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# HARDING UNIVERSITY LECTURES

1980

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**Educating for Eternity**



As the eighties get underway, we are excited and encouraged for the new decade and the opportunities which lie ahead.

More than ever before, Harding must maintain its excellent tradition of quality of Christian education. New challenges continued to rise to confront the institution.

We are deeply grateful for all that has made it possible for Harding to grow and serve so well. We are truly "Educating for Eternity," and with the help of the Lord and friends, we shall succeed.

Clifton L. Ganus, Jr.  
President  
Harding University

795  
More than 3,000 students gathered on the campus of Harding University in Searcy to open the 1980-81 academic year in August, following a summer of record-breaking heat and drought.

However, the elements proposed no threat to the goals and purposes of Harding University toward developing students spiritually, intellectually, physically and socially.

The 3,400-seat George S. Benson auditorium was available for full use the first time in an academic year, and plans were taking shape for construction of a new business building.

The Harding Academy building, begun in the spring of '80, neared completion with anticipation of being ready for January 1981.

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FOREWORD

# Harding University Lectures

1980

*Theme:*

*"We Give Thee But Thine Own"*

FIRM FOUNDATION PUBLISHING HOUSE  
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## FOREWORD

"We Give Thee But Thine Own." These words, borrowed from a familiar hymn, express precisely our responsibility as true stewards of God.

There are many words for *servant* in the New Testament, but one of the most meaningful is the one usually translated as "Steward." A steward is a servant who is in charge of that which belongs to another. We, as God's servants, are stewards. All that we possess comes from God. All that we can give to God was originally his. When Israel brought sacrifices to God, they were simply giving him that which was already his. All of the "cattle on a thousand hills" belong to him (Psalm 51:10).

This lectureship focuses on the most important concept of Christians as stewards. Since we are stewards, we realize that not only all we have comes from God, but we also are impressed with the importance of using these blessings wisely. A steward is given the privilege of his office with the understanding that he will have to give an account of his stewardship. "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (I Cor. 4:2).

It is our hope in producing this lectureship, and this lectureship book, that Christians will be awakened to a greater sense of dependence upon God. Also it is our prayer that Christians will feel more keenly their responsibility to be good stewards: Stewards of their money, time, talents, homes.

May the eternal reward of all good stewards be yours at the end of your service here on earth.

Neale Pryer  
Lectureship Director

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## WE GIVE THEE BUT THINE OWN

HAROLD HAZELIP

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Almost every great philosopher, whether committed to Christian ideals or not, has agreed that a preoccupation with material things is self-defeating. Henry David Thoreau built a one-room cabin out at Walden Pond and lived in it for about two years. He refused to serve mammon or his own appetites. Once when he was having dinner with some notable persons of his day, Ralph Waldo Emerson asked, "What dish may I pass you, Henry?" "The nearest," Thoreau replied.

If you were to inherit one million dollars tomorrow, unless you are desperately poor, it would not solve many of your problems. They would still be waiting for your attention. This sum of money would not bring love into your life, make you more self-disciplined, diminish your selfishness, upgrade your character, make you a true child of God, cause you to love goodness or to treat others more charitably. Our basic needs are inner needs.

We all tend to want the same things. We want God and mammon. The tax-collectors, the harlots, the Pharisees, the alcoholic, the minister—all want security, happiness, recognition, peace of mind, pleasure, physical health and worldly goods. Have you ever known anyone who did not want all of these things? The minister has appetites which he wants to



satisfy just as everyone else does. The alcoholic wants peace of mind; this is one reason he drinks.

The difference in people is not that they want different things, or that they ask different questions, but in the response they make to life's desires. Christ demands a choice: "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth. . . . For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. . . . No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money" (Matt. 6:19-24). "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15).

The question we often ask publicly about religion is, "What does it demand?" The question we may muse over privately is, "What does my religion allow?" What does my commitment to Christ allow me to be? To do? To think? Don't we all want an easy religion rather than one which makes great demands on our time, money and affections? If we ask one thing of our family, our friends, or our religious commitment, it is, "Let me be! Don't try to change me!"

My religion may allow me to be very materialistic, while not allowing me to miss church services. It may allow me to treat my wife, my parents, my children, my friends or others badly, while not allowing me to drink or dance. It may make allowances for bad temper or a lack of kindness but not for missing Sunday School. If we could play back through a recording all of your conversation of last Tuesday, what would it show? What are your everyday interests? Would it show you are interested in making money, or keeping it? That you gossip? That you enjoy tennis or golf? That food is important to you? That you are interested in acquiring things, or being entertained?

We are all in danger of inverting the parable of the pearl of great price. We sell the most valuable jewel for a collection of worthless marbles. The Bible seeks to give us a dif-

ferent perspective on the material order. Everything was put here by God for man to use and enjoy in the fulfillment of the whole human family.

#### GOD AS A GIVER

God's ownership and man's stewardship of the world is a central theme of the Bible. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it . . ." (Ps. 24:1, 2). "Sovereign Lord," the early church prayed, "you made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them (Acts 4:24). God owns everything because he created everything.

He delegated responsibility for the creation to man: "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over . . . all the earth . . ." (Gen 1:26). The Old Testament contains a series of laws regulating man's stewardship of the earth. Basic to these laws is the understanding that ultimately everything belongs to the Lord. "The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants" (Lev. 25:23). The Hebrews could sing, "The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land" (Ps. 95:5).

God gave laws which protected the right of each family in Israel to remain in possession of the ancestral inheritance (Lev. 25:5; 1 Kings 21). With the coming of the year of Jubilee land which had been sold went back to the descendants of those who originally settled it (Lev. 25:23-41). The land was given a year of rest each seventh year (Lev. 25:1-7). No generation had the right to take everything off the land and destroy its fertility. God's laws regarding man's stewardship reached into such areas as the taking of interest and the law of the tithe (Ex. 22:25; Lev. 27:30-32).

In addition to the tithe, God used a system of sacrifices in the Old Testament to teach man the seriousness of sin and to pre-figure the sacrificial offering of Christ. However, a basic contrast soon appears between Old Testament religion



and pagan religion. The pagans assumed the gods were just like themselves. They would place their produce, their best animals and even their children on burning altars to send sweet aromas up to the deities. They assumed the gods would be flattered by their presence and would respond in kind.

But when God began to make detailed revelation of himself and his will to Abraham, he was not at all like the pagan understanding of deity. Instead of being selfish, greedy and demanding, Jehovah appeared to Abraham to *give* him something. He offered Abraham a land to call his own, descendants more numerous than the sands of the sea, a name that would become great, and a means through which all peoples on earth would be blessed (Gen. 12:1, 2).

Paul Scherer has described this meeting between God and Abraham as the moment when a human being with the image of God he had made came face to face with the God who had made him. And what a difference there was! Pagan notions had associated the gods primarily with egocentric demands. But the true God came wanting to bless, with no ulterior motive to what he was doing. He wanted to give to another rather than to get for himself. God is a Giver rather than a Taker.

This helps us to understand the reason for the creation. We ask with childlike wonder, "Why did God create the world in the first place?" The Bible indicates that it was to share the joy God knew in being alive. He wanted all creation to come to experience the fullness of joy he has.

How can he move us toward this goal? We were joyously created and we move toward a joyful eternity. Once we grasp this, we begin to understand why God desires the kind of gifts he does. "For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgement of God rather than burnt offerings" (Hosea 6:6). "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: To loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor

wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn . . ." (Isa. 58:1-12).

The creator of all things does not want material things for himself: "I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are mine. If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it. Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats?" (Ps. 50:9-13).

Although God does not need material things, he does have a "favorite charity." Like any true parent, he wants every one of his children to be brought to fulfillment. He started something with Abraham that he wants to get to everyone. Who are the objects of his special concern? Human beings in the greatest need. God is a giver. He calls on us to use the resources he has given us to supply the spiritual and physical needs of our fellow men.

#### WHAT WEALTH CAN DO TO US

Instead of sharing God's vision, we seem always to feel that our needs are slightly greater than our income. Money is not everything, but it seems way ahead of whatever is second best. The living standard of the average family in the United States has doubled in the past three decades. Aladdin with his magic lamp could not have had in other ages what we count normal: cars, planes, phones, television. Taking into account taxes and inflation, the disposable income for the average American has risen more than 50% in the past 25 years. But do we feel 50 percent more affluent than we did in the 1950's?

Psychological research has suggested some principles to explain why we are never satisfied. First, the "adaptation-level" principle suggests that we use our past to measure our present experience and form expectations for the future. If



we suddenly lose our wealth, as in the great depression, a high suicide rate results. But if our finances improve, we adapt. We never reach utopia because once we achieve it we recalibrate and expect more.

The "relative-deprivation" principle suggests that happiness and unhappiness are relative to what we observe others like ourselves experiencing. We not only evaluate our success or failure by an internal standard, but also in terms of rewards our peers receive. If our rewards are greater than those of others, we are happy; if less, we will be discontented. Measuring ourselves by others, Americans seem to want at each income level about 25 percent more than they have.

Third, researchers speak of a "self-serving bias." People generally perceive themselves more deserving, more admirable, less prejudiced, etc., than others among their peers. We seldom feel overpaid.

Finally, the "principle of upward comparison" indicates that when people are given opportunity to compare themselves with various other people, they generally choose to measure themselves by those whose rewards have been superior to their own. Highly educated privates in World War II became unhappy when they compared themselves not with other privates but with their educated peers who had become officers.

The church in America has also experienced an upward mobility. Within one generation we have passed from congregations with contributions of \$10—\$30 per Sunday to contributions of \$10,000—\$30,000 per Sunday. We have moved from money made up on the spot for the summer meeting, orphans or a rare missionary to elaborate budgets. What does it do to the church to pass from one-room buildings to semi-cathedrals, or from a part-time preacher to a sizeable staff of paid workers?

Wealth may move us toward being a more secular people. Like Laodicea, we lose sight of the true riches (Rev. 3:14-

21). Ezekiel raised the question of why Sodom was destroyed; he concluded that she was "arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy" (Ezek. 16:49).

Wealth may move us toward a change in message. There is a connection between one's economic position and his patterns of thought. We may unconsciously accommodate ourselves to conditions in our society and lose the biblical perspective on contemporary problems.

Wealth may also cause us to lose touch with the masses. Europe is dotted by impressive cathedrals which have no impact on the lives of the masses. They may even be hindrances to the spread of the gospel. As a people, we have never been very successful in converting the wealthy, but our prosperity encourages a gulf from the poor. There must be an equal concern with both.

#### OUR HOPE: OUR RELATION TO GOD

The Romans had a proverb to the effect that money is like sea water: the more a man drinks, the thirstier he becomes. Our salvation always involves grace, not the lifting of ourselves by our bootstraps alone. When Jesus addressed the problem of our relationship to things, he noted that people are anxious about what they will eat, wear, or how they will meet this or that crisis (Matt. 6:25-34). This anxiety exists on both sides of the dilemma. Those who have too much are concerned with how to keep it, others with how to get it. To both Jesus says, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matt. 6:33).

In other words, the answer to our anxiety question is our relationship to God. The secret of our stewardship lies in what God is and what he can do for us. Setting the heart on his kingly rule and allowing him to set things right in our lives gets at the problem of our run-away affluence. Why are we so obsessed with acquiring and having things? We desperately want satisfaction and security. We assume with



Tevye, the main character in *Fiddler On The Roof*, "If I were a rich man" my problems would be solved.

We are slow to learn the truth that no material objects can fully satisfy our hearts. Augustine was right: "Thou hast made us for thyself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in thee." God is the only one who can satisfy the heart. He is the only one who can secure a person against the threats of life. Our hope lies in a basic overhaul of the human heart—a profound conversion from things that cannot satisfy or secure us to him who can.

Leo Tolstoy, a late 19th-century Russian novelist, has written a haunting parable for our affluent age. In his short story, "How Much Land Does a Man Need?" he tells of a simple peasant who had always lived on someone else's land. He heard of an estate being divided and sold to peasants. He was excited by the opportunity to own a few acres. The excitement soon turned to disappointment. A traveler told of a place where land was cheaper. Thinking more land would fulfill his heart's desire, he sold everything and moved to the new frontier to purchase a larger plot. Soon the dissatisfaction returned.

Another traveler from a distant land told of simple people and land which cost almost nothing. Arriving in the new area, the chief made him a proposition—all the land he could walk around in a day for only a thousand rubles. The one condition was that he must return to the starting point by sundown. He set out early and ran through the morning hours, not stopping to eat, drink or rest. The territory was rich and fertile. In his anxiety he failed to measure time and distance carefully. The sun began to go down. Realizing how far away he was, his body aching, he ran as fast as he could and staggered back to the chief's fur hat—the starting point. He had encompassed an immense tract only to fall prostrate on the ground and die of exhaustion. The story ends with the question raised in its title "How much land does a man

need?" In this case, only an area six feet long, three feet wide, and four feet deep.

The biblical view of wealth is not negative. Jesus did not tell the rich young ruler, "Go, destroy your possessions," but, "Go, sell your possessions and give to the poor . . ." (Matt. 19:21). There is a way to relate to things that leaves one poor, or there is a way that makes one rich. As David learned through his gifts for the temple, and expressed in his prayer to God, "Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand" (1 Chron. 29:14).



## STEWARDS OF OUR TIME

DAVID B. BURKS

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### INTRODUCTION

The apostle Paul in Colossians 4:5 says, "Make the best possible use of your time." Again, in Ephesians 5:15, 16, Paul says: "Live life, then, with a due sense of responsibility, not as men who do not know the meaning and purpose of life but as those who do. Make the best use of your time, despite all the difficulties of these days." We hear messages about the importance of being good stewards of our wealth and possessions. We also need to emphasize the fact that as Christians we will be held accountable for our use of time as we stand before the Lord in eternity—when time is no more. *Urgent Versus Important*

Generally speaking, the more involved we become in our work, the greater our time pressures. The phone continually rings, meetings take up a larger and larger part of our day, drop-in visitors cause frustrations as we try to complete our task. Vacations come at greater intervals. Making ends meet at home gets harder. The deep sense of fellowship that you felt with a kindred few has been replaced by a multitude of superficial relationships.

You may see yourself on an uphill climb. One day you will have children. One day they will be through school. One day there will be a better job. One day the children will be married and you will have more freedom to travel. One day you will be retired. And then, one day you will die. But where

did your life go? Were those promises of a victorious Christian life just hollow words? Were they meant for someone else?

The answer may seem to be a 30-hour day. Surely this extra time would relieve much of the pressure and allow us more time to visit friends, read articles, pray, answer letters, spend time with our family and with our God. But would more hours really help us? We would probably be just as frustrated then as now. A mother's work is never finished, nor that of teachers, ministers, students, or others.

The dilemma involves more than the shortage of time and really is a problem of priorities. We must learn to use our time wisely and do those things which are important as opposed to centering our attention almost entirely on urgent matters. Hummel, in his pamphlet, "Tyranny of the Urgent," beautifully deals with this concept.<sup>1</sup> Urgent matters are those tasks which call for instant action—phone calls, meetings, drop-in visitors, etc. Important matters rarely must be done today or even this week—extra hours of prayer and Bible study, a visit with a non-Christian friend, careful study of a new book, etc. We need to devise plans so that we can purposely spend more time on important matters and less time doing crisis management, dealing with urgent matters.

### *Misconceptions About Time*

Many people believe that by working hard they can "make up time." However, time, once lost, cannot be retrieved. It cannot be hoarded; it must be spent. Someone has said that we cannot rent, hire, or buy time. We cannot store it, freeze it or can it.

Another common misconception is that "time will heal everything." Thus, we fail to solve problems that need our attention on the false assumption that the simple passage of time has healing powers. But people remember and while

<sup>1</sup>Hummel, Charles E. *Tyranny of the Urgent!*. IVCF, Madison, WI., 1967. pp. 1-15.



problems may be sublimated, they are never healed through the passage of time.

Perhaps the most common misconception about time is the excuse, "I don't have enough time." What we really mean should be expressed, "I don't choose to spend time on this project." We all have the same 1440 minutes of every day, 168 hours each week. The great paradox is: No one has enough time; yet everyone has all the time there is.

#### *Jesus Managed Time*

What is the answer? The answer lies in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. He was challenged, as we are, to use his time wisely. His ministry was only a short 3½ years. Yet, in John 17, he made a remarkable statement: "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (v. 4). Were all of the sick people healed at this time? Were all of the people of the nations told about the living God? Yet, on that last night with many urgent human needs unmet, the Lord had peace because He Knew He had finished the important work God has given Him to do.

To be sure, Jesus worked hard (see Mark 1:32-34; Mark 3:21; Matt. 4:37, 38). Yet his life was not feverish and he had time for people. He could spend hours talking to one person such as the Samaritan woman. His life showed a wonderful balance and sense of timing. In *The Discipline and Culture of the Spiritual Life*, A. E. Whiteham stated, "Here in this man is adequate purpose . . . inward rest, that gives an air of leisure to His crowded life: above all there is in this man a secret and a power of dealing with the waste-products of life, the waste of pain, disappointment, enmity, death—turning to divine uses the abuses of man, transforming arid places of pain to fruitfulness, triumphing at last in death, and making a short life of thirty years or so, abruptly cut off, to be a finished life."<sup>2</sup>

His secret was that he prayerfully waited for his Father's instructions and for the strength to follow them. One of the

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

best indications of this truth is found in Mark 1:35: ". . . in the morning, a great while before day, He rose and went out to a lonely place, and there he prayed." Jesus discerned the Father's will day to day in a life of prayer. He attached priority to important matters, and then used his time wisely in implementing these goals.

#### *The Process*

To help us be better stewards of our time, a three step process is suggested. It involves setting goals, establishing priorities, and ways to accomplish these goals. It is a continually changing process and one which allows us through God's direction to discover better goals and more effective ways of reaching them.

#### GOALS

For the Christian the secret of managing your life is to prayerfully define what kind of a life you believe God wants you to lead. A good way to do this is to set specific goals for things you want to happen in your life in the days ahead.

A goal is a statement about how we hope things are going to be at some time in the future. It is really a statement of faith. As the writer of Hebrews said, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for" (Heb. 11:1). Goals have the power to lift our eyes to greater things. They give direction, focus our attention, keep us on course, and make day to day decisions easier. They help us know when we have achieved. They challenge us and they motivate us.

Most of all, goals help us spiritually. There are at least three strong reasons for setting goals at the spiritual level. First, goals lie in the future. Christians should be people who live in the present and in the future. Paul sums it up when he says, "Forgetting what is behind me, and reaching out for that which lies ahead, I press toward the goal to win the prize which is God's call to the life above, in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13, 14). Christians should be growing and developing people. They should be secure. God has forgotten what lies ahead, so we can forget it, too.



The second reason for setting goals spiritually is included in the Biblical imperative, "you, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). We are given the assurance that there is a standard for us to follow. While we know that we are not perfect, we can rejoice in the fact that we can measure our success in meeting goals against standards set by God.

A third spiritual need for goals is to give us a way to respond to our understanding of God's plan for our lives. Too often we stop at Ephesians 2:9 and forget that we are born afresh in Christ, and born "to do those good deeds which God planned for us to do" (Eph. 2:10).<sup>3</sup>

#### *Why Are We Afraid of Goals?*

Probably the greatest fear we have of setting goals is the fear of failure. However, we need to realize that growth has always involved risk and we need to be willing to set moderately difficult, but potentially achievable goals, and work toward implementing them.

A second reason why people are afraid to set goals is that they are concerned that they may be violating God's word if they make any kind of statement concerning the future. Many people argue that planning is in and of itself wrong. The argument generally relates to James 4:13, where we are told that we are not to say what we are going to do today or tomorrow. However, James is really telling us to recognize that while we are pursuing our plans there is always the dimension, "if God wills."

We must realize that God is sovereign and we must understand that goals are statements of faith, statements about what we believe God wants us to do or be.

#### *What Is a Good Goal?*

Too often, we do not choose goals; rather we choose broad purposes which do not lead to specific actions. We often talk about our grand purpose of "giving glory to God," or

<sup>3</sup>Engstrom, Ted W., and Dayton, Ed R., *Strategy for Living*. Regal Books, Division, G/L Publications, Glendale, California, 1976.

"going into all the world." These are excellent statements in and of themselves. However, such statements are not good goals which will cause us to use our time effectively.

Goals differ from purposes. Purposes may be thought of as aims or missions; something for which we ultimately hope. Goals, on the other hand, are related to purpose and are an outreach of purpose. We can measure the attainment of purpose only by attaining goals relating to our purposes.

Well formulated goals have the following characteristics: they are measurable and specific, they identify results, they are realistic and attainable, and they state time limits. To be a great mountain climber is a purpose. To climb Pike's Peak during the month of January is a goal. To really understand God's word is a purpose. To take specific training in leading neighborhood Bible studies by next June is a goal. To hold one neighborhood Bible study each week for ten weeks is a goal.

To help evaluate goals, the following questions may be helpful: Are they clearly and specifically stated? Are they in writing? Do they emphasize tangible and measureable results? Are they reasonably attainable? Were the members of the Church involved in determining these goals? Do we have a plan for accomplishing the goals? Are we committed to attaining these goals?

#### PRIORITIES

The next step in the process of being better stewards of our time involves establishing priorities for the goals which we have just spelled out. Which goals are best? Which should we accomplish first? All of us have more goals than we can handle in any given day.

#### *The ABC Plan*

As we seek to attach priorities to the goals which we have selected, the best approach that I have seen is called the ABC plan. This plan involves making a list of all the goals that you have to be considered in a given time period—day, week, etc. The list does not have to be in any particular order, al-



though it is sometimes helpful to put these goals down in logical, functional groups. The result may be a very long list of goals. Eventually, you will want to break this down into short-range, medium-range, and long-range goals and break it into time periods as well.

The next step is to assign priorities to the goals on your list using the ABC technique. Instead of trying to rank the goals with a number ranking them from top to bottom, it is generally easier and leads to a better result if you assign each goal a value: A, B, or C. The A value stands for "must do," very high value. The B value stands for "should do," medium value. The C value stands for "can do," low value.

Now rate each goal and assign an A, B, or C value to each one. If your list is especially long, you may find that you have a number of goals marked A and if this is the case, you will need to go back and subdivide the A's with the headings A-a, A-b, A-c. The purpose is to subdivide all the goals into their order of priority.

For the most part, without consciously thinking about it, we assign ABC priority to our events on a daily basis anyhow. This more or less formalized procedure enables us to consciously choose and plan how we are going to spend our time. Obviously, we need to spend most of our time each day doing A-value items as opposed to spending most of our time on accomplishing B or C values. However, we need to realize that B and C value items are much easier to do and seem more urgent. It will take a conscious effort on our part to focus on A-value items.<sup>4</sup>

#### *Three Levels of Christian Commitment*

Naturally, the assigning of A, B, and C values to our goals needs to be done in the context of our Christian commitment. If we are going to be effective stewards of our time, our goals need to be prioritized in such a way that we express our faith as to what God wants us to do and be. In

<sup>4</sup>Lakein, Alan, *How to Get Control of Your Time and Your Life*, Peter H. Wyden, Inc., N.Y., 1973. pp. 76-80.

short, our goals must stand up against the test of God's word. Consider the following three broad-levels of priority established in God's word: spending time alone with God, spending time with God through His body, and spending time with God in the work. All three levels are important.

The fact that we need to spend time alone with God is illustrated by the fact that Jesus said that there was no way to God except through him (see John 14:6). He said that as many as believed that he was the Christ were given the power to become God's sons and daughters (see John 1:12).

Spending time with God through his body is illustrated by Jesus' commandment, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another" (John 13:34). We are told to love another. In John 13:35, we are told, "this is how all men will know that you are my disciple, because you have such love for one another."

Spending time with God in the work has to do with building up the Body for the ministry (see Eph. 4:11, 12) as well as the work of evangelism in all respects. Our professional work would clearly fall in this category.

#### PLANS

Planning is the next logical process after we have written out our goals and established priorities for them. To make them operational, we must plan ways by which these goals can be accomplished. We must realize that it is not a question of whether we will or will not plan. To make no plans is a plan in itself. Rather, it is a question of whether we will affect the future with purpose or at random.

Many people fail to plan because planning is seldom ever urgent even though it is important. Further, planning represents decision-making in the future, and so we put it off into the future as opposed to giving our immediate attention to it. Perhaps many of us fall into the trap of the "crystal ball syndrome" when we say that we aren't good at it so why do it in the first place.

Regardless, planning is important and it does save time,



We experience the need for planning almost every day when we make such statements as "If I had only thought to bring that tool, this job would be a cinch." "Why didn't I remember I had to take Jimmy for a haircut? Now I will have to make two trips."

Planning, simply stated, is trying to discover how to accomplish our goals. Planning is moving from the way things are to the way we want them to be. Further, plans should be changeable. Plans should not represent a rigid and pre-determined set of decisions that can never be changed at any point as we move through life. As the writer of Proverbs said, "It is pleasant to see plans develop. That is why fools refuse to give them up even when they are wrong" (Prov. 13:19).

Plans also help us to communicate our intentions to ourselves and to others. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). Unless you have decided where you are going, how can I decide to accompany you?

#### *Hypothetical Example*

The planning process might lead to the following kind of calendar for an individual as he or she seeks to utilize their time effectively. It would first include time with God. Time would be scheduled for worship, prayer, meditation. Time for personal meditation and prayer would need to be scheduled on a very regular basis.

Secondly, our hypothetical calendar would need to include time with our spouse. The Bible states that a man should leave his father and mother and should cleave unto his wife and that they should become one flesh (see Genesis 2:24). There should be time on our calendar for being with our husband or wife. It is possible for two people to spend a lifetime under the same roof and never really know each other. Time should be scheduled for programs to strengthen your marriage.

Our calendar should always contain time with our family. Surely this would be a high priority item on our list of goals. We need to spend time with our sons and daughters. The im-

portance of this kind of time priority is illustrated by Paul when he stated, "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Tim. 5:8).

Another high priority item would be time set aside for you. You need times when you are going to have a release valve from the pressures that always come. Perhaps you can find these through a regular program of recreation such as bowling or racquetball.

Time for fellowship is also extremely important. We need to spend time with our brothers and sisters in Christ. This means not only in the formal worship service but outside as well. Our hypothetical calendar should also include segments of unplanned time for others. We need time when we can be available to meet the needs of others and if we plan all of our activities for a given week or month, we will have trouble being flexible enough to meet the needs of people when they need us. Perhaps two evenings each week should be left free so that we can have some flexibility in changing our plans so that we can meet the needs that do arise unexpectedly.

Our schedule should also provide time for personal planning. Planning takes time and we need to make up our list of things to do each day and then we need time to pray about these statements of faith. When we bring our plans before the Lord, we should be saying in effect, "Lord, this is what I believe you want me to do, this is the way I intend to carry it out, trusting that I am in your will and believing that if this is not the approach that I am to take, you will reveal that to me also."

This hypothetical calendar is surely not complete in all respects. It would be different for every single person. However, keep in mind that the purpose of this kind of a schedule is to free us from being tied down to some urgent matters and give us time to do things which we believe are extremely important. Unfortunately, when most people think about schedules and calendars, they think of rigid deadlines and



constraining structures. They fear that by overscheduling they will give up all of their ability to be flexible. What I am suggesting here is quite different. As I see it, schedules and appointments are fences which we build around our time in order to give us greater freedom.<sup>6</sup>

#### STRATEGIES

In closing, I would like to share with you some strategies or plans which may be helpful to us as we attempt to be better stewards of our time.

##### *Pareto's Principle*

Vilfredo Pareto was a brilliant Italian mathematician, sociologist, and economist of the 19th century.<sup>7</sup> He came up with what has come to be known as the 80/20 rule. Simply stated it says that "80% of the work results will come from 20% of the events." In church 80% of the work is done by 20% of the people; 80% of a company's sales can come from 20% of its products; 80% of the outcome of a football game will be the result of 20% of the time spent on key plays. To put it another way, using ABC technique, referred to earlier, given ten items on our list, only 2 of them, 20% will be A's. Yet, 80% of the value to us will come by doing only 2 of these 10 items on our hypothetical list. We need to conscientiously look for the two opportunities out of ten that will have real payoffs, for the two minutes of our times that will save us eight. My own experience suggests that this 80/20 principle really works on a day to day basis.

##### *Things To Do List*

One of the most effective ways to gain control over our life and time is to simply write down on a daily basis things that we have to do. There are many calendars available which can help us in this, but the techniques used are really not important. What is important is that we on a regular basis write down those things that we want to do. This really is

<sup>5</sup>Engstrom, *Strategy for Living*, pp. 83-87.

<sup>6</sup>Engstrom, *Strategy for Living*, pp. 120-127.

<sup>7</sup>Lakein, pp. 80-84.

the essence of planning and it enables us to establish priorities and then do those things which are of high value to us.

##### *Use Delegation*

Undoubtedly, delegation is one of the most useful skills a Christian leader can use to be a more effective steward of his time. Unfortunately, many leaders in the church still operate under what I refer to as the "Moses complex." All of us are familiar with the story in Exodus 18 where Moses was the leader and in charge of everything. He was not using delegation. He did not share responsibility or authority. There was no opportunity for people to use their own talents and future leaders were not being developed. Moses was still in charge yet people shared in the authority and responsibility and were able to use their talents in getting the work done.

There are many other Biblical examples of delegation. In Luke 10:1-24 we read where Jesus sent out 70. In Matthew 10:1-42 we read where Jesus sent out the 12. In Acts 6:1-7 we read about seven being chosen to minister and the Acts 6 model is perhaps the best single example of delegation that we can look at. Effective delegation can free us of many activities and at the same time help develop those people with whom we work and live each day.

##### *Family Planning Time*

Too often different members of the family go their own way without communicating to the others their needs and their desires, as well as their goals. Families can get together and decide on how they want to spend their time, can plan vacations, can plan social engagements together, and can determine which television programs they are going to watch during the week. I believe this to be one of the most useful time management techniques for any family and it has many other implications as well.

#### CONCLUSION

Unfortunately, many of us do not use our time effectively. One study of church leaders revealed the following twelve



major time wasters for church leaders: personal disorganization, problems with delegation, interruptions, indecision and procrastination, socializing, junk mail, lack of planning, television, meetings, family problems and family errands, traveling time and car problems, and fatigue.<sup>8</sup>

In the area of business, the most commonly listed time wasters are: crisis management, unplanned meetings, lack of objectives and priorities, telephone interruptions, ineffective delegation, drop-in visitors, confused responsibility and authority, inability to say "no," indecision and procrastination, and untrained and inadequate staff.

You will have to determine what yours are, but I suspect that yours will include some of those listed above. It might be extremely helpful for you to take one week and keep track on a very specific basis of how you spend your time. You could then compare this with how you thought you would spend your time for that particular week. Discrepancies represent a good starting place in establishing plans by which we can meet our goals that are really important to us.

By way of summary, I have been trying to suggest that effective stewardship of our time involves a process of setting goals, establishing priorities, and making plans that allow us to implement prioritized goals. Surely, the development of schedules which will show us the steps to take on a daily basis is an extremely important part of the entire process. We must anticipate problems and be flexible and realize that we must constantly utilize new information as we move through this process. To be sure, I would not recommend that you become a "time nut." Remember, time is to work for us and we should not develop a guilt complex over it. Getting control of your time really does not require that you become a "time nut." That is overcontrolling your time. You will soon become obsessed with it. The idea behind con-

<sup>8</sup>Engstrom, Ted W., and Dayton, Ed R. *The Art of Management for Christian Workers*. Waco, TX. Word, Inc., 1976., Reimnitz time wasters.

trolling your time is that you work smarter, not harder. The more control we have over our time, the freer we will feel to do all of the things we really want to do.

Remember, in a very short span of time, our Lord Jesus Christ was able to do the important things in life. In like manner, God has given us the time needed to accomplish the important things in life. Every day brings to each of us the opportunity to evolve into something better than we were at the start of the day. The apostle Peter says that we are to "grow in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). This growth in grace and knowledge takes place within a time space, within life itself. One author put it this way:

Take time to work—it is the price of success.

Take time to think—it is the source of power.

Take time to play—it is the secret of perpetual youth.

Take time to read—it is the fountain of wisdom.

Take time to be friendly—it is the road to happiness.

Take time to dream—it is hitching your wagon to a star.

Take time to love and be loved—it is the privilege of redeemed people.

Take time to look around—it is too short a day to be selfish.

Take time to laugh—it is the music of the soul.

Take time for God—it is life's only lasting investment.

—Author Unknown



## GOD'S PLAN FOR EVANGELISM

JIM WOODSELL

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## EACH ONE HAS A SPECIAL GIFT

The Bible teaches that the church is the "body of Christ" (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18, 24; 1 Cor. 12:27). Every saved person is a member in the body (Acts 2:47; 1 Cor. 12:12, 27). Now notice carefully, it is God who places the members in the body. As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 12:18, "But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." In verse 24 of the same chapter, he says, ". . . God hath tempered the body together. . . ." The work of placing members in the body belongs to God.

Not only does God place the members in the body as it pleases him, but he also gives that member the motivation to develop the ability to perform where he places him. Study carefully Romans 12:3-8.

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. **HAVING THEN GIFTS DIFFERING** according to the grace that is given us, *whether prophecy*, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or *ministry*, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on *teaching*; Or he that exhorteth, on *exhortation*: he that *giveth*, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth *mercy*, with cheerfulness.

From 1 Corinthians 12 it is made clear that the "whole body" is not a single member, "but many" (1 Cor. 12:14). The body is composed of feet, ears, hands, eyes, etc., and remember, "God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him" (1 Cor. 12:15-18). If you are a member of the body, that means YOU.

Peter said it like this, "As every man hath received THE GIFT, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man *speak*, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man *minister*, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Peter 4:10, 11). There is a natural line drawn between "speaking gifts" and "serving gifts." You will see that this is so by looking again at the list in Romans 12:6-8. They are categorized as follows:

*Speaking Gifts*

1. Preaching
2. Teaching
3. Exhortation

*Serving Gifts*

1. Ministry
2. Giving
3. Ruling
4. Mercy

## WHAT IS A GIFT?

A "gift," as used in this study, is a God-given motivation for serving in the body of Christ to obtain glory and honor for God. It is a spiritual motivation to work for God in building up the body of Christ (1 Peter 4:10-11; Ephesians 4:11-12). 1 Cor. 4-7 says, "For who maketh thee to differ from another: and what has thou that thou didst not receive: now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"

The word translated "gifts" is from the Greek word *Charismata*. This word is closely akin to the word "grace" which is from the Greek word *Charis*, and the word "joy" translated from the Greek word *Chara*. A person's gift is a product of God's grace and a source of joy. Joy is a natural



stimulant or motivation that provides us with the initiative to involve ourselves in good works.

#### YOU ARE GIFTED

God has given you a gift enabling you to fulfill a special function in the body of Christ. He has also instructed you to concentrate on that gift (Rom. 12:3-8), but do you know what that gift is?

A Christian man related this experience recently. In his lifetime he had left four solid positions, one from which he could have retired 21 years ago, because he felt like the only way he could fulfill God's will for himself was by preaching. He tried to preach even though he felt inadequate and could see that he made a greater contribution in other ways. To him pulpit preaching was not a joy but a frustration.

It is important that you know what your gift is because it is a source of joy which will motivate you to good works. An understanding of where you fit into the body will put the "want to" into Christianity for you.

#### WHAT GIFTS ARE NOT

##### *Miraculous*

To say a person has a "gift" is not to say that he has the ability to perform miracles or that he can impart miracle-working power. A miracle is defined in the New Testament context as being an event of supernatural power, capable of being witnessed by the senses, which accompanies a servant of the Lord for the purpose of confirming the divine commission (Mark 16:17-20, Heb. 2:1-4). *Such miraculous spiritual gifts were limited to the New Testament period.* The purpose and cessation of miraculous signs may be traced in the New Testament as follows:

1. There were signs that belonged exclusively to the apostles (2 Cor. 12:12).
  - a. These signs were for the purpose of confirming the word of God (Mark 16:17-20); Hebrews 2:1-4).

- b. Signs were for the purpose of bringing the infant church to maturity (1 Cor. 13:8-11).
2. Those on whom the apostles laid hands were capable of working miracles, but they did not have the ability to impart the same power by laying their hands on others (Acts 6:1-8; 8:5-7, 14-21).
3. When the apostles died and those on whom the apostles laid hands died, there were no longer any "miracle workers" (1 Cor. 13:8-10).

##### *Talents*

A person's talents are related to his physical abilities and are possessed even by unbelievers. Gifts are possessed by believers only. Talents focus on techniques and methods while gifts have to do with spiritual motivation. Gifts are dependent on God-given power while talents depend on natural power. Talents are directed toward the natural level while gifts are directed toward building up the body of Christ or saving the lost. Talents are present from physical birth while one's gift is given at the time of his spiritual birth.

This is not to say that God does not give us our talents, but two people with the same talents can have different gifts. One may have the gift of "mercy" while the other has the gift of "serving." In that case they would use their talents through their individual gifts.

The "gifts" of Romans 12:6-8 are not miraculous with the exception of the first one mentioned. Prophecy is used in the New Testament as the miraculous proclamation of God's word. Since the other "gifts" are not miraculous, they are sometimes referred to as "natural endowments" or "talents." In this study we have tried to use the term "gift" as used in the New Testament context, understanding that a person's "talents" or "natural endowments" are consecrated to the service of God upon his conversion to Christ.

