise (2 Corinthians 10:12).

Let us be realistic. How many persons can be first? How many can be president of the United States? How many can win? How many can make it to the top by society's standards? How many can be number one? How many can be the best looking or know the most or achieve the most? The message we keep hearing from society is that unless we come in first, we are losers. And losers are bad people, and you do not love bad people. Therefore, I must not be loved.

Is there something else besides these standards of society that can help us feel good about ourselves? Yes,

and we can begin with this principle: *No one under any conditions can ever buy or earn or achieve or deserve self-worth. It is a gift.* It is a gift of God because we live and were created in His image. So all this time we have been working hard to achieve and to earn what we already have — a self that is worth loving. Can you imagine giving someone a precious gift, but they do not acknowledge your gift and continue to search and try to get it from other sources? Imagine how you would feel. Imagine how God feels when we do not acknowledge our worth and our heritage and try to achieve it by other means. If we would quit comparing ourselves with others and recognize that worth is a gift, then we would enjoy confidence, happiness, and gratitude.

I am not suggesting that we should not look as good as we can or know all that we can or do all that we can, but these things become a by-product of the fact that we know who we are. We achieve because we are worthy — not in a vain, hopeless effort to try to gain worth. Imagine what a person could achieve if he knew he was loved regardless of what he did, and that what he did had nothing to do with his worth or acceptance.

The same thing is true about our salvation. We are either working to gain our salvation or we are doing our good works and good deeds because we *have* the *gift* of salvation. Do we see our salvation as a gift we already have, or is it something we are trying to obtain? Remember, you cannot earn a gift. We should live our lives as an expression of love, and everything we do should be influenced by that. Jesus tells us in John 4:13:

“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty

again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed that water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

Jesus gives us a spring that gushes forth, not a thirst that needs to be quenched.

“On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, ‘If a man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.’ Whoever believes in Me, as the scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him” (John 7:37).

If we can learn to respond because of love that is already within us, rather than love that we are trying to achieve, then we can conquer fear.

“There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The man who fears is not made perfect in love” (1 John 4:18).

With love we can conquer the fear of comparison, fear of what others think, fear of not knowing enough. No matter how pretty you are, no matter how much you know, no matter what you achieve, no matter how large your bank account is, no matter how big your car or house is, if you do not know how to give and receive love you will not feel good about yourself. If you know how to give and receive love, you can feel good about yourself. The real measurement of a person is if he feels good about himself, and this is greatly affected by his relationships with God, others, and self. And these rela-

tionships are formed and maintained by giving and receiving love. You cannot live any better than you can love.

Learning to Express Love

How do we help people feel good about themselves? How do we help them realize that they already have the gift of God's love and they don't have to worry about earning it?

1. *We begin by giving them total, unconditional acceptance regardless of their behavior.* It begins by affirming people to let them know how much we love them. And we need to learn to express this love in as many ways as we can. Few of us have ever experienced total, unconditional love, so it is difficult for us to understand that we are loved simply because of who we are and not what we do. Most of the time when we tell someone, "I love you," we really mean we approve of their behavior or, "you please me." Seldom have we heard someone tell us, "I love you," if we are doing less than is required at some certain task. Yet that simple experience can be life-changing. It will change people we work with, it will change people in the church, and it will change people in our homes. If you ever get the feeling that you are loved for who you are, not what you do, you will be a new person! If you ever get the feeling you are loved whether you win or lose, you have a chance of winning more often. How will the world know that we are the true followers of Jesus Christ? The Bible gives us the answer:

"A new command I give you: Love one another.

As I have loved you, so you must love one another. All men will know that you are My disciples if you love one another" (John 13:34,35).

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law (Romans 13:8-10).

You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love one another as yourself." If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other (Galatians 5:13-15).

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity (Colossians 3:12-14).