##### *Offices*

There are a number of offices mentioned in the New Testament, some that are no longer in existence. In Ephesians



4:11 the offices of apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastors-teachers are mentioned. In Philippians 1:1 bishops and deacons are listed, These offices are not gifts. An office relates to the person's function. Gifts relate to the special motivation these persons possess to carry out a particular work in the body. There can be no doubt that a person serving in an office will do a much more efficient job if he has the gift corresponding to that office. It is equally obvious that a person can have the gift that goes along with a particular office in the church and not be performing in that capacity. For instance, a person can have the gift of ruling and not be an elder, or a person can have the gift of teaching and not be teaching, etc.

#### *Ministry*

A ministry is an area in which a gift is exercised. It is an outlet for the employment of a gift. Although a person's gift will never change, his ministry might change many times. A person with the gift of exhortation may exercise that gift through pulpit preaching, teaching a class, or as a foreign missionary. All of these may be simultaneous ministries, but with the single gift.

#### *Fruit*

A person's gift is related to service while fruit has to do with character. A gift is the means to an end while the fruit borne by the gift is the end. Each believer has one special gift (1 Peter 4:10 NAS) but is instructed to bear much fruit (John 15:8).

#### *Godliness*

A person is not automatically godly in his actions simply because he has received a gift. Paul said to the Corinthians, ". . . that ye come behind in no gift . . ." (1 Cor. 1:7), and yet look at their ungodly behavior. Euodias and Syntyche had their problems even though they were Christians (Philippians 4:2-3), and so did Barnabas and Paul (Acts 15:36-39). To have a gift does not guarantee sinlessness, nor does it guarantee entrance into heaven. A gift simply gives you

the ability to function in the body where God has placed you, if YOU choose to do so.

#### THE VALUE OF UNDERSTANDING GIFTS

Knowing that God has given me "a special gift" and knowing what that gift is enables me to find personal fulfillment in my work for the Lord. As I use my gift I know that I am cooperating with God in building up the body of Christ. It also becomes apparent that God's will is that I concentrate on the use of my gift (Rom. 12:6-8) and trust him to give the increase. Knowing what my gift is will motivate me to give my whole being to this work for the Lord (Col. 3:23) while God is trusted to give fruit to the work (1 Cor. 3:5, 6).

Knowing what my gift is will also enable me to fulfill my personal responsibility in the local church. God does not expect individual Christians to do everything that needs to be done. *He does expect every member working together in the body to do everything that needs to be done.* Remember, the whole body is not an eye, an ear, a foot, etc. The teaching of Paul on this subject is not to think more highly of yourself than you ought to think (Rom. 12:3).

Knowing what my gift is will make it possible for me to use my time better. I will know when to say "no" to a request to do something that is not compatible with my abilities. It may be that we have assumed responsibilities which God did not intend us to have, or we may have assumed responsibilities which actually detract from our basic motivation. I need to give priority in my schedule to those things that I am best suited to doing.

#### *Benefits to the Congregation*

Being able to define the gifts and determine which gift each individual Christian actually has will make for responsibilities to be delegated to those who have the motivation for achievement in that area of assigned work. Also knowing the characteristics of a particular gift will make it possible for us to anticipate responses from fellow Christians in



varying situations. If we know what their gift is, this will enable us to see these situations from their point of view. A person with the gift of teaching will not see problems in the classroom in the same way that one will who has the gift of mercy, nor will one who has the gift of exhortation want to condemn sin as would one who has the gift of prophecy. Understanding the gifts enables us to understand that all people are not motivated in the same way, thus we understand each other.

The end result of knowing each person's gift will be the building up of the body of Christ. Paul says of the individual members of the body, ". . . God tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another" (1 Cor. 12:24-25). In another place Paul wrote, "'When he ascended on high, he led captive a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.' . . . And he gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, FOR THE EQUIPPING OF THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF SERVICE, to the BUILDING UP OF THE BODY OF CHRIST . . ." (Eph. 4:8, 11-12 NAS).

Our challenge today is to get "the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Eph. 4:16). Peace and harmony will prevail in the congregation where every member is not called on or expected to do every work that comes along, but *is expected* to do those works that fit that place God has especially given to him.

#### THINK SOBERLY

The title for this lesson is found embedded in Paul's teachings on the subject of gifts in Romans 12:1-8. To find where we fit in the body of Christ will require sober thinking. The

purpose of this lesson is to examine the first eight verses of Romans 12, and to draw relevant observations from them.

#### OBSERVATIONS FROM ROMANS 12:1-8

"I Beseech You Therefore . . ." (12:1-2).

The word "therefore" is a word that introduces a conclusion based on something that has already been said. Paul has laid a basis for belief in the previous eleven chapters of Romans on which he now urges the beauty of Christian character. He laid a solid foundation on the theme of salvation, and now he is appealing for dedication and devotion of life which will be in keeping with the acceptance of this redemption.

Because of all that God has done for us, he urges us to submit our lives totally to him. Paul's appeal is the same as that made by John in 1 John 4:19, "We love him, because he first loved us." As Jesus' "meat" was to do the will of the Father "and to finish his work" (John 4:34), so we must be willing to let the Father's will be done in us! If we are not willing to comply with the teachings of verses 1 and 2, then verses 3 through 8 will have no meaning for us.

Jesus said, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine . . ." (John 7:17). Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one" (1 Cor. 2:14-15 RSV).

When you determine that you are not going to follow the "mold" of the world, but that you are going to be "transformed" by the truth of God's work (Col. 3:10), you will then be able to "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:2).

" . . . Not to Think of Himself More Highly Than He Ought to Think" (12:3)

All members in the body of Christ are equally important. This is true by virtue of our redemption (Christ died for



each of us). In the church it is true by virtue of God's sovereignty (The Lord adds to the church). We should not pride ourselves in our gift because God is the giver of it.

There are three erroneous views that a Christian might hold toward himself. (1) One who believes that he can do everything that there is to be done is in error. No single member can constitute the whole body. Some try to be the "Jack of all trades" and as a result "master none"! These people equate "motion" with "faithfulness." They stir up a lot of dust but produce few actual results. (2) Those who view their gift as "THE" gift are in error. Some who have natural ability in a given area have been known to assume a condemning attitude toward those who do not have the same emphasis. We must be brought to realize that it takes EVERY talent of EVERY member to reach and teach EVERY creature! (3) Then there are some who consider themselves as being unimportant. This is the greatest of all errors! One who has been "washed in the blood of Christ" (Rev. 1:5-6) is a "king" and "priest." You are somebody! You are important! You are a "son of God" or a "daughter of God" (Rom. 8:14; 2 Cor. 6:18; 1 Cor. 6:19-20). When the apostle John considered this great truth he said, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us . . ." (1 John 3:1). Find your place in the body of Christ and go to work!! Above all, cease to resist good works!

Paul asks the questions in 1 Corinthians 3:5, "What then is Apollos? What is Paul?" and answers, "Servants through whom you believed, as *the Lord assigned to each.*" In verse 7 he says, "So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth," and then in verse 8 he makes this observation, "He who plants and he who waters are equal . . ." (RSV). As we noticed in the previous lesson, ". . . God set the members every one of them in the body, at it hath pleased him" (1 Cor. 12:18).

You are what you are in the body of Christ because God "set" you "in the body, as it hath pleased him." You are no

more important, nor are you less important than any other member in the body.

"We, Being Many, Are One Body" (12:4-5).

Paul is here using a figure that we cannot misunderstand. He likens the spiritual body of Christ, the church, to our physical bodies. He is saying that just as we have many different members in our physical bodies, and all of these members do not fulfill the same function, so in the church there are also many different members, which likewise, have different functions. Every member of the body is necessary.

In 1 Corinthians 12:21-22 it is stated, "And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, ARE NECESSARY." We, as members of the body of Christ, are mutually dependent upon each other. Thus, when "one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Cor. 12:26).

Frustration is created in the body when a "foot" tries to assume the role of the "eye," or the "hand" tries to be an "ear." To draw an analogy from Paul's use of the human body, many times members of the church would be compelled to comb their hair with their feet, or brush their teeth with their feet. This creates discord and disharmony. Again from 1 Corinthians 12, "But God has so composed the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part, that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another" (vr. 24, 25). When the members of the body are coordinated, the hands doing the work suited to hands, the feet doing the work suited to feet, and the eyes doing the work suited to eyes, disharmony will be abolished. A body that is coordinated will have a much greater impact on society than one that is tearing limb from limb and member from member.



### “Having Then Gifts Differing” (12:6-8)

There are at least four reasons for having varied gifts. They are listed as follows:

1. To enable the body to function in a systematic, coordinated way.
2. To provide a place for every member of the body to perform a useful service.
3. To expel disharmony from the body.
4. To glorify God, who has “tempered the body together . . .” (1 Cor. 12:24).

Seven gifts are listed in Romans 12:6-8. The seven gifts and their definitions are as follows:

1. Prophecy—This term is always used in a miraculous sense in the New Testament and is no longer present in the church. What “prophecy” was in the age of the “unwritten” message of Christ, “preaching” is today. Preaching is simply “proclaiming truth.” The person with this gift finds joy in so proclaiming the word that the hearers are convicted, called to account and the secrets of their hearts disclosed (1 Cor. 14:24, 25).
2. Service—serving the needs of others. This person’s motivation is to meet the practical needs of others.
3. Teaching—clarifying truth. This person has the natural desire to search out and validate truths from the Bible.
4. Exhortation—encouraging, comforting, consoling, or counseling. This person is motivated to stimulate the faith of others.
5. Giving—contributing money. This person finds joy in entrusting personal assets to others for the furtherance of their ministry.
6. Ruling—giving aid or organizing. This person has the natural ability to coordinate the activities of others for the achievement of common goals.
7. Mercy—to have pity, to have compassion on, and show special favor to those in distress. This person is naturally empathetic and has the ability to comfort those who

are in distress. However, he is compelled to act rather than just feel.

A deeper study of these gifts will follow in the next seven lessons.

### SOME CLUES TO FINDING YOUR GIFT

1. Get a working understanding of all seven gifts. In the lessons to follow each gift is discussed in some detail. The challenge of this study is for you to find your place in the body and function there as a healthy member.
2. Go to work in all these areas. Try preaching a sermon, teaching a class, visiting door-to-door, conducting a cottage class, visiting a nursing home, leading some special project in the church’s work, etc.
3. Take special notice of your personal desires and inclinations. You may discover your gift just like a person discovers his ability to sing. A person who has a special singing ability is drawn toward singing and toward those who have vocal ability. A strong desire for some area of activity may well indicate your gift.
4. Take stock of your personal dedication. It is not likely that the person who does not have the willingness or drive to search for answers will find answers!
5. Our gift will be developed or exposed through proper exercise. We are to be instruments, not ornaments. The existence of a gift is a call to exercise it. Eyes are purposeless unless they exercise the function of sight. If we fail to use a member of our bodies, it will eventually become useless. If we don’t use it, we lose it.
6. Delight or joy may well indicate your gift. When a member of the body is rightly related to the head, that member will find joy in ministering. Conversely, when a member is working out of a sense of duty rather than enjoyment he will experience frustration rather than fulfillment. When a person is “turned on” he will turn others on.
7. Discernment of others is important in finding that at



which we are particularly gifted. Others may see special ability in us that we have yet to recognize. A person who is close to you and has observed you closely over a period of time will be able to recognize attributes that you might modestly overlook.

#### PROBLEMS TO WATCH FOR

There are at least three problems to which each Christian needs to be sensitive. First, some will become confused when they start trying to "pinpoint" their particular place in the body. If people are pushed to concrete conclusions as to what their gift is, they can become frustrated and desperate. Those who are not sure of their particular area of greatest service should specialize in those things at which they are adept and remain open for other opportunities. You can be sure that you are important to the ongoing of the Kingdom! Those who are the "Jack of all trades and masters of none" spend a lot of time in motion, but often with few actual results.

Secondly, some will quickly "fixate" on what they think their particular gift is and will use it to rationalize away other biblical responsibilities. It might be that a person who concludes that he has a gift of speaking does not have any obligation to serve people in a physical way, or it might be that one with a gift of serving would conclude that he need not be ready to supply an answer to those who would ask a reason of his hope (1 Peter 3:15). Obviously, such a misuse of gifts will result in an unhealthy body. All of the talents and abilities that a person has are God-given (Ps. 139:14-16), but many of these talents and abilities must be drawn out and developed through exercise. Jesus stated the principle when he said, "Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have" (Luke 8:18). He made the same observation in Matthew 25 as he took the "talent from the 'one talent man'" and gave it to the man who had ten talents. He said, "For

unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath" (Matt. 25:29). There are some things that we become capable of doing just by virtue of maturity. Teaching is an example (Heb. 5:12).

The third problem that we need to guard against is that of "self-deception." Some people will think they have a gift which in reality they do not have. Self-deception can be remedied through a candid evaluation of others.

A word of caution is in order as we proceed into this study of gifts. Not having a specific gift does not absolve us of our responsibility in those areas where God has commanded obedience. For example, let us use evangelism. There is no doubt that God has commanded every Christian to preach to all nations the gospel of Christ (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; 2 Tim. 2:2). I may not be a gifted evangelist, but I am still obligated to do evangelism. (Matt. 10:32-33; Luke 9:26).

#### ROLES AND GIFTS

As with any blessing, truth can be abused. The Bible is clear on the matter of gifts. One member cannot be the whole body, but there are some that insist on abusing this truth by saying, either verbally or through their actions, that this eliminates them from any obligation to develop areas of their life outside their gift. They say, "Since I don't have the gift of evangelism, I don't have to tell others about Christ," or "Since I don't have the gift of mercy, I don't have to be particularly merciful," etc.

Those who use "gifts" as an excuse to stop developing in other areas need to re-evaluate their commitment to Christ. Paul's point in Romans 12:1-8 is that each member should CONCENTRATE on his particular function in the body for the welfare of the whole body. We are especially equipped for that place in the body where God has placed us, but we have also accepted the WHOLE of Christ's teachings.



According to the teachings of God every member is told to develop in each of the following areas:

1. Evangelism. Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 5:29; Acts 10:42.
2. Service. Gal. 5:13; Col. 3:23-24.
3. Teaching. Heb. 5:12.
4. Exhortation. Heb. 3:13; 10:25.
5. Giving. Luke 6:38; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8 & 9.
6. Organization or Ruling. 1 Tim. 3:4, 12; Pro. 16:32.
7. Mercy. Luke 10:37; 2 Cor. 13:8; Col. 3:12.

It is obvious that God expects every faithful Christian to give back to the work of God as he has prospered (1 Cor. 16:1-2), but there are some who have this as a "gift." They will find it easy to conform to the teachings of God on the matter of giving. On the other hand, they might have a problem teaching others. The Bible is just as clear on the matter of teaching others as it is on giving. A person with the gift of teaching will find teaching to come easy but will have to develop his ability to give. So it is true in every gift area. We are to develop in those areas that come hard to us, but for the greatest efficiency of the working body each member should concentrate on his "gift" area.

If we can get every member working in that area where he or she finds particular delight, and developing in those areas that come rather hard, we will have a body of God's people building themselves up in love (Eph. 4:16).

#### THINK

The noted English preacher, Charles Spurgeon, was visiting a woman of destitute circumstances. He noticed a signed document in a frame on the wall. When he inquired about the document the woman told him she had acquired it some years before from an old man that she had cared for during his last days. Just before his death, she said, he had signed this document and asked her to keep it. Spurgeon borrowed the document and carried it to a bank for analysis. It was discovered to be a genuine will that actually made the

old woman rich. She had lived in poverty while being rich. Perhaps many Christians are doing the same thing!

#### THE ONE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

The church of Jesus Christ has but one purpose for existing. It is the same purpose for which Jesus himself came to the earth. Jesus stated this purpose plainly in Luke 19:10, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Everything Jesus did pointed to this end. His death was for this very purpose (Rom. 5:8; John 3:16). When Jesus gave himself for this purpose he gave his whole body. Every member of his body was sacrificed for the purpose of saving the lost! That sacrificed body was taken from the cross and laid in a tomb, but on the third day it came to life and left the tomb. The Spirit of God had reentered that body and brought it from the captivity of death. Jesus walked the earth in that same body for forty days and then ascended back into heaven (Acts 1:1, 2), leaving his disciples instructions to remain in Jerusalem until they had received power from God (Luke 24:39).

On the first Pentecost following the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, the apostles were found in the city of Jerusalem. It was on this day that the Spirit of God descended from heaven and filled them so that they "began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:1-4). This was the beginning of the church. Paul says the church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 1:18, 24). The purpose of the body of Christ has not changed. The church exists today for the purpose of seeking and saving the lost! Every member, regardless of where he fits into the body, should be dedicated to fulfilling the one purpose for which the body exists!! This is consistent with God's plan for reaching the lost.

#### *God's Plan for Reaching the Lost Every Member (Acts 8:4)*

God's plan for saving the lost involves every member in the body of Christ. The body of Christ does not exist to be



served. At the dispersion of the Jerusalem church "they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). It was not the trained preachers who went everywhere preaching the word for they remained in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1). The common Christian shared with others the good news about Christ!

Cooperation rather than competition should be the guiding principle for God's people. If all resistance to bodily growth were removed from the church, inestimable progress would be made. This would be true even though the resisters made no contribution except getting out of the way.

If we can get people to see where their place is in the body of Christ, they will find joy in fulfilling that place. Not only will they cease to resist good works but they will actually make a meaningful contribution to the building up of the church.

People often resist good works because they feel threatened by them. Those who do not know what their job is think everything that comes up is their job. Usually they are already frustrated from trying to do more than they can adequately get done and much of this is done out of sheer duty with no joy attached.

We need to realize that standing in the way of saving the lost is serious business. Jesus said of the Pharisees, "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in" (Matt. 23:13).

All members of the body do not have the same function, but all members of the body, to be faithful and useful, must fulfill their individual function. Only by cooperative action, and a striving for the same goal, can the body be coordinated to achieve its ultimate task.

Every member that is fulfilling its function is contributing to the saving of the lost. Someone has illustrated this beautifully with a set of carpenter tools. It seems that a set

of carpenter tools held a conference. Brother Hammer presided but was told that he would have to leave the meeting because he was too noisy. He said, "I'll leave, but Brother Screw will have to go too. He won't do anything unless you turn him around and around." Mr. Screw said, "I'll leave, but Brother Plane will have to go too. All of his work is shallow. There is no depth in anything he does." Mr. Plane said, "I'll go, but Brother Rule will have to go too, because he is always measuring people. He thinks he is the only one right." Mr. Rule said, "I'll go, but Brother Sandpaper will have to go too, because he is rough. He's always rubbing people the wrong way."

About this time the Carpenter of Nazareth walks in. He put on an apron and proceeded to build a pulpit from which to preach the good news of his coming. In doing this he employed the hammer, screw, plane, rule and sandpaper. At the conclusion of this work Brother Saw remarked, "Brethren, I observe that we are all workers together with the Lord."

*Every Day* (Acts 2:46; 5:42).

Winning the lost to Christ is not simply a Sunday project. Christianity is a way of life that should be followed "daily." Sunday is the first day of the week, not the last day. Psychologically, it seems, we have included Sunday in our "week end," and it is taking us to "week end." Instead of entering into worship as the beginning of a new week we view it as the way to end the previous week. Thus we experience a "blue Monday." The first day of the week, with the celebration of the victorious resurrection of Christ, should set a precedent for the six days that follow. The remainder that it was necessary for Christ to die to save us from our sins should remind us that all who have not accepted him are still lost and God is depending on us to share the "good news" of salvation with them.

*Every Home* (Acts 5:42)

Every Christian home should be a radiating center for evangelism. When people enter our homes they should know



that Christians live there by the decor, the books on the shelves, the music, etc.

An organized program of evangelism, if misunderstood, will destroy the natural outreach of the church. Every member should be involved, in every home, on a daily basis in reaching out to the lost. There are many unsaved that come into the homes of Christians that never hear the name of Christ. In many congregations the responsibility of reaching the lost has been delegated to a few people who compose the "local evangelism program." Christians need to understand that God is depending on them. God is depending on YOU to reach the lost. There is no way that we can delegate our responsibility to "seek and save the lost" to another.

The arrangement of Christ was to tell Peter, James and John of his death and resurrection. They in turn were to tell others who would tell still others until all had heard to the farthest parts of the earth. If this plan fails there is no way the lost can be saved. There is no plan "B."

The gospel was preached to every creature under heaven in the first century. It is obvious that between that time and now someone has failed to tell others. Someone failed to fulfill their responsibility. Are you fulfilling your place in the body? Are you sharing your faith with those who come into your world?

*Every Creature (Mark 15:15-16)*

God says to go after every creature. How many are you going after in your community? One thing is sure, we won't reach any more than we go after. Likely we will reach less than we go after. To be faithful to Christ we must go after "every creature." Too often we limit ourselves from reaching the lost by the size of the church building. It is apparent that the New Testament church had no such physical limitations. It reached a membership of 3,000 the first day of existence. That membership had grown to 5,000 men in just a short while. They were after every creature.

While working with the church in Davenport, Iowa, for

the first year, I was content to go after those we thought we could reach. At the beginning of the second year someone asked a visiting evangelist, "How broadly do you think we should be in covering this area?" He replied, "Cover it like the dew covers the ground!" Suddenly I had a vision of going after the 110,000 that lived within the city limits of Davenport, and through the efforts of a bus ministry and the excitement of other members the attendance jumped to over two hundred per service on Sunday morning and Wednesday night in just two months.

In a Wednesday night bus meeting the Bus Program Director was mapping out plans to get the lost to the church building. As he excitedly went over the plans one young lady became exasperated and said, "Why Roger, I believe you want all of Davenport in here next Wednesday night!" He replied, "Now you are catching on!!" God tells us to go after every creature.

*All Out for Souls*

Bruce Jenner won the decathlon at Montreal in the Olympic Games of 1976. This was a contest that consisted of ten separate track and field events. Bruce Jenner had an obvious will to win, and he had a body that was in shape for the contest. Which member or members in his body do you believe should receive the most credit for his victory? The hands? the feet? the legs? the eyes? the ears? Which? There was obvious cooperation between all of these members or defeat would have been certain. Even the unseen organs of his body cooperated. This is precisely the lesson Paul is teaching in 1 Corinthians 12:14-27.

Every member in the body of Christ is important! Every member must cooperate with every other member if the great work of winning the lost for Christ is going to be accomplished. Some will find their particular ministry in the teaching program, some in bus evangelism, some through caring for the building and grounds, but every member has a place and can contribute.



While in Texas in a soulwinning seminar, a sister in Christ related a past experience of hers. She and her husband have been active in winning the lost to Christ through cottage meetings for some time. They are particularly adept to this good work having influenced a number to obey Christ and be saved in their ministry. Not long ago this sister was asked by a department head in the educational program at their congregation to teach a class consisting of three-year-olds. She said that she had shuddered at the thought but agreed to give it a try. After three weeks she was at her wit's end and went back to the department head and told her, "It's no use!" The department head, knowing her skill in teaching cottage classes, said, "You know I have the same problem with cottage meeting work. I tell you what, if you will do my cottage meeting work for me, I'll teach your class of three-year-olds for you!" This is the kind of cooperative spirit that we need in the church. Every member in the body should be contributing in some way to the winning of the lost. Every program of the church ought to have as its ultimate objective that of winning the lost to Christ.

We need to go all out for souls in our community today. This idea has been well expressed by one, W. Roy Steward, and is adapted for your consideration.

Though I speak with the tongues of scholarship and use high-sounding phrases and well-coined sentences, and though I have a winning personality, and have the art of getting along with people, and fail to win souls to Christ, I am a cloud without rain, and a well without water.

And though I have the best of education and understand all mysteries of religious psychology, and though I have all Biblical knowledge, and lose not myself in the task of winning souls to Christ, I become as high-polished brass and as a tinkling symbol.

And though I read the latest books and magazines, and attend worship regularly, go to lectureships and workshops and yet am satisfied with less than winning souls for Christ, and building Christian character, I am as a wandering star without light or heat.

The soul winner doth not behave himself unseemly; doth not make it hard on others and easy on himself; is not envious of others that seem to be more successful; is not puffed up over his own attainments.

The soul winner never faileth, but if one does not win souls he is a failure. Though I win the highest positions in the church and am recognized and honored by all and fail to win souls for Christ, what will it profit me in eternity?

Now abideth position, popularity, and personal soul winning, but the greatest of these is personal soul winning.

#### *In the Absence of Some Gift*

In a mature congregation all seven gifts will be present, but there are cases where one or more gifts are absent. Although this body will not operate at peak efficiency, provision has been made for it to function. According to the directions of God every member is told to develop each of the gifts. Notice the following scriptures:

1. Preaching or Evangelism. Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; 2 Tim. 2:2; Rev. 22:17.
2. Service. Gal. 5:13; Col. 3:23-24.
3. Teaching. Heb. 5:12.
4. Exhortation. Heb. 3:13; 10:25.
5. Giving. Luke 6:38; Romans 12:13; 1 Cor. 16:1-2.
6. Giving Aid or Organizing. 1 Tim. 3:4; Proverbs 16:32; 17:2.
7. Mercy. Luke 10:37; 2 Cor. 13:8; Col. 3:12.

Perhaps we could learn a lesson from nature that will help us to respond to those situations where all of the gifts are not present. When a bee hive is damaged and its vital functions impaired all of the bees in that hive respond in a remarkable way—their abilities change in order to meet the emergency situation. Likewise, we as members of the body of Christ must be willing to step up and fill the gap if one of the gifts is missing.

Many people are impaired physically and learn to get along by using members of their bodies as unusual instru-



ments. Some people have to comb their hair and brush their teeth with their feet. Others walk on their hands, but we recognize that such a body will not be able to perform on a par with a body that is normal and healthy.

A normal, healthy church of Christ is composed of the seven gifts mentioned by Paul in Romans 12:6-8, with faithful members utilizing those gifts as God has appointed them to be used. There is a coordination of efforts with the other members of the body to reach out to those that are lost and bring them to salvation in Christ. In a healthy body there is no competition between members.

"From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Eph. 4:16).

## THE MINISTRY OF COUNSELING

C. BRUCE WHITE

C. BRUCE WHITE, author of *Thy Kingdom Come*, has preached for twenty years. Having served as a counselor, preacher and Bible class teacher, he is presently occupied as Family Counselor for the Madison Church of Christ in Madison, Tenn. and Director of Counseling at David Lipscomb College. A graduate of David Lipscomb he has earned the M.A. and the M.Th. from the Harding Graduate School of Religion and is now working toward the completion of his doctorate.

It is my philosophy that we suffer consequences of emotional difficulty to the proportion of movement away from Biblical-principled living. I opt for the Bible being a book of instructions for living. When we all begin to believe in the Bible in this way and then practice it, we will be more stable and better able to help others.

Thomas Oden uses the terms "congruent" and "incongruent" to describe the stability of the counselor and counselee. It is impossible for "incongruence" to help "incongruence." They both feed on the neurosis of the other. It is essential that the counselor be "congruent."

My position is that "congruence" is found in applying Bible principles to daily living. Let me illustrate this in happiness. I constantly hear, "I'm not happy" or "Help me to be happy." It is necessary to do a little research to find what happy means to this individual person and then to bring him or her to understand what it really is.

The Greek word that is translated "happy" is *makarioi*. This word has the significance of inner joy rather than the superficial smile or the brief rapture that comes through material success. It is truly translated better as "blessed" since our language has adulterated the word "happy."

Jesus gives instructions in John 13 which clarifies the Bible principle for finding happiness. The first thing He does,



is illustrate in life what He plans to teach. It is impossible to help someone else to learn something which you are unwilling to practice.

Jesus washes the disciples' feet to illustrate his point of serving another. We do not advocate foot-washing as a religious service, but it might not be a bad social practice to reinstitute humility in our people. At any rate, we must find our own means of "foot washing" if we are to be servants.

Jesus, secondly, tells the disciples that they should follow the example. This is to suggest that "incongruence" must follow a pattern to develop "congruence."

One might say, "Isn't this directive counseling?" Let me affirm that it is definitely directive. Carl Rogers may have turned the corner for reflection, but he didn't arrive at what it needed to get individuals into a position to solve their own life problems. I believe in Bible-directed living. Jesus gave direction to life (John 10:10).

One author was discussing non-directive counseling and suggested that had John the Baptist used reflective counseling he might not have lost his head. This may be the case but there is the stronger possibility that he would have lost his soul. It is very important that the commitment to the truth over ride the desire to make a friend of the client.

Now, after Jesus gives them a pattern, and tells them to follow it, he instills hope. He tells them, "If you know these things, happy are you if you do them." It is important to assure the counselee that the goal is attainable.

Please note that happiness is not the object to be pursued, however. The thing of which life is formed is service. The by-product is happiness. It is important to note that Biblical principle is helping people. One does not set out in life to be happy. One sets out to serve and happiness comes.

It is also affirmed in this text that intellectual understanding is not the key to happiness. Jesus said it is not enough to know, memorize, direct, or interpret the idea of service, but, "if you do it," you will be happy.

The counselor must recognize that unless Bible principles are put into practice then no subsequent change will take place. Many preachers make the mistake of just reading or quoting scripture to troubled counselees without structuring a way for this to be put into practice.

It is as much a part of the minister's role to search out the talent or ability of the counselee and help this talent to be activated as it is for him to read Bible activities to the person. Luke records, for Theophilus, "all that Jesus began both to do and teach" (Acts 1:1).

The Bible is an integral part of the counseling which a minister does. Books on psychology, personality development, counseling theories and techniques are helpful, but do not abandon the Bible as a chief source.

The Bible message should be brought to the counseling situation with skill and diplomacy. It is for this reason that the disciplines aforementioned should be learned. It is as important to know when to introduce Bible teaching as it is to know the Bible principle which will help.

This involves the skill of listening, and "trained listening" will constitute the thrust of our next lecture.

#### TRAINED LISTENING

There is, perhaps, no one skill which is less developed in most of us than that of listening. We are just not given to really listening to what others say. It has been my experience that about as many marriage problems result from mis-communication as from a lack of communication.

The illustration of the man looking at the woman and saying, "I know you believe you understand what you think I said, but I'm not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant," is too often the truth. There is a desperate need to teach communication skills in our society and especially the ability to listen.

Preachers, of all people, should be interested in this area. Just think of what a difference it would make if your entire congregation knew how to listen. Think of the motivation



that could be supplied through the pulpit. Think of the misrepresentations that could be avoided as your members discuss your sermon on Monday. Think of the changed lives as the message of the gospel was clearly understood and thus internalized.

But, the reality is that few people know how to listen. This leaves a number of possibilities open for a message to be heard. Communication specialists suggest six messages that can come through.

1. What you mean to say
2. What you actually say
3. What the other person hears
4. What the other person thinks he hears
5. What the other person says about what you said
6. What you think the other person said about what you said

Estimates suggest that only about 20% of what is said is actually heard by the listener. We can hardly expect to respond properly with that little understanding of what has been said.

We need to establish some principles of trained listening. Let me suggest a few to act as a beginning of our thinking in this area.

First, we must avoid the tendency to think of what we are going to say in response while someone is telling us something. Paul Tournier has said, "It is impossible to overemphasize the immense need humans have to be really listened."

One of the things that I learned in my years of working with troubled young people is that they all share one thing in common. They all expressed that no one ever listened to them. We are too quick to want to tell them what they need to do.

This is a common mistake made in communication. If we are to learn from the other person then we must shut down the outgo and just listen to what is said.

Secondly, we must seek to understand what the other per-

son is really saying. We want to be able to relate to how the other person feels and our listening must lead us to understand the meaning of what is being said.

It may be that by reading the non-verbal clues or the expressions which are a part of meta communication we can have a deeper understanding of the meaning of what is being said. Trained listening involves picking up on body language, facial expression, gestures and numerous other ways of adding meaning to verbalization.

This is one reason that I do not counsel on the phone. This is only a device for making contact and establishing appointments.

Thirdly, we must seek clear understanding in communication. This may involve asking questions to assure that our listening is proper. "Do I understand you to mean that—?" is a practical way to restate something which I hear but may not agree with. This allows the speaker an opportunity to affirm the statement or to restate it in clearer terms.

It is important to seek clear understanding in communication since what I say in response will be a feeling or emotional stimulus.

Fourthly, trained listening demands that one be aware of prejudice or opinion operating as a filter. We may have a preconceived idea or opinion that will shade the way we hear what is said.

Dwight Small points out that listening is not a natural thing and demands practice. We are most comfortable in expressing our own ideas and opinions. Most people do not want to hear as much as they want to speak.

Fifthly, we must not second guess or preempt the speaker in trained listening. I think that many communication problems arise as a result of assumption. We assume that we already know the feelings or mind of the other person, so we hear what we want.

The preacher is notoriously a bad counselor because he is a poor listener. The preacher is an authority figure with an



inflated ego who must be the center of attention and has not been trained in listening. His position, thus, prevents him from being an empathetic listener. He has advice based on, "if I were you," and usually a scripture, and a prayer. If this "sound advice" (which is mostly sound) does not get the job done, then "no one could have helped them."

We need so much to learn the skill of listening as ministers and counselors. The schedule and calendar of the listener will be constantly filled because so many people are wanting to be heard. It is obvious that communication is not just listening, so our next lecture will be on talking.

#### EFFECTIVE TALKING

It does not seem that we should have to teach a lesson on talking, but it is an essential part of counseling. We do not learn to talk; usually, we just pick it up. We gain our language and its use by being in association with others. This is done primarily by our parental environment.

One does not study and learn to use "ain't" or double negatives. We hear this verbiage and begin to assimilate it as language. Profanity is not a learned skill but a societal influence. Slang and useless words fill our vocabularies as we associate with cultural influences and regional effects.

One of the most pronounced to me is the influence of athletes on our society. I became aware of this usage in television interviews. It appeared that every athlete interviewed would use "you know" after every word. It was not long until I noticed this phrase in common usage. It is nonsensical slang and will interrupt the thought pattern of a trained listener.

If a client is talking to me and relates that "his wife is going out at night (you know) and doing (you know) things that (you know) she might not (you know) ought to do (you know)," It is extremely difficult for me to identify with what he is saying because my mind is constantly saying, "No, I don't know."

John Powell, in his book, *Why I Am Afraid to Tell You*

*Who I am*, gives five levels of communication. These may help us to learn to talk better. Let's share them briefly.

Level Five: Cliché Conversation. This is the safe level of talking. It only involves "How are you?" "How is your family?" "How are the kids?" This involves no personal sharing and one can remain safely behind the screen.

Level Four: Reporting the Facts About Others. These are little bits of information about others without personal commentary. We are just reporting the news. It does not involve our personal feelings or opinions.

Level Three: My Ideas and Judgments. This is where real communication begins. This is where one is cautious but is willing to risk sharing his own ideas and decisions.

Level Two: My Feelings and Emotions. This is the surfacing of personal opinion. One shares his exact feelings and judgments concerning a matter. For real communication to continue there must be a sharing of one's feelings.

Level One: Complete Emotional and Personal Truthful Communication. It is essential that in-depth personal relationships share at this open level to exist. This is not easy because it involves the risk of being rejected because of honesty, but it is vital for growth to take place.

Let's look at a few other hints on talking from H. Norman Wright. It is very important to say it straight. Beating around the bush or cluttering the issue by couching it in flowery language causes confusion.

The story is told of a woman who was having her genealogy published. The author found that one of her grandfathers had been electrocuted in Sing Sing. She requested that it be phrased gracefully in the book. The statement appeared in the book as "One of her grandfathers occupied the chair of applied electricity in one of America's best known institutions. He was very much attached to his position and literally died in the harness."

It is also helpful to stay on the subject. Don't bring in side issues that may be distracting. It may be the philosophy of



life which you espouse that causes this to happen. An optimist will be more apt to stay on the subject than a pessimist.

You may want to ask if you are looking for solutions or more problems.

When you offer criticism also include solutions. It is easy to be negative and to point out weaknesses. Avoid being the critic who never gives a positive suggestion.

It is helpful in talking to avoid the emotional extremism. Statements such as "you always" or "you never" are extremisms. We are guilty of making exaggerated claims on individual judgment. "The whole world" or "everyone is" based on the actions of a few is an extremism.

Try to avoid leaving the impression that you know something when you don't. It is not an admission of complete failure to have it evidenced that one is not knowledgeable in one area. My brother is an electrical engineer and works with guidance systems and computers. We discuss golf, fishing, and our children when together because I am ignorant of his field. I do not feel threatened in his company because of this lack of information since I have no desire to learn all of that. It does not interfere with our friendship or ability to communicate.

The best method of maintaining clarity is to repeat the statement that you heard, putting it in your words, so as to gain an affirmative or negative nod from the other party. This is more involved than a mere grunt and will cause the other person to be impressed that you are truly listening.

One should attempt to control emotions in talking. It is acceptable to show excitement in positive things but control should be exercised in negative things.

One should avoid talking over distractions. It is advisable to seek the undivided attention of the listener. If there are other activities going on or if the emotions of the listener are being affected, then your message may be distorted.

Finally, do not be afraid to talk. The only means of real relationship is communication. The feelings of one person

for another will be shared. It may be done in meta communication, non-verbal communication, or verbal communication, but it will be done. We best control the situation by effective talking and trained listening.



## THE VIBRANT CHRISTIAN WOMAN

B. LAVERNE (MRS. CARL) WADE

LAVERNE (MRS. CARL W.) WADE attended Freed-Hardeman College and graduated from Memphis State University. She has taught Sunday school classes for eighteen years and has written articles for the *Christian Woman*, the *World Evangelist* and *Firm Foundation*. She is presently serving as a staff writer for *Victory*. Certified to teach courses in "Fascinating Womanhood" and "The Christian Woman," she is also active in pro-family and right-to-life organizations.

What can I share with my Christian sisters that will help them to be all that God wants them to be—to help them grow and develop toward spiritual maturity with a new perspective and in common sense practicality?

Most of you have been bombarded by the world's viewpoints about being "today's woman," about life goals, about marriage (or the lack of it), and about rearing children. But I believe there is a uniquely Christian approach to womanhood; being a woman, a wife, and a mother. Bible guidelines—relevant, ready, reliable for all time—are still geared to your needs today. So I hope to encourage you through these lessons to begin working toward being the very best servant of God you can be in all areas of your life—the vibrant Christian woman!

### THE VIBRANT CHRISTIAN WOMAN AS A PERSON OF WORTH AND VALUE

We are going to share something that will help you to be a more effective Christian as a woman, a wife and a mother. We're going to talk about you as a vibrant Christian woman, a person of worth and value. You are so special. You are special to God! You are special to your family, and I want you to feel a bit of that specialness and your uniqueness in being a woman as we meet together this week. *"We give*

*thee but thine own"* directs our thinking in giving back to God the very best we can be. Let's begin by looking to ourselves as God's woman.

Life is an exciting experience to be lived and used to develop every potential, capability, and dream that you can envision. God didn't make "no junk" when he made us. He made woman for a very exciting role. Have you read Philippians 4:13 lately? "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" should give us a positive image of ourselves and our capabilities. You can eliminate the thinking of a loser and develop the winner's traits that will lead you in successful Christian living.

You are created in the image of God. You are the daughter of a King. Christ died that you might live eternally (John 3:16). And, today is the first day of the rest of your life!

We should begin every morning with, "This is the day that the Lord has made. I will rejoice and be glad in it." Read motivational books to get you started. Listen to workshop tapes as you get dressed. Use the beginnings of the day for your own personal devotion time to read the Bible and pray.

Develop a positive mental outlook. Our mind believes what we tell it. You choose to be happy or gloomy. Our attitude is what makes the difference. How we habitually think will eventually determine our outlook on life. We all have problems in our lives; it's how we react to them that makes the difference in our lives.

You don't enjoy being around people who are frowning, sad, gloomy, grumpy! And, a joyful attitude is a command from God. 1 Thessalonians 5:16 tells us, "Rejoice evermore." "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice," says Philippians 4:4. We must try to stay cheerful ourselves and help others by our happy attitude. If our lives are devoted to God and His service, surely our lives will reflect our peace and joy. Guard against negative thinking becoming the dominant factor in your life.



Christians should have confidence. We are made in God's image (Gen. 1), ransomed of God (1 Peter 1:19), and we are the light of the world and the salt of the earth (Matt. 5). We are designed by the Creator for success. Putting that principle into action requires some consideration of the future and what you want to do with your life.

It surprises me to find that only 3% of American people have clearly defined goals for their lives, when our goals and our values are the very foundation for our life. Whatever we do each day should be building toward an ultimate goal.

To set goals for your life, think first of your spiritual values. What does God want me to do right now at this particular time of my life? Then, think about your family and your personal interests in deciding what you really want to do.

Set realistic goals in relationship to where you are right now. Priorities determine what we do, not necessarily the knowledge of what we should do. I know factually that I need to study my Bible more. I need to spend more time in prayer, I need to diet and exercise, but just the knowledge that I need to do these things won't make me do them. I have to have the desire to make my life goal-oriented. I have to have the desire to plan and change my life. Isn't it great that we have a power source greater than ourselves? 1 John 4:4 assures us, "He that is in me is greater than he that is in the world."

In setting your goals, remember to base your priorities on the priorities God has already given you. For instance, God has already given you priority in your sphere as a woman. You can't say, "Well, I'm not going to be a woman. I just don't want to be a woman." Because you are a woman, that foundation should be the basis of everything you do. If you're married, you have priorities as a wife. Your most important value in marriage is to make your man happy, to help him to be the very best man of God that he can be. And,

your priorities as a mother must be considered if you have children. You have the responsibility to finish that wonderful product God gave us—to mold and shape those little lives and help our children to become God-fearing, obedient adults in the kingdom of God. This is the basis of our study, our values and priorities as a woman.

#### THE VIBRANT CHRISTIAN WOMAN AS A GODLY WIFE

We wives are the light and warmth of our husband's lives. We're the sweetheart of his life. We're in oneness with our man. Genesis 2:18, 23 says it in this manner, "Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.'" And Adam said in turn, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she will be called Woman because she was taken from the man."

Marriage is not two separate lives lived under one roof. Marriage is meshing two lives into one united front. Your husband needs you in many ways. We'll elaborate on a few.

I. Your husband needs you as an understanding helpmeet. Love is the combination of sex and deep friendship. The trouble with a lot of love today is that it is mostly sex and very little friendship. Love is something we choose to do. That's why the Bible can boldly dictate, "Love your enemies." "Love your wives as your own bodies," directed to the husbands. And, to the older women, "Train the younger women to love their husbands and to love their children."

II. Your husband needs you as a friend. With the confidence of your love and friendship, your husband can truly open up. He can trust you with all of his private, intimate thoughts and feelings. You can give him a sense of permanence and stability, and he knows that he can share his dreams with you without any fear of reproach. He won't get that total acceptance in any other social relationship.

III. As much as men might hate to admit it, they need you to be somewhat like a mother figure in their lives, not to dominate them but to maintain the ideal. They look to you as a symbol of all things good.



IV. Fourthly, your husband needs you as a pacesetter in the home. You generate the warmth and heart of the home. He needs you to cheer him on, to support him, to be a cheerful positive-thinker.

V. Fifthly, to cover all the ways that your husband needs you, we must include the physical. You are sufficient unto all his needs. God designed and created male and female, and Genesis 1:31 points out, "And God saw everything he had made and behold it was very good."

Read Proverbs 31 again when you get home to see the timeless praise of a good wife. When women are groping today to find, "Who am I? What's my goal in life? Where am I going?" this pattern is still the ideal.

Let your husband know in words and actions that you're with him and his plans and dreams. Let him know that wherever he is, is home and you can be happy as long as you're together. Just ask yourself, "Am I truly surrendered to God and submitted to my husband?" Respect your husband as the leader and decision-maker of your family. As 1 Corinthians 11:3 advocates, the husband as the leader and the wife as follower. When you think about it, what is the basis for submission to your husband? Your submission to the Lord and your love for him! You don't submit to your husband because he's always the most spiritual or sweetest or kindest man—you submit to him because you love the Lord. What you do, you do "unto the Lord" (Eph. 5:22).

Submission is also a willful act. No husband can force his wife into submission. He might coerce her into obedience—grudgingly and of necessity—but joyful submission is a voluntary act of your will. Our submission to our husband shows our submission to and confidence in God's plan for our lives.

Make a commitment to your husband and your marriage. Start your own campaign against the rising rate of divorce. A great marriage for you can begin today with this commitment. When you put yourself in the correct line of authority,

you'll come to know the true joy and happiness God meant for you to have as a cherished wife.

Don't try to change your husband but share his interests and ideas. Praise him for his accomplishments. Live within his income, whatever it might be right now. Listen and look for ways to compliment your husband. Be flexible and cater to his likes and dislikes. Listen to him and look him in the eye when he's talking. Treat your husband like you would a special guest in your home. Be attentive and recognize his needs and be ready to fill them.

#### THE VIBRANT CHRISTIAN WOMAN AS A PATIENT MOTHER

Thank God for mothers! Isn't it wonderful that God gave us the creativity to conceive and nurture in our womb and bring forth at the appointed time another human being? That's one of the special blessings we have as women.

Motherhood is one of the staples always mentioned in things that are pure and lasting: Motherhood, America and homemade apple pie! No other person in the home has the importance of mother. God's word instructs children to "honor thy mother." God forever glorified motherhood in the fact that he let his only begotten Son's human body be formed in the womb of a woman—born as any other human baby, yet without a human father.

You are such an important person in your child's life. For each child you raise, you are the primary protector of his health, education, intellect, personality, character, and emotional stability. You serve as doctor, nurse, psychologist, teacher, cook, spiritual mentor, and sometimes policeman. You are with your child usually more than your husband is and you are the main giver of security and love. You are a worker together with God in raising a child to His honor and glory. You have the responsibility to give him a spiritual foundation, as expressed in Deuteronomy 6:6-9. Mothers are the most influential teachers of their children in the early years. We need to show our children that Christ is the Lord of our lives, that his words are the very air we breathe.



Your children need you to give them God's word. They need to see you reading the Bible, studying its pages and respecting its commands by our obedience. If they see us reading the daily newspaper with more enthusiasm and more regularity than we read our Bible, then it's useless to tell them that the Bible is the greatest book in the world. If Christianity is not made real in the family, it'll be difficult to make it real anywhere. We must use the home as our basic foundation for Christian teaching.

Our children need us to give them good Christian literature suited for their age level, and each of our children should have a Bible of his very own. Provide good commentaries and history books on the Bible.

Each of us should provide a time of family devotion each day in our homes. Plan a time when the whole family can be together to share a portion of God's word and pray and sing.

Give your children some of your time each day sharing their interests. Build their self-esteem with praise and appreciation. Work at letting your children know that they are important to you and that they are of much value and worth to God. Choose to make your family relationship rich and rewarding. Love your children and tell each one daily, "I love you." A mother's greatest gift to her children is the example of a Godly Christian mother. Proverbs 31:28, "Her children rise up and call her blessed."

Discipline your children in love and fairness. Bring them up in the "discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4).

Stand up for the beauty of motherhood. In an age of liberation, let it be known that your greatest calling is in service and devotion to your family. Give your children to God as the women of the Bible did. Teach your daughters to be feminine, your sons to be masculine men. Let the world see in you that a woman is greatest when she is stooping to understand a little child, that a woman is freest when she is

in the bondage of love to make others happy. Let each day be a little lifetime of joy and sharing with your children.

#### SUMMARY

Set your priorities and goals in accordance with your values and pray for God's guidance. Choose permanent values in your life and trust God that they will turn out right. Romans 8:28 assures us, ". . . all things work together for good to them that love God. . . ." You are largely responsible for the quality of life that you live. Decide today to become the very best servant of God that you can be as a woman, a Godly wife and a patient mother. And, yes, you *will* be THE VIBRANT CHRISTIAN WOMAN.



## MUST THE YOUNG DIE TOO?

JOHN W. DALE

JOHN W. DALE began preaching in 1964. A graduate of Freed-Hardeman, he received his B.A. in Bible from Oklahoma Christian College. He earned the M.S. in Communications from Murray State University in Murray, Ky. and is presently working toward the completion of the Ed.D. in Human Development and Counseling. Dale preaches for the Seventh and Poplar Church of Christ in Murray.

### INTRODUCTION

*"For we must needs die, and are as water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person; yet doth he devise means, that his banished not be expelled from him." (2 Sam. 14:14)*

*"For I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living." (Job 30:23)*

*"For he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others." (Ps. 49:10)*

*"There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war; neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it." (Eccl. 8:8)*

*"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." (Rom. 5:12)*

*"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." (Heb. 9:27)*

Yes, death is universal. It is no respecter of persons. The rich as well as the poor, the black and the white, the saved and the lost—all must "go the way of all the earth" (Josh. 23:14). But what about the young? Must the young die too?

### MUST THE YOUNG DIE TOO?

It needs to be clearly understood and never forgotten that anyone, at any age, can die at any time. While it isn't good to spend our time worrying about it, it is well worth the time and effort it takes to prepare to live successfully, thereby

staying prepared to die successfully at any time.

While the subject of physical death needs to be emphasized and warned about, for the young as well as the old, this message is primarily centered around another death that the young can experience. It is a death that must take place in the separating from the love and practice of sin, once accountability to sin has been established.

Now let's define our terms. *Die* means "to separate or be destitute of life." *Death* involves the "separation" of something from something else. James 2:26 tells us that "as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." As the body having been *separated* from the spirit is dead, so faith that has been *separated* from works is also dead. *Death* also includes "destroying the strength of, depriving of power." (Thayer, pp. 282-283 and 423-424; Vine, pps. 273-277). The *young* is a bit more difficult to define. It implies *youth*, *youthful age*, which brings up the possibility, even the temptation of lust. Therefore the *young* under consideration are accountable (able to lust) and are old enough to be "examples of the believers" (I Tim. 4:12; 2 Tim. 2:22). Now, must the young die too?

With our narrowing of the discussion to "death to sin" range of consideration, young people must be taught the necessity of repentance (dying to the love of sin), reformation (dying to the practice of sin) and total conversion, including baptism (dying to the guilt of sin). When this takes place, one may be said to be "dead," and freed from sin (Rom. 6:7). We are "dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:11).

When does the time of accountability come? O, how difficult to determine exactly when it comes! A young person isn't regarded as "old" enough to drive legally, get married (without parental permission) or vote, but many feel that he is responsible for his actions before God—accountable. There'll be no arbitrary age set (such as the Jewish tradition of a boy becoming a man at age 12, or the argument



based on the Israelites' "carcasses falling in the wilderness" of all who were 20 years old or older (Num. 14:26-33) or any other age that men have devised). The gospel is to be preached to the "all" (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15) which must coincide with the "all" who have sinned (Rom. 3:23).

What happens to one who dies (physically) during the time that he is becoming accountable, during the transition period? We can spend our lives dealing with 'what if' questions for which we have no "thus saith the Lord" answers, so rather than spend time on that, let us simply say that our confidence is in the Lord, who does all things well. He has never mistreated anyone yet, and he never will. So let's concentrate on what he *has* revealed, and on getting his message to all who can learn. Ultimate judgment doesn't rest with us fellow strugglers.

When the young come to the time that they realize their responsibility before God, they must be taught and encouraged to obey the gospel. They must be encouraged to break with sin (die, if you please) and give over completely to the Lordship of the Christ. Here is the startling and sobering reality in all this: If 'our' young people do not die to sin while they're young, there is a good chance that they never will. Some say that they are going ahead and 'sow their wild oats' (no doubt, praying for crop failure) and then when things are more settled ("when I have a convenient season") emphasis can be given to spiritual things. How tragic and needless is such reasoning! What guarantee is there that such a one will still be alive when the oats are sown? What guarantee is there that he will be serious enough about that commitment when the time does come? When 'our' young people grow up in our homes and in our Bible School programs and do not become Christians, how many of them ever become Christians? Though I have no statistics available, experience tells me that the number is small.

While those of us who are older should teach the younger, we should pray for them and encourage them in every way

possible, we should also set the example for them to follow. If they saw that being a Christian was important to us, that we found peace in living for Jesus, then they would be more likely to give it a fairer hearing in their own consciences. The song says, "O try the life which Christians live; be saved, O, tonight." Are we setting the proper example in the presence of our precious young people that would cause them to want to take seriously this thing of 'religion,' of 'Christian living'?

The young must see the urgency of dying to sin while there is time and opportunity. Little by innocent little the heart may be hardening (Heb. 3:13; 1 Tim. 4:2) while God implores us to remember him in our youth (Eccl. 12:1). One of my favorite songs encourages us to:

*Give of your best to the Master; Give of the strength  
of your youth;*

*Throw your soul's fresh glowing ardor, Into the battle  
for truth.*

*Jesus has set the example; Dauntless was He, young  
and brave;*

*Give Him your loyal devotion, Give Him the best that  
you have....*

*Give of your best to the Master; Give of the strength  
of your youth;*

*Clad in salvation's full armor, Join in the battle for  
truth.*

What is it going to take to convert the young? May God help us to remember that His power to save anyone, young or old, is *the gospel* (Rom. 1:16). All the gimmicks in the world will never save one soul. If we do everything on earth for our young people, except point them toward the Savior, what really have we accomplished? If we could come to respect them as intelligent, thinking beings, then perhaps we would quit insulting them by providing little more than a "poor man's country club" atmosphere for them and start challenging them to deeper and richer studies. While I am *for* edification activities outside the regular schedule of services, I am *not for* abandonment of strong spiritual em-



phasis and stimulus that can and should go hand in hand with these other things.

*How shall the young secure their hearts, And guard their lives from sin? Thy word the choicest rules imparts To keep the conscience clean.*

*'Tis like the sun, a heavenly light, That guides us all the day; And, throw' the dangers of the night, A lamp to lead our way.*

*Thy word is everlasting truth; How pure is every page! That holy book shall guide our youth, And well support our age.*

When the young do not die to sin, what results? They may live in that condition for a period of time, they may die physically at any time and then what? There is spiritual death. Must the young die too? Yes, even spiritually, even eternal separation from God and all the redeemed. A young man was brought into the emergency room. He was badly injured, suffering intense pain, but as he was wheeled into surgery, never to come out alive, his last pleading screams were, "I want to be baptized; I want to become a Christian." The nightmare of that true account should prod all of us to encourage every accountable person on earth, of any age, to turn to Jesus for forgiveness of sin and the abundant life in the here and now and, in the world to come, life eternal.

Must the young die too? Yes, the accountable young person must become a Christian by *dying to the love of sin* (repentance); *Dying to the practice of sin* (reformation); and *dying to the guilt of sin* (as God forgives sin through the blood of Christ, shed in his death) (Rom. 6:1-7).

Must the young die too? Yes, physically speaking, the young can die at any time. Preparation needs to be made (not just to die, but to live, really live (and when that preparation is made correctly, he stays ready to die.

On Mount Calvary, three deaths are taking place. On one cross, a man was *dying in sin* ("If you are the Christ, save yourself and us."); the thief on another cross was *dying to*

*sin* ("Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom."); but the man on the other cross was *dying for sin* (Luke 23:39-43). If we ever derive the benefits of Jesus' death for our sins, we must die too (Matt. 16:24). We must be buried into his death (Rom. 6:3, 4). We must continually kill the evils of the flesh (Rom. 6:6-14). If we do not, we will die another kind of death—spiritual death, eternal separation from Him who died to save us (Rom. 6:23). May God help us to accept his grace.



## A STEWARD MUST BE FAITHFUL

HAROLD HAZELIP

The concept of stewardship may owe more to contemporary usage of the term than to a well-founded biblical base. One way to approach the wider implications of biblical teaching on stewardship is through a word study.

The common word for steward, *oikonomos*, originally meant "house" or "place of residence." Since the Greek and Hebrew languages have no word for "family," they use the terms for "house" (*oikos*, *beth*). Consequently, *oikos* includes domestic fellowship, and in the broader sense, the family, including children, servants and perhaps even families of guests.

Another important related term is *oikodome*, meaning the act of building or "edification" (Mark 13:1; 1 Cor. 14:12). In the New Testament the congregation is a "house of God," and this house is to be built up (1 Cor. 3:10-15; Eph. 4:16).

*Oikonomia*, the word for stewardship, commonly has to do with the management of a household or an estate (Luke 16:2f). The word is not always used in the same way in the New Testament, and its meaning is not easily captured in a single concept in other languages. This is brought out in an interesting way by comparison of various Bible translations. New Testament usage includes Paul's use of the term in connection with his apostolic office (1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 3:2; Col. 1:25), and a sweeping use of the term to refer to God's plan for man's salvation (Eph. 1:10).

*Oikonomos* is used in extra-biblical Greek to designate one who administers the affairs of a house. The use of the term broadened to include a variety of concepts, including a religious connotation when used by pious Greeks to refer to persons entrusted with responsibilities in connection with pagan cultic practices.

## THE STEWARD IN THE BIBLE

The biblical concept of stewardship begins with God's grace. God thinks so highly of his human creature that he trusts him to administer that which belongs to God. The stewards' ministry rests upon confidence. The steward has unique authority as an authorized representative. He works independently on behalf of his master and yet he is completely dependent upon his master. He will one day give an account of the way he discharged his stewardship, an account which will involve both dependence and independence.

Eliezer had both a unique relationship and a special responsibility as Abraham's steward (Gen. 15:2). He was to select a wife for Isaac (Gen. 24:3, 4). He sought God's help in making this choice (Gen. 24:12f) and later gave an accounting of his mission with a good conscience (Gen. 24:62-67). During the fulfillment of his mission, he was conscious of the stewardship of time (Gen. 24:33, 55).

In the same manner Joseph was Potiphar's, and later Pharaoh's, authorized representative (Gen. 39:4; 41:39f). Joseph resisted the temptation to use his position for selfish purposes (Gen. 39:8, 9). He even acted as steward in prison, being put "in charge of all those held" and "made responsible for all that was done there" (Gen. 39:22). Later, with Pharaoh on his throne, Joseph exercised stewardship in governing the entire land.

The book of Hebrews looks back upon Moses as one who was "faithful in all God's house" (Heb. 3:1f).

*Oikonomia*, the common word for stewardship, is actually quite rare in scripture, appearing only nine times in the New Testament and only twice in the Old Testament. The two references in the Old Testament are to Shebna, an unfaithful steward in the king's house who was replaced by the good steward Eliakim (Isa. 22:15-24). The context indicates that the good steward is a "faith" to those for whom he is responsible (v. 21).

In the New Testament the steward appears first in two



of Jesus' parables. Luke alternatively uses the words "steward" and "servant" as he describes the true steward as a person of faithfulness and wisdom who looks toward a day of reckoning (Luke 12:42-48). This indicates that the steward ordinarily was a slave. The second parable tells of an unjust steward who was deprived of his responsibility (Luke 16:1-9).

Other New Testament uses include Paul's reference to the apostles as "stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. 4:1, NASB). Paul used the word steward for the person who looked after a minor's property until he came of age (Gal. 4:2). He describes the overseer as a steward who is to be faithful in his Christian life (Titus 1:7). Peter depicts every Christian as a steward of the grace of God (1 Peter 4:10).

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GOOD STEWARD

Paul virtually identifies good stewardship with faithfulness (1 Cor. 4:1, 2). His own calling rested upon the fact that he had been "considered to be faithful" (1 Tim. 1:12; 1 Cor. 7:25). He could, like the characters in Jesus' parables, be trusted to represent his Lord during his Lord's physical absence (Matt. 25:14; Luke 12:43).

This confidence God has in us encourages us to be responsible. Everything we have to work with comes from our Lord. We are stewards, using whatever gifts we have "received to serve others faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms" (1 Peter 4:10). There may be a temptation to look upon what we have as our own, to do with as we please (Luke 12:45). We are charged with guarding "what has been entrusted" to our care (1 Tim. 6:20). The steward who discharges his mission and is found to be "good and faithful" when he gives account of himself will share his Lord's joy (Matt. 25:21, 23).

Faithfulness is to characterize our relationship to our Lord. With regard to our responsibility, wisdom is required of stewards. Instructions are not always fully detailed. Life

is constantly changing. The steward's responsibility is to give the members of the household "their food allowance at the proper time" (Luke 12:42). If the master delays his return, unexpected situations may demand a wise response within the framework of the master's expressed will.

This is the point of Jesus' parable of the "shrewd manager" (Luke 16:1-9). His master commended him, not because he was dishonest, but because he had "acted shrewdly" (v. 8). An unexpected situation had occurred and he had asked himself, "What shall I do now?" He quickly decided and took advantage of his fleeting opportunities. Jesus applied this parable to his disciples because he did not find this kind of shrewdness among "the people of light" (v. 8). The steward is to be wise in searching for opportunities and acting upon them.

The parables of the talents and of the pounds (Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27) indicate that our gifts are his and not ours. He distributes responsibilities in accordance with our abilities and we are expected to work with wisdom.

A third characteristic of the steward is his obligation to give an account. What he works with is actually "someone else's property" (Luke 16:12). Jesus emphasized that stewardship involves being ready to give an account when we are summoned by surprise (Matt. 24:36f). We and our work are ultimately judged by the Lord (1 Cor. 4:1f). The accounting may catch us by surprise (Matt. 25:37), but it will never involve the impossible (Mark 14:8).

#### IMPLICATIONS OF "FAITHFUL"

When one is a steward (*oikonomos*), he is part of God's congregation (*oikos*). As a living stone in God's house, he has an inter-relationship to other stones in the wall, each in its own place (Eph. 2:19-22). His attitude is described with the word edification (*oikodome*). He places himself under God's plan of salvation for the world (*oikonomia*, Eph. 1:10). His position is based upon God's trust in him. He is expected to be wise enough to recognize and deal with op-



portunities, never forgetting that one day he will give an account.

This deep relationship involves a commitment to the Master's purpose for our lives. We need direction and leadership which is supplied by this purpose. Hibernation and withdrawal cannot satisfy. We are called upon to "follow" him (Luke 9:57-62; John 21:18-22). He has a purpose to achieve in history and beyond history. He chooses to include us in this purpose.

Our faithfulness to him means that we will accept his guidance and direction as we walk into the future. As one reads the gospels he may be startled by how little time Jesus spent allowing people to dwell on their past mistakes. Nicodemus was a teacher of Pharisaic legalism. Jesus did not ask him how he became a Pharisee; he simply told him that he must be "born again." He did not explore the circumstances which led the woman to be taken in adultery; he quickly said, "Go now and leave your life of sin." In his story of the prodigal, a paradigm of how God deals with people who have failed, the son is not allowed to recite his memorized speech. He is stopped in the middle with an offer of forgiveness.

Our failures are on our minds and we become burdened. Jesus showed us that God is anxious to forgive us and help us remold our lives for the future.

Faithfulness to our charge implies that we will imitate Jesus' faithfulness. Christ's faithfulness as a steward is emphasized in Hebrews 3:1-6. He has given us a standard by which to test our living. One of our problems is that we live in vastly different circumstances from those of his life. He lived in a largely rural society, did not marry, itinerated as a preacher. Our society is complex, we have family responsibilities and concerns about property. This may make it difficult to decide the course of action he would take, but we cannot question the fundamental truth that we are here

to follow Jesus. Our purpose is to apply the test: Is this action in the direction Jesus would go?

Our stewardship is not a burden. True freedom consists in serving Jesus Christ and being made captive by his love. Radhakrishnan, the Hindu scholar, once illustrated the nature of service by a violin string. Left on its own, unattached, a simple piece of wire, its ends are free to be moved in any direction. Yet it is not free to serve its true function. Only when its ends are bound to a violin is it free to play. And only when our lives are brought into harmony with God's plan are we free to experience true joy and fulfillment.



## THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST

DAVID PAUL WALLACE

DAVID PAUL WALLACE, who has served as a minister to the Central Church of Christ in Cleburne, Texas since 1972, earned his B.A. from Abilene Christian University. He has been Central's pulpit minister since the completion of his M.A. at Texas Christian University in 1976.

Most who have enjoyed the privilege of attending a Christian college like Harding look back with great fondness to the experience of daily chapel. Those attending Abilene Christian will recall a special memory associated with the first chapel each fall in which the following words are traditionally sung to begin a new school year.

All hail the power of Jesus name  
Let angels prostrate fall  
Bring forth the royal diadem  
And crown him Lord of all!

How appropriate to begin any Christian endeavor by expressing the confident conviction that "Jesus Is Lord." In essence, the Christian faith since the beginning has been expressed by this phrase. Convinced of the Lordship of Christ, the hearts and souls of the first disciples were filled with such absolute certainty that they boldly refused to be intimidated by any foe. Under their banner of faith, the assurance that Jesus was Lord, New Testament Christians moved mountains and the world has never again been the same. Perhaps the greatest need in each of our lives spiritually is that we come to a greater affirmation of the Lordship of Christ. If we could but approach the depth of perception and life response expressed by the first disciples when they proclaimed Jesus as Lord, a great spiritual renewal would result.

In New Testament times, the word "Lord" was commonly used in several ways. For example, in its secular usage, the

word was often used to express courtesy as one today would use the word "sir" when addressing a respected person. "Lord" was also used as an affectionate and loving term similar to our word, "dear."

Most often, however, the term "Lord" designated someone who possessed unquestioned authority. It was descriptive of the leadership of the head of a household or the authority of a master over his slave. "Lord" was used to describe the undisputed owner of property as today we might refer to as "landlord." A "lord" was a ruler who had authority to make decisions such as a commander in the military or a judge with legal power. The scholars of New Testament words agree that no term is so clothed with authority as is the word, "Lord."

What did the disciples mean, then, when they spoke of Jesus as Lord? While they must have used the term as a demonstration of their courtesy and respect, their understanding of Jesus as Lord had far greater significance. And no doubt they also displayed their deep affection for Jesus by calling him "Lord." But the first disciples expressed much more than just emotional warmth when they were called to pronounce Jesus as Lord. They called him Lord because they had discovered that He, as the Son of God, possessed absolute and undisputed authority! As they walked with the Master, the first followers were gradually convinced that their leader had power to assert unconditional sovereignty in any realm! He was the Lord of all!

Two thousand years later, the Lordship of Christ is still a personal discovery of undeniable truth demanding a radical response in life.

### PERSONAL DISCOVERY

To live in the continuing light of the Lordship of Christ must have been an unceasing adventure for the first disciples. Each day must have been filled with new expressions of his Lordship.

Early in Jesus' ministry, the followers began to realize



that Jesus possessed unlimited authority over the elements of nature. Astonished, they marveled at his first miracle as He turned water into wine thus "revealing his glory and the disciples believed in him" (John 2:11). Soon they discovered that no substance of nature was too complex for the Lord's authority. Once about to perish at sea in a raging storm, the disciples heard Jesus command, "Peace, be still!" Immediately the tempest submitted. So astounded were the disciples, they asked, "Who is this that even the winds and the seas obey him?" (Matt. 8:27).

They were awed as the compassionate Jesus demonstrated his power of control over all sorts of human maladies. Even the dreaded incurables yielded to the sovereign and healing authorities of Jesus. "He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak" (Mark 7:37). Witnessing these miracles, the disciples forged a chain of evidence, link by link, around the truth of Christ's Lordship. Every new expression of his authority must have been like coming to discover Jesus all over again. Even death was submissive to his command as on three occasions his voice commanded life from the lifeless.

If his power over the elements of natural existence filled the disciples with wonder, their discovery was made even more remarkable as they listened to words of Jesus. "He taught them as one having authority" (Matt. 7:29). The compelling authority of the Master Teacher made leaving him impossible. Peter concluded, "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 7:68). Those stumbling in darkness and wandering without direction were given the sovereign point of all reference as Jesus declared, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

When the powers of Jesus were challenged, he responded with even more awesome authority. "But Jesus," the Pharisees once stammered, "You are breaking the Sabbath!" Jesus replied, "The Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath"

(Mark 2:28). Alarmed, the Jews once objected that Jesus seemed to claim greatness beyond Abraham. "Abraham rejoiced to see my day," Jesus replied. "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:56, 58).

Every day the disciples walked with Jesus was a new day of discovery into the dimensions of his Lordship. They began calling Jesus "Lord," not out of mere courtesy or affection, but because they came to regard him as one who had supreme authority.

In complete control, Jesus soundly defeated every challenge to his unique power. He was not even overcome by the human scorn, hatred, and jealousy of others. He proved mighty in battle against Satan's most subtle deceptions. He was "tempted in all points, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). He withstood every attack and the disciples amazingly reported that he "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (1 Peter 2:22).

But then came the greatest test of all as Satan was to confront Jesus with the ultimate challenge to his Lordship. Jesus surrendered His life on the cross. The disciples, who had previously witnessed the authority of Jesus in every experience, for a moment may have considered their leader's authority to be limited after all. On a Roman cross, perhaps even Jesus was submissive to a greater power.

They observed distantly as Jesus was crucified. They stood by campfires of denial and spent endless moments in deep reflection. Had it all been just a dream? Their hopes, which had been gradually built on undefeated authority, seemed to vanish as the stone was rolled into place with a somber note of finality.

This last enemy held its prey for three days. Then, on the glorious resurrection morning, Jesus broke the seal of the tomb and walked out in the power of God with the keys of death. Jesus had thus demonstrated his complete sovereignty even over the fearful and domineering powers of death. This discovery, when learned by the disciples, certified



Christ's Lordship beyond doubt. It was the resurrection that gave the term, "Lord," its final authoritative dimension when applied to Jesus.

Previously confused and scattered by the cross, now the disciples overflowed with the absolute conviction that Jesus was alive and was Lord of all! Of the final words Jesus spoke before ascending, perhaps none were received with more unreserved acceptance than these. "All authority in heaven and in earth has been given unto me" (Matt. 28:18).

#### AN UNALTERABLE TRUTH

Jesus is Lord! This truth still stands with awesome power and rings with unconditional authority. The Lordship has been challenged often, but defeated never. There is but "one Lord" (Eph. 4:5) who is "Lord of lords and King of kings" (Rev. 17:14). Nothing is more certain amid the delicate uncertainties of human existence than the truth that Jesus is Lord.

In bold conviction, Jerusalem was filled with this undeniable truth on Pentecost. "This Jesus whom you crucified is now both Lord and Christ!" (Acts 2:36). The New Testament church turned the world upside down with this message preaching "not ourselves, but Jesus as Lord" (2 Cor. 4:5). Yes, he is called Christ because he is the Messiah, promised of old. Yes, he is called Jesus, because he is the Savior, the Son of God. Yet, it is the conclusive declaration that Jesus is Lord that in "all things given him preeminence" (Col. 1:18). "Therefore God has exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of things in heaven, and things in earth and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:10-12).

Jesus is divine and in this highest sense, he is Lord. Men may attempt to deny this truth, shake their fist in rebellion, and offer fanciful theories about Jesus, but the truth of his Lordship remains unaltered. There are no mistaken identi-

ties here. He is neither imaginary, legendary, or mythical. He is Lord! Anyone even remotely honest with the gospel accounts will arrive at the same discovery those first disciples affirmed, "Jesus is Lord!"

In this life, if one chooses to deny the Lordship of Christ, he does not escape truth, but only postpones acknowledgment of that truth. One day all will concede that Jesus is Lord. The righteous will joyfully join in that angelic chorus ascribing praise to the Lord, "Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing" (Rev. 5:12). Those who failed to acknowledge Christ's Lordship will likewise on the final day confess the undeniable truth. The atheist will sadly confess with eternal regret, "Jesus is Lord." Satan will ultimately bow in final defeat and admit it, "Jesus is Lord." Every tongue will confess the undeniable truth and the scoffer will spend an eternity of sad regret as he ruefully admits the Lordship of Christ. The irreversible truth can be acknowledged now in triumph or later in regret—but the truth will be acknowledged by all.

#### RESPONSE DEMANDED

The unalterable truth that Jesus is Lord is a personal discovery of such magnitude that no part of one's life can again ever be the same. By its very nature, the positive affirmation of Christ's Lordship demands a dramatic response in the life of the believer. Acceptance of this truth must include more than the mind alone. The will is involved. Understanding that Jesus is Lord is certainly a valid intellectual conclusion, but the discovery is worthless unless it prompts the unqualified submission of the will.

Jesus said, "You call me Master and Lord, ye say well, for so I am" (John 13:13). Determining with the mind that Jesus has all power and authority is a warranted verdict, but the real test of one's confession comes with the surrender of the will. Since he has all authority, then we must yield to him the control of our lives. We can give nothing less than



our unreserved commitment in view of his Lordship. Jesus denounced the followers who would merely call him, "Lord, Lord," but refuse to do the things he commands (Luke 6:46). Since he is Lord as well as Savior, then we must allow him as our highest authority to control every aspect of life.

How readily we rejoice at the consequences of Christ being our Savior, but the implications of Christ being our Lord are not always so promptly accepted.

Jesus presents the terms of following him in three ways as he urges his disciples to count the cost in Luke 14. First, in the heart, Jesus must have the place of unrivaled devotion (14:26). Many scriptures urge us to demonstrate responsible love to parents, wife, children, and even love our neighbors as ourselves. Yet, when one considers the supreme authority and sovereign master of his life, the disciple must love the Lord with an unsurpassed devotion, Jesus insists that anyone trying to compete with him as Lord must be despised because of the intense and unrivaled love given to him alone.

Secondly, Jesus indicates that one submitted to his Lordship must die to self (Luke 14:27). Before becoming a Christian, a man is considered dead to God because of sin (Eph. 2:1; Rom. 6:23) and alive to the world because of its dominion. Obeying the gospel of Christ reverses this process in the life of a disciple as he is alive to God and dead to sin. Affections are set on things above since one has died to sin (Col. 3:1-3). Being united with Christ in baptism gives one the redemptive benefits of his blood, but it also is that remarkable moment in one's life when he dies to self and submits to the Lord's control. Counting oneself dead to sin, no longer a slave to its cruel mastery, the disciple is alive to God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 6). Having borne the cross of self-denial, the Christian is crucified with Christ and now the Lord reigns supreme (Col. 2:20).

Thirdly, Jesus indicates in Luke 14:33 that his Lordship has its fullest reality in the disciple's life at the point of un-

qualified submission. There can be no unresolved loyalties to the one who forsakes all for Christ. One surrenders claim to all sacred territory he may consider his personal rights or possessions. When a person becomes a disciple, he forfeits the right to do what he pleases, say what he pleases, go where he wants, think what he wants. In unconditional surrender of the will, one must do what the Lord commands, say what the Lord instructs, go where the Master directs, and fix his mind on things above. One willingly and readily renounces all for the sake of Christ since he has discovered the truth that Christ has all authority! We belong to him as he both made us and purchased us. He is to have final authority and control over all of life.