It is important that we let other people feel unconditional acceptance because God loves us totally and unconditionally. But unless we have experienced this love, it is difficult for us to believe that God loves us because of who we are and not what we do. If we receive love only as a result of our behavior or performance, then it is difficult to perceive God's love any differently. A strong motivating force is knowing that people believe in you. The people who believe in you will influence your life more than the people you believe in. I remember two individuals who put faith, confidence, and belief in me. Each one gave me a special task and said, "I believe in you." They greatly affected and changed my life. I believe in them, but their belief in me was a greater motivating factor.

In my 30-hour seminar *Adventures and Attitudes*, people often come with little faith in themselves and anyone else. I watch them as they receive love, maybe for the first time in their lives, and begin to open like a little flower starting to bloom. They say things such as, "I have never trusted a person before in my life until now." They become beautiful people, responding to love and acceptance. I have often wished there was a love support group I could send them to so that the dynamics of love could be a regular part of their lives. And then I remember there is such a group which meets around the world every week. It is called the church. A genius must have established this loving support group to help us encourage and to love one another. Do not miss this part of the great mission of the church.

2. *Learn to forgive others.* Forgiveness completes the

circuit. It allows love to flow. Without forgiveness, love is short-circuited. Nothing says I love you as quickly as knowing you have been completely forgiven. No matter what has been done, no matter how badly you have been hurt, you can forgive. Yes, you can! God gives us that power and ability. Again, it is a decision. Society says when a wrong has been committed, someone has to pay. But it is useless to try to get even or retaliate. In most cases you cannot. God says He will take care of it.

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is Mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12:17-21).

All categories of people need to forgive. Parents need to learn to forgive their children. Children make mistakes, and if we are not careful we will get in the habit of being "the great referee." We never look for the good; we never compliment them; we only criticize the bad plays. We develop the habit of finding fault. W. Livingston Larned expresses this idea very well:

Father Forgets

"Listen, son: I am saying this as you lie asleep,

one little hand crumpled under your cheek and the blond curls stickily wet on you damp forehead. I have stolen into your room alone. Just a few minutes ago, as I sat reading my paper in the libray, a stifling wave of remorse swept over me. Guiltily I came to your bedside.

These are the things I was thinking, son: I had been cross to you. I scolded you as you were dressing for school because you gave your face merely a dab with a towel. I took you to task for not cleaning your shoes. I called out angrily when you threw some of your things on the floor.

At breakfast I found fault, too. You spilled things. You gulped down your food. You put your elbows on the table. You spread butter too thick on your bread. And as you started off to play and I made for my train, you turned and waved a hand and called, 'Good-by, Daddy!' and I frowned, and said in reply, 'Hold your shoulders back!'

Then it began all over again in the late afternoon. As I came up the road I spied you, down on your knees, playing marbles. There were holes in your stockings. I humiliated you before your boy friends by marching you ahead of me to the house. Stockings were expensive — and if you had to buy them you would be more careful! Imagine that, son, from a father!

Do you remember, later, when I was reading in the library, how you came in, timidly, with a sort

of hurt in your eyes? When I glanced up over my paper, impatient at the interruption, you hesitated at the door. 'What is it you want?' I snapped.

You said nothing, but ran across in one tempestuous plunge, and threw your arms around my neck and kissed me, and your small arms tightened with an affection that God had set blooming in your heart and which even neglect could not wither. And then you were gone, pattering up the stairs.

Well, son, it was shortly afterwards that my paper slipped from my hands and a terrible sickening fear came over me. What has habit been doing to me? The habit of finding fault, of reprimanding — this was my reward to you for being a boy. It was not that I did not love you; it was that I expected too much of youth. I was measuring you by the yardstick of my own years.

And there was so much that was good and fine and true in your character. The little heart of you was as big as the dawn itself over the wide hills. This was shown by your spontaneous impulse to rush in and kiss me good-night. Nothing else matters tonight, son. I have come to your bedside in the darkness, and I have knelt there, ashamed!

It is a feeble atonement; I know you would not understand these things if I told them to you during your waking hours. But tomorrow I will be a real daddy! I will chum with you, and suffer

when you suffer, and laugh when you laugh. I will bite my tongue when impatient words come. I will keep saying as if it were a ritual: 'He is nothing but a boy — a little boy!'