The Lordship of Christ, then, becomes a living reality to us in its greatest sense when we love him with an unrivaled devotion, follow him with an unceasing denial of self, and surrender all in an unqualified submission. This concept of Lordship is the key around which the whole matter of triumph in a Christian's life revolves. The fullness of joy in living for Christ can never be known except under his Lordship. If, in the minds of Christians everywhere, we could grasp even a fraction of the glory of Christ as Lord, our individual lives would never be the same and the church would march in a manner that would read like the book of Acts.

Our collective challenges as God's people are pressing. Indeed, they would seem overwhelming except for one thing—Jesus is Lord! When confronting a world that is lost, we could have no good news and could have no power were it not that Jesus the Christ is Lord. When coping with the confusion of religious division, we could have no answers except that all authority be residing in Christ the Lord. Hence, we plead, "Hear ye him." When facing our greatest assignments, we could have no optimism except that we may confidently affirm that Jesus is Lord. And the reason for our greatest concerns would dissolve if we could profess the



Lordship of Christ in its fullest glory and power. The gates of hell shall not prevail against the church because it was purchased, founded, and built by the blood of him who is Lord! Who is the man who will cry, "defeat?"

Professing the Lordship of Christ is also the crucial key in the individual's life. It will guard against pride when men would lift us up and seek to give us a crown—there is but one who wears the crown. It will remove indecision from our lives in that Jesus becomes the Lord of every decision. In times of temptation, the way of escape is found because Jesus is Lord. In times of joy, the good things do not crowd out the best things when Jesus is Lord. In times of uncertainty and confusion, the One who is the same yesterday, today, and forever still reigns. When death threatens, we are assured, "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living" (Rom. 14:8-9).

Under the Lordship of Christ, the door of triumph swings open in this life and in eternity. In humble resolve, together we unify this melody in our hearts,

All hail the power of Jesus name!  
Let angels prostrate fall!  
Bring forth the royal diadem,  
And crown him Lord of all!

## ALL THAT YOU HAVE

NEALE T. PRYOR

NEALE T. PRYOR received his B.A. in English from Harding in 1956. He earned the M.A. and M.Th. in Bible from the Harding Graduate School in Religion and the Th.D. from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. In addition to his work as a professor of Bible at Harding University, he participates in youth rallies and lectureships and conducts approximately twenty gospel meetings each year.

The rich young ruler came to Jesus earnestly desiring to do any thing in order to have eternal life. Jesus first told him to keep the commandments, but that was too easy; he had done that from his youth up. But when Jesus told him to go and sell all he had and give to the poor, that was too much. What turned off this young man so quickly? It was just four words in Luke 18:22, "all that you have." If Jesus had said to give 50%, he likely would have done it. Perhaps even 75%. But Jesus made an impossible demand—100%. That was too much. He went away sorrowful.

We are often surprised with such a demand that Jesus made of the rich young ruler. We are glad that he didn't say that to us! Many people want to be saved like the thief on the cross, but no one wants to be saved like the rich young ruler. Who wants to give all that he has?

But that is exactly what Jesus demands of us. No less than 100%. Jesus did not even bat an eye as he told the man to give 100%. When the young man was leaving, Jesus did not run after him and say, "How about just 80%? Or maybe 50%?" He let him go; with Jesus it was "all or nothing."

It seems that Jesus tried to talk people into following him; then he tried to talk them out of it. He would turn around to them and say, "Are you sure you want to follow me?" Once a crowd was following him, and he told them that they would have to hate their own parents, wives, children, and



selves. He warned them that they should count the cost of following him; they might not be willing to pay the price. He concluded, "So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33, KJV).

In the parables of the hidden treasure and pearl of great price, Jesus pictured both men selling all that they had in order to buy the treasure or the pearl (Matt. 13:44-46). Obviously Jesus thought that it was a good investment. He was laying down one of the most fundamental lessons in discipleship—total commitment.

#### I. TOTAL COMMITMENT DEFINED

Around the foot of Mt. Sinai, the children heard the voice of God thunder at them from the top of the mountain. What was the first commandment they heard? "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:3). This was not only the first in the order of the ten; it was first in importance. One place where God refuses to be is in second place. Total commitment is giving God first place in our lives.

Jesus echoed the same sentiment in Matthew 6:33. After speaking of our concern for food, drink and clothing, Jesus said, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." The story is told of a manufacturer of pickles who had a jar of pickles on his desk with the following words taped to it: "God first. Others second. Pickles third." There is nothing wrong with pickles. But when pickles, or anything, become more important to a man than his God, a change must be made.

Under the old law God commanded that the first fruits be his. The firstborn were dedicated to him. The first city taking in Canaan, Jericho, was to be devoted to God. God will not be satisfied with leftovers. Mid McKnight told a touching story about his dog Frank. Mother always gave Frank leftovers, but Mid thought his dog deserved more than that. He would slip other food out of him. He even gave

him a piece of cake. He then concluded, "I treated my dog better than some of you treat the Lord." We spend our time and money as we wish; then if we have any left over, we give it to the Lord. When we have company, we don't usually serve them leftovers. We serve leftovers when just the family are present. How much of an insult it is to give God only the leftovers of our lives. God demands the first and best; he accepts no other.

Some feel that if they give God one day in the week, they have the other six to use for themselves. God demands seven days a week, no less. Some feel that if they have given to God the 10.00001% he demands (we must do better than the 10% of the Jews!) they are free to spend the rest as they wish. God demands 100% of our income. We give the government the taxes due and are free to spend the rest as we wish. This is not the case with God. We are accountable to him for 100% of our earnings. He and his work must be considered in every penny we earn and spend.

All of our excuses generally boil down to the simple fact that we are more interested in other things. Jesus told the parable of the great supper. When the invitation was sent out, "they all with one consent began to make excuse" (Luke 14:18). One had to see about his oxen; another had to see about his field; another had married a wife and could not come. The reason was the same with all three—other things were more important to them than the invitation.

The many excuses the preachers and elders hear today generally can be boiled down to one simple fact, other things besides God are more important in people's lives. A man asked his neighbor if he could borrow his saw. He was told No because he was having soup for lunch. The first man asked, "What does your having soup for lunch have to do with my borrowing your saw?" The other replied, "I don't want you to borrow my saw, and one excuse is as good as another." When someone does not wish to put God first in his life, one excuse is as good as another.



One man offered to follow Jesus, but first he wanted to bury his father. Jesus told him, "Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:60). Another would follow Jesus, but he wanted to bid farewell to those at his father's house. Jesus replied, "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). When one decides to follow Jesus, he burns his bridges behind him; he gives him all that he has; he puts him first in his life.

The story is told of some people on a mission field who roped off an area and brought gifts for the construction of a new church building and placed them within the roped off area. One man was too poor to give anything. As he stood weeping because he had nothing to give, he crawled over the rope, stood in the ring, and said, "I give myself!" That is total commitment. God does not want your gifts; he wants you! "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1). That is total commitment defined.

## II. TOTAL COMMITMENT DEMONSTRATED

The presence of, or the lack of, total commitment is obvious in people's lives. In many ways, consciously or unconsciously, men and women demonstrate their commitment to God, or their lack of it. Many of the problems dealt with in the church are symptoms, not causes. They are a symptom of a far deeper spiritual illness, lack of commitment. Commitment to God will cure these ills.

### A. *Worldliness in the church*

Often we hear people say, "I know that it would be better if I didn't do it, but I don't think a fellow will go to hell for it, do you?" It is possible that one will not "go to hell" for that particular act, but such an attitude as this puts one in serious jeopardy.

Our task on earth is not to see how close to sin we can get without being lost. Nor is it to see how many question-

able activities we can engage in and still be saved. What would you think of one who got as near as possible to a cliff and said, "See, I haven't fallen yet"? Or what if he hung one foot over and said the same thing? Our job is not to see how near the edge of the cliff we can get without falling. The committed Christian is seeing how far away from evil he can get, not how much evil he can flirt with and not be lost.

When we truly love God, we are trying to please him as much as possible. We are interested in abstaining from all appearances of evil. We desire those activities that make us stronger in the faith, not those that would weaken us. True commitment is demonstrated in our attitude toward the world and its allurements.

### B. *Giving of our means*

A lack of commitment to God is seen in the attitude: "How much do I have to give? Let me know so I can put it in, but not a penny more." Why do brethren not give generously? Because they are not committed. People give to that cause to which they are committed. A boy does not begrudge the money spent on his sweetheart; he loves her. Parents are glad to spend and be spent for their children; they love them.

When brethren love the Lord, they will give. Paul told of the generosity of the Macedonian brethren; they gave more than they were able. The "secret" of their liberality is seen in 2 Corinthians 8:5: "but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." People may give without loving, but they will never love without giving. Giving is an expression of love. Generosity is a true demonstration of total commitment. When we have the brethren totally committed to the Lord, we will not have to worry about the contribution.

### C. *Church attendance*

The truly committed Christian will attend church regularly. You won't hear him say, "Do I have to come back



tonight? Where is the scripture that says I have to be here on Wednesday night?" What would you girls think of a boy who took you home from a date and asked you as he said goodbye, "Have I got to come back again this week?" I wonder what God thinks of us who sing "O how I love Jesus" on Sunday morning and then ask, "Have I got to come back again tonight?"

When people are committed to God, they will attend faithfully; if they are not committed, no amount of pressure will keep them faithful for very long. Poor attendance is not a cause; it is a symptom, a symptom of a lack of commitment.

I am more worried about why the brethren are not present than I am about how many times they "punch the clock." We will not be saved because we logged so many hours inside a church building. But a spiritual low that permits a brother to absent himself from the assembly is a serious matter.

A little playmate of mine and I were out playing one Wednesday afternoon. I had to come in and get ready for church, but he didn't. I asked him if they had church on Wednesday nights where he attended. He replied, "Oh yes they have church, but it's only for those who are old and about to die and really want to go to heaven. We don't ever go." It was just for those who really wanted to go to heaven. He could easily tell that his parents didn't care to go all that much. He could see a lack of commitment demonstrated in his home.

### III. TOTAL COMMITMENT DEMANDED

Total commitment is demanded of every Christian for two reasons. First, the love of God demands it. One cannot reflect upon the love that God has shown to us without feeling some sense of indebtedness to him.

God never asked of us what he himself was not willing to do. He asked Abraham to offer Isaac, but very near that same hill he gave his only begotten Son. And there was no angel to save his life either. Jesus asked of the Rich Young

Ruler "all that you have." But Jesus gave all that he had. He shed every drop of blood; when there was no more blood, there came out water.

As we see in our mind's eye the sacrifice on the cross, our hearts should melt at such wondrous love. "Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, *my all!*"

Secondly, total commitment is demanded of us because of the consequences. Either the Bible is true, or it is not. If it is not true, then let us close up shop and forget the whole farce of Christianity. But if it is true, and I believe with all my heart that it is, it demands every fiber of my being. There is nothing more important in this whole world. The theme of my life must be, "What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul" (Matt. 16:26).

### CONCLUSION

The rich young ruler left Jesus thinking that he could not afford to meet the Lord's demand of all that he had. It was asking too much. But as we view it, he could not afford to pass up the opportunity. By his decision he kept his possessions for a few years, but he lost his soul.

Jesus' invitation to us is the same: "ALL THAT YOU HAVE." We not only can afford it, but cannot afford not to give him all that we have. With him it is all or nothing. With us it must be the same.



## EVOLUTION AND THE BIBLE

JOHN M. BANKS

JOHN M. BANKS, who has studied in Israel and Germany, holds the B.A. and M.A. degrees and has completed much course work toward the Ph.D. Having preached for 33 years, seven of which were entirely spent in evangelistic efforts, Banks has traveled through Hawaii, Europe, the Near and Middle East, New Zealand and Australia. For the past 25 years, he has actively participated in radio and television evangelism programs. He has appeared on "Know Your Bible" for seven of the eight years it has been aired.

### THE BREADTH OF THE CASE

The most dominant and pervasive thought pattern of the last one hundred years is a complex built upon or associated with evolution.

Geology, biology, psychology, anthropology, sociology, astronomy, genetics, and even chemistry are now fitted into the evolutionary schema.

In each of these fields good arguments can be made by those who believe in the biblical account of creation. But, to "cover the bases" one has to become familiar with a mountain of data and learn to counter many highly sophisticated arguments. Thus, too often the Christian would simply throw up his hands with something like, "I know you are wrong and the Bible is right, but I do not have the knowledge to argue the case successfully myself."

### SOME CRUX IDEAS

Formerly we Christians fumed about the increasing effect that the evolutionary teaching was having upon our children. We also tried to counter those "scientific" arguments which were often advanced by our evolutionary friends. It seemed that there were thousands of ways that the evolutionary dogma was being pressed, and as soon as one was met and answered three more would appear in its place. The confusion of it all, due in the main to its complexity, dis-

couraged all but the most determined believers in "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

Fortunately, during the last two decades, there has been a sort of distillation process going on. Two different factors have been at work to sculpture the mountain of data down into a few more understandable and manageable subdivisions.

First, as more and more evidence comes in, many of the standard arguments supporting evolution have been abandoned. "Man is a creature of the Pleistocene," which was dutifully learned by all the students in the first half of the 20th century, has been abandoned. "Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny," which was a favorite phrase of the evolutionary biologist for about 100 years, now evokes smiles upon the faces of biologists whenever it is mentioned. "Acquired characteristics as the change mechanism" is now almost completely abandoned. Likewise for scores of other arguments which formerly were used by evolutionists to "prove" their hypothesis.

Second, during the last two decades a number of "creationist" groups have come into being. Many of these have developed vigorous programs of countering evolutionary teaching at any and every place possible. In schools, churches, civic groups, universities, and the halls of legislative bodies they have pressed their case. In our universities alone, over 100 debates have been held between men of the highest levels of scholarship. The names of the various debaters read like a "Who's Who in Science." And, importantly, the audiences on the various university campuses were of sufficient sophistication in the different areas covered in the debates that the debaters were compelled to "stick to the evidence" rather than mounting some emotional appeal to avoid the evidence.

In debate after debate, the creationists developed some five impregnable positions—each of which strikes at the heart of evolution. If any of the five holds up, then the whole



structure of evolution is essentially demolished.

The purpose of this study is to explain these five major positions in such a way that the average believer in the Bible can not only understand them himself, but with confidence in their strength he will also be able to pass them on to others. These five points have all been "refined as by fire" and they will stand up under the most educated or the most forceful attack!

#### THE ORIGIN OF THE UNIVERSE

Actual origin is seldom discussed by an evolutionist. He is so schooled in cause and effect he can hardly think of an uncaused cause. He likes to start with hydrogen clouds, dust particles, helium nuclei, methane clouds, etc., etc. But, each of these is *existent* and the question of origin is *where did they come from?*

If one presses this argument long enough and hard enough, an evolutionist will be forced to one of three positions. (1) "I do not know," or (2) "It came from nothing," or (3) "It always was."

If he takes (1) then he loses all the "scientific" aura with which he likes to clothe his views. If he takes (2) he is hard pressed to the "science" of such an obviously unscientific statement. If he takes (3) he forfeits his basic cause and effect concept which is the foundation of scientific thought.

An effective way to press this position is by the following syllogism:

Major premise: Something is. (Impossible to negate.)

Minor premise: Something does not come from nothing.  
(Scientific.)

Conclusion: Therefore, something always was.  
(Inescapable.)

After having posed this syllogism, the main difference in the creationist and the evolutionist is that the creationist believes that the "Something which always was" was *intelligent*, and he calls him "God." The evolutionist, then must hold that the something which always was" was *non-intelli-*

*gent*—dumb, non-living, non-thinking, non-planning matter.

The creationist clearly has the stronger case.

This argument has been used with such force that more and more evolutionists are saying, "We have nothing to say about origin. It is outside our area of competence. This, within and of itself is a signal victory for believers in the Bible. They have been chided for nearly a hundred years for believing in an "uncaused cause," and now their chiders have been driven to the same position.

In a recent article by one of the world's leading astronomers, the plight of the evolutionist was graphically put into a story about scientists struggling for years through the mountains of ignorance climbing higher and higher toward the summit of truth. When the last peak is climbed and the last rock is scaled, the scientists are dumbfounded to find that the theologians have been sitting there for centuries before the scientists arrived!

#### THE ORIGIN OF LIFE

Departing from the questions regarding the origin of the universe, (and even granting, for the sake of argument, that it came into being any way the evolutionist says), we now turn to the origin of life on this planet. Given a universe does not necessarily mean given a living thing. There may be greater distance between non-living and living matter than there is between a hydrogen cloud and a universe.

In Darwin's day, when the amoeba (a tiny one celled organism) was thought to be a very simple thing, there seemed to be little difficulty in jumping from a bit of non-living matter to a "simple" amoeba of about the same size.

Today, the microbiologists tell us that they already know thousands of complex parts and functions in the most rudimentary living thing and that they discover scores of new ones every year! Some functions are chemical, some are temporal, some are kinetic, some depend upon shape, some depend upon size, and some are actuated by still unexplainable phenomena! Some of the processes of the various sub-



units of the simplest living thing must function at such a precise time that the chances that such a staggering complexity could have come into being accidentally is, by a fair definition, *impossible!*

It has been said that the chances of life originating accidentally is approximately the same as the chances which would obtain of a Webster's International Unabridged Dictionary resulting from an explosion in a printing shop!

One famous geneticist calculated that the chances that one set of human chromosomes could have accidentally formed in its beautifully ordered arrangement would be a number so large that if one wrote 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, it would take 45 years just to write the number!

It is doubtful that very many evolutionists *really* believe in the accidental origin of life. Those who do are usually content to say, "Well, given enough time anything can happen." This begs the question. They are talking in terms of 20 billion years for the age of the universe. This is an insignificantly small number as compared with those which must obtain in order to support accidental combinations of non-living matter into a living system.

Further, it should be noted that if we somehow came up with a simple living unit we still have insurmountable difficulties in regard to growth, reproduction, metabolism, specialization, adaption, irritability, etc., etc. Still further, if we should admit that it *could happen*, that in no way proves that it DID HAPPEN! This is the thing that irritates some evolutionists the most—their whole case rests largely upon things that *have not been observed*. They are simply asserted.

#### THE FOSSIL RECORD

Although sometimes said to be the evolutionist's dream, it is more accurately his nightmare. The fossils found in the sedimentary layers of the earth's crust are regularly

producing new problems for the evolutionist and strengthening the case of the creationist.

It should be noted that the fossil record is *real evidence*. Although its arrangements and the reasons therefor are debatable, the facts of the fossils are not subject to doubt on anyone's part. If evolutions can be established on the *evidence* then it *must* be on the fossil record because this is the only *real evidence* to support the existence and variations in the living things in the past.

In every debate the creationist presses the fossil record because it shows three great strong points which the evolutionist cannot explain.

First. Its "beginnings" are near its "endings." It is meant by that that the first three-fourths of the fossil record is missing. The earliest fossils are already highly developed living things that (according to the evolutionist) must have had a long, long, history of prior development to have reached such complexity. Sponges, algae, corals, snails, brachiopods, starfish, are found in the earliest life bearing strata. And, although each evolutionist admits that there must have been eons of prior development of these life forms, he does so *without evidence*—not *because of evidence*.

Second. The scarcity (or some argue complete lack) of transitional forms increasingly plagues the evolutionist. In Darwin's time, he realized the importance of finding these transitional forms between the major groups of living things, and he asserted that in time they would all be found so that a complete series could be demonstrated showing the gradual changes between molecules and men!

But, after a hundred years and more of searching, they have not appeared! Instead, the record clearly reveals that different forms appear suddenly and retain their characteristics throughout their life period of existence. Then, they disappear equally suddenly without becoming precursors of other slightly advanced forms.

Again, many of the earliest living things continue un-



changed all the way down to the present. If gradual change is the basic process of evolution, why is it absent in the record of all extinct living things as well as all extant living things? This is a most serious difficulty.

Bearing in mind that the fossil record is the only real evidence upon which to base evolution, the single fact of the absence of transitional forms is sufficient in many people's minds to declare the theory bankrupt!

If evolution actually occurred, transitional forms would be the essence of the fossil record; instead they are notably in absence!

Third. According to the geological time scale and the fossil sequences which have been arranged by the evolutionists, the "tree" of living things, which begins with the invertebrates, (those simple living things without backbones), and gradually grows upward into the vertebrates, the fish, the amphibians, the reptiles, and finally the mammals, there are very troublesome gaps in the record.

If you look closely at a textbook displaying such a "tree," you will notice that there are broken lines at various crucial junctures—indicating that there are no known fossils to fill that gap—that they are supposed to exist (and it is hoped, they will be found at sometime in the future).

The magnitude of these gaps is considerably more than a few dots on a diagram. For instance, the gap between the invertebrates and the vertebrates is 100 million years! Again, the gap between the fish and the amphibians is something in the range of 30 million years. Additional gaps also appear between the various "links" in the chain of life between the molecule and the man which almost cause one to think that there is no "chain" at all. More accurately, there are numerous "links" with no clear connections to other "links" and vast distances between the "links."

These three great difficulties have caused some of the leading evolutionary scholars to admit that the fossil record favors special creation instead of evolution!

### THE SECOND LAW OF THERMODYNAMICS

Not a few scientific "laws" have, in the past, been exposed as scientific errors. Most, of course, have not.

Probably the most agreed upon, and most fundamental of all scientific laws are the first and second law of thermodynamics. The first, which does not particularly concern us, says in substance that energy is never created or destroyed. It is changed into various forms and places but it never is, in total, increased or diminished.

The second deals with the concept of *entropy*. This refers to the "deconcentration" of energy. If a given quantity of energy is in a given location and then becomes "de-concentrated" or spread out, it is said that entropy has increased.

For instance, think of a coal mine. Within a cubic yard of coal at this location there is, let us say, 10 billion units of energy. It is all concentrated in that one cubic yard at that one place. Now, take the coal out of the mine and if you could number and label each one of these energy units you would soon realize that never again would they be in the same concentration as they had been before they were mined. Some would separate in the mining process, some would be separated in the splitting up process for transportation.

Then, later, they would be further divided as the coal was burned in the various places to which it was transported. Still further, those products which received the energy which originally was contained in that single cubic yard of coal, would be further disseminated to perhaps distant parts of the world.

After a given time you would say, "Let's call the roll. Where are all those numbered and labeled energy units in that one cubic yard of coal?" The answer would be that they are now spread to hundreds or perhaps millions of places. Some warmed homes, some made steel, some were changed into other forms of energy, some escaped into space, and probably a thousand other processes consumed the rest.

What does all this have to do with evolution? Just this—



the whole process is 180 degrees out of phase with the supposed evolutionary process. Evolution requires a building up, a greater concentration, a higher degree of organization, a larger size, more complexity, greater degrees of specialization. When you have to get from a molecule up to a man you must EXPAND, man!

Entropy calls instead for a wearing down, a cooling off, a simplification, a de-concentration, and higher degrees of randomness.

A second aspect of the laws of thermodynamics can be seen by suggesting that energy, *per se*, is only one of the requirements for existence and life. An illustration will help us understand the point.

Suppose I buy a piece of land outside of town and order all the necessary building materials for the construction of a house. They are delivered by the various merchants and placed in a large pile. Everything that is necessary for the completed house is there on the ground.

A friend drops by and asks, "Say, what are all those building materials doing here?" I reply, "I'm building my house." "You are, well it doesn't seem so to me." I say, "Sure I am. You see the sun up there, that is the source of energy here on the earth and there is plenty of it to build this house as well as all the other houses to be built in the future. So, each time the sun shines, I am building my house."

If he is my friend, he will explain that although the energy from the sun is indeed necessary (and probably the origin of all energy potential on the earth) it, alone, is not sufficient to build a house. Additionally, there must be a (1) *plan* (either visualized or written) and (2) a *mechanism* for channeling the energy into the appropriate places and times called for in the plan.

The energy which the carpenter received from his breakfast will be used to swing the hammer or pull the saw. The energy in the gasoline will be used to turn the mixer to mix the concrete which will be poured into the foundation. The

energy in the electrical line will be used to operate the power tools which aid in the construction. But all these are not energy alone. They are energy planned and directed by the various mechanisms appropriate to the tasks.

The discovery by Crick and Watson a few years ago of the structure of the DNA molecule has given the creationists a decided advantage in their debates with evolutionists. When the Creator said that every living thing would reproduce "according to its kind," He knew that he had placed the "plan" into all living things that would govern their continuance down through subsequent ages. We now know it as the DNA molecule!

#### THE MORALITY OF THE CASE

The first four points in this study deal with that which is considered scientific.

This one moves into the moral considerations which are implicit in evolution as compared to creation. It should be emphasized that not all evolutionists see the impact of their theories upon their morals, but it should also be insisted that consistency demands that those principles which are said to be true regarding human beings should apply to human beings as we see them today. If human morals are no more than human conventions (and originated in human minds) then why is one convention better than any other. If it be said that those conventions which conduce toward the continuance of improved life on this planet, then the question comes, according to whose judgment. Would it conduce to improved life on this planet if we killed thirty per cent of the populations of the poorer nations of the world? Surely, the resources of the lands and seas would be less depleted and the standards of living for those remaining alive would be greatly improved. Why would this not be a good thing?

When a number of the leading Nazis were brought to trial after World War II their pleas were straight and simple. "We were ordered to do what we did in the extermination of mil-



lions of 'undesirable people' by our higher officers. They, in turn, were carrying out the orders of the duly elected or appointed political officials of the Third Reich. It was a sovereign nation and had the right to enact and pursue any laws which it deemed appropriate to the securing of its desired ends."

The prosecution won the case by insisting that there are higher laws than human conventions. They reasoned that if everyone alive at a given time decided that it was right to murder, pillage, rape, and torture, it would still be wrong! This is the creationist's view. A true evolutionist would be hard pressed to assign any guilt to the Nazis.

If human beings actually evolved from some animal-like form, then all morality is nothing more than a creation of the creature. This is what the evolutionist believes. Men came before morals, they say. The existentialist says "existence before essence," which means that there were men before there was a proper way for men to act or be. Thus, he emphasizes that one should be concerned more with "being" than with any way that he "ought to be."

The creationist stoutly denounces this notion. He observes that the Creator visualized *a way to be* for humanity before the *creation of humanity*. Adam and Eve were created "in the image of God." God's embodiment of good, truth, justice, kindness, pity, compassion, etc., thus were programmed into the creature in potential form and then he was instructed as to how he should be. (It is admitted that he has the potential to be evil also, but again, he is instructed not to be.)

A second division of this moral consideration is this—*every evolutionist should be a rabid racist* (to be consistent with his theory).

If our present level of existence came about by the strong or the fit taking the places of the weak and the not-so-fit, then any attempt to strengthen the weak or the not-so-fit would be plainly devolutional! The process calls for a continued upward development partly by killing off those who

are for some reason not equipped to climb to higher levels of life. If this process brought us finally to humanhood who knows, if we continue it faithfully (by killing off the weak and the not-so-fit) we shall surely climb onward and upward until perhaps we become gods ourselves!

A "head-start program," a "minority aid program," programs to aid the retarded, programs to aid those with debilitating diseases, and all such like efforts should be the anathema of the evolutionist. His attitude should be "Let them die, kill them off, step on them in our march to higher and higher levels of excellence in the onward and upward march of evolution!"

On the other hand, it was God in the flesh who said, "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise."

Creationists see and appreciate the difference between the two views.



## TO WHAT SHALL I GIVE MYSELF?

MARY OLER

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Suppose you have never heard about God. You are mature, and intelligent. Throughout your life, you have appreciated the beauty of the world, the shades of trees, the colors in flowers. Rainstorms excite you, and rainbows delight you. Nature is indeed wonderful. You feel grateful, and fortunate to be alive. Sometimes, when groups gather, you converse about the good things in your life. It is easy to let the mind run to family, friends, and employment. Yes, it is a wonderful world!

One day, you learn there is a heavenly Father, who gives you everything. "God is not far from any of us!" Paul encourages unbelievers in Athens. "He sends rain on the just and the unjust!" Jesus assures his disciples, perhaps to open their minds to the exceeding broad ways of God (Ps. 119:96). The lilies of the field are scattered about in such profusion no serious viewer can doubt the liberality, the generosity, the open-handedness of the unstinting, lavish Planter of seeds.

### WHAT DO I HAVE TO GIVE?

What do I have to give to one who has given me life! Whatever it is, it must be something from within this person blessed to live, breathe, sing, call, and praise. No gift of silver or gold can express my gratitude to God adequately. I will give—once and again—of silver and gold to help spread the love of God throughout the world, but first of all,

I give myself. The most intimate, the most priceless gift I have to give is myself.

"Let my mouth be filled with thy praise!" the Psalmist cried (Ps. 71:8) in his joy at being able to give something to God. My mouth! The instrument through which I eat and drink to sustain life, the voice with which I speak with gentleness and love, the lips with which I kiss to express sincere devotion. My mouth! It is mine—and mine alone! I have something to give to God!

### I GIVE MYSELF TO PRAISE

"Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise" (Ps. 98:4) because the Lord has done marvellous things. He has remembered his mercy to men who so often are unkind and unmerciful! All the ends of the earth may know the salvation of our God, who is no respecter of persons! National origins, color of skin, thickness of household purse fade away under the righteousness of God, who judges the world and its people with justice and equality! Sing and make noise—a loud noise—but not merely a loud noise, but a joyful noise! He is the God of my praise! (Ps. 109:1).

"I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth" (Ps. 34:1), David sings at the realization he has sought the Lord—and has been heard—and has been delivered from his fears. Continual praise! Who could ever cease praising when aware that they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing! Who would utter one prayer and consider it enough when he believes the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his eyes are open unto their cry! So long as there is breath to praise, praise shall be given to one whose mercy endures forever. And even with a lifetime dedication, the thoughtful heart realizes the impossibility of full explanation of the mercies of God: "Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? who can shew forth all his praise?" (Ps. 106:2).



## I SEEK THE PRAISE OF GOD

The praise of men! How human hearts long for—and seek—the praise of men! Let's compete! Win over somebody else! Become Miss Universe! Lead the club in sales! Be first to ring the bell! Read the newssheets! What do they say? What do people think about me?

In Jerusalem, some of the chief rulers believed in Jesus, but they would not confess him. "They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:43). Paul tried to clear up misunderstandings of the way praise of God is received (Rom. 2:29). He spoke of the coming of the Lord, after he said it is required in stewards that they be found faithful (1 Cor. 4:2). At this coming of the Lord, the faithful stewards will receive praise of God (1 Cor. 4:5). "Well done, good and faithful servant!" A life contest won—and honored!

## I GIVE MYSELF TO THE POWER IN PRAYER

When Jesus' disciples prayed, things happened! Apostles prayed, and the lot fell on Matthias to take Judas' place. Disciples prayed, and Peter was released from prison. The church at Antioch prayed, and Barnabas and Saul sailed away to take a continent for the Lord. What could two men do? There were dangers, delays, difficulties, divisions, and disappointments! There were also loves and loyalties of men of God, and lessons to be taught in lands opened through the power of prayer.

In Jesus' early ministry, the disciples knew things happened when believers prayed. "Lord, teach us to pray!" (Luke 11:1). "After this manner, pray ye. . . ." (Matt. 6:9), Jesus said. Jesus prayed, in the daytime and the night, in the presence of life and death. His followers took note of his close touch with his Father in heaven, and they walked in the light of his example. Changes may come in the time schedule of things asked for, but God's people learn to wait. "I waited patiently on the Lord, and he inclined unto me and heard my cry" (Ps. 40:1). "I must see Rome!" Paul, a

man of prayer, saw plans changed, arrangements shifted, and found the power of God working in a shipwreck, on a strange island.

## I GIVE MYSELF TO A PEACEFUL LIFE

What kind of life is best? Paul, teach young Timothy! Teach him what to do to be able to "lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Tim. 2:2). Prayer is the answer! Pray for all men! Pray for all in authority! Supplications, prayers, intercessions, giving of thanks (1 Tim. 2:1). Select the one needed in a situation about which you need to talk to God. No one in need of your prayers is to be left out. Present your petitions before Almighty God—and marvel at the definite results!



## SETTING UP A CHURCH BUDGET

MAC LAYTON

MAC LAYTON holds the B.A. from Abilene Christian University and has begun graduate work at the University of Tulsa. Having written 24 tracts and *The Holy Spirit*, he has also completed the first full-length book in the brotherhood on giving, entitled *This Grace Also*. Layton preaches to the North MacArthur Church of Christ in Oklahoma City, Okla.

### TEN GOLDEN TRUTHS FOR ACCEPTABLE GIVING

The most vital element in moving the Lord's people to acceptable, cheerful giving is a powerful teaching program. We are dwelling on the lower levels if we are more interested in "meeting budgets," "reaching goals," or "raising funds." The needs of the Lord's work are great and many, but beyond this is the greater need in the spiritual life of the one who gives. Paul said, "I seek not yours, but you" (2 Cor. 12:14). The ideal church budget is where every Christian gives every Lord's day as he is prospered, and lets the elders know so they can plan an intelligent program of work. We must preach on money, but let us never preach for money! When all our people know that our primary concern is building men in the image of Christ, and that our purpose in teaching on giving is the same purpose of Christ, their spiritual welfare, then all the money that is needed to do a glorious work for Christ will be forthcoming!

Our task, then, is not promotional, but developmental. Archibald McLean had something inspirational to say about this:

It is a Christlike thing to lead others to give. Paul refers to Titus and gives thanks for putting the same earnest care for the Corinthians in his heart. Titus travelled among the churches in the matter of this grace and urged them to have their offering ready . . . to stimulate beneficence is one of the highest ministries

on earth. No one can do another a greater service than to take him out of himself and inspire him with a genuine concern for others. (*Where the Book Speaks*, Fleming H. Revell, pp. 180-181).

Here are ten golden truths from the New Testament that will move every Christian to liberal, joyous giving:

*First, the New Testament church, our perfect example, was a giving church.* In Jerusalem they continued steadfastly in the fellowship (Acts 2:42). Whatever else this means, scholarship is unanimous in declaring it includes the sharing of material blessings. Before many days these Christians are selling their goods and possessions, then on to selling their lands and houses (Acts 2:45; 4:32-35). This generosity was such a well known trait that some tried to copy it without the sacrifice, and were lost in the process (Acts 5:1-11). The example of the Macedonian churches, giving so sacrificially out of poverty and affliction, is held up by Paul for brethren of all time.

If we preach the restoration of New Testament Christianity, how can we allow this virtue of giving to be neglected so? How can we allow those with less truth to out give us? How can churches of Christ be content to be fifteenth or twentieth in per capita giving in the U.S.? Who will lead us to the restoration of giving?

*Second, giving is a grace, God's great door to happiness.* So much of the beauty of all the other graces was missing as long as the Corinthians did not abound in this grace also (2 Cor. 8:7). Here is a character quality, a virtue, a grace, always found in mature Christian character. Giving faithfully is a natural fruit of the Christian life.

And it is the golden path to happiness. Jesus' life on earth was a life of self-sacrifice, generosity, sharing. He promised his followers that if they would lose themselves in his service, they would find themselves. In the act of giving we find increased faith, expansion of love, and greater enthusiasm. The zenith is reached in Jesus' sublime statement: "It is more blessed to give than it is to receive" (Acts 20:35). Can







for the abundant liberality of the first Christians, we see the all-consuming desire for the expansion of the Kingdom of God. Fellowship in the spread of the gospel was the dearest, most exalted privilege. No road was too long, no pain too great, no sacrifice too severe, for the salvation of the lost. Money given for the care of the poor and the advancement of the gospel was looked upon as a privilege. Invested in the lost, the building up of the young, and for all of God's purposes on earth, it was an act of surpassing spiritual beauty. Not for a moment was there a thought that discussing material and financial needs was "materialistic" or "unspiritual."

Here is a burning question: "Will they enter heaven who will not fulfill the divine charge to save the lost, and who will not give that others may teach them?" There will be a grand company in heaven to welcome those who gave that they might have the gospel preached to them. Many can go, but all can send. Paul declared, "I hold not my life as dear unto myself so that I may accomplish my course and the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24).

*Sixth, faithful giving is God's antidote for the ills of the soul.* The command of God is good for us. Each of those things he issues provides some need of the human spirit. Those who have learned the art of Christian giving know the transformation of the soul into His likeness. In raising money God is raising men. He does not need anything from us, but we need to give. Giving is to the soul what sunshine is to the apple tree, what rain is to a parched desert.

"The liberal soul shall be made fat" (Prov. 11:25). Getting is animal-like; giving is God-like. Jesus declared that in giving, "good measure, pressed down, heaped together, and running over" that it shall be returned to "our bosom." Which means the gain is "in us." We are the granary (Luke 6:38).

That blight of the soul, the cancer of covetousness, the

disease so common to the spiritual life of every child of God, is cured by faithful, cheerful giving! We must know what good our money can do for others, what powerful works for Christ can be done by our gifts, but we also need to know what happens to the giver. He is blessed with radi- any health spiritually, and protected from a thousand ills that come through covetousness and hoarding.

*Seventh, giving is sowing.* There is no doubt but that Paul says the same thing is reaped that is sowed. And money is what is sowed in giving. "He that soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall also reap bountifully" (2 Cor. 9:6). To sow faithfully means God will multiply our powers to sow again. It means that God will take the seed sown, increase it again and again, and send it on through time bearing fruit for His name.

Tragically, many think of giving as loss, as throwing money away, or at the most doing a little good, then it's all over. They do not see the larger picture of giving as sowing. If we knew that the harvest is dependent on the extent of sowing, how we would sow! When the farmer plants his field, he does not do it with a stingy hand, but sows to every corner and every part of the field in a generous way, because he knows that where he does not sow he cannot reap. Everywhere our Lord calls on us to look on our giving as the most valuable exchange on the market of life.

*Eighth, the Christian is most like his Savior when he is giving.* What other trait so describes Jesus as that of giving? Paul declared, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). To walk in his steps we must walk in the way of boundless giving, self-sacrifice, loving care. From his baptism to the old rugged cross that was the path he walked. A tight fisted, stingy, Christian is a contradiction, as unlike Christ as any could ever be. Jesus must be Lord of our lives, not simply an object of worship. When a great musician



writes a score of music, or a symphony, he does not write it merely that men may read it and admire it, but that it might be reproduced with all its sweet tones of beauty. In like manner Jesus wants His life to be reproduced in the lives of His followers. Liberal giving is a sure way to demonstrate Christ in us!

*Ninth, liberality is a sure demonstration of Christian values, priorities, and influence to the world.* Paul considered the sacrificial giving of the Macedonians an example for all the world to see and know. He held up their love, sacrifice out of poverty, as examples of the highest sort. In these words he shows their example, "how that in much proof of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded to the riches of their liberality" (2 Cor. 8:2). The Gentiles abounded with thanksgiving when they saw the gifts of their brethren (2 Cor. 9:13).

Talk is cheap, and other actions may be misinterpreted, but Christian giving is a sure proof we are followers of Christ. Men may argue against many things, but the gifts of love are unanswerable.

God loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor. 9:7). That word *cheerful* is from the Greek *hilaron*, and our closest English word is "hilarious." God loves those who are having a great time, "fun" if you please, giving gifts to him! He saw the gifts of Cornelius and said they were gone up as a memorial before him (Acts 10:1-4). We remember the givers. But we build no monuments to remember the takers and receivers and getters. The great marble monuments in Washington, D.C. are built to honor the self-sacrificing soldiers and citizens who gave without reservation. In Christian giving we see a demonstration of example and influence that the Christian is not in love with this world, he has his "head on straight," and knows real values. Men know where our hearts are by where we invest our treasures (Matt. 6:19-20).

But what can we say about the example of Christians today to an unbelieving world? When we see Jews, Catho-

lics, denominations of every sort, outgiving us, bestowing their bequests and wills in great generosity to their causes, how does that make New Testament Christians look in the eyes of the world? Where are the big gifts for the local church of Christ? What must the world think when it hears our preaching, then sees our stingy giving?

*Tenth, giving is a major basis upon which man's judgment and eternal destiny will be determined.* The last great separation of mankind into lost and saved, sheep and goats, is to be made on the basis of sacrifice for others, how many we fed and gave drink, how many ill we cared for, how many prisoners we were concerned about (Matt. 25).

Jesus told two parables (one apparent true life account) of two rich men. The one of Luke 12 who forgot both God and man as he laid up all his goods for his own use in years to come. He was pronounced a fool on that determination, and his soul required of him that very night. The other of Luke 16 fared sumptuously in regal splendor, ate his rich food, and neglected concern for Lazarus at his gate, poor, ill, and neglected. When he died he lifted up his eyes in torment, facing endless eternity because of his luxurious living to the neglect of those in need. The prime truth in both of these accounts is that the way a man hoards, spends, and gives his material possessions will determine his place in eternity. If that is not the truth of these two parables, then they make no sense at all. Man will answer to God for his stewardship of life's blessings, and that answer will reflect his love, his recognition of the purpose of life, and his understanding of the plan of God.

Successful giving is deeply rooted in faith in God. When we know that God will take care of us we have no trouble with liberality. As Paul says, "My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19). One of our splendid elders, Riley Cavin, always reminds us, "You get all you can by promotion and talk, and I'll take the way of faith and beat you every time!"



Giving does indeed reflect the faith of our people. The matter of the contribution is a deeply rooted spiritual problem. It is not just the challenge to good works, or promotional gimmicks, or a better budget we need. It is deeper faith in the precious promises of God.

To hear the glad summons "well done," we must learn to do well in "this grace also"!

### THREE GREAT DOORS FOR THE IDEAL CHURCH BUDGET

There is no doubt about it! The ideal church budget is where every Christian gives every week into the church treasury as God has prospered him. When the elders know what that amount is they have a scriptural, logical pattern for church finances. Anything less is not enough; anything more is asking too much! When our brethren understand that the leadership of the church is concerned about their obedience to God and spiritual enrichment in the matter of giving, it will be easy for every member to purpose, and to let the elders know the amount of that purpose.

The three great doors to the ideal church budget are: Every member purpose, vision, and planning. Too much of the fund raising by faith (fake) healers, bingo charlatans, and the rah-rah-rah stuff of many denominations smacks of religious racketeering. How beautiful God's plan of giving, for its wisdom, its dignity, its simplicity, its power!

Recently the Harvard School of Business released a report on what it takes for any major enterprise to succeed. A wide awake eldership in the Lord's Kingdom knows that all these principles are Scriptural, and will put them into practice. Here they are: (1) purpose (2) strategy for results (3) shared goals (4) effective systems of information. We begin this study with the first of these principles.

Purposing in giving is not an optional expedient. It is not simply a system originated by the elders or budget committee to raise the necessary money to make the church go.

Every Christian must purpose his giving if he is to please God. Inspiration puts it in these words, "Let each man do according as he hath prospered in his heart: not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7). The Macedonian and Corinthian example points out: "I know you are eager to help: I speak of it with pride to the Macedonians: I tell them Achaia had everything ready last year: and most of them have been fired by your zeal" (2 Cor. 9:2). Several facts are outstanding in the thirty-nine verses of 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 regarding purposing:

1. The Macedonians and Corinthians purposed a year in advance.
2. They were blessed and enriched personally by this purpose.
3. Others had their needs supplied because they purposed.
4. Christians are urged to follow their good example.

Because God is a God of purpose, His people must be people of purpose. His purpose was eternal regarding our salvation, and the coming Kingdom (Eph. 3:11-12). To convert our brethren on the power of purposing means we are a long way toward liberality. And it works the other way as well: when our brethren get their contribution to where they are not ashamed of it, purposing will be easy.

There is no suspended judgment in purposing. The alternative is chaos. If we do not purpose our giving we purpose default, a decision is made by indecision. Just as the one who knows he should be baptized sins when he does not act on that knowledge, so the Christian who knows God's will in respect to purposing does wrong if he does not purpose.

The sense of duty and honor require that every Christian purpose his giving, and be willing to let God's appointed leaders know that amount. He responds in this way because it is the will of God (2 Cor. 9:7).

The only satisfactory response to His Savior is a liberal



purpose for every week he is prospered. Christ did nothing by accident; He willed His death for lost humanity. He came with a plan, a will, a previously ordained Testament, for man's salvation. The concerned Christian will so order his life by planning and purpose in all things, including his weekly giving.

The relationship one has with the Holy Spirit ordained elders requires purpose in giving. Elders are selected by meeting Divine qualifications to direct the life of the church and bring every Christian to spiritual maturity (Acts 20: 28-32). There is no way elders can protect the church from the cancer and idolatry of covetousness unless they are aware of the giving and stewardship of the members. There is no way they can plan intelligently the greatest work on earth unless they know what to expect each week. Some manner of declaration to the elders, whether by means of a purpose card, or verbally, is necessary for the arrangement of a church budget that will be pleasing to God.

The protection of conscience and advancement of one's spiritual life will call for a purpose. The liberal know they have God as a partner. In purposing there is the satisfaction of a good conscience, the understanding that one is fulfilling his part in a Grand Scheme.

The place of every Christian in the church demands that the Christian purpose. As a full partner, carrying his share of the load, the Christian gives. Paul declares there must be equality in giving (2 Cor. 8:14). The equality is what each is able to do. Those who are able now help out others, knowing that some day they may need to be helped. For too long the elders in the average congregation have been content to let a few carry the load in giving. Just about everywhere 25% do 75% of the giving, and some 25% of our people must not be giving at all. It is not unusual for those partaking of the Lord's Supper in the evening, who were unable to be present for the morning service, to give nothing at all! This kind of selective obedience, smorgasbord religion, where we take out

of the Bible commands to obey that only please us, is characteristic of the kind of confusion rampant in denominationalism today. We simply cannot go on allowing a few who do not want to purpose or give have their way over the great majority of those who will gladly purpose! Minority rule over the wishes of the elders and the church is an ugly violation of the sacred government God has given to His Kingdom. Let us teach every Christian that God wants him to purpose, and to be willing, in the spirit of love and cooperation, to let his elders know the amount of that purpose. When that day comes we will see a spirit of joy and happiness fill the Lord's people like those days in the very beginning in Jerusalem almost twenty centuries ago!

The sons of this world seem to be wiser than the sons of light when it comes to vision. AT & T has made an estimate of the communication needs of every community of the United States for the next twenty-five years. Weyerhaeuser Wood Company has just planted trees that they will not harvest for the next forty years. Some scoffed in the early days of the 60's when the vision was announced that we would send a man to the moon in the 70's. But it was done!

Far ranging dreams are now being announced to erase cancer, leukemia, heart disease, and many ills plaguing the human race. One vision says that someday there will be a shot that will eliminate tooth decay. Everywhere, in business, communication, space exploration, and science, men of vision are planning a glorious future!

But where is the vision and planning in the Lord's church? Where are the elders who know where they are going in the next year, five years, ten years? In most congregations we are just barely keeping up. There is no magnificent plan for the time ahead. How true, "most of the shadows of life are caused by standing in our own sunshine." Shakespeare has one of his characters say, "The fault, Dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in our selves that we are underlings." Too many men placed by God to head



the church on earth are not leaders. You must have faith before you can have vision, and obviously they have not placed their faith in Almighty God or they would dream great dreams for His work.

Once the great playwright, George Bernard Shaw, said, "The ordinary man sees things as they are and asks, 'Why?' But the man of faith and vision sees things as they ought to be and asks 'Why not?'" We must have men in every congregation who see things as they ought to be and lead to fulfill that vision!

Planning paves the road of the future. The church with a vision, a strategy for results, will grow and prosper. Everywhere you look you can see it. Those churches with men who plan and keep the lines of communication up for their people are churches that are growing and abounding. The church without hope is like a man without hope. It becomes stagnant, ineffective, and as always, divisive. "The leaders took the lead in Israel, and the people gave themselves willingly" (Judges 5:2). The Lord's people will arise when the challenge is greatest.

The big money is not being given to the local church. When the will is made, the land and cattle given away, the big money is given, it seems that the local body of Christ is second or third on the list, or not at all. Our brethren are not thinking in terms of great giving to the local church. There may be many reasons for that, but the fact there is little confidence in the leadership of the local body of Christ to plan great things must be one. When there is confidence in the elders, issuing from wise vision and planning, we will see all the money given necessary to fulfill those dreams.

God can accomplish great things as well as small. It seems He is waiting in the wings to grant spectacular success for those willing to launch out by faith. Over the past few years we have seen some superb, one-time contributions given by our brethren in many places. Often this has gone over the one million mark. Most of these contributions were given for

buildings. We long for the day when men of vision will lead our brethren to see the total picture of the Lord's work, soul winning at home, missions, education, help for the needy and downtrodden, and lead our brethren to see that the needs of the church of our Lord are weekly. When every Christian is giving every week as he has been prospered, there will be no need of any special contribution, except in case of emergency. May God hasten the day when we have no missionary begging for support, no good work in need, no child crying for food! In the New Testament the churches searched for good men and sent them out to preach the word of God. Today we see missionaries begging for support. With faithful giving we can return to the New Testament church fully, both in practice as in doctrine!

Why must elders plan? There are four great reasons:

First, long range planning is necessary to establish rational control over the future. This is true in any endeavor of life, the home, business, and the church. Had elders known where they were going, antism and liberalism would not have infiltrated the church as it has done in the past two decades. No ism would invade the Kingdom if leadership planned the teaching program as it should be planned. Not to plan the future of the local church is to plan failure, a bad decision by indecision, default by neglect. We will never know the kind of church budgets necessary for the salvation of the world until we plan them!

Second, long range planning establishes priorities. It eliminates getting bogged down in minutiae, the piddling little details that hinder progress. Where there is a purpose, and a way outlined to reach it, there will be no more of the tedious and tiring "business meetings" where long discussions are held on things that do not matter. The church that is caught up with a vision of glorious things for the Master will have no time to paddle around in shallow waters!

Third, long range planning aids in the implementation of the tasks. Where there is a great, overwhelming reason, a



goal in view, organization seems to fall in place. The mother whose child is drowning finds a way to save it! There are those who are constantly looking to organization as the saviour of a dead church. We look for preachers who are "good organizers." And if organization is all it takes then we ought to go out and hire a bevy of organizers to make the church go! Time and experience have shown us that is a futile plan to follow. You take a smoothly organized machine, and I'll take a little church with vision, and beat you every time!

Fourth, long range planning magnetizes conditions. It creates joy, confidence, and unity. Obstacles melt away. Difficulties fade. Half the battle is won before a blow is struck when wise elders present plans for the future. Long range planning is a catalyst that demonstrates faith in God and His Providence. You can't stop a man with a dream, and you can't help a man without a dream! Most of the things creating division in the church are not related to doctrine, but to idleness, boredom, lost vision.

God has made His work dependent on the generous giving of individual Christians. The arrangement of a schedule of spending, commonly called a church budget, is a Divine necessity. Church finances are not just a necessary evil. All this apology and timidity for teaching God's plan of giving will cease when we see the part it plays in the salvation of the world and the upbuilding of the church. We must not let the negative minded, tight fisted, rule the church by non-purpose and non-giving, and non-planning. The alternative to a well planned church budget is invitation to waste and bad stewardship. But God's people will accept faithful teaching and preaching on giving, just as they accepted it on baptism and the identity of the church!

Daniel Burnham, Chicago architect, said in 1907:

Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood, and probably themselves will not be realized.  
Make big plans, aim high in work and hope, remem-

bering that a logical diagram once recorded will never die, but long after we are gone will be a living thing ever asserting itself with ever growing intensity. Remember our sons and grandsons are going to do things that would stagger us. Let your watchword be order and your beacon beauty. Think big! And remember, when you create a situation that captures men's imagination, you capture life, reason, and everything!

Purpose, vision, and planning, three doors to building an ideal church budget. Our final study coming up is "The Ideal Church Budget." Great churches do not just happen, and just wanting to grow is not enough. There is a price to pay, sacrifices to be made.

#### THE IDEAL CHURCH BUDGET

The Divine injunction for all our life in the church is, "in business not slothful" (Rom. 12:11). The business of directing the church to maturity and expansion is the primary business of the elders, who will give an account of their watchcare (Heb. 13:17). A very large part of this care is in the field of finances. Not only must elders see that each member grows in the grace of giving, but they have the added responsibility of seeing that what is given is used in those areas carefully defined by the will of God.

Every church has a budget. The question is whether or not it is Scriptural and effective. The budget is simply a means to see that the money given is put in those places God has so willed it be spent.

God's perfect plan of church finance in the New Testament has a two-fold purpose: (1) to assist every Christian to grow in the likeness of Christ by liberal giving each week (2) to enable His work on earth to be accomplished. Phillips Brooks said once, "When a force that is meant for expansion is denied the expansion which its nature craves, it not only loses its power in that expansion, but it will also fail in the field to which it is limited." Many a dead church has



seen that prophecy come true! Given golden opportunities to grow and expand, but stunted by ineffective leaders and unwilling followers, they not only did not grow, they died!

Since every church must expand or die, and since every church has a budget, good or bad, the question that arises is, How do we establish the ideal church budget?

First we must define the ideal church budget before we can launch into ways to achieve it.

*The ideal church budget is where every member gives every week into the church treasury as he has been prospered, and informs the elders of the amount he plans to give.*

When that amount is totalled, there is the perfect, Scriptural, budget amount! It is a fact without question that our people will give liberally when they understand that the elders are leading them to do the will of God. This is the budget that puts the Lord's work on a sane, intelligent, responsible basis.

The methods of "guessing" the amount for the budget on the basis of last year's contribution, or setting a pre-arranged figure, then challenging the church to reach it, are methods that just may be miles away from ideal. What eldership or budget committee has the wisdom to set a figure of what the church can, and should do, in giving, unless it has a word from the church? Last year's contribution may be a thousand miles away from the ability of the church to give! The guess of the budget committee, however, well educated, may be a thousand miles away from ability of the church to give, either too high, or too low! Most congregations base their budget on the needs for building expansion, salary, missions, education, help for the needy, etc. This is noble as far as it goes, but it still does not go back to "square one"! Our giving to God is to be as prospered, weekly, according to our ability, not whether this or that is being done. Until we give liberally we have not given at all! The ultimate success of a church budget goes back to the individual Christian. Many an eldership could do a magnificent work

for the Lord if the brethren gave as they should. It is not always the fault of leadership that congregations grow weak and sickly. Many a Christian has been heard to say, "I would give if only the elders would do this or that work!" Others "boycott" the giving when things do not go their way. What a perversion of the will of our Father in Heaven! Our giving is not based on our whims, or any present works in the Kingdom, but on what is right. As long as giving is treated as "fund raising" or "church finances," without the overwhelming response to the will of God, the church will continue to fail its grand mission to save the world.

Letting the members set the budget is the Scriptural way. For fourteen years where I have preached we have let the members set the amount of the budget with their purpose. Dozens of congregations have seen some amazing success in their giving with this program. At any rate, whatever challenges and plans the elders present, they can only do what the church purposes to do.

In this plan there are no previously arranged, pre-set figures. There is a day set when all the members of the church are asked to indicate to the elders what they plan to give in the coming year, the Lord willing. On that day the purposes are totalled, and that total is the budget for the new year.

Elders have no right to ask any more than that, and they dare not to ask for less.

God forbid that a church budget hinder the advancement of the Lord's people. But when it is set too low, the arbitrary figures set in many church budgets pose no challenge to give as prospered. A deadly infection of self-satisfaction can fill the church meeting such a budget, while it does not even approach ability in giving.

This plan makes it easy for every member to purpose. Here is why: (1) Every Christian knows that this puts the grandest work on earth on a stable and intelligent basis, and takes planning of that work out of the realm of guess and



chance. (2) He knows that he must be faithful in keeping his purpose to give each Lord's day, for the work is built on what he has purposed. (3) This combines perfectly the need for a systematic congregational budget, with its challenging good works, and the need for personal participation and involvement of every member in its creation. (4) This puts the "bee" on personal responsibility, because the member who will not indicate to the elders what he intends to give declares plainly he wants no part in the planning and progress of the Lord's work. (5) Even more important to the concerned eldership is the fact this creates a feeling of trust, love, and confidence between leadership and people. This is the atmosphere absolutely essential for the church to thrive and prosper.

To prepare the way for a successful purpose day the following events must take place: (1) Four mailouts to every family, along with a well-written tract in each mailout informing everyone what is to take place, why, and the expected 100% cooperation of every member. These are mailed each Thursday so they can be received before the Lord's day. They follow a challenging theme, and are signed personally by each of the elders. (2) For four weeks preceding purpose day announcements are made at every service, and appropriate articles printed in the bulletin. (3) A planning day, involving all members of the church from Junior High and up, is set for the Sunday before purpose day. This is a time when the elders each take a small group during the Bible Study period, listen to positive ideas from men and women alike, regarding their dreams for a great work for the Lord. (4) Appeals should be made by the elders from the pulpit regarding the need for 100% participation, and a generous purpose on purpose day. (5) A series of well-prepared sermons on vision, faith, and liberal giving, preached on four Sundays previous to purpose day.

On the day set for all members to purpose these things should be done: (1) Elders and ministers present to a com-

bined meeting of all members some dreams and goals decided upon from the planning day. This is done in the Bible class period. No pre-set figure is ever announced! (2) During the worship period a stirring sermon on individual responsibility and liberal giving is preached. (3) Following the sermon the elders pass out the purpose cards. Every member is asked to sign at the same time, with one heart and one soul. The purpose card is well worded, and has three urgent appeals printed on it: 100% cooperation, give more than 10% of income, and make sure that your giving reaches the church treasury every week of the year. The elders pass the cards out, and the elders take them up. This is confidential information for the use of the elders only. It is used for one purpose only, and that is to secure a total for the church budget. The cards are destroyed after that one use. The purpose is between the Christian and His Lord, as far as his vow is concerned. No one is allowed to take a card home. If, after all the appeals, announcements, and sermons of the last four weeks they are not ready to purpose, they never will be.

Some dramatic cooperation and unity in the unexpected and difficult field of money has been experienced. In some years we have had *all* our families who attend with regularity to purpose. In no year has the average fallen below 95%! They know this is the way we do things, and every member is expected to purpose. We encourage all young people to participate, from the earliest years. As we lead the young to see the importance of giving we will bless the church with great givers for generations to come!

The first Sunday of the new year is when a beautifully printed budget is presented to the church. The elders have taken the total of that purposed by the entire membership, and arranged a Scriptural, broad, challenging ministry of service. This is presented in the worship hour.

Elders should make the final decisions regarding the finances of the church and its yearly budget. They deal with



great spiritual matters when they prepare the budget. The idea that the money given by God's people is just material, and "deacon" or "budget-committee" work is not a New Testament concept. The money collected for the poor saints in Judea was sent to the elders (Acts 11: 27-30). The elders are over all the work of the Lord all the time. Wise elders know that their preparation of the budget eliminates wrangling and indecision. Deacons should be given responsibilities to fulfill the vision and good works found in the ideal church budget.

This will get the job done! It works! Let the church set the budget!

## SOUL WINNERS FOR JESUS

JERRY O. LOUTZENHISER

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### THE HARVEST IS PLENTIFUL—LUKE 10:2

After working for the past sixteen years in more than 80 area-wide evangelistic campaigns with some 1700 different soul-winners, I have learned that Christians approach soul-winning with many different attitudes. Methods of approach, along with "tools" we have invented, are really insignificant compared with our attitudes. It really doesn't matter much whether we use charts, filmstrips, tracts, or "one-shot" teaching guides to instruct the lost and encourage them to obey Jesus. But, if one is to be an effective soul-winner, it matters greatly that he approach the lost with the attitudes Jesus had toward the lost, along with the message by which they can be saved. For example, there are brethren who honestly believe that they live in a city where no one wants to hear the gospel. They feel they live among people who are either so sinful or so "religious" that there is no one who will listen.

Can it be true that no one will listen, especially when Jesus says the harvest is plentiful? Since we are to be soul-winners for Jesus, let us listen to Him in regard to our attitudes toward evangelism.

#### 1. *The Yield Is Dependent Upon the Amount of Seed Sown.*

Jesus in the parable of the Sower of Soils, tells us to sow the seed broadcast. He said that the seed fell on all the dif-



ferent soils. Some of the seed fell on the path, some on rock, some among thorns, and some fell on good soil (Luke 8:5-8). His charge to the apostles was to preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15).

I lived in Iowa for twenty years. Seventy-five per cent of the grade A soil in the United States is in Iowa. It is not unusual for an Iowa farmer to get 160 bushels of corn to the acre. Let us suppose one of those Iowa farmers decides to plant 300 acres in corn and in order to save money he is going to plant only one cup of seed. He puts a few kernels of the corn in each far corner of the field, and the rest right in the middle of the field. Now, when October comes, how much harvest will he have? Very little! Why? Because very little seed was sown!

Some Christians are more "soil-inspectors" than sowers of seed. They say, "he is so poor he wouldn't be a responsible Christian" or "he is so rich he wouldn't have any interest in spiritual things." Others say, "He is already going to a church and I'm sure he wouldn't be interested," or "He is such an evil person you wouldn't be able to get him to listen to the gospel." "Soil-inspectors" seem to have a very difficult time finding anyone who they think will become a Christian. But soul-winners do just what Jesus says and sow the word of God into every heart, without concern about what type of soil it is.

## 2. *The Yield Is Dependent Upon the Type of Soil.*

Another attitude that is harmful to soul winners for Jesus is that it is their fault when someone they teach fails to respond to the gospel or, if they do become a Christian, falls away soon after. They blame themselves, asking, "What did I do wrong? What should I have taught him? etc.," not realizing that a person's response is dependent upon the condition of his heart. Jesus said some would have hard hearts so the seed would not grow in them, and others would have hearts filled with the cares and pleasures of the world so the word would be choked out of them. Certainly, there are

times when a teacher does not really teach or he may say or do something to cause a new Christian to stumble, but that does not happen often. Usually the reason for the lack of response or falling away is simply that the soil is not good soil!

When a soul winner asks, "What's wrong with me?" he might as well have asked, "What's wrong with the seed?" There is nothing wrong with either the sower or the seed. The soil just was not good. The soul winner's attitude should be: "I have done what Jesus said to do. I have sown the seed in love. I am saddened when the seed does not bear fruit. I am made happy when it does, but always I rejoice and am thankful that *I did* what Jesus told me to do."

## 3. *There Are More Who Desire to Hear God's Word Than There Are Soul-Winners.*

Jesus said: "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few" (Luke 10:2). I have found this to be true in every place and in every evangelistic effort with which I have been associated. From Portland, Oregon to Tupelo, Mississippi, and in many places in between I have seen again and again more people who wanted to hear the gospel than there were teachers to teach them. Christians should believe Jesus when he says the harvest is plentiful. We need to sow and reap. When the apostles came back from the city of Sychar with food they found Jesus talking to a Samaritan woman. They wanted to give him something to eat but he said to them: "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work. Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see how the fields are already white for harvest" (John 4:34, 35). Our attitude should be the same as Jesus' attitude. Look around, there are many, many people who want to hear the gospel. In more than thirty years of teaching and preaching the word of God I have always found this to be true: There are more people who want to hear God's word than there are those to bring it to them.



#### 4. *Those Who Teach What They Know—Reap Souls.*

That seems rather logical. If I teach anything, I have to teach what I know. But there are some Christians who truly believe that they need to get something like a Ph.D. degree in soul-winning before they start winning souls. It is good to learn methods of effective teaching and have a good knowledge of the scriptures, and everyone does need to study and become more proficient in teaching God's word in such a way that the lost will understand and be moved to obey Jesus. However, there is an attitude among some Christians that not everyone should try to be a personal worker or teacher, that if one does and makes a mistake, it will ruin the opportunity for someone else to teach that person. That may be true in extreme cases, but the real problem is so many of us have the opportunity and ability to reach out to others with the gospel and yet feel we are not qualified to do so.

I have seen literally scores of people obey the gospel who were taught by teen-agers and adults who had never taught anyone before. These "teachers" really had no experience, but they loved lost souls and told them what they knew and what Jesus had done in their own lives. They had become Christians, so they knew what one must do to be saved. Along with that they shared their joy and the peace that comes from being in Christ.

To be soul-winners for Jesus we must sow the seed in every heart. Even though we know that some will never obey God and that others will fall away, we should go ahead and tell everyone what we know about becoming a Christian and what Jesus has done for us, because Jesus said the harvest is plentiful and there will be those in whose hearts the seed will grow and produce fruit. We can then be happy and grateful that we have done our part in sowing the seed. John wrote: "And they have conquered him by the blood of the lamb and *by the word of their testimony*, for they loved not their lives even unto death" (Rev. 12:11).

#### "HE WHO BELIEVES IN ME SHALL NEVER THIRST" (John 6:35).

Jesus' statement means that there is a universal thirst that no amount of material wealth and physical pleasure can satisfy. This spiritual thirst is common to every human being. It can only be satisfied by that which Jesus gives. For this reason, the soul-winner can be effective in his work by offering to the thirsty those things spiritual which will satisfy. He must teach God's word to everyone he can.

I have learned that one of the best methods of reaching the thirsty is through Bible Correspondence Courses. In the past 25 years, I have had a part in enrolling 23,000 students, in grading their lessons, and in following-up on the enrollees. Recently, I have been responsible for producing (as a part of the Mid-North Mission Program of the College church in Searcy, Ark.) a new Bible correspondence course. The title for the series is *Water of Life*. Like the other materials (*Power, God Makes a Man, Jesus the King, Truth Series*) that were produced as a part of my mission in Iowa, the *Water of Life* lessons were developed for their own work and then made available to others. Our motivation to produce this new BCC was twofold. First, we saw the need for a series that would encourage the students to actually get into their Bibles. Many courses can be studied and the questions answered without the student really reading much of God's word. Secondly, since postage rates keep climbing, we saw the need to do something to keep the cost down per student so we would be able to get *more* students studying the Bible. This has been accomplished by the self-mailer type arrangement in *Water of Life*.

What do Bible Correspondence Courses have to do with our being soul-winners for Jesus? Just this, they are a tool to help us locate those who desire to study God's word and to give us a way of teaching through the mail many lessons that would not otherwise be taught.

My assignment for this class is to point out the impor-



tance of being soul-winners and to present the methods that I have been using in evangelizing. Since my work has been almost totally in new fields and with small struggling churches, I have used BCC's extensively.

Note how a BCC can be used and the advantages of the *Water of Life Series*:

### 1. *Cultivate the Soil.*

If Christians will go from house-to-house in a community and offer, a *free, undenominational* Bible course, they will enroll someone in from ten to fifteen per cent of the homes contacted. In Mitchell, S. D. in 1976, 600 were enrolled out of 3200 homes. This is typical whenever we go to every home in a city. In Davenport, Iowa over 3,000 were enrolled. In Des Moines, in 1968, 400 lessons were being sent in each week by some of the 2,800 students enrolled in the southern section of that city. The same is true this year in Albert Lea, Minn. where over 300 enrolled out of 1,600 homes. (At this writing only 20% of the homes in Albert Lea had been contacted.)

Those who study these lessons are having the word sown in their hearts. They are studying out of their own Bibles what God says about Jesus, the abundant life, death, worship, the Holy Spirit, etc. We have found that those who study the BCC lessons are very receptive to studying the Bible personally with us in their homes later on.

### 2. *Pre-locate the Good Soil.*

One of the most often heard objections to a Bible Correspondence Course is, "Only a small percentage ever complete the course." That is true. If our only purpose for enrolling people in such courses were to see how many of the enrollees would complete the course, then we would have to say such a method of reaching the lost is mostly ineffective. The BCC helps the soul-winner locate who is really interested in studying the Bible and in spiritual things. Those who do not finish the course are still good prospects.

Research that I have made, by using 8,000 BCC students

as a sample, show that close to 70% of the enrollees will say "yes" to a home Bible study. They have already said "yes" to taking the lessons in the first place. In Davenport, Iowa in 1967, 101 were baptized into Christ in six weeks. From the *Davenport Campaigner*, July 6, 1967, note the following short article: "Influence of the BCC: of the 80 baptized (to date), 45 were enrolled, 7 finished the BCC, 10 finished more than 2 lessons, 28 were enrolled but did not finish lessons." These 28 did say "yes" to a home study and were obedient to the gospel, even though they had not completed even one lesson. This indicates that enrollees in a Bible Correspondence Course are good prospects. They are interested in studying the Bible even though some never did get around to sending in a lesson. If we can get back to these enrollees within the first six months after their enrollment (better to go in three or four months), we have a good opportunity to encourage them to continue on with the BCC or to study the Bible with us personally.

### 3. *Water of Life BCC.*

A title that would have a pleasing effect on all prospective students was chosen from the scriptures for this new BCC. In Revelation, John writes: "I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost." And, "Let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost" (Rev. 21:6; 22:17).

*Water* is something we all need and enjoy being around. *Life* is something we want, especially the *good, abundant* life. In several cases titles for individual lessons have been chosen from the scriptures such as: *living water, beginning at Jerusalem, by one spirit baptized into one body, the kingdom of God*, etc. This also appeals to the student since we have as our sole purpose encouraging him to study God's Word and to do God's will.

The Water of Life lessons also call for feedback from the students. This is accomplished by providing a large space



for Questions and Comments. One thing that teachers and preachers desire from their students and audience is a response. This feedback is very important to the later response of a soul to the gospel. Students feel free to make comments and ask questions even though they have not yet made a personal acquaintance with you. About one out of six who send in lessons use this space, not only for questions and comments, but also to give referrals. One lady sent in 14 names. A couple sent in the names of six other couples.

Other unique things about the Water of Life lessons are that no envelope is required because it is a self-mailer, and the lessons are set in twelve point type and thus are easily readable even by the elderly.

Bible courses are good to encourage the thirsty to drink of the water of life. They help the soul-winner for Jesus to locate the thirsty and to prepare the soil for future studies.

#### CONDUCT YOURSELVES WISELY TOWARD OUTSIDERS (Col. 4:5)

It has been my privilege to work with as many as 142 Christians in a single week in a campaign for Christ. Cities are literally "turned upside down" when so many are out at the same time teaching God's word. However, each study is a "one on one" situation as the studies are usually arranged so that only two people (one, a "silent" partner) go into a home to teach a person or family there. The attitudes of the two going into the home can effect the response of those taught. The soul winner:

##### 1. *Expects Immediate Obedience.*

We read in many places in the book of Acts that those who were taught became Christians after just one lesson. This is true of the 3,000 on Pentecost, of the Ethiopian eunuch, and of the jailer and his household, etc. There is an important attitude to be gained here—that of expecting those who have learned what to do to be saved to do it immediately. In order to become a Christian, a person doesn't

need to know about the unscripturalness of instrumental music in worship nor the qualifications of elders. There are a lot of things he'll learn after he puts on Christ. Some may object for various reasons to what they have labeled "one-shot studies," but let us note that many who became Christians their first opportunity and how they then, through continued study, grew to maturity in Christ. All of us can cite examples from our own experiences of ones becoming Christians at the first study. During the past 16 years in area-wide campaigns, I have seen 20 times more people respond to God during home studies than at preaching services. Teach at the first setting all one needs to know to become a Christian, and expect him to obey God. Exhort him to "arise, and be baptized."

##### 2. *Knows God Makes the Seed Grow.*

Jesus said in Mark 4:26, 27 that "the kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed upon the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he knows not how." The rewards of seed sowing are exciting and re-assuring. The Lord is telling us in this scripture that there is something He is doing to bring about the harvest. He said the sower went to bed at night, night after night, and the word of God sprouted and grew. How many times do Christians get up-tight about their teaching work? We feel so self-important at times that we forget God has the greatest part in this soul-winning business. Paul said in I Corinthians 3:5, 6: "What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but *God gave the growth.*" After we do our part, God is the one who gives the growth. Jesus said: "*The earth produces of itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear*" (Mark 4:28). Christians who are soul winners are those who are diligent to plant and water and then depend on God to give the growth.



### 3. *Is Quick to Hear and Slow to Speak.*

A soul-winner for Jesus is one who is a good listener. He realizes he can learn from others and that he can know the needs others have if he'll be quiet and listen. Paul said: "If anyone imagines he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know" (1 Co. 8:2). Have you ever talked to someone you knew wasn't listening? What was your feeling toward him, especially when what you had to say was important to you? Sometimes in teaching a Christian will try to over-power the lost person with much speech and knowledge. But Christians should always be quick to listen, slow to speak, and ready to learn something himself (James 1:19).

### 4. *Speaks Graciously.*

Paul in Colossians 4:5, 6 also helps us in our attitudes and approaches as soul-winners. He wrote: "Walk in wisdom towards those who are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone." A soul-winner should be sure that the "bread of life" that he is bringing to the lost is presented in a tasty or palatable way. That is with kindness and consideration, not presenting himself, but Christ, to the outsider. He should be out-of-the picture as much as possible so that the learner will be seeing not him, but the love of Christ.

### 5. *Is Not Quarrelsome.*

The final passage we want to consider as soul winners is this: "And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to everyone, an apt teacher, forbearing, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth, and they may escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will" (2 Tim. 2:24-26).

There are Christians who believe that to convert someone to Christ, the soul-winner should really come down hard on a lost soul. In an Iowa campaign some years ago, a personal

worker was reporting on a study he had with a Methodist. He was explaining how he told this man that he needed to be immersed, and immersed for the forgiveness of his sins. He then said: "I really pinned that Methodist's ears to the wall." Whereupon Lloyd Deal said: "Have you ever seen anyone baptized with his ears pinned to the wall?"

God says that we *must not* be quarrelsome. We really have no choice as to whether or not we should have an argument with the one we are teaching. If a Christian does become quarrelsome, he may win an argument, but a soul will probably stay lost. The outsider is really opposing himself, but through his learning the truth from a kind, apt teacher, he may repent and escape from the devil. No matter how often our own person may be attacked or how loud and quarrelsome the outsider may become, the Christian is to be forbearing, correcting his opponent with gentleness.

In conclusion, soul-winners are those who know God's great part in causing the seed to grow, who teach all one needs to know to become a Christian to those outside of Christ, expecting them to obey the same hour of the day. They are quick to listen, apt teachers, kind, always speaking with grace and never quarrelsome. They are the means by which Jesus has souls saved and added to His body, the church. They are truly soul-winners for Jesus, because they are practicing the spiritual qualities and attitudes that Jesus has.