I am afraid I have visualized you as a man. Yet as I see you now, son, crumpled and weary in your cot, I see that you are still a baby. Yesterday you were in your mother's arms, your head on her shoulder. I have asked too much, too much."

Once as I was leaving a seminar, a man asked if he could see me for a few minutes. I had another appointment, but I told him I could take 15 minutes. He told me how critical he was of his son and how much it hurt his little boy. I said, "Yes, and it is affecting your relationship with your wife, isn't it?" He said, "Yes. But what can I do about it? How can I quit?" I said, "First of all, you have to forgive your dad and mother." He said, "You know, my dad was like that. How did you know?" I said, "Because that is where you learned it. Your dad has probably made a lot of mistakes with you. But you will never forgive other people until you forgive your parents."

In the movie *On Golden Pond*, Chelsey came back from Europe to get Billy, the 13-year-old son of the man she married. They had left Billy for the summer with Norman and Ethel while they went to Europe on a honeymoon. In one scene, Chelsey and Ethel stood on a dock talking. You could hear laughter echoing over the water. It was obvious that Billy and Norman were having a good time. Chelsey said something like, "Well, I

guess it is easier since he is a boy. How come dad never played with me like that? I guess I should have been a boy.”

Chelsey's mother then made a great speech. She grabbed Chelsey, shook her and said, “Chelsey, you have been carrying a big chip on your shoulder all these years. It is not very becoming, and you need to get rid of it. Life is moving on, and you need to get on with it. Everybody has memories of bad childhood days, but you can choose to live and forgive.”

That is the message many of us need to learn. Life moves on, and we need to get on with it. We need to learn to forgive. Many people appear shocked when I suggest that they may also need to learn to forgive God. Secretly, we blame Him for situations and tragedies in our lives. We have to forgive God in addition to forgiving the world, society, other people, and finally, ourselves.

Forgiveness can be costly, but if you think the price of forgiveness is too high, wait until you get the bill for not forgiving. It comes in many forms. Forgiveness is “eating our lunch.” It grabs us by the throat and controls us. Healing only comes in a person's life after he has experienced complete forgiveness — both giving and receiving sincere forgiveness.

For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins (Matthew 6:14,15).

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8).

3. *Learn to become "people builders."* I call these people "candle glowers" rather than "candle blowers." Somehow we erroneously believe that if I can blow your lamp out it will make mine burn brighter. But the truth is, I grow only as I help you grow. "Bucket fillers," not "bucket spillers." If you spill my bucket, then I tend to want to spill yours.

Becoming people builders is a two-way street. It benefits and encourages others and sparks that flame of love. But it also helps us feel good about ourselves. Recently I spoke to a high school class. As usual, I got to the classroom first, shook hands with everyone and looked them in the eye to check those four indicators of a person's confidence (smile, vocalizing your name, eye contact, warm hand shake). None of the students could put together all four of those things. So I spent about an hour explaining the concepts. When I left I did the same thing. I wished them all a good day and shook their hands. Each of them could now put all four of those things together. I went out to the parking lot, got in my car, and drove back to my office. But I did not have to use my car. I just did not want to leave it in the parking lot. I felt so good I could have flown back! Why? Because I knew that I had touched some lives, and they would never be the same again.

I feel very fortunate to teach at Abilene Christian University. Sometimes I feel like I should pay them for the rewards that I get. In my classes I constantly try to

build up other people and motivate them. As a result, I stay very excited and motivated myself. My reasons for teaching are almost selfish.

Victor Frankle, in his book *Man's Search for Meaning*, talks about this process. While he was in German prison camps during the war, he was often asked to speak to other inmates to encourage them to keep living just one more day. He said that was the last thing he really wanted to do. But as a result of those speeches, he was encouraged. He was the one who survived.

I remember one morning as I walked to Chapel I saw a girl working in the flowerbeds on the campus. I tried to imagine how she felt as those beautiful, intelligent college students walked by her. I stopped to speak to her, saying something about the beautiful day we were enjoying. She reached down to pick up another piece of paper, and I said, "Thank you for making our campus beautiful." She stopped and looked at me, and her eyes just shone. How do you think I felt the rest of the day?