## STEWARDS OF OUR MINDS

JACK P. LEWIS

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## INTRODUCTION

In the parable of the talents the Lord suggested that men differ in abilities, that they are accountable to God for the way they use their ability, and that they lose what they do not use. It takes little observation to know that men differ widely in natural gifts. We meet the man unusually endowed in athletic, musical, artistic, mechanical, or business ability. We are not foolish enough to suppose that the Lord made men equal. Any teacher knows that the IQ span stretches from the retarded to the genius levels. An acquaintance of mine, working in a home for retarded children, said, "I am grateful for the idea that they will not have to account for what they do not have." Every good endowment is from God (James 1:16). The man who has been unusually endowed by the Lord through his parents deserves no more credit than the five talent man in the parable deserved for being entrusted with five talents. The intellectual did not earn his genius. It was given to him.

Not only are there different mental endowments for which the possessor did nothing, but there are also different opportunities to develop the mental endowment one does have. The man born with a silver spoon has an entirely different possibility from the man born to a subsistence existence. The man born in a free, affluent society has entirely different possibilities from the man in the totalitarian society, and has entirely different chances from the man born among the

masses of the Orient. One does not deserve credit for benefiting from a situation he did not create.

Finally, the fact that a person has persisted in pursuit of education until he has been awarded the highest degree does not necessarily imply that he is a good steward of his mental endowment. He may regard that attainment of a degree as the apex of the use of his faculties; what he does after the degree is the important thing.

## I. IT IS THE TRAINED MIND THAT SERVES THE LORD

The Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of those who by reason of use have their senses trained to discern between good and evil (Heb. 5:14). The musician can train his ear to recognize the slightest deviation in note and quality; the surgeon can train his hands and eye to do intricate repairs in surgery; and the artist can train himself to recognize minute differences in color and form. In like manner, the mind of every man is capable of almost limitless development.

No valid generalization can be made over how much formal training a specific individual ought to have and how he is to get it. There are outstanding self-trained people. In general, however, one is going to render a better service if he pursues formal education diligently to the extent of his mental endowment and to the extent that his circumstances will allow.

If the Lord requires that a man account for what he does with his time and his money, surely he will also expect him to account for what he does with his mental faculties. In the light of the fact that all of us have undeveloped potential, what I would like most to impress on every person about the stewardship of the mind is briefly told: "You can be better than you are!" Few people that render outstanding use of the mind reached their attainments solely "a doing what comes naturally." Thomas Edison said that genius is "two percent inspiration and 98 percent preparation."<sup>1</sup> Edi-

<sup>1</sup>Quoted in C. B. Wall, *Incandescent Services: Reader's Digest* 64 (April 1965): 165.



son's son said of his father, "Maybe he was a genius, but few men ever worked harder to be one." My own teacher Julius Levy retorted in heavy German accent to a student who had excused his failure by accusing Levy of being a genius, "But I was not born a genius. I got that vay by hard verk!" The poet said,

The heights by great men reached and kept  
Were not attained by sudden flight,  
But they, while their companions slept,  
Were toiling upward in the night.<sup>2</sup>

If all the evil that has been done through history out of ignorance were paraded before us, it would be a shocking array. The Jews are described as having zeal without knowledge (Rom. 10:1-7). Ignorant of God's righteousness, they sought to establish their own and failed to attain the righteousness of God (Rom. 10:3). Peter informs us that the Jews crucified Jesus in ignorance (Acts 3:17). Jesus's prayer for his murderers was on the basis "They know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Paul as a persecutor acted ignorantly in unbelief (1 Tim. 1:13). The Gentiles were alienated from God through ignorance (Eph. 4:18) and, before their obedience, lived in lust in their ignorance (1 Peter 1:14).

The invitation of the gospel is a call to the use of the mind—"Come learn of me" (Matt. 11:29). "Do you not perceive?" Jesus asked (Matt. 16:18). First-century evangelism was not a high grade "holy rollerism" which in pep rally fashion whipped men's emotions into a response but left their minds unconvinced. There is a reasoning element in Paul's evangelism. He was "explaining and proving that Jesus is the Christ" (Acts 17:13). He declares, "We persuade men" (2 Cor. 5:11), and "I speak as unto sensible men" (1 Cor. 10:15). These are invitations to intellectual exercises. In the parable of Jesus, when ones does not understand the word, the devil takes it away (Matt. 13:19).

<sup>2</sup>Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "The Ladder of St. Augustine." stanza 10.

Faith is an intellectual response to God's words and works recorded in scripture. In Scripture God discloses his mind to man's mind. "Come let us reason together," invites Isaiah (Isa. 1:18). Hosea lamented, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hos. 4:6). Though God hid his secrets from the wise and the prudent (Matt. 11:25), Jesus does not say that he revealed them to the ignorant. The Christian is admonished not to remain a babe, but to add to his faith knowledge, wisdom, and understanding (2 Peter 1:5, 6). He must "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). Paul prayed for the Colossians, "That you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding" (Col. 1:9). For the Ephesians, he prayed that "the eyes of the mind be enlightened" (Eph. 1:18, 19). The Christian should strive to give an answer for his hope to those who ask (1 Peter 3:15).

## II. STEWARDSHIP OF THE MIND REQUIRES CONTINUED STUDY

Great stress is placed today in all areas of activity upon continuing education. One must strive to maintain and upgrade his skills and knowledge across his entire career. One has said that drudgery is as essential in calling forth the treasures of the mind as harrowing and plowing are to bringing out the fruits of the earth.<sup>3</sup>

One's judgment is no better than his information. If one chooses preaching for his area of activity, he must continue to study and grow. He will be preaching to scientists, doctors, lawyers, teachers, and executives who are studying and growing in their own fields. One has said, "A minister behind the times may be a menace rather than a blessing to his flock."<sup>4</sup> Another said,

The minister is a surgeon with words; the scalpel can

<sup>3</sup>Margaret Fuller, quoted in *Reader's Digest* 87 (July 1965): 37.

<sup>4</sup>David Hubbard, Bulletin of Fuller Theological Seminary (April 1966). Cited in W. T. Purkiser, *The New Testament Image of the Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974, c. 1969), p. 64.



cut either to heal or to further endanger the patient. A pastor whose scalpel is either dull or rusty is guilty of theological malpractice.<sup>5</sup>

If one chooses teaching, the field of his teaching can be counted to change rapidly and if he does not study he will be left in the backwater. "He who does not increase his knowledge decreases it" (*M Aboth* 1:13). The rate of forgetting is so high that he who does not study each week, year in and year out, throughout his years of service will become gradually more and more incompetent. Yesterday's notes will not equip students for tomorrow's world.

In our society where the life expectancy, now averaging seventy years, is longer than ever before, it is important that plans be made that the mind be kept sharp and useable in these added years. While men reach their peak in almost all activities in the third and fourth decade of their lives,<sup>6</sup> some outstanding records have been made by older men. The Roman figure Cato began the study of Greek when in his eighties; John Milton was nearly seventy when he completed "Paradise Lost"; Cervantes finished the second part of *Don Quixote* at age sixty-eight; Winston Churchill was called back to the British government when he was seventy-seven; and Oliver Wendell Holmes continued in the Supreme Court to age ninety-one.

By knowledge the rooms are filled with precious and pleasant riches. . . . A man of knowledge is mightier than he who has strength (Prov. 24:4, 5).

### III. IT IS THE OBEDIENT MIND THAT BEST SERVES THE LORD

The mind is a two-edged sword that may be used either for God's service or for the devil's service. With it one can forge fetters of error that will keep men in error for generations. History has its list of heretics whom thinking men

<sup>5</sup>C. S. Calian, *Today's Pastor in Tomorrow's World* (N. Y.: Hawthorn Books Incorporated, 1977), p. 119.

<sup>6</sup>H. C. Lehman, *Age and Achievement* (Princeton: University Press, 1953), 359 pp.

would put in the category of those who used their minds to foster evil. The mind can devise diabolical schemes—as those of Marx, Mao, and Hitler did—which will bring suffering to man for generations.

The mind which serves the Lord is the mind renewed in the image of the Creator (Rom. 12:1; Eph. 4:23).

To set the mind on the flesh (*phronēma tēs sarkas*) is death but to set the mind on the Spirit (*phronēma tou pneumatos*) is life and peace. The mind set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law (Rom. 8:6, 7).

God gave the Gentiles who did not acknowledge him up to a base mind (Rom. 1:28). Their senseless minds were darkened (Rom. 1:21). The god of this world has blinded the mind (2 Cor. 4:4). They walk in the vanity of the mind (Eph. 4:17). To the corrupt and impure nothing is pure; their very minds and consciences are corrupted (Titus 1:15). Before turning to the Lord one is estranged and hostile in mind (Col. 1:21). By the continued life of sin one becomes of corrupt mind (1 Tim. 6:5; 2 Tim. 3:8).

The enemies of the renewed mind include the hardened mind. Paul notes that the Jewish minds were hardened (2 Cor. 3:14) so that they did not understand the Gospel. Our word for that situation is "closed" or "prejudiced." Its opposite is the receiving of the word with readiness of mind (cf. Acts 17:11).

The double mind—that is, the uncommitted mind or the divided mind—is an enemy to the renewed mind. The double-minded man is unstable in all his ways (James 1:8). The double-minded man must purify his heart (James 4:8).

The proud (cf. Rom. 1:20) mind is an enemy to the renewed mind. Paul recognizes a danger for the rich of being haughty (1 Tim 6:17). This term may be translated "swollen with conceit" (2 Tim. 3:4). All three of these passages where the term *hupsēlophronein* occurs were translated "high minded" in the KJV. Its opposite is humility of mind (Acts 20:19) or lowliness of mind (Phil. 2:3).



While all of us are dependent to some degree upon the learning of others, the renewed mind is the mind that has freed itself from being a prisoner to other men's minds. The mind which must know what position our brethren have always taken on a question before it makes a decision, or the mind that can always be counted on to line up with a well-known leader on any question, is a bound man. The relationship of the teacher to the pupil may result in a bondage of the mind rather than in the lighting of a torch that will burn on its own. I am reluctant to answer the pupil's question "What is your position?" not because I do not have a position and not because I am hesitant to make it known, but lest it should blind him. The student must think for himself! He must outgrow the teacher! The mind which solves every question by an appeal to what the so-called "authorities" say is not a free mind. The Samaritan people said to the woman,

It is no longer because of your words that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world (John 4:42).

The goal of our struggle in being stewards of the mind is to take every thought captive to obey Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). In our Bible study programs, we have often seen the boy or girl forced to attend as long as the parents had control of them but who rebelled at the earliest opportunity. We held their bodies in bondage, but we did not win their minds. Our programs are "brainwashing" programs with the goal to wash sin out of the mind and to replace it with God's law written on the mind and heart (Heb. 8:10). Our congregations apparently have many people who like those Elijah addressed are "limping between two sides," still in love with the present world. Stewardship of the mind calls for one to "seek first the Kingdom of God."

The Christian considers his mind a trust from God which he must preserve in as far as it is possible for him to do so. He will not willfully engage in actions that are known to cloud the mind and to reduce its capabilities. For this rea-

son he foregoes the use of alcoholic beverages and the use of drugs of all kinds—both stimulants and depressants—except when these are prescribed by a physician for medical purposes. The best mind housed in a broken body is greatly handicapped. The person interested in serving with his mind must look to the preservation of his health.

Not only must the Christian preserve his mind, but he also must use it and develop it to its full potentialities in the light of the opportunities the Lord gives him. The teachings of Jesus are teachings that appeal to both head and heart; hence, the command of God is that we love him with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind (Matt. 22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27).

The Christian protects his mind from the ravages wrought by the filth of society. "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7). Salacious literature, X-rated movies, strip shows, and other filth and trash are paraded on the television, on the news stands, and on the streets of all our cities. Lot was vexed by the filthy life with which he was surrounded in Sodom (2 Peter 2:7). Though he may personally have escaped corruption, evil moved into the lives of those nearest him more than he probably was aware. The heart must be kept with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life (Prov. 4:23). The mind must be safeguarded by diligent study from God-denying systems and from the ravages wrought by error of all sorts. The energies of the mind can be expended on idle gossip, on that which is vicious, and on that which is lawless. The Christian seeks to center his mind on the things that are honorable, just, pure, lovely, gracious, excellent and worthy of praise (Phil. 4:8). Paul prays that the heart and mind of the Philippians will be kept in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:7).

#### IV. IT IS THE SERVING MIND THAT GLORIFIES GOD

The mind that serves the Lord must not only be trained and renewed in the image of God, it must also be diligently applied to God's causes. The areas in which the mind can



be applied are as wide as the universe itself and as diverse as are the personalities of men. At the beginning God gave Adam the command, "fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen. 1:28). When one improves the lot of his fellowman, he serves the God who made man. The great medical discoveries came by the application of the trained mind to the problems of suffering bodies. A new day dawned when the idea of anesthesia entered the mind of Sir Humphrey Davy, when the idea of blood circulation dawned on Harvey, when Louis Pasteur discovered a cure for rabies, when Madam Curie discovered radium, when Roentgen discovered X-ray, and when Jonas Salk removed the fear of polio from the lives of our children. The discovery of even such a lowly thing as aspirin by Dresser glorified God, who made man in his own image, by the alleviating of the pains of suffering humanity.

There are those who have devoted their minds to the mechanical problems of the world. Their invention, whether the lowly safety pin, the zipper, or a mighty bridge linking two continents together, was first a dream of the mind which then through skilled hands came into reality. There are those like Galileo who worked out the law of falling bodies or like Newton who discovered the law of gravity upon which others could build their discoveries. How the life of mankind was changed when Bessemer invented a process for making steel; when Nobel came up with dynamite; when the Wright brothers made their airplane fly and changed the pattern of transportation for all times: when Carrier invented air-conditioning; when Bell gave the world the telephone; and when Edison gave the electric light and the phonograph! These and thousands of other inventions have alleviated the drudgery of men's lives. The invention of the printing press, the radio, and television not only changed life, but they greatly influenced the way men can communicate God's word to others. The minds that put together the essentials of the computer system changed life on this earth for all time. These are only a few examples of what men have done in the

stewardship of the mind. They all glorify the God who implanted within us a mind like his own mind. We only think his thoughts after him.

Ezra came back from captivity to study the Law of the Lord, to do it, and to teach his statutes and ordinances in Israel (Ezra 7:10). The teachers of society serve the Lord with their minds. One cannot teach what he does not know. He must first learn, and then he can teach. His profession is one of the poorer paying professions of our society; there is, however, a need for teaching by skilled teachers in all areas and at all levels from kindergarten on through graduate school. In most cases the student is not going to be better than he is taught to be. In the Christian school we are interested not only in the teacher who knows but also in the teacher who does. We seek teaching both by word and deed.

Webster said,

If we work upon marble, it will perish. If we work upon brass, time will efface it. If we rear temples they will crumble into dust. But if we work upon men's immortal minds, if we imbue them with high principles, we engrave on those tablets something no time can efface, and which will brighten to all eternity.<sup>7</sup>

A young woman, graduate of our school, who had acquired knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, got a vision of translating the Bible into some of the one thousand or more dialects into which it has never been translated. There is a great need for capable minds to work on translations—both for those who have never had a translation before and also in the improvement of those now existing. This sort of work is a service of God rendered by the mind.

The work of preaching is one of the great ways in which a man can be a good steward of his mind. Preaching is an effort by which one uses his mind to try to reach other minds for Christ. I am persuaded that we who preach underestimate the mental effort it takes to win the minds of men. One

<sup>7</sup>Daniel Webster, Speech, Faneuil Hall, 1852, quoted in *Reader's Digest* 117 (June 1980): 41.



has said, "Piety can in no wise be a substitute for the refining fire of exacting intellectual discipline."<sup>8</sup> Another has said, "Men who die mentally in the ministry are not murdered . . . they commit suicide."<sup>9</sup> It is a widespread evaluation of our pulpit efforts that today's people are greatly bored with the preaching. Calian observes,

It has been my observation both in small and large congregations that the laity on the whole are suffering from respectful boredom with most of today's preaching.<sup>10</sup>

There is many a preacher who spends his time talking about his family's activities, about his own activities of the week, about programs he admires that the brotherhood in general is carrying on because that is all he knows to talk about. Out of the abundance of his heart his mouth speaks. He has not studied and thought enough to speak of anything else. There is many a discouraged preacher whose people are dissatisfied with his efforts who would cure his problem with a serious program of study which would give him something to say. Just as a skilled lawyer wins his cases by the work he had done in his study before he goes into the courtroom, so the preacher determines his success or failure by the preparation he has made before he enters the pulpit. The glib tongue cannot take the place of hard study. The fact that an audience listens respectfully and says nice things as they shake the preacher's hand does not mean that they have been truly benefited. If one is to be a good steward of his mind in preaching, he must strive to equip and educate the mind, challenge and educate the will and then speak to the heart of his people.

The field of writing demands a stewardship of the mind. The proverb reminds us that "the Pen is mightier than the

<sup>8</sup>R. M. Bender, "On Being a Christian Professor," *The Christian Scholar* (June 1957): 124.

<sup>9</sup>Bishop Kennedy, "We Never Had It So Good," *Pulpit Digest* 40/no. 261 (January 1960): 15.

<sup>10</sup>C. S. Calian, *Today's Pastor in Tomorrow's World*, p. 13.

Sword."<sup>11</sup> Books have changed the course of history. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is said to have started the Civil War and to have freed the slaves. Alexander Haley's *Roots* changed society; the world will never again be like it was before.

In my introductory courses to the Old and New Testaments, I regularly point out to my students that there are programmatic books—books that define the status of certain questions and point to the new avenues of investigation. Many books merit only one reading and are soon out of print. The writers make no new contribution but merely restate the case they have borrowed from those who went before them. There are other books, however, like Karl Barth's *Commentary on Romans*, B. H. Streeter's *The Four Gospels*, and C. H. Dodd's *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* which turn men's minds to new patterns of thought. If these new patterns break the shackles of error and point men to paths of truth, then that author has served both God and man with his mental endowments.

Books like Augustine's *Confessions* and his *City of God* molded thought for centuries after Augustine's day, and their influence is not yet dead. Not all in them is truth, but they still merit a reading. Jerome used his scholarly bent to learn the Greek and Hebrew languages and to prepare a new Latin Bible for the church of his day. For a thousand years when men in the Western World read the Bible, they read it in the form Jerome had given them. The English Bible and English religious languages have been heavily influenced by Jerome's vocabulary. There is hardly a serious religious question that one can investigate in depth without encountering ripples in the sea of learning stirred by Jerome.

Erasmus in preparing his Greek New Testament furnished the tool upon which all the reformation leaders built their work. One said of him, "Erasmus gave his life to 'serv-

<sup>11</sup>Logan Pearsall Smith, *In Church*.



ing God' by advancing knowledge."<sup>12</sup> Tyndale opened the Bible to English readers by his translation.

One may think of the tools upon which men depend daily. What would the New Testament students do today without either the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament or the Nestle Greek New Testament? What would he do without the Bauer lexicon? What without the Blass, Debrunner, and Funk Greek Grammar? What a service it was when Alexander Cruden set himself to the task of preparing a concordance so that men could locate specific verses in the Bible! One said of F. L. Cross's *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, "I don't know how we got along without it." How would one find his way through the sources of Church history without Johannes Quasten's volumes on *Patrology*? Take the dictionaries in any language you can work in and ask how we could do without them. The framers of indices not only serve man, but they also serve God with their minds in their work. Someone must conceive of all of these tools and then set his mind to the task of preparing them.

In our own circles, Alexander Campbell greatly influenced the movement through his *Christian System*, his *Millennial Harbinger*, his *Living Oracles*, and his numerous debates. Many generations after J. W. McGarvey's death when men of the church want to get information on the book of Acts, it is to McGarvey's *Commentary on Acts* that they turn; and when they want to know about Bible Lands, they speak of his *Lands of the Bible*, McGarvey's commentary has influenced men far more than all the sermons he ever preached.

A book that is worth reading does not roll off the pen automatically. The author has to have been preparing himself for years before the idea of the book ever surfaces in his mind. He has to have acquired the tools to work in the area he is to write on; he has to have acquired the skills needed

<sup>12</sup>P. S. Allen cited in E. H. Harbinson, *The Christian Scholar*, p. viii.

for consolidating the information he has gained, then the idea of a book may dawn in his consciousness. But the book is not yet complete. His material must be worked and reworked. In the British Museum there are on display three handwritten copies of Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" which he wrote in the process of getting the elegy just as he wanted it. It was probably written over a period of eight years. Lincoln made five copies in getting his Gettysburg Address as he wanted it. Those who guide men to light and truth through their written words serve the Lord with their minds; those who seduce men into error serve the devil.

#### CONCLUSION

Apart from the mind of man both the earth and its animals would have remained across the millennia pretty much as the Creator made them. It is the mind discharging its stewardship that has turned the wilderness into a civilized place. No man can tell you what service the Lord demands of you in the stewardship of your mind. The Lord said, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). How much of that truth do you want to know? Most of us are strongly tempted to be content with producing two talents where five are expected. One has suggested that eighty percent of the mind goes unused. We have not yet been made perfect. We have not yet attained the goal.

Like all other activities the stewardship of the mind has its counterfeits which confuse obtuseness with depth of thought and which confuse dryness with carefulness of scholarship and which suppose that the use of big words shows intellectual capability. If one really knows a subject, he can talk in terms that all can understand.

The true steward of his mind knows that what he has been able to learn is infinitesimal when placed beside the learning that there is in the world. His mind is nothing beside the mind of God. At times he must confess with Job,



I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me which I did not know (Job 42:3). As Irenaeus pointed out in the second century, "It does not follow because men are endowed with greater and less degrees of intelligence, that they should change the subject matter of the faith itself. . . ." <sup>13</sup>

The small light which a scholar has is a treasure in an earthen vessel—a treasure entrusted him for the removing of the darkness so that those who walk in gloom may see the great Light.

<sup>13</sup>Irenaeus *Against Haeresies* I.10.3.

## STEWARDS OF OUR SOULS

BILL LAMBERT

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We commonly think that the stewardship of souls extends only to preachers and elders, and that it is accomplished completely through teaching doctrines and forcing conformity to a set of laws through disciplinary sanctions. It does indeed involve these people and these methods, but it involves abundantly more.

I will not be able to deal with every aspect of the stewardship of souls in this speech, therefore I will briefly deal with who the stewards of souls are, over whose souls they are stewards, and the avenues of this stewardship. I shall deal in more detail with the means used by our Lord in his stewardship of souls, and relate these to some of the more crucial problems of our time concerning the souls of others and our duty to them.

No, stewardship of souls is not simply some ecclesiastical authority setting forth some external corpus of rules of faith and practice and enforcing them upon their particular organization. It involves every Christian everywhere, becoming involved everyday, wherever he is, under all circumstances: at work, at play, and at worship. It involves teaching the gospel, extending warm love, giving self, living the good life, sharing our joy, praying for one another, doing Christian work, confessing that Christ is the source of all



this good, and telling others the gospel plan by which they can share in this more abundant life.

Stewardship of souls is saving the lost and keeping the saved saved. All Christians are stewards of souls, since every Christian is obligated to teach the lost and we are obligated to encourage, build one another up and bear one another's burdens. Preachers, elders, teachers and parents have a special ministry to special groups. We have, therefore, been made stewards over our own souls, the souls of our families, neighbors, brethren and all souls in all the world. We exercise our stewardship through our homes, our Christian life, Christian fellowship, and world evangelism.

As with the Chief Shepherd who came to seek and save the world, the means of our stewardship are revealed truth and God's grace working through us. The use of truth involves teaching the Word by precept and example, involving every disciple in Christian service, and enforcing this system through discipline. The manifestation of God's grace involves accepting one another through forgiveness and helping one another to become better. This involves a warm and loving fellowship through which we share one another's burdens and build one another up. Preachers and elders train church members and assist them as they engage in a universal Christian evangelism and a mutual ministry to each other.

The words "steward" and "stewardship" are used only in about five passages in the Old Testament scriptures and in thirteen passages in the New Testament. The Old Testament words are *ben mesheq bayith* and *iysh 'asher al bayith*, meaning respectively "son of acquisition of my house" and "a man who is over his house." The former phrase is translated "steward of my house" in the KJV and "heir of my house" in the RSV, and the latter is translated "the steward of Joseph's house" in the KJV and RSV (Gen. 15:2; 43:19).

The New Testament word is *oikonomos*, which is taken from the classical *oikos* (a house) and *nemō* (to arrange,

allot, distribute, pasture). In the New Testament it means one who keeps the order of the house or allots and distributes the house or possessions of another.

The English word "steward" is from the Anglo Saxon *stigweard* or literally "styward." A sty is a pen for cattle or swine, and a ward is one who guards or administers. Thus, a steward is a supervisor, administrator or manager who takes care of another's possessions. A steward not only has charge of the possessions of another, but he will be called to account for how he has discharged his duties or will give account for that which is placed in his charge.

Soul is translated from the Old Testament word *nephesh*, which is used 752 times and translated 44 different ways, which are all related in some way.

The New Testament word for soul is *psuchē*. It is used 105 times and translated "life" or "lives" (40 times), "soul" (58 times), "mind" (3 times), "you" (1 time), "heart" (1 time), "us" (1 time) and "heartily" (1 time). Scholars of both testaments say the words for soul have the following meanings which are all related to or are manifestations of life (*Zoē*): (1) natural life, (2) the immaterial part of man, (3) the disembodied man, (4) the seat of personality, (5) that which perceives, reflects, feels, desires, (6) the seat of will and purpose, (7) the seat of appetite, (8) persons, individuals, (9) the equivalent of the personal pronoun, (10) an animate creature, human or other, (11) the inward man.

In this speech concerning the stewardship of souls we will deal with that part of man which learns moral and altruistic principles, that which is conscious of God and His work and responds to Him, and the eternal spirit of man.

It is the inner man which determines behavior. As man thinks in his heart so is he (Prov. 23:7), and the faith in our inner man gives us victory over the world (I John 5:4). Jesus said that from the good treasure of our hearts comes forth good deeds and from the evil treasure proceeds evil



(Matt. 12:34, 35). Thus, stewardship of souls has to do with man's moral behavior and relationship to society.

It is the spirit of man and its relationship to God or its awareness of God's grace, love, and law that lifts him above the animalistic and heightens the quality of his existence into a more abundant life (John 10:10; 14:6). Thus, our stewardship of souls relates to the quality of life realized by God's people.

The eternal nature of man enables him to have an existence beyond this world. His knowledge of and response to the gospel will determine whether he lives eternally in heavenly bliss or in the damnation of hell (Heb. 5:9; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Acts 20:32; James 1:21; Rom. 1:16, 17). Because of this, our stewardship of souls is related to where those around us will be eternally. Thus, we assert that our stewardship of souls involves our responsibility for the behavior, the joy of living, and the eternal welfare of our fellowmen.

Although *oikonomos* is not directly applied to all Christians, the duties bound upon all and the accounting which all must give implies that we are all stewards of souls. The talents in the parable of Jesus embrace all abilities and opportunities for doing good and influencing others for God (Matt. 25). We are, therefore, stewards of souls to the extent of our opportunities, abilities, and authority to influence their behavior, quality of life and eternal destiny. Our responsibility for our own souls and a universal Christian ministry to the lost and to one another point to the stewardship of every Christian over his own soul and the souls of other people.

Every one of us shall give account of himself to God (Rom. 14:12). He who heeds the Word of God regarding salvation and conduct shall deliver his soul, but the blood of the heedless shall be upon his own head (Ezek. 33:4, 5). We must each appear before the judgment seat of Christ and receive judgment according to what we have done in the flesh (2 Cor. 5:10). Repentance requires that we each take

a critical look at our thoughts, feelings and deeds, in the light of the Word of the Lord, and make the changes necessary in becoming what we ought to be (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30; Jonah 3:10).

Making disciples is a stewardship of souls. Since this is the obligation of every disciple (Matt. 28:19, 20), every Christian has a stewardship over the souls of all whom he has opportunity and the ability to influence. This and other statements of the great commission establish a universal ministry of evangelism among Christians (Luke 24:47-49; Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 1:8).

When we think of Christianity as something that takes place in a church building on Sunday morning, we have grossly missed the mark. When we think of evangelism only in terms of a professional class of preachers or personal workers, a major harm is done, and by thus minimizing the evangelistic responsibility of other men and women some of the brightest talent in the church is wasted, and some of our greatest evangelistic opportunities are squandered. Every Christian is first a minister of Christ (Matt. 6:33), then a doctor, lawyer, farmer, teacher, etc., and the office, factory, parlor, etc. are the principal places for evangelistic activity. Christians are likened to leaven and salt, because we should affect everyone with whom we come in contact (Matt. 13:33; 5:13-16). All who are taught the gospel must teach others, and they, others, *ad infinitum* (2 Tim. 2:2). We must have a significant number of Christians with a true and relevant faith, who are willing to live by it and share it through love and teaching, or we will fail in evangelism.

The mutual ministry of Christians is evidenced by the use of the reciprocal pronoun "one another" in the New Testament. It is used 100 times (58 times excluding the Gospels) with Paul using it 40 times. When all the "one another" exhortations are classified, they can be grouped around approximately 12 significant actions Christians are to take toward "one another." We are told as members of one an-



other (Rom. 12:5) to be devoted to one another (Rom. 12:10), accept one another (Rom. 15:7), admonish one another (Rom. 15:14), greet one another (Rom. 16:16), serve one another (Gal. 5:13), bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2), submit to one another (Eph. 5:21), encourage one another (I Thess. 5:11), and more.

Our mutual ministry is evident in that we are referred to as a body and as a family (Rom. 12:4, 5; I Tim. 3:15). Paul says that the church must build itself up by every member supplying his part (Eph. 4:14-16).

There are some special ministries which are assigned to particular people. Husbands and wives have special Christian duties to each other to bring joy, ease the burdens of life and help each other to get to heaven (Gen. 2:18, 24; Eph. 5:22-31). Parents have special duties to their children relevant to their being brought up in the Lord (Eph. 6:4; Prov. 29:15; I Thess. 2:11; Heb. 12:7).

We are instructed that within a reasonable time every Christian ought to be a teacher (Heb. 5:12), but one should not be a teacher until he is prepared for the task (James 3:1, 2). In the first century church there were particular people who had a special ministry of teaching (Acts 13:1; I Cor. 12:28, 29; Eph. 4:11), and there are special instructions regulating this ministry (I Tim. 1:3; 2:12; 4:11; 6:2, 3; 2 Tim. 2:24; Titus 2:4). One of the most common words in the New Testament used to describe the process of spreading the gospel is "teach" (*didasko*).

Preachers have a heavy responsibility for the souls of men. Without preachers men cannot hear, believe, and be saved (Rom. 10:13-17), and Paul said, "for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel (I Cor. 9:16b). The preacher is charged to preach the gospel under all conditions; to reprove, rebuke and exhort with all long suffering and doctrine (2 Tim. 4:1, 2). Preachers are called "stewards of the mysteries of God," who must be faithful to their charge (I Cor. 4:1, 2).

Elders are called stewards of God (Titus 1:7), and they watch for men's souls, as those who must give account (Heb. 13:17). They are over Christians (I Thess. 5:12); rule congregations (I Tim. 5:17); oversee the flock (Acts 20:28), and must give account to the Chief Shepherd for their work (I Pet. 5:4).

There are two basic means through which souls are reached for Christ and kept. As the Chief Shepherd (Steward) came to seek and save mankind (Luke 19:10), he came with two basic things: grace and truth (John 1:14, 17). It is truth that makes us free (John 8:32), and truth is the standard of conduct which is required of his disciples (John 17:17). However, truth without grace has failed to save man, because the weakness of his flesh makes him unable to save himself and demands a savior (Rom. 8:3; Eph. 2:8, 9). Christ is our Lord, in that he governs our conduct through the Word. Man had a Lord under the Law, but he needs a savior. Through his grace Jesus makes possible the fellowship of believers and their fellowship with God (I John 1:7-10; Rom. 3:23-27). Our stewardship of souls involves these two elements.

We cannot reach the lost, change their behavior, nor help them to get to heaven without preaching the truth and enforcing it through discipline. However, as we teach and uphold the truth we must manifest the grace of God to our fellowmen.

The common idea that true stewardship of souls is achieved through teaching the law and forcing people into conformity through criticism and isolation is not effective. Truly, the rebellious are to be rebuked and deprived of fellowship (I Cor. 5; 2 Thess. 3), but the weak Christian, in his struggle to come from the pits of sin to Christian excellence, must have help; he must have the forgiveness and loving nurture of grace.

Christians make two common mistakes; we tend to think that we cannot be both faithful to truth and outstanding in



the grace of Christian love, and that to love sinners requires us to condone sin. Jesus combines an uncompromising commitment to truth and warm loving relationships, when he tells us to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:30, 31). He came with a fullness of grace and truth combined (John 1:17), and he tells us to combine the two by "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15). God extends his love to both saint and sinner, in that he gave his son for the world (John 3:16), not being selective with his love. He even gave Christ to die for us while we were yet sinners (Rom. 5:7, 8).

The grace of love must be evident before we are able to reach the souls of the World, and it must be real and warm for us to be able to keep them. People are looking for someone to love them, accept them and help them to become better, and they "don't care how much we know until they know that we care." The multitudes didn't come to Jesus because they knew that he was the Messiah, the Son of God; they came to him because he cared; he then convinced them that he was the Son of God. Christ didn't come into the world to condemn us but to save us and bring us into fellowship with the Father (John 3:17). We likewise preach the truth because of our love for the lost, therefore, we must manifest God's grace through gentleness and loving service. By this others are convinced that what we preach is real, not mere theory, and by this they will be motivated to act upon what we teach. Let us never cause them to feel that we teach the truth in their world of error just to condemn and exclude them.

None of us wants to be with people who don't love us, and if love is not evident in the church, we tend to drift from it looking for warmth and acceptance. The church should be a refuge from the coldness and trouble of the world; not the greatest trouble we have in the world.

Since love (*agapē*) is from God and is the essential nature

of God (I John 4:7, 8), our love shows God to the world (I John 4:12), and proves to the world that we are truly disciples of Christ (John 13:34, 35). We Christians should love our neighbors as ourselves (Mark 12:31) and the brethren enough to die for them (John 13:34, 35; I John 3:16); Christ loved us and gave himself for us (Gal. 2:20).

In this stewardship of souls we communicate a person, a way of life, and a quality of life from our lives to the lives of others. Paul tells us that if we don't show love toward one another we communicate no more than the meaningless gong or clanging cymbal and our superior knowledge and eloquent speech amounts to nothing (I Cor. 13:1, 2).

The ecumenical desire of some Christians has caused them to forget the necessity for Biblical Authority. Some who emphasize Bible authority are selective as to which Scripture they observe. Many owe more to their culture and traditions than to the Bible, and some even seek to bind their culture and traditions upon others. We must learn to preach by the authority of the Scripture and live under the authority of the Scripture, and we must allow others the same privilege.

Anyone who rejects the Authority of Scripture cannot have fellowship with God nor with the people of God. The prophet says that our iniquity (rejection of God's authority) will separate us from God, and sin will turn his face and stay his helping hand from us (Isa. 59:1, 2). It was man's turning from God's authority, to his own way, that caused him to be lost (Isa. 53:6). To go onward, remove oneself from the authority of Christ's teaching, destroys any claim to fellowship with God (2 John 9). All who choose the traditions or commandments of men over the Word of God have a vain religion (Mark 7:7). We must all give Christ place in our hearts as the Lord (one who controls) of our lives (I Peter 3:15), but it is not enough just to say Lord, Lord, since we must do His will (Matt. 7:21; Luke 6:46). We cannot be our own Lord, because it is not within man's right, nor ability to direct his own steps (Jer. 10:23).



God does not require perfection of us, but he does require that we submit to the authority of the Scripture in all things (Col. 3:17). Since God requires submission to the authority of His Word, we must do our best to know His will, because one who doesn't try to know what He requires does not care about His Authority. These, like Jannes and Jambres, are ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth, because they are reprobate concerning the faith and resist the truth (2 Tim. 3:7, 8). We must always be loyal to the truth.

Truth is absolute and subject to being understood (John 8:32). Although, as there is none who perfectly conforms to God's standard, there is none who understands all things perfectly, the weakness is in us and not in the system of truth (Rom. 3:10, 11). There are some things which are hard to be understood (2 Pet. 3:16), some are less endowed with natural ability to understand than others (Mt. 25), some have further to come than others, and some by reason of time, are less mature than others (2 Peter 2:2). Some, who because of time, should be mature (Heb. 5:12), are babes because they are reprobate (refuse to search for and consider evidence) and resist the truth (2 Tim. 3:7, 8). Some seem to think that taking time to gather adequate data or evidence to warrant a conclusion is a sign of weakness and is essentially compromise, while others imply that indecision is a sign of scholarship. Some insist that others should take a stand without adequate study or that we should take an immediate stand on every issue as though we know everything, while others seem to imply that we cannot know anything nor stand for anything. Although we can know that which is clearly revealed, we will never completely master God's revelation, because it is the Holy Spirit's revelation of the infinite, omniscient mind of God. Thus, the greatest of us remains in need of grace.

The faithful in Christ, having been baptized into him (Gal. 3:27), have forgiveness by the blood of Christ (Eph.

1:7). Since this cleansing is continual (I John 1:7), and their sins are not charged against them (Rom. 4:8), there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ and walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh (Rom. 8:1, 4). These have not rejected the authority of the Bible, but simply do not understand or consent to what they are doing (Rom. 7:14, 15). Since no one can say, "I have not sinned" nor "I have no sin," the Christian will sin, although he is walking in the light (I John 1:7-10). Although his actions are sinful (I John 1:8, 10; 5:17), his sins are not unto death (I John 5:17) or do not cause him to be separated from or rejected by God, because Christ makes intercession continually and doesn't charge these sins against him (I John 1:7; 2 Cor. 5:19; Heb. 7:25).

Although we are not perfect in understanding nor in deed, God accepts us, because we are in Christ and submit ourselves to the authority of His Word. Since He shed His blood to keep us cleansed of sin, Christ lovingly and gently keeps us in His grace and tries to bring us to a more perfect understanding and more perfect manner of life, while refusing to partake of or condone our false ideas and mistakes. Therefore, while we must not consciously have part in nor condone one another's false ideas and mistakes, we must accept one another with love and gentleness, seeking to help one another to a better understanding and more perfect way of life, where there is evidence of a submission to the Authority of the Scripture.

Christ, full of both grace and truth, is truly our example in regard to the problem of tolerance and intolerance of Christians who sin and err. The above Scripture principles point toward the balance of accepting one another, even the weak and less learned (Rom. 14:1; 15:7), while firmly standing for, contending for, and teaching the truth. We must keep the proper balance of tolerance and intolerance regarding the ignorant, misled, rebellious and false views of truth. We know that Christ is tolerant and accepting to-



ward the Christian who is imperfect in knowledge and deeds, because he has been baptized into him and seeks to live under the authority of the Scripture as well as he can. But he is tolerant toward all sin and error, does not accept the unbaptized, and rejects those who refuse to abide by the Authority of his Word. Thus, in him, we have the supreme model in the matter of tolerance and intolerance as stewards of both souls and truth.

Even though we are to accept our brethren as Christ also accepts us (Rom. 15:7) we are not to have fellowship with their unfruitful works of darkness (i.e. misunderstandings of the Word, or deeds which are out of harmony with the Word), but we must reprove them (Eph. 5:11; I Tim. 5:22). Since Christ came to reveal the truth as well as to extend grace, we must teach the truth as we manifest his grace (John 1:14, 17; Eph. 4:15). While manifesting grace and tolerance and bearing gently with the weak and those who are misled, we must be intolerant toward sin and error, as our Lord is (Jude 23; Rev. 2:6).

Those who are not in Christ (Eph. 1:3, 7) and whose faith is not submissive to the authority of Christ (Gal. 5:6; James 2:19-26) have no promise of acceptance to fellowship in grace and spiritual blessings, forgiveness of past sins nor of continual cleansing by the blood of his grace. Even those in Christ have the sacrifice of Christ withheld from them if they make a willful practice of sin (Heb. 10:26), because they have rejected the authority of his Word.

Although we are not to be chronic critics of others (Mt. 7:1), we are to withdraw from those who walk disorderly (2 Thess. 3:6, 14), reprove them before all (I Tim. 5:20), and deliver them to Satan, because they have rejected the authority of Christ and his truth by making a deliberate practice of sin. Though one keep the whole law but reject the authority of God by deliberately yielding to the practice of sin in one point, he is guilty of all (James 2:10; 4:17).

Since the Lord requires no more nor accepts less than we

are able, do we have a right to require more or approve less of one another than we are able (Matt. 25:14ff)? Since Christ receives us by His grace and forgiveness, our ignorance and imperfections notwithstanding (Rom. 15:7), should we not, as brethren in Christ, and on the same basis of grace and forgiveness, accept one another, even with our ignorance and imperfections? Since God only requires that we be sincerely baptized into Him (Rom. 6:17, 18), search the Scriptures for the truth, and live within the authority of the Word as best we can, do we have a right to require more or less of each other?

Since God requires each of us to search the Scriptures (Acts 17:11) and prove all things (I Thess. 5:21) by his Word, in an effort to make "the faith" our faith, shall we not allow one another this privilege? Since God has taught us, by word and example, to be intolerant toward sin and error (Eph. 5:11), can we be faithful and neglect to seek opportunities to instruct one another (I Thess. 5:14, 15)? Since the Scriptures require us to discipline those who rebel against the authority of Christ (2 Thess. 3:6; Matt. 18:15-17; I Cor. 5), are we obedient as God's stewards if we refuse to practice the same.

Since we are required to prove all things (seek adequate evidence for a rational decision) (I Thess. 5:21), can we be faithful stewards and make judgments, approve or condemn doctrines, works, or persons without first seeking the facts in every matter? Since it is a demonic doctrine and work to bind where God imposed no form but granted freedom (I Cor. 7:8, 25, 36-38; 8:8; 10:25-31; Rom. 14:1-4; I Tim. 4:1-3), or to loose and grant freedom where God did impose form (Matt. 16:18, 19; 2 John 9), shall God's stewards dare require more or less than He did or make opinion a test of fellowship?

Since Jesus has taught us never to approach our fellowman and his problems with a motive to condemn and cast stones rather than with a purpose to save him (cf. John



8:3-11), do we dare take on the spirit of the Scribes and Pharisees? Shall we, who organically have no ecclesiastical authorities, allow such to exist in fact by administering sanctions against those who are committed to the authority of the Bible but have a problem of understanding in regard to some difficult matter, and are not in conformity with our thinking on such matters? Shall we force others to draw a premature conclusion and take a premature stand in order to conform to our, often poorly founded, conclusions, and take away their right to collect and reason upon Biblical evidence as they move toward greater maturity.

Is it the Christian steward's purpose to take sides on every issue and get into the fight whether he has adequate evidence or not, or is it his role to seek, above all things, to know the truth, arrived at on the basis of adequate evidence and proper rational thought, and impart it to all in the love and grace of Christ? Is it the role of the teacher and preacher to know all of the answers and impart them to his students, or is it his role to teach his hearers (students) how to investigate the Scriptures, gather evidence from the total of the Scriptures, and to reason adequately upon the total context and know the conclusion warranted by the Scriptural evidence? Truly, we must be among the mature and have a good grasp of truth, but we will never be perfect nor understand everything, because we are human and not gods. Although we must be such good students of the Word that our auditors respect our judgments and teaching, they must be taught to look to God's Word as the final source of truth, lest they become slaves to the doctrines and commandments of men.

Although some, in their desire for unity, seem to minimize the necessity of preaching by and living under the authority of the Scriptures, let us never be selective in our submission nor mistake our opinions, our cultural preferences, or our traditions for Scripture. Let us always remember that we can never restore New Testament Christianity nor help

souls to mature by forcing conformity to our own views but only by insisting upon, encouraging, and assisting others in a study of the Scriptures and submission to its authority. Where there is sufficient Biblical evidence, a respect for Biblical authority, and a sufficient love for each other, this desired growth and conformity will follow.

Let us combine an uncommon love for one another and an uncompromising commitment to truth. Let us maintain the unity of the Spirit and bond of peace while standing for the truth. Let us not lay burdens upon others that we could not bear ourselves nor make demands which Christ doesn't require of us. Let us maintain an atmosphere conducive to Biblical searching and communication about what is indeed God's truth. Let us be careful to discern between problems over Biblical authority and differences of understanding on difficult Biblical questions.

Let us labor to avoid the two prevalent extremes and crimes against Christ and the Church. Avoid liberalism which is not concerned with Biblical authority, but grants everyone a right to his own belief in matters of faith. Avoid treating sincere Christians who are imperfect in knowledge and deeds, or who don't conform to all of our conclusions, as if they are guilty of a rejection of the authority of the Bible.

Our ministry is a ministry of truth, not a ministry of compromise; it is a ministry of reconciliation and peace, not a ministry of separation, alienation and fragmentation.

Christ came with grace and also with truth. We must preach the truth, but remember to manifest the grace of Christ while standing for the truth.



## STEWARDS OF OUR TALENTS

CLARENCE C. DAILEY

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Our conception of the value of a thing is indicated by the use we make of it. We indicate our conception of the value of money by the way in which we spend it, or save it, or waste it, or invest it. Our conception of the value of time is indicated by the way in which we use it, or waste it. In the same way, we reveal our conception of the value of our talents by the manner in which we use them, or abuse them, or bury them.

It is said that when the Kimberley diamond regions in South Africa were first being explored, that the explorers saw little native boys playing with the small pieces of mineral substance in much the same way that we see children playing marbles. However, those bits of mineral substance were diamonds in the rough! When they were properly cut and polished, some of them were gems of exceeding great value. And yet, little boys had used them to play marbles! They had absolutely no conception of the value of what they held in their hands.

Several years ago a preacher visited in the home of a physician. During his visit with his host, he sat near a small table on which he noticed what he thought was a nut picker. But when he picked it up and was holding it in his hand, his host explained that it had formerly been used as a surgical instrument. The preacher said that it suddenly occurred to him that what he was holding in his hand had probably been

used in saving lives, and for a while, he thought it was a nut picker! How he underestimated the real value of what he held in his hand.

By the grace of God all of us hold certain talents in our possession. Our conception of their value is indicated by the manner in which we use these talents, or waste them, or bury them. Too often, we seriously underestimate their value. In the first place, each of us needs to recognize that his talents are gifts of God, and therefore, precious. In his "general epistle of practical Christianity," James tells us, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning" (James 1:17). We must recognize that we are stewards of our talents, and that ultimately, we shall give an account for the manner in which we have used them.

When Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, "Seek ye first his kingdom and His righteousness. . .," he certainly included the stewardship of our talents. In the same sermon, Jesus said,

Ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under the bushel, but on the stand; and it shineth unto all that are in the house. Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven (Matt. 5:14-16).

In the use of our talents, our lights shine, and consequently, others will be able to see our good works. Tragically, too many of us have hidden our lights, or have allowed them to go out altogether.

Mrs. Jacob Walker was taken as a bride to the Sandy Hook lighthouse. She liked it there for it was on the point of the mainland and she could keep a garden for vegetables and flowers. But after a few years, her husband was transferred to Robin's Reef. When they got there, she said she wouldn't stay. "Water, water everywhere" made her lonely and blue. At first, she refused even to unpack her trunks and boxes, but gradually she did. One night while tending the



light, her husband caught cold. It turned into pneumonia and he had to be taken to a hospital, but she could not leave the light even to be with him. A few days later, they brought her the news that he had died. She once said to a reporter,

We buried him in the cemetery on the hill. Every morning when the sun comes up I stand at the porthole and look in the direction of his grave. Sometimes the hills are white with snow, sometimes they are green, sometimes brown, but always as I look, I remember the last words that he ever spoke to me. It is what I heard Jacob say more often than anything else in his life. Just three little words: Mind the light!

When she told that to her interviewer, she was 70 years old. Her husband had been dead for 32 years. And she was still minding the light!

It seems to me that there is a parable for us here. "Mind the light" is about as good a three-word summary of the Lord's words to his disciples as one is likely to find. I believe that this is our purpose in the world. It is our job to "mind the light." If we who claim to be the people of God do not mind that, who will? And this is done by our good works, by the use of our talents.

One of our great problems is the temptation to feel that our particular talents are quite unimpressive, that they are not worth noting. Because my abilities are not as great as those of another, I am tempted to feel that mine do not matter. In the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30) one thing is abundantly clear—all are not equally capable. "Unto one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one; to each according to his several ability . . ." (v. 15). The servant who had been given one talent was not condemned because he did not gain five or even two, but rather, because he buried the one he had. Have you not heard an old man sigh and say, "I wish I had my life to live over. I would change some things"? He is saying that he would have bought some opportunities that he refused to purchase; that he would have used some talents that he has buried.

In the buses that are run by the British government for tourist parties, there is a sign that reads "Kodak as you go." It means "take your pictures as the scenes appear; there will not be time for you to go back and do it later; this bus is keeping a schedule." So it is with the passage of opportunity. The apostle Paul said, "Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:15, 16 [NIV]).

An enemy of ours is a monster called sloth. In the old days, sloth meant laziness, lack of diligence, wasted opportunity. Today, sloth is one of the most agreeable of our enemies. So agreeable, said James Barry, that we call it by pet names. We say, "Oh, I'm just taking it easy," or, "I'm just loafing." There is a delightful passage in Proverbs which tells us that "as the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed" (Prov. 26:14 [KJV]). His only labor is twisting from side to side in his sleep. He has given way to idleness while a talent grows green with mold. He is playing games or lounging while business opportunities, family duties, and other Christian responsibilities are neglected.

Paul exhorts Christian people to "redeem the time" (Eph. 5:16). When he uses that special word "redeem," he is thinking of the market with its commodities laid out for sale. The wise merchant does not linger at home during marketing hours, but hastens to mingle with the busy throng to buy up the articles that are for him a particular advantage. The figure of speech is striking! All around us opportunities of usefulness, service, and self-development are presenting themselves. Life's busy market is opened every day for us to traffic in, but we must go there prepared and willing to buy, not to saunter through it, viewing with an idle, though eager, eye its tempting array of wares. We must purchase, "redeem," and promptly, before the chance is gone.

In a fine little book entitled *Try Giving Yourself Away* by David Dunn, there is a story of the little girl who wanted to



give her older sister a birthday gift, but had no money in her bank. But that didn't stop her. When the sister opened her birthday packages at breakfast, she found an envelope tied with a ribbon. Inside were three colored slips of paper, each with a "gift" neatly printed on it: "Good for two dish washings," "Good for two bed makings," "Good for two kitchen floor scrubblings." To give yourself is to use your talents. And whether it be the talent to wash dishes, make beds, and scrub floors, or to teach classes, preach sermons, or write a book, there is a vital stewardship involved. One of the devil's most effective approaches is his effort to convince us that our talents are so insignificant that they don't really matter. In Matthew 10:42 Jesus said, "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you he shall in no wise lose his reward."

In his vivid picture of the judgment in Matthew 25, he spoke of those who will hear the king say, "Come, ye blessed. . ." and those who will hear him say, "Depart from me, ye cursed. . ." It is more than striking that in his illustration, he did not speak of those who had possessed what we might call great talents, but rather, of those who had used what abilities they had to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to extend hospitality to the stranger, and to visit the sick and the imprisoned. At the judgment the question which will sound heavily upon our ears will be, "What did you do with your talents? How did you use those capacities that were entrusted to you?" No wonder Cato confessed that the fault of which he felt the greatest need to repent was spending an hour unprofitably.

A famous physician was being honored on one occasion by a great university. He said, in accepting the honor, that his friends knew that he was not really a genius or particularly gifted. If he had a secret, he said, it was that he divided each week into day-tight compartments, and then thought of each day as a complete unit, God-given, in which he could use his

talents to the fullest. He packed as much as he could do into each day.

We need to seek God's guidance and help in the use of our talents. We cannot, in our own strength, be confident of our selectivity if we do not seek wisdom from above, from him who can help us distinguish between the important and the unimportant. But if we develop the habit of beginning each day with prayer to our Father, of planning each day in recognition of his presence, of opening the doors of our lives to his counsel and help, we shall find that life becomes abundant when we use our talents in terms of stewardship.

Try planning your whole day in the morning, recognizing that "this is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it" (Ps. 118:24 [NIV]). Bring each engagement to the throne of grace, each duty, each unfilled portion of the day. You will find that the few moments spent with him sweetens the temper, clears the vision, steadies the nerves, and makes possible the most effective use of our talents. When we recognize that "our times are in his hands" (Ps. 31:15), we can be confident and calm. "Redeem the time—use your talents—make the most of your opportunities—in these difficult days."



## THE PREACHER AND TAXES

CHARLES B. STEPHENSON

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In Luke 20:19-26, the attempt by the Jewish leaders to trap Jesus involved a question concerning taxes. Jesus' answer to those individuals gives us the basis for our proper stewardship of things financial with regard to governmental institutions. Jesus said that we are to "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." Even the Internal Revenue Service contends that it only wants people to pay the legally owed taxes, and no more.

Both Matthew 17:24-27 and Romans 13:5-7 raise the question of conscience or offense in relation to one's tax obligations. Each person should conduct himself in such a legal manner with regard to taxes so as to avoid giving anyone a reason for questioning the person's religious values. Thus, in addition to the role played by a minister's taxes in his exercise of stewardship over the blessings which have come to him from God, a proper concern in this matter is part of a display of the Christ-like life style.

Many of the taxes which we pay are collected in such a manner so as to make our legal obligation automatic: consider our sales taxes, gasoline taxes, school taxes, and real estate taxes. But, when it comes to our income taxes the maze of laws, rules, regulations, and forms with the ever present exceptions keeps us off balance. The best possible

approach in these circumstances is the seeking of professional help. Here the minister should be warned that not everyone who prepares taxes is aware of the peculiarities which govern the minister's taxes. Therefore, the minister should learn enough about his own circumstances in this regard to be able to ask the professional questions appropriate to his particular tax obligations. Any one of the popular books about the minister's taxes would help in gaining the knowledge for such questions.

*Self-employment.* A question which often confuses the minister and the congregation (Both should be aware that this also confuses some tax preparers.) is whether or not the minister is considered an employee. This is not to question whether or not he is working with a particular congregation. It is a question of definition by law.

Section 1402 of the *Internal Revenue Code of 1954* contains the definitions of self-employment. Sec. 1402(a) (8) states that:

an individual who is a duly ordained, commissioned, or licensed minister of a church or a member of a religious order shall compute his net earnings from self-employment derived from the performance of services described in subsection (c) (4) without regard to section 107 (relating to rental value of parsonages), section 119 (relating to meals and lodging furnished for the convenience of the employer), section 911 (relating to income earned by employees in certain camps) and section 931 (relating to income from sources within possessions of the United States)....

The above mentioned subsection (c) (4) describes these self-employment services as "the performance of services by a duly ordained, commissioned, or licensed minister of a church in the exercise of his ministry or by a member of a religious order in the exercise of duties required by such order."

According to the above definitions, a minister is considered to be self-employed for purposes of taxation. Yet, it should be noted that sec. 1402(a) (8) referred to secs. 119



and 911 which deal with regulations for employees. Even though the minister is defined as self-employed, he is given the privilege of enjoying certain employee benefits as these are described in secs. 119 and 911. This definition of self-employment is delineated in IRS *Regulations* sec. 1.1402(a)-11.

*Social Security.* In the area of employment taxes, Code sec. 3121 defines wages and employment which comes under the Federal Insurance Contributions Act (FICA). Sec. 3121 (b) (8) (A) states that "service performed by a duly ordained, commissioned, or licensed minister of a church in the exercise of his ministry or by a member of a religious order in the exercise of duties required by such order" is not considered employment subject to such insurance.

Therefore, according to the preceding definition of employment and the definition of self-employment the minister is not subject to FICA withholdings. He is to pay self-employment tax on form 1040, schedule SE when he files his annual tax return.

While we are in the area of tax payments, let us note that sec. 3401 (a) (9) declares that the church is not to withhold taxes on a minister's salary. The minister is to make quarterly payments which should cover his income tax and his self-employment tax for the coming year.

*Housing Allotment.* As noted in sec. 1402(8) (a), sec. 107 deals with the minister's housing costs. It declares that:

In the case of a minister of the gospel, gross income does not include—

(1) the rental value of a home furnished to him as part of his compensation; or

(2) the rental allowance paid to him as part of his compensation, to the extent used by him to provide a home.

The minister must observe the fact that Reg. sec. 1.1402(a)-11 (a) says that:

A minister will include in the computation of his net earnings from self-employment for a taxable year . . . the rental value of a home furnished to him as remunera-

tion for services performed in the exercise of his ministry or the rental allowance paid to him as remuneration for such services.

In addition to the inclusion of any housing in the wages for self-employment tax, sec. 1.1402(a)-11(a) also specifies that the value of meals and lodging furnished according to sec. 119 must be included for self-employment taxation. Thus, housing and other boarding furnished to a minister is not to be reported as gross income for income tax purposes; but, it must be added to his net taxable income for the purposes of computing self-employment tax.

Again, the Internal Revenue *Regulations* sec. 1.107-1 enlarges on the related Code section. Here it is stated that the designation of a sum for a housing allowance must appear in some such document as an employee agreement, minutes, or budget statement. The amount must be agreed to prior to the paying of the allowance or it will not be allowed as removed from the gross income.

Reg. sec. 1.107-1(b) defines home as "a dwelling place (including furnishings) and the appurtenances thereto, such as a garage." 1.107-1(c) declares that a housing allowance may be expended "(1) for rent of a home, (2) for purchase of a home, and (3) for expenses directly related to providing a home." This same section specifically denies that the cost of food and servants is "directly related to providing a home." Accordingly, virtually all household expenditures are to be considered when computing a proposed housing allowance.

There are years when a minister does not spend all of his housing allowance for housing. How should the difference between what was allowed and what was actually spent be viewed? Reg. sec. 1.107-1(c) states:

A rental allowance must be included in the minister's gross income in the taxable year in which it is received, to the extent that such allowance is not used by him during such taxable year to rent or otherwise provide a home.

Though this is a clear statement, the issue is still being de-



bated in the courts. The minister should watch the outcome of this litigation as it will affect his situation.

If the minister is purchasing a home with a rental allowance, he has a distinct advantage with the consideration of any taxes and interest on the purchase of the home. Revenue Ruling 62-212 provides that:

The amounts of interest and taxes paid by a minister of the gospel in connection with his personal residence are allowable as itemized deductions, under the provisions of sections 163 and 164 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, respectively, even though the minister is entitled to a rental allowance exclusion under section 107 of the Code.

In actual practice, if the minister itemizes his personal deductions on form 1040, schedule A, the amounts of taxes and interest covered by his housing allowance are actually deducted twice from his taxable income.

*Exemption from Self-employment Tax.* Conceivably, this topic could have been covered under an earlier section of this paper. Yet, the topic is of such nature as to require its own section. Code sec. 140(e)(1) sets out the following:

Any individual who is (A) a duly ordained, commissioned, or licensed minister of a church or a member of a religious order (other than a member of a religious order who has taken a vow of poverty as a member of such order) or (B) a Christian Science practitioner, upon filing an application . . . together with a statement that either he is conscientiously opposed to, or because of religious principles he is opposed to, the acceptance (with respect to services performed by him as such minister, member, or practitioner) of any public insurance which makes payments in the event of death, debility, old age, or retirement or makes payments toward the cost of, or provides services for, medical care including the benefits of any insurance system established by the Social Security Act), shall receive an exemption from the tax imposed by this chapter with respect to services performed by him as such minister, member, or practitioner.

Note that this section specifies that it does not deal with

those individuals who have taken a vow of poverty. Such cases would be covered under sec. 1402(g)(1) which covers faiths which have religious teachings which will not allow the acceptance of such insurance. According to sec. 1402(g)(1)(D), these are such groups as provide for the care of their own members without other assistance.

In view of the numerous articles which have appeared in various brotherhood papers saying that no minister of the church can qualify for an exemption from self-employment tax, it is believed that some individuals have confused the stipulations of 1402(e)(1) and 1402(g)(1) which deal with distinct cases before the law. No minister can claim an exemption because of religious tenets or a vow of poverty. But, who can say whether or not any one other person is or is not "conscientiously opposed to" a particular practice. One may not agree with the one so opposed, but that does not remove the possibility of the opposition.

It should be noted that this regulation is not for the purpose of avoiding an unwanted payment. It does recognize a possibility of the religious conscience. If a minister has such a conscientious objection, he must file form 4361 according to the proper time for such filing or his request will be denied. Generally, this should be done by the time of the filing of the income tax return for the second year when the minister has had at least \$400.00 in self-employment income, any amount of which is from the performance of his duties as a minister. If form 4361 is timely filed and approved, the exemption only covers income from his service as a minister. Any other income, even self-employment income, will still be covered by all such social insurance taxes.

*Stewardship.* This brief survey of some of the questions concerning a minister's taxes offers several options which may affect the stewardship of a minister's financial blessings. Will he live in a home provided by the congregation which he serves, or will he have a housing allotment with which to purchase a home? Is he or is he not conscientiously



opposed to public insurance? The answer to both of these questions will affect his stewardship possibilities.

Other considerations also affect a minister's stewardship in view of his taxes. In order to divide correctly between what is Caesar's and what is God's, a minister must keep good financial records. Indifference or indecision in this area causes individuals to overpay their taxes. Can such a case be viewed as good stewardship?

Due to fear of involvement with IRS, or an uncertainty about the law, some individuals purposely overpay their taxes to avoid any future questions. Giving Caesar what is God's? Can this be good stewardship? This problem can be avoided with the aid of a professional in the field of taxation.

Most of us view taxes as a necessary evil to which we must give some grudging attention. If ministers will focus on the stewardship possibilities, the task can rise from the mundane to the spiritual. Ministers can and should be leaders in viewing the everyday circumstances of life as opportunities to enhance our service to God. Taxes offer just such an opportunity.

## THE SANCTITY OF SACRIFICE

TREVOR WILLIAMS

TREVOR WILLIAMS attended the Birmingham College of Food and Domestic Arts from 1964 until 1966 and spent two years at the North Ireland Bible School in Belfast, North Ireland. Having been a Bible class teacher and part-time preacher for fifteen years, he has served full time as an evangelist for the past eight years.

### *We Give Thee But Thine Own.*

Whenever the apostle Paul mentions the name of Jesus his heart jumps with joy and he has to praise the Saviour. Whenever the name of Jesus rings in the ears and hearts of men not only the hope of salvation is envisaged, but the cross and empty tomb. This is how Paul remarks upon the sacrifice of Jesus in Galatians "who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever" (Gal. 1:4, 5).

Mankind has never fully accepted that salvation is a gift. Preachers have put church building funds, weekly offerings, meeting attendances, goodly works and even baptism into a system for earning salvation. Praise be to God, salvation is free. Jesus paid the price, blood has been shed and we are saved not through one nice, kind of even loving deed of ours, but through the agony, pain and torment of the cross.

Now when sin is taken out of the way, Jesus can deliver us from the present evil age. We are living in Sodom and Gomorrah. Fire and brimstone are waiting to be poured down upon us, yet because of a handful of righteous men the Lord delays his actions. Look up brethren and be prepared to see the Lord. Open your ears and let them be tuned to hear the cry of command and the trump of the angel of God.

In the days of our Lord men and women were put into the arena upon a public holiday and sport made. This is part of



an account of Ignatius—"And when he was even now judged to be thrown to the beasts, he spake of that which he had to suffer as he heard the lions roaring. 'I am the wheat or grain (saith he) of Christ, I shall be ground with the teeth of wild beasts, that I may be found pure bread.' He suffered in the eleventh year of Trajan."

John Fox, in the famous *Book of Martyrs*, quoted from the 9th edition of 1684 A.D., further records "Justus also and Pastor, two brethren, with like martyrdom ended their lives in the city of Spain called Complutum, under the said Adrian the Emperor."

"Likewise, Symphorissa the wife of Getulus the Martyr with her seven children, is said about the same time to suffer. Who first was much and often beaten and scourged, afterwards was hanged up by the hair of her head, at last having a huge stone fastened to her, was thrown headlong into the river and after that her seven children in like manner with sundry and divers kinds of punishment diversely martyred by the tyrant."

"The story of Hermannus and Antonius and others report of Sophia with her three children also. Also of Seraphia and Sabina to suffer under the said Emperor about the year of our Lord, and hundred and thirty."

The story is also told of the martyrdom of William Wolsey and Robert Pigot who were put on trial on 9th October 1555. They refused to accept the teaching of the Catholic church believing that the scriptures were the only guide for man in matters of religion. On 16th October 1555 these two men were taken and burned at the stake. The place was in the town of Ely, England and the place of execution, probably before the Cathedral doors. These words were said by Wolsey: "I take the eternal God to my record that I do err in no part or point of God's word, the Holy Bible but hold and believe the same to be the most firm sound doctrine, in all points most worthy of my salvation, and for all Christians

to the end of the world. Whatsoever my enemies report by me, God forgive them therefore."

The two were chained together. Amongst the wood pile were thrown copies of religious books including New Testaments (probably Tyndale's version). Each one asked for a testament and clasping it to their breasts began to quote Psalm 106, "Praise the Lord. O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures for ever." At the conclusion of this the fire was lit and the two men sacrificed their lives for their faith.

Today is no different; some of God's children will suffer, but many are accepted into society with its easy living and sweet music. It is great to be socially accepted. It is wonderful to have climbed the ladder of success and to hear the world applaud us in honor. And we often rejoice, not knowing the cold clammy hand of Satan is squeezing the very life's blood out of us. We do not hear the pierced hands of the Man of Galilee applaud; his hands are extended pleading with us—"return ye unto God."

We are a royal priesthood, a chosen nation, God's own people. Our lips have often been defiled because we live amongst a people of unclean lips, but Jesus will deliver us from the present evil age.

The text of Galatians 1:5 continues, "to whom be glory for ever and ever." Ever is a long time. Ever and ever so much longer and that is how long we can praise Jesus. If we have but one glimpse of His lovely face as we enter the portals of heaven, we would be singing throughout eternity. If He spoke one word as we knelt before the throne of grace we would have our intellect filled for always.

Christians, we are being delivered now; today and now is the time to start to glorify Jesus.

It is said that on two occasions should a man preach Jesus, in season and out of season, when he wants to and when he does not. And on two occasions should a Christian sing to glorify God, when he wants to and when he does not. For



when the heart aches and we forget for a moment the holiness of Calvary's sacrifice, then the songs of Zion will stir our spirit so that we will glorify and honour the Holy Lamb of God.

A sacrifice when offered was made of three components:

1. the priest
2. the giver
3. the sacrifice.

We shall take a brief look at each one.

### I. *The Priest:*

Under the Mosaic law the offspring of Aaron were to minister spiritually to the people of God. They were to be correctly dressed for the occasion after washing with water. Only then could they be in a state of holiness. Without the correct procedure the sacrifice would not have been acceptable. Some priests were good and some bad. Many people who have been washed, go about in the righteous garb of Christianity yet belong to dead churches; the reason why is quite clear—man's ministry has prevailed. Every dewy-eyed, soft-soaped method has been used to build congregations. Many however are in living churches, preaching the word of God and converting sinners into saints. It is not always the biggest or most polished that produce the most righteous or the best sacrifice.

Malachi 3:3 says, "He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, till they present right offerings to the Lord." Note that 'He sits'; the King of heaven is watching in pain and agony. He is all attention for His priestly people; nothing is going to interrupt the careful watching for the 'apple of His Divine eye.' The church composed of blood-bought priests are ever being looked at because He is refining. Here comes the challenges for this world against the body of Christ. Each generation is charged against perhaps three or four times to make it stand against the heretical storm of false doctrine and change. He is refining in the heat

of the day those who will be purified for the kingdom. Those who would be soldiers of the army of heaven must take the heat lest we be known as chocolate soldiers and melt away. 'He sits' on the throne of justice and mercy with perseverance, blessing his sons and daughters, bringing them under subjection. "Those whom the Lord loves he also chastens"—we do not like it but we are not our own; therefore, he will make something of us for if we are left by ourselves we shall still be raw base metal.

"He shall purify the sons of Levi." These are his chosen people. God will not purify those who do not want it. We can easily reject purification, but with that comes the rejection of sanctification, we shall be unholy. Remember Judas. To reject Jesus is to accept the misery of sin and death. It is the ore with most gold that will be refined as it is the branch bearing most fruit which must be checked most often.

The sons are to be purified, not washed on the outside but purged with fire on the inside. So often we hear of complaining Christians, we must rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice, for if we cannot be preserved in honey then it must be with salt, lest corruption should take hold of us and bring about our destruction.

But we must note the object of the refining since we may be content to let the fire burn and let the coals glow as much as ever they will, since it can only be for a very little while, and then comes the ages, the eternities, the God, the Christ, the Heaven which He has prepared for us, *when we are prepared for them.*

Then we read, "That they may offer unto the Lord our offering in righteousness." The Levites had no portion in the land to get fat and rich, yet they did not go without. It is good to be fed and watered and to enjoy spiritual goods. But better still is the ability to bear fruit and thus provide an offering of sacrifice in righteousness. Do not look back at past failures but take stock and with ability use the examined life in the future. It is only when dross is taken away



that gold is pure, but it does not become a thing of beauty until it is shaped, and its form changed by the craftsman. The gold ore must be sacrificed to become special and thus sanctified.

## II. *The Giver*

The one who offers the sacrifice must be holy. Upon the golden crown of the mitre of the High Priest was enscribed "Holy to the Lord." Zechariah writes "And on that day there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses 'Holy to the Lord.' And the pots in the house of the Lord shall be as the bowls before the altar; and every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be sacred to the Lord of Hosts" (Zech. 14:20-21a).

If the pots and pans are to glorify God, how much more must the one who offers sacrifice be holy, not with outward array of good or even gallant works for God, but with a heart cleansed by the blood of the lamb, washed as white as snow, and changed by the Saviour and valiant for the King of heaven!

Christianity has to be seen to be believed. We are people of the book, but we must remind ourselves that "the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two edged sword" (Heb. 4:12). Often churches and individuals are so wrapped up in promoting their own views on a number of subjects, it is known as "contending earnestly for the faith." Sometimes brethren of the opposing view will join in battle, thus making two or even three divisions in the church each one contending earnestly, not "for the faith" but what to them is "the faith."

Persecution must come from outside the church, not inside. Is Christ divided? Yes, for when the church has spots and wrinkles and scars, Christ is being divided. Let the pulpits cry out for the contending of the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints because "we preach Christ crucified." When the preaching of the cross takes second place, then Christ is crucified again. When for one moment we for-

get the heavy weight of sin on his shoulders "who knew no sin," we place ourselves before God as the heathen do, not knowing his grace, love or mercy. Peter says, "Humble yourselves therefore, under the mighty hand of God that in due time he may exalt you" (1 Peter 5:6).

The sanctity of the giver is vital for the sacrifice to be offered acceptably. We have many brethren in the church who will give of time, money and resources to help in mission work. Whilst the efforts given will result in good, no gift will be accepted by God unless the giver is in love with Jesus. Gifts may even be given to appease God for lack of faith. The Christian man must stand pure and holy before God when he offers the sacrifice.

## III. *The Sacrifice.*

The sanctity of the sacrifice is seen in particular in the passover lamb. The lamb was taken from the flock being one year old and without blemish and kept four days before being killed. We see that the lamb was about to come into maturity having survived the fatalities of youth. It would be in prime condition strong and beautiful. The lamb was without blemish, the eyes were clear and bright, no scars or flesh wounds, no stunted growth. In every way perfect. For four days the lamb was kept aside being checked and re-checked for perfection. Then the family gathered, each one making sure no leaven was in the house. The mother had prepared and baked unleavened bread and washed the bitter herbs ready to eat. The eyes of the household were focused on the lamb, fit and healthy. The father brought in the lamb and with a basin to catch the blood the throat was cut. Immediately the fleece was removed and the lamb set to roast; great care had to be exercised because no bone was to be broken. The family gathered at the doorway with a bunch of hyssop as the father sprinkled the blood on the doorposts and lintel of their peasant home. Finally the door was shut as they went in for the last time as slaves. The meal was eaten with



speed, coats and hats on and staff in hand ready to leave at the call.

At midnight the angel passed over the house; blood was on the door posts and the angel passed by. But where there was no blood he entered and brought death. Our brother Paul records of Christ, "Our Paschal lamb has been sacrificed" (1 Cor. 5:7). Prepared and made ready in the prime of His beautiful life, He was sacrificed. The blood when on Calvary now washes us white. With blood on the lintel and doorposts of our heart, death will not enter, only the morning call leading us to the promised land.

We need to be ready with the precious jewels bestowed with favour upon us to go forward from sin to Canaan's fair and happy land. Yet what sort of sacrifice are we? Christian, are you sacrificing for your Lord? Are we ready to be crucified with Christ?

Under Mosaic law when the sacrifice was taken to the tabernacle the sacrificial lamb was presented to the priest who held a bowl under the neck of the lamb. The one who was offering sacrifice would then take the knife and cut the throat of the lamb holding up its head until the life had drained from it. There was outward show, but the design of the sacrifice was to make those who offered aware of sin.

Perhaps the Christian aware of many sins will not fall into many temptations or will control himself from immorality. But at the same time he will have a heart that yearns to be released from the mercy of God's grace knowing that in Christ we do have a higher standard, that we dare not enter the bondage of Satan. Yet still a yearning takes place. Perhaps some yearn for a homosexual relationship even though it is condemned by God. How many have fallen into fornication perhaps just once, but have wrestled with it knowing it to be wrong, yet desiring it to take place again. And if these are not your problems it may be stealing, lying, cheating or downright cowardice. God demands that for the sacrifice to be acceptable, the one who offers the sacrifice

will also be surrendered to the High Priest who is able to sympathize with our weaknesses and who in every respect has been tempted as we are yet without sinning (Heb. 5:15).

Will you heed the call as a labourer to the fields that are white unto harvest? Will you go to Europe, Asia, Africa and preach of the love of God? If you do then your first sacrifice must be your native country. Its pride and good things, its politics and traditions. To enjoy a new land you must leave all of the old land behind.

But perhaps those who read these words are not even saved. Hurry now to the fountain of life. Jesus' blood will save you too. Are your sins many? He will wash them all away. Are your sins few? They are still ugly in the sight of God.

Perhaps you will financially assist in the preaching of the word. If you do then make a commitment that will not be dropped in a few weeks, for that is lying and cheating.