One of the sad stories I remember hearing tells about a fisherman who kept his crabs in a basket without a top because every time a crab started to crawl out, another crab would reach up and pull him back down. I wonder if that is where we get the expression we use when we refer to someone as "crabby."

Turkey farmers tell me when a turkey rubs his wing against a barbed wire fence, skins himself and begins to bleed, the other birds rush to him and begin to pick him to death. Unless the farmer arrives quickly, they will pick the injured bird to death. I have seen people like that who take "cheap shots" at others.

Instead, be a person who helps other people grow and helps meet other people's needs. The person who distributes love feels good about himself. I grew up experiencing this with my dad and mom. I remember those evenings in Alabama after dinner when Dad, without any great fanfare, would simply say, "I think I will run down to Partridge Crossroads and get my car filled with gas. Somebody might need some help tonight." As a young boy I often remember hearing a rap on the door at two or three o'clock in the morning. It might be a mother wanting Dad to hunt her son who was lost, or someone wanting to take a friend to Birmingham to the hospital. Dad could go because he had his car filled with gas. We have to have our hearts filled with love to be ready to reach out and help people because there are so many people who are hurting.

"People builders" are also "force feeders." Remember the film about the pike and minnows? If someone had taken the time to force feed the pike, he might have lived. We have that opportunity with people who are hurting. When you have the opportunity, feed people tender love and care. There is always hope!

"People building" is an exciting enterprise. We will never become successful "people builders" until we value people as special and important. We must see their intrinsic worth. When that happens, we can get in the people business. Once while I was at a car dealership, I watched a boy and girl playing. The little boy climbed in the back seat of his family's Volkswagen. The dad hollered at his daughter, "Get in the back seat." She leaned against a brick wall about 10 feet away. He

looked at her with so much hatred. He said in a voice that would have frightened most men, "Do you want to stay here or get in the back seat?" She dropped her little head and stood silently. He said, "Get your hand out of your mouth; I asked you a question. Answer me. Do you want to stay here or get in the back seat?" She timidly said, "I don't want to stay here." He talked to her as you would talk to a beast or animal in the forest. I watched her heart melt. He was still hollering at her as she got into the car. And I wondered how she was treated when she got home. I wanted so much to hug her and whisper in her ear, "Everybody is not like that. I love you and God loves you." But I did not. I let her down. I should have said, "Just wait a minute. Look at what you are doing. It does not matter how big you are or how tough. Look what is happening inside this precious little girl. The damage that you are doing to her will last a lifetime, maybe an eternity." But I let her down. Love had at least temporarily been replaced by fear. All human failure results from a lack of love. Remember, we cannot live any better than we can love.

My wife and I saw a play called *The Curious Savage* at Abilene Christian University. It was a story about some young people who had been sent to a home for rehabilitation for mental illness. A rich woman had also been placed there by her family trying to get her money. She was not crazy, but she went along for the trip. But they did not get her money. When she arrived she began to extend love, total unconditional acceptance. She started building up other people, and they had never experienced that before. One morning at the breakfast

table, Fairy said to her, "No one here said they loved me all day long."

"Yes, they have, Fairy."

"No, they have not. I have been waiting."

"Florence said it at the dinner table."

"She did?"

"Yes, she said it when she said don't eat too fast."

"Was that saying she loved me?"

"Of course, There are a million ways of saying that you love someone. You say it when you say, 'Take your umbrella. It might be raining.' Or, 'Don't eat too fast.' There are many ways of saying it without just directly saying it. And you will have to listen for them, my dear."

The play was so funny that I almost rolled in the aisles with laughter. But when they dropped the curtain I stood with tears in my eyes because of the change in the lives of those people from their new experience with love.

And in addition to listening very carefully, you also have to look deeply to find value in other people. But we can do it. A popular song expresses this idea very well. Gary Morris sings it.

"Give her a thorn and she will find the rose,
Give her sand and she will find the sea,
Give her rain and she will find the rainbow.
Just see the love she found in me."

It was not easy, and she had to look deeply. But what a difference it makes to know someone loves you and they believe in you. And they build you up.

A Little Bit of Heaven

Another story tells of a man who dreamed he died and went to hell. He opened his eyes and saw a great banquet feast with knives, forks, and spoons four feet long. Everyone was trying to eat, but they were throwing food over their backs on the floor, and everyone was starving. Then the man dreamed he went to heaven. In heaven they had the same feast with four-foot knives, forks, and spoons. But in heaven the people were filled and content because they were feeding each other. When we become "people builders" and help others grow, we bring a little bit of heaven down to earth.

In the movie *On Golden Pond*, Norman, a cynical old man played by Henry Fonda, tries to light the fire in the fireplace with the wrong end of a match. Finally, he turns it around and lights the fire. Billy and Ethel run for the water bucket. Billy pours water on the woodbin, and some water spills on the paper and runs out on the floor, adding to the mess. Norman looks at Billy and yells, "You have made a mess of things."

Billy walks out on the porch and says to Ethel, "I wish he would not yell at me like that."

Ethel, played by Katherine Hepburn, pulls him aside and makes a classic statement: "Billy, he is not really yelling at you. He just sounds like he is. He is yelling at life. He is like an old lion. He has to see if he can still roar."

All through the movie, Norman seldom smiled, he could not hear the loons, and he did not see the beauty in the flowers. He was cynical and negative about

himself and life and most of the people around him. He made life miserable for everyone, including himself.

Ethel, on the other hand, was full of life and beauty. She saw the richness and beauty in little things: picking strawberries, listening to the loons call, seeing the sun rise, or watching a butterfly. When Chelsey asked them to keep the boy for the summer, she said, "Let's do it, let's do it."

After Billy came into Norman's life, touched him and brought the child out of him again, and after his near bout with death when he dropped Ethel's mother's china, Norman seemed to change. But sadly, he waited too late, too late to hug Chelsey, to express love, to show a little worth. As they were leaving, walking down to say goodbye to Golden Pond, he said to Ethel, "Listen, the loons are telling us goodbye."

I hope you don't wait that long. Don't wait till some tragedy or emergency forces you to see the beauty of life. It might be too late. Do not wait to become "people builders." Do not wait to forgive and show unconditional love and value to people. Use every opportunity you have.

A traveling salesman called his wife from a pay phone, but as he hung up and walked away the phone rang. He went back, assuming it was the operator calling to tell him he needed to put in more coins. It was the operator, but she said, "I thought you might like to know that before she hung up, your wife said she loved you."

Would you have taken time to call? He needed to know that. It could have changed his entire life. It could

have made all the difference. In much the same way, God is trying to remind us, "Before you hang up, I am going to tell you one more time that I love you." A television documentary about cruelty to animals showed a conveyor belt carrying newly-hatched chickens. People were picking them off and packaging them according to their size, color and quality. The weak, small chickens were just pushed aside and carried on down the conveyor belt to be crushed. One little chick that came along kept getting pushed aside, but as it neared the end of the conveyor belt each time it began to walk back up again. The little chick just looked at those people as it to say, "Won't you take me?" They would push it aside again until finally it was dumped over the edge.

We are all heading down a conveyor belt to death, but Jesus picked *us*. Regardless of our size, age, or color, He picked us all. He will never push us aside, deny us, or say no unless we say no. We should not push people aside either.

I must confess to you I've been somewhat selfish in this study. We teach what we want to learn, and I want to experience love and inner peace. There has to be another way of living rather than being pulled through life kicking and screaming. The answer is learning how to love.



Included in this volume are seven main lectures, four afternoon session presentations, and two featured class presentations of the 66th Annual Bible Lectureship program at Abilene Christian University. These presentations focus on the theme: "Called to be Servants."

The Lectureship Committee has selected theme speakers and topics which it hopes will make not only an outstanding Lectureship program, but also a valuable book.

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