One more point that must be emphasized, your sacrifice must be holy. Be it small or great your sacrifice must be given in love because of God's love. In faith as God's grace is extended and in humility as God will exalt you. In peace that God's peace will fill you and in fullness that you may entirely belong to God.



## VICTORIOUS LIVING

RANDALL YEARWOOD

RANDALL NILE YEARWOOD, a Nashville, Tenn. architect, received his B.A. from Washington, University in St. Louis, Mo. He has taught several Bible classes for teenagers, and for the last four years, he has taught the auditorium class at West End Church of Christ in Nashville.

A short while ago I was on a plane leaving Seattle, and the man sitting next to me began to tell me how hard he had worked to become successful. Without realizing it, he quickly revealed why he was not a success. He said, "You know, you would think a guy like me with a good education and some good work habits would be bound to succeed when most of the people in this country are second rate." I wonder if you are as tired of cynicism and despair as I am. You feel as I do that we are very sure to build second rate lives for ourselves when we think, say, and do second rate things.

For many years, in researching and observing the subject of greatness, I've tried to sense the common denominator in great and wonderful people—truly successful people—and I believe deeply that there is a specific master key to joy, wealth, and individual significance. Before I share the secret with you, I'd like to ask you to picture a door at the top of some stairs, and before we can use the master key on that door, we must first walk up these steps and cross that threshold. Each step from where you are now to that door and that key can be mastered. It is vitally important, however, to clearly and crisply see what those steps require. Before you begin to climb those steps, it's important to see that the threshold—the foundation—is constructed from a set of attitudes. This foundation requires attitudes that are open, curious and positive. And more importantly, these attitudes should be rooted in the firm belief in the future of this world

and the joys waiting, just waiting, to be discovered.

Let me share with you some observations about ourselves that have been tested by time.

For instance, it has been said by one of the great philosophers, "Our main task as we grow older is to retain the capacity for the joy of discovery, and to learn from our pupils as we teach them." A great historian has said the average age of the world's great civilizations has been 200 years. All nations, he says, have progressed through the following steps: from bondage to spiritual faith, from spiritual faith to great courage, from courage to liberty, from liberty to abundance, from abundance to selfishness, from selfishness to complacency, from complacency to apathy, from apathy to dependency, and from dependency back again into bondage. All of these are attitudes. He also wrote much more importantly—"Our destiny is not to be determined for us. We determine it for ourselves."

So your attitude is so important. You are living in a time of exciting discovery. In the coming years all of man's energies, dreams, joys, fears and striving will focus on three things. They are really all the same thing. They are self-discovery, self-fulfillment, and self-actualization. The importance of knowing who you really are is not new. The only thing that is new about this is that many people are just now discovering the importance of that unique and potentially great creation known as yourself.

Listen to what some great thinkers have said about the attitudes which ensure success.

Plato said: "Before you can move the world, you must first move yourself." Socrates said: "Above all, know thyself." Shakespeare said: "To thine own self be true." Christ said: "Above all, give thyself." Aristotle said: "Lose yourself in productive work in a way of excellence." Emerson said: "What you are thunders so loud, I can't hear what you are saying." And Ghandi summarizes it so very beautifully when he said: "You will find yourself by losing your-



self in service to your fellowman, your country, and your God."

Let me add, when you determine what you want, you have made the most important decision in your life. Let me put it another way: Know what you want to accomplish in life, and then, if you feel deeply that it is good and it is right, live, talk, and work and dream as though you were already there. And Edwin Markham said: "How great it is to believe the dream as we in youth by the starry stream. But a greater thing is to fight life through and to say at the end, the dream is true."

If you clearly see that each step up the stairway is greatly affected by your attitudes, you are ready to commence the climb. So let me share with you the joyful news that we are truly on the threshold of breathtaking new discoveries about human potential, and the first step on the stairway to the greatest secret is that you always become what you think. If you see yourself as a unique and potentially splendid creation of a loving God, this is precisely what you are and will become. Remember, what the human mind can conceive, human abilities can accomplish. Anybody can do anything that he can imagine. If you see yourself as a second rate loser, this is precisely what you can and will become. You see, the quality inner life leads to abundance in all other ways. What you think is what you are. And it shapes and forms and affects all that you say and all that you do and determines 100% of what you are.

Throughout this talk with you, I'll be assuming that we've already taken this step up the stairway and that you know and believe that everything you become is a result of what you think. We will be talking about the kind of attitudes that will provide your mind with fuel and purpose. And the next step on the stairway—to spiritual, financial, and mental riches—is the understanding that you become what you say.

A man told me recently, "You know, on the last trip to the moon, we really blew it." I asked what he meant, and he said,

"This was an awesome, a unique, and a beautiful thing to happen, and yet coming back from the moon were dull, nitty-gritty, mechanical second rate words and thoughts." It had become, you see, a mechanical or scientific quest instead of a giant leap toward man's destiny. And then he startled me by saying that it was a potentially sensual experience, and we had made it hum-drum. Why didn't those astronauts let themselves go and use words like "beauty" and "joy" and "happiness" and "love" and "excitement"? Reviewers and listeners by the millions would have gained new mental vitamins and hope and purpose because of what they said.

The highly respected scientist and futurologist, Dr. Herman Kahn, said recently in a speech at the White House that the 1990's would be glorious. Listen again. Yes, I said glorious. Does it occur to you that we don't hear that word very often these days? Why not? It's because we truly do become what we say. And if we use great thoughts and words, we've no recourse but to become great people. And if living up to the greatness of our potential seems frightening, and fear creeps into our waking and sleeping thoughts, then we automatically begin to back away and use pale, listless, and non-juicy words. If you consistently think of and use words like "glorious" and mean them, then glorious things happen to you. It's one of the great universal laws.

I invite you then, I challenge you, to select and use all words as explicit instruments for growth and success. Try these, learn to relish how they feel as you use them: truth, strength, love, joy, excellence, vigor, God, tenderness, courage, fitness, peace, zest sparkle and beauty. And wisdom is the perfect blending of intelligence and love, and real wisdom comes only when we experiment and work at widespread and consistent use of intelligence and love through words. And then, make no mistake about it, you truly become what you say.

The great contemporary writer, C. S. Lewis, illustrates this principle so well when he wrote to tell us what happened



in the year he had published the famous book called *The Screwtape Letters*. In that book, he had written these letters as though he were the devil himself, and the letters were addressed to his nephew on earth, whose name was Wormwood. And he would sign each letter "Uncle Screwtape." Now, in these letters, which were written with an almost magical talent for subtleness, evil, vindictiveness, and all of the lowest and basest emotions, some perfect prescriptions were contained from Uncle Screwtape to Wormwood on how to destroy all that was good and light and bright and wholesome on earth.

The book sold a million copies and the film that was made from it brought in a million dollars. And C. S. Lewis became a financially wealthy man, but he was mentally ill, he tells us, for months, because in the writing of that book, he had first thought and then spoken the kind of words which he said left his mind, and I quote, "full of itch, scratch, and rot." For months, he wallowed in a kind of self-induced despair, even as the money poured in. He not only didn't feel good. He felt bad. Then he decided he would use the same tools, the same instruments, to choose his life, that he had used when he descended into the depths, virtually, of spiritual decay and despair. And he wrote books like *Miracles*, and *The Great Devotes*, and *Out of the Silent Planet*, and a series for children. These books were full of beautiful imagery and beautiful experiences, wonderful discoveries, and delicious tastes, both on this planet and in far-away and beautifully conceived parts of the universe. For instance, he wrote much of what he called *Deep Heaven* and then he became well and finally successful as a total vibrant human being.

The third great step on the stairway to this secret of joy is to build on strengths. First, we must see that a weakness really is—Write this down on a piece of paper if you have a chance. Write down: "A weakness is \_\_\_\_\_," and think a little bit and then simply finish the sentence by saying, "the

absence of a strength." It will then read, "A weakness is the absence of a strength." And that's all it is, you see. A weakness is simply a zero, a minus, a vacuum, a lack. It indicates that we need something, and that something is always a strength.

And for 2000 years, we have spent so very little of our personal, economic, governmental, physical and spiritual resources to discover and talk about and think about and apply strengths. Most of mankind has dissipated most of its potential to an entirely unnecessary amount of thought about its weaknesses. The Bible tells us in numerous ways that perhaps the greatest sin of all is to dwell on and agonize over our own inadequacies, because, you see, if we do this, we will focus on the weaknesses or inadequacies of other people, and become proud. And this, indeed, is the greatest sin of all. I expect that everyone I am talking to recalls the statement: "Pride goeth before a fall." This is really saying, that dwelling on weaknesses is not only the path of the gutless and expedient, but also the path of the insecure and unenlightened person whose actions may then suggest and some people tend to call him, "conceited," "egotistical," "self-centered," and words of this kind. Now, actually, this kind of person, the one who may seem arrogant, badly lacks a feeling of deep, sustaining, self-confidence. And such confidence is made possible by an adequate and eventually even a splendid awareness of his present and potential strengths.

The next step on this stairway is supported by a famous behavioral scientist. The eminent psychologist, Dr. Henry Link, said 30 years ago, based on very extensive research, that one common denominator in the life of all happy people, was that virtually every day, such men, women, and children either did or attempted to do something difficult. We only have the confidence to keep attempting the difficult if we start off determined to respect and believe in ourselves. Take this fourth step and we continue up the stairs toward the door of success and self-actualization only as we continue to



reach for difficult goals which require us to dig deep into our mental and spiritual reservoirs. And constantly surface new strengths. In this process, then, we continue to discover and build new strengths. The study of ourselves is like the search for diamonds in South Africa. At first, people found a few diamonds in the yellow clay, and they were delighted with their good fortune. And they supposed that this was the full extent of their find. Then upon digging deeper, they came upon the blue clay and to their amazement, they then found as many precious stones in a day as they had previously found in a year. What had formerly seemed like wealth faded into insignificance beside the new riches. Don't stop at the yellow clay. Press on to the rich blue clay and the greater riches beyond.

Back for a moment now to Dr. Link. His team of researchers dug deeply into attitudes, life-styles and present levels of happiness. They studied the rich, the poor, the in-between. They studied some 10,000 people. They found that a tragically large number of people really believe happiness can be gained and retained by the pursuit of ease and expedience. Thus they build up ever increasing feelings of guilt and self-loathing—two attitudes which are enemies of real happiness. Shakespeare obviously knew what he was up to when he said, "Sweet are the uses of adversity." There is something about taking on a tough and difficult challenge, on working hard, which burns away accumulated layers of guilt and self disgust and frees you up to really live.

Before you take the fifth step, let's talk some more about attitudes. Greatness is a frame of mind, an attitude, and it's interesting how many wonderful ways we can indicate our attitude with the skillful use of words. For instance, a man's mind is the man himself for thought is, after all, the mightiest agent in human affairs. Thought is the most productive form of labor. Doesn't that say it well? And the steps become easier when you understand the three great sets of laws. They are man-made ordinances and statutes.

Physical laws such as the law of gravity, and by all means the most powerful set of laws, are the spiritual laws which are set forth so beautifully and demandingly in "The Sermon on the Mount." If you violate a physical law, for instance, the law of gravity, and jump from a tenth-story window, you would be smashed. And if you violate a speeding ordinance, you would be fined or imprisoned. If you try willfully or knowingly to break one of the spiritual laws, you are flying in the face of universal forces which defeat you every time. And a part of the great secret is to know that you cannot really break any of those laws. You can only break yourself upon them, if you don't seek to understand and apply them. These great laws, of course, include The Beatitudes and powerful and beautiful promises like "Knock and it shall open unto you," "Seek and you shall find," "Ask and it shall be given unto you," and "By their fruit you shall know them." And of course the powerful summary of cybernetic truth called "The Lord's Prayer." Study them, test them, use them. They work. They are the roots which nourish healthy and stretching attitudes.

Another vital ingredient in the great secret and part of the key to life's great treasures is the importance of giving. This is the sixth great step. Calvin Coolidge put it well when he said, "No person was ever honored for what he received. Honor has been the reward for what he gave." And an old Hindu proverb says it so well: "Help thy brother's burden across, and lo, thine own has reached the shore." One thing that money cannot buy is the warm impulse of the human heart, and it will invariably produce greater happiness for the giver than for the recipient.

And now we have mounted the stairway partially. There are some more steps. They can be fun and zestful, tough and exciting. Here they are.

You must respect yourself. It all begins with you. We can change our whole life and the attitude of people around us simply by changing ourselves. You must believe in the power



of love, the most powerful battery of success vitamins in the world, and the toughest, most virile, and most effective of all medicines. You must speak crisply and decisively, radiate sureness and provide reassurance to all around you by what you think and say. You must practice integrity. This means applied honesty at all times. Colonel Lindbergh said, "The most exhausting thing in life is insincerity."

You must let your enjoyment of life show. Laughter is infectious. Help it become an epidemic. Though we travel the entire world to find joy, we must carry it with us, or we will not find it. We must develop a deep personal faith. We must believe in something bigger than ourselves to truly believe in ourselves. We must think, live, and work positively. This means you are consistently and positively looking for the light. You are reaching out. You are unwilling to waste time exploring the dark where only the lonely and discouraged dwell. You must believe you can always learn more. One of the reasons mature people stop learning is that they become less and less willing to risk failure.

There are some beautiful people who have lived or are still living abundantly in their 80's and 90's. People such as Robert Laterno and Lillian Gilbraith, and many more. They have helped to prove that long, happy, abundant lives are products of being very concerned about and open to the needs and uniqueness and richness of others. We must work hard and like it. It is essential for mental and emotional health. And much research, for instance that of Dr. Link, has shown that a major common denominator in the long, healthy, and happy life is that of hard work focused on clear, specific, and stretching goals. You cannot take more out of life than you put in. People with little to do become tired of their own company and life becomes filled with imaginary shadows. We must practice self discipline, and as you look way up at the top of the stairs of the successful life, you must know your own critical path up those stairs. You must have a blueprint, a map, so that you are always striving to-

ward a bright, clear beacon which beckons and calls you. Great men train themselves to seize, shape and master opportunity.

Longfellow wrote: "The heights by great men reached and kept do not attain by sudden flight, but they, while their companions slept, were turning upward in the night."

Success is not the result of external, spontaneous combustion. You must set yourself afire. You must compete with your own ultimate self. Remember, he is your worst enemy or your best friend. You decide. The amateur competes with other people, and the pro always competes with his own ultimate self. If you overcome others, you must be strong, but when you overcome yourself, you become mighty. You must live qualitatively. Strive for quality and ideas, in human understanding and in all other ways. Always place quality first and quantity always comes with abundance. You must listen positively. This means to listen with your guard down and to truly let the other person enter your heart and to be prepared to share yourself fully and openly with those around you. Building relationships with others makes us happy, and to do this, we must keep all barriers down. The negative listener hears the other person out and then says what he was going to say anyway. We must welcome problems as opportunities in disguise.

A troubled person asked Dr. Norman Vincent Peale how he could rid himself of all problems. Dr. Peale said, "I can direct you to a place where there are 1,500 people who have no problems whatsoever." And the man said, "That's the place I want to go." And Dr. Peale directed him to a certain cemetery. To have problems and to identify them and to welcome them is not only to have proof that you are living, but it is an excellent way to insure that you will live longer and better. Walter Brennan says, "If you help the chick out of its shell when it's hatching, it's going to be too weak to survive. It's the struggle that develops its muscles."

You must accept yourself; indeed, you must love and re-



spect yourself. Remember, if you don't see anything in yourself to love, you won't be able to truly love anyone else. You must make tension an asset. It is the electric current the personal motor must have for real results. Negative, frightened, self-centered tensions can make you ill, but positive, strength-oriented goal-setter tension can help insure health, youth, and joy. You must welcome emotion. Learn to truly relish feelings. Without them, you have rigor mortis. Now who needs that? You must walk and think tall. You may be whatever you resolve to be. Believe that life is rich and your belief will help create that fact. You must greet, confront, and engage life. Choosing the expedient and easy path each day is a sure invitation to mediocrity, disappointment, and despair. Choosing the expedient makes your physical, mental, and spiritual muscles grow flabby and die. You must plan to live a long time and plan to enjoy every second. Learn to savor the flavor of each passing now. Resolve to live right to the last moment of life on this earth.

You must be a self-starter. Only the amateur waits to be started by someone else. You must live, talk, and work in terms of what you are for. Waste no time simply thinking about and dwelling on and working in terms of what you are against. Discover what you want most of all in this world and set yourself to work to get it.

The next step is about a word I'm very fond of. That word is *caring*. If you care enough, you can find out who you really are. If you learn to give enough and care enough about goals and dreams and a grand design that is bigger than you, and you have in this very free and privileged country all the opportunity you could ask for to target total fullness as a person, as a unique and real you. Men like Henry Ford and Andrew Carnegie, and Art Demoss did not invent and create primarily to get rich. Their prime motivation was to create a better world. Because they were committed to this, because they cared very much, their fellowmen made them rich. You will be able, if you care enough, and I will

bet that you do, to prove that continuous renewal as a total person can be yours. Then you will be able to visualize yourself as a walking transmitter of enthusiasm, zest, gusto, stretch, and integrity on the job or off, and it's important; in fact, it's vitally crucial to develop some specific and organized patterns to apply all that we are saying here.

Here is what I would like to ask you to do. St. Paul said "This one thing I do." But, I am asking you to do two things. Having already decided what you want most in life, sit down every Monday and list the one most important thing you want to get done by next Monday. Then list the greatest strength you have now or plan to acquire so that you can use it to get that important thing done. Place these two statements where you will see them often. If you truly persist in this, you will discover by the end of the year, that you still have strengths you haven't yet written down. And, your accomplishments—try this exercise and see—you will be utterly amazed. But only you can prove it to you.

Oh yes—one more thing. Visit your family doctor immediately for a complete physical. Press him to tell you how fit you can possibly become through excellence in diet, exercise and wholesome living habits. Then, set out to discover how it feels to really feel good. I mean just as good as you possibly can. Do you care enough? Do you have the courage? Probably 1 in 10,000 at most truly feels as good as he can. Believe it or not, it requires courage to properly handle a body that is just as fit and joyful as it can be. A word of warning—you must start immediately. Goethe said, "The right man is the one who seizes the moment." While we meditate on when to begin, it becomes too late to do. Robert Louis Stevenson died at the age of 32, but he probably did more real quality living, loving, giving and building during those 32 years than most people do in a long lifetime. And it was Stevenson who said, "That man is a success who has lived well, laughed often, and loved much, who has gained the respect of intelligent men and the love of children, who



has filled his niche and accomplished his task, who leaves the world better than he found it, whether by an improved poppy, a perfect poem, or a rescued soul, who never lacked appreciation of earth's beauty, or failed to express it, who looked for the best in others, and gave the best he had."

You are very close to the top of the stairs now. And I would like to quote the one who said it even better than Stevenson, and he was also the architect of modern phrases like "management by results" and "management by example," when He said in that great message from the mountain, "By their fruits ye shall know them." He also said, "You are the earth's salt, and you are the world's light." Do you dream enough? Do you care enough? Are you using each day?—what I call the vital balance of WLPW. These four letters mean—WORK, LOVE, PLAY, WORSHIP. Do you dream enough and do you care enough to really love and do you know how tough and strong and stretching that four letter word is?

Love is not only the erotic love of man for woman, but also two other things.

Filial love is a feeling of brotherhood, a warm sharing of cooperation, concern, and openness and a third dimension, and the toughest of this powerful word is *agape* love. This means the kind of strong and virile emotion in which you care about as much or more about another person or persons than you care about you. Christopher Morley said, "If we discovered that we had only 5 minutes left to say all we wanted to say, every telephone booth would be occupied by people calling other people to stammer that they loved them." Don't wait until the last 5 minutes. Do it today. Here, you see, you are carrying out and demonstrating the truth of Ghandi's great statement about finding yourself by losing yourself.

And now, we approach the essence of the great secret. That's a Latin phrase meaning "the distilled essence" or "the one great secret." And it gets to the heart of the per-

petual sense of wonder that provides the mortar for cementing together the great principles of building on strengths and recognizing that you become what you think, and that you become what you say.

Now you have taken the final step. You stand in front of the secret itself. It's no more and no less than the greatest statement of truth ever uttered—and here it is. It is the key at the top of the stairs. The door. The answer. Pay particular attention, please, to the last two words.

*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.*

Examine and test this power-packed key from every angle. Listen thoughtfully, openly, curiously, and be sure to carry out these specific planning exercises, and I promise you an unusual life with unusual growth and unusual joy.

Let me close with a final request. As your mind and spirit grows, and reaches up and outward, so that you think and say and do the things that the Great Commandment to love unleashes, let yourself savor a perpetual sense of wonder about everything around you. Then, the application of the greatest secret will yield a wonderful job, wonderful human relationships, and a wonderful life.

#### GOALS FOR LIFE

Where are you going? Will you have equal opportunity to get there? And what must you not give up to reach your goals?

Today, as you drive down the highway, you see mile markers. If you know where you are going and how to use them, they tell you something. For instance, they can tell the location of a Smokey if you have a C.B.—or the distance to the state line—or the distance to your destination—or the miles per hour. Mile markers are important if you know where you're going or their relation to where you're going.

One of the most important times you will spend in your life is deciding where you are going in life and committing



to that destination. After that time is spent, everything will fall into place.

How many of you have ever been up into the Statue of Liberty?

From up in that great statue, you can see great ships going out to sea. They are carrying many different kinds of cargo. Their crews speak many different languages. The ships are heading for many different ports. Some are headed to South America—some to the Gold Coast of Africa—some to England—others to the West Coast of Europe. Many will go around the Cape of Good Hope to the ports of Jidda and Bahrain in Saudi Arabia.

Today as I stand and look at you, I am like that person who is in the Statue of Liberty watching those ships go by. Each of you is, in a way, like those ships. Each of you wants to go to different places in life. Each of you has different abilities.

But in one way, you may be different!

There is one thing every one of those ships has in common. Regardless of their differences in crews, cargo, and destination, in one way they are all exactly alike! Every one knows exactly where it is going! There is no guessing! Nothing is left for chance! The destination is decided, a course plotted, equipment bought needed for a successful trip, a crew picked—and the captain says—cast off!

Have you picked your destination? Have you gotten the equipment you need for your voyage? Have you plotted your course? Do you know exactly where you are going?

If you are to succeed in life—you must know exactly where you are going in life!

How many of you have ever heard of Howard Hill? Howard Hill is an expert with a bow and arrow. Someone asked him, "How is it that when you go out camouflaged on a hunt you always come back with your game, but other hunters go out with high-powered rifles and come back empty-handed?"

Mr. Hill answered, "If I did not study the eating, drink-

ing and sleeping habits of the game, plan my trip with thoroughness and carry it out precisely, I'd just be walking through the woods."

Have you planned your life thoroughly? Are you prepared to carry out your plans and pay the price of accomplishment?

A young couple was driving along a country road and became lost. They saw an old farmer sitting on his front porch. They stopped and asked, "Sir, where does this road take you?"

He said, "Young folks, that road will take you anywhere you want to go if you know where you are going."

To go anywhere, you must know where you are going.

If you don't sit down and plot your course, what is going to happen? Let's look at what Yale University found out. Yale made a study of their graduates who had been out of school for twenty years:

—3% had written their goals and changed them as they went along.

10% knew what they wanted to do with their lives and could talk about them in broad terms.

—87% had never written down their goals.

—The result of 20 years shows that 3% had accomplished more than the other 97% combined.

Now, as you set out to go to your goal, what type of opportunities will you have? Will each of you have the same opportunities? Equal opportunities are a big thing now. The Federal Government says you will have an equal opportunity, but don't you believe it. There is no way. We don't have equal opportunity—we have ample opportunity. The son of the bank president will always have more opportunities than someone else. But the bank president's son will probably have had life so easy that he will not have the determination to succeed in spite of obstacles. Life owes you nothing. America owes you nothing, but freedom. If America gives you the right to succeed, it must also give you the right to



fail. As a matter of fact, life doesn't promise you anything but a catastrophe every once in a while.

The right to succeed and fail is the only equal opportunity you have and the only one you really want. One of the greatest obstacles you face is that my generation and the one before has turned to our government and asked it to take away the right of failure—It's against the law to be poor. It's a right for everybody to have a job. I saw a bumper sticker the other day that said—"Medical care is a right—not a privilege." That thinking is the best way to eliminate medical care altogether. If you want to succeed, you must have that great opportunity to fail. The greater the chance of failure, the greater the reward if you succeed.

There was a beautiful lark that lived in the top of a tree. That lark loved to sit in the top of the tree and sing. The lark also loved to soar. It would fly high into the sky and glide and soar—singing and soaring were so much fun. It would only come down to find something to eat. It would hunt for food—find it—and sing and soar.

One day a man with a blue box walked under the lark's tree. The bird was attracted to that blue box. It flew down and lit on the man's shoulder. "What's in that pretty blue box?"

The man said, "Worms."

The bird said, "I love worms. Are they good ones?"

The man said, "They are the best."

"Well, how much are they?"

"Only one feather."

So the bird bought one. Now he could sing and soar and never have to stop and hunt for food. All he had to do was buy a worm. One worm and one feather. That was cheap and easy.

One day the bird bought a worm and the man pulled a feather. Then the bird got ready to fly away. He could not. That last feather took away his ability to fly. He couldn't soar. He didn't feel like singing. He had lost his freedom.

As your ship goes by the Statue of Liberty, you won't have the same size engine as others. Your crew may not have as many members. But you can have a course and a destination. You can make your destination if you think you can.

But to make your destination, you *must* leave the harbor. In the harbor, you are safe. The storms cannot wreck you. High winds and waves will not shake you. Your crew doesn't have to work. You just sit and rest. In the harbor, you cannot fail. But you aren't able to go anywhere either.

Folks, are you smart enough to take the time to plot your life's course?

Are you awake enough to see every opportunity you have?

Are you bold enough to leave the harbor? To risk failure?

If your answer to these questions is yes, you are well on your way to reaching your goals. If your answer to any one question is no, you are guaranteed no success.

Folks, it doesn't take much of a man or woman to succeed and be happy—but it does take all of him or her. It won't be easy. The easy way will not get you closer to your goal.

Two men went hunting and killed a deer. They were pulling the deer by the tail, and the going was tough. A man came by and said it would be easier if they would pull it by the handles God gave them—pull it by the horns. They ran around and pulled it by the horns. One said, "Sure is easier, isn't it?"

The other said, "Yes, but we're getting further from the pick-up all the time."

Every one of you has been given many talents. You do not have the right to not use those talents. That's right—you do not have the right to waste them.

Jesus told the story of the talents. To one man, he gave 5; to another he gave 2; to another he gave 1.

Do you remember what he found and did when he came back? He went to the man to whom he had given 5 and got back 10. The man that got 2 gave back 4.

Then he went to the man to whom he had given 1. He was



looking forward to getting back 2 talents. Surely he had been able to double his one talent. To double one talent was the easiest.

But the man said, "Lord, I've still got Your one talent. I didn't take any chances with it. I buried it so no one would get it from me. I've done a good job; I've protected it. Look, Lord, aren't you proud of me for not losing it?"

What did the Lord say? He said, "You slothful servant," and he cast him into outer darkness.

You don't have the right to not try. You do have the right to fail or succeed depending on your efforts.

Folks, you have but one life—please don't waste it. You could be like the man that had one hair on his head. Boy, he loved that hair. He massaged it; shampooed it; oiled it; combed it. He loved that hair!

One morning he woke up and there was that hair on his pillow!

He saw it—said "My goodness, I'm bald!"

Don't wait till it's too late before you realize how short your life is.

And another thing, coming close doesn't count. Life is harsh. Nobody remembers who came in second. In 1974, the winning jockey at the Kentucky Derby won \$27,000. Two seconds later, the 4th place horse crossed the finish line. The 4th place jockey got \$30.00. Two seconds between 1st and 4th. Two seconds between \$27,000 and \$30.00. Almost making it is no good. There is no fun on the trip you almost took. There will be no celebration for the promotion you almost got. There is no fun in almost.

As you go on your voyage of life, you have to make it to celebrate. Coming close doesn't count except in horse shoes and throwing hand grenades.

You know, more people spend more time planning their vacations than they do their lives.

But as you live your life and set your goals, never forget

Matthew 16:26: "For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

Life is a one-way street—and we are not coming back. You must live your life the very best you can the first time, because there is no second chance.

I want you to remember that you cannot lose your reputation—you can only change it. Your reputation, once broken, can be repaired, but the world will always keep an eye on the crack.

Think of life as a time you have borrowed from God. He is expecting you to pay the interest by living your life right.

As you leave this place today, for wherever you are going, you either have a map showing you how to get from here to there, or you have made the trip so many times that you don't need a map. You have a plan in your mind.

You have your next short trip planned. Does it make sense for you to plan your next short trip and not plan the most important trip of all—your life?

#### WORRY

Last week I had an occasion to worry. I was flying on one of those cheap airlines. On the third stop the pilot came through and asked, "Would you like to make a donation for gas?" A little later the pilot came back and said, "Where are you going?" What a question! I said, "I'm going with you! Don't you know?"

But Psalms 127:2 says, "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep."

What have you received from Christ?

Sleepless nights?

Anxiety?

Fear?

Worry?

We may have all those things, but they are not of Christ. If they are not of Christ, what are they from? The world?



If these things are of the world, what are they doing in our lives if we have not become a part of the world? Are we of the world or of Christ?

But as hard as we try, we worry sometimes, don't we?

But Jesus said, "I am the truth" in John 14:6. He also said in John 8:32, "The truth shall make you free."

A little girl named Kathy won the Jaycee Oratorical contest in Minnesota. Kathy defined freedom—"Freedom is the right for as many people as possible to be as happy as they can."

I doubt that Jesus would quarrel with that. But when we are worried, are we happy and free? Jesus said he would set us free.

People worry about many things. Some worry about getting old. Bill Gove is a nationally known speaker. He said, "It bothers me when these kids come to me and say you're old. I don't say to them—you're new!"

People worry about their position in life—I'm not as successful as I want to be, or I don't have as much money as I should have.

How many of you feel you are an average American? The average American would love to inherit a million dollars. How many of you would like to inherit a million dollars?

In California, a grandmother was driving on a freeway, was hit by another car, and lost both her legs. The court awarded her \$1.5 million. Would you trade places?

In Massachusetts, a construction worker fell and crushed his pelvic bone. The courts granted him \$1.6 million. Would you trade places with him?

In Texas, an attorney was accidentally shot and blinded. He was awarded \$6.5 million. Would you trade places?

In California, a young girl became a paraplegic because of a reaction to medication. The court awarded her \$7.5 million. Would you trade places?

You came into this room stating to yourself you were just an average American citizen. Yet, you have turned down

becoming a millionaire 17 times over. You are not average. Don't let anyone make you average. You are a magnificent creation, made in the image of God. You can do anything in life you want to do. So with that potential in life, why waste one minute of life worrying?

Harry Winston, the jeweler who bought the Hope Diamond and donated it to the Smithsonian Museum, was asked if he ever worried about owning it because of its reputation of bringing bad luck to the owner. People supposedly died because of it. Five owners became insane. No owner escaped misfortune, death, suicide or insanity. He said, "No" but it caused others to worry. Once when he and his wife were in Brussels they had to return to New York on separate planes. Hers was in the morning. His was the next flight after lunch. When a man boarded and sat beside Mrs. Winston, she courteously introduced herself as Mrs. Harry Winston from New York. He asked if her husband was the jeweler. "Yes," was her reply. He shortly got up and left the plane.

Mr. Winston boarded his plane and took his seat by a man he did not know. About an hour into the flight the man turned to Mr. Winston and said, "I'm lucky. This morning I almost got stuck on the same plane with the wife of the man who owns the Hope Diamond."

Mr. Winston did not have the heart to introduce himself.

Mr. Winston is the only owner to have escaped its ray of punishment. The man's worries were wasted. His time and energy were wasted.

Right now, I want to see the hands of those of you that have a tendency to worry once in a while.

Now, if you didn't raise your hand you probably didn't understand the question, because most folks have a tendency to worry once in a while. There are some people so out of what's going on, that they don't worry. They don't count! A sales manager called one of his salesmen to inquire about his week. "What's been your best day?" The salesman re-



plied, "Monday, I made a sale. Tuesday, I didn't see anyone. Wednesday, the sale on Monday called and cancelled. So I guess Tuesday was my best day."

If I could show you, if I could tell you, what worry is, do it in one sentence, would you be interested?

If I could show you an easy technique to rid yourself of worry for the rest of your life, would you be interested?

What is worry? Worry is nothing more nor less than thinking about what you don't want to happen. Do you know you and I become what we dwell on? The Bible tells us—as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. When you put all your effort into worrying about something, you can cause it to come into your life.

Earl Nightingale says it this way: we become what we think about.

Worry is vividly imagining a negative outcome. It's negative thinking, and you can't be just a little negative!

For instance, worry is saying to yourself, "Oh, I'll bet we don't get that contract this week—and if we do, I'll bet we lose our shirt." Or, "I'll bet we won't be able to pay off the house note and we will lose it." Or, "I just know that boy my daughter is going to marry is going to be a bum and I'll wind up supporting them both."

And what does worry do to you? It begins to knot up your gut. It causes ulcers. It builds anxiety and high blood pressure. It frustrates your positive actions. It shortens your years. It causes you to do nothing when action is needed. Fear takes control of your life.

Fear is the most powerful negative motivator of all.

Fear is the great inhibitor.

Fear restricts, tightens, panics, and scuttles plans.

Fear looks to the past and repeats old failures.

Fear causes hardening of the attitudes!

A dense fog covering seven city blocks to a depth of 100 ft. is composed of less than one glass of water. This is, all the fog covering seven blocks, 100' deep, could be, if it were

all gotten together, held in a single drinking glass, and would not fill it.

This can be compared to our worries. If we could see into the future, and if we could see our problems in a true light, they wouldn't blind us to the world and to living life itself. If we could do this our worries could be regulated to their true size and price. And if all the things most people worry about were reduced to their true size, you could probably put them into a water glass, too.

An authoritative estimate of what most people worry about is: Things that never happen—40%

Things in the past that cannot be changed—30%

Needless worries about our death—12%

Petty, miscellaneous worries—10%

Real, legitimate worries—8%

What we must do is to take the fog of our worries and put it where it really belongs—in the 8% space where it belongs—then don't worry about it. Do something about it!

Even if it is wrong—do something! Then you will know more than when you started! You will know one thing that won't work.

If you ever let fear freeze you into no action but worry, it will soon be too late to do anything, because to decide not to decide is a decision.

For just a few seconds, I want you to play a little game with me.

Each one of you close your eyes. No cheating.

With your eyes closed, think about what you want more than anything else in this life.

It may be a cabin in the mountains.

It may be a new car.

It may be a grandchild graduating with honors from college.

It may be you graduating with honors.

It may be good health for a child.

Whatever it is—think on!



As you envision that right now, actually seeing yourself enjoying the fulfillment of that goal, smell the smells—take a deep breath and enjoy it; hear the sounds—listen carefully; see the sights; feel the feels; enjoy the fulfillment.

Isn't that a wonderful feeling? You can open your eyes now.

If you had been up here with me, you would have seen a big smile on everyone's face. Smile as big as you can. Don't lose that smile.

Now without losing that smile, try to worry.

Don't lose that smile!

You cannot smile a genuine smile and worry.

You cannot have a prosperity thought and a poverty thought at the same time.

You cannot deny what you affirm. You cannot affirm what you deny.

The feeling you had when you smiled was called what? Happiness! You see, when you think about what you want to happen it makes you feel good right now. Right now! You don't have to wait on it to happen to feel good.

Now, do you do your job better when you are happy?

Do you feel healthier when you are happy?

Of course, you do.

You see, everything functions better, right now, when you are happy.

Folks, grinning is winning! Look at Jimmy Carter. When you are happy, you are up—not down. Every one of us wants to help people in a positive way, don't we? To lift people up you have to be up. You can't lift people up when you are down. Well, there *is* one way—you can brighten the room when you leave.

But that is not the way we want it or the way Christ expects it.

The second benefit of thinking about what you want to happen and not thinking about what you don't want to happen is this: When you think in your conscious mind a pic-

ture of what you want to happen, and the subconscious, being like an ever willing servant, like a computer, it doesn't care what you feed into it. You feed garbage in—you get garbage out. You feed good in—you get good out.

Everything starts as an idea in your mind. Your subconscious mind will pick it up and keep it somewhere. But everything starts in your mind: art, architecture, music, worry.

Anything your mind can conceive, you can do. Anything! Provided you are willing to pay the price.

Jules Verne conceived of a rocket taking a man to the moon. Werner Von Braun carried it out. He read the book, got an idea, and went to see President Kennedy. Pres. Kennedy said, "You've got a great idea—let's put a man on the moon in ten years." Von Braun said, "I can't do it in 10 years." Kennedy picked up a calculator and said, "You've got 10 million seconds—count backwards."

He did it in 9 years and 2 months!

Anything your mind can conceive—you can do!

When you think about what you want to happen rather than what you don't want to happen, your problems become a growth opportunity.

Dr. Norman Vincent Peale called W. Clement Stone: "Clem, we got a problem." Stone said, "Great!" Dr. Peale pleaded, "Clem, you don't understand. We got a double bad problem." Stone said, "That's double great!"

Mr. Stone immediately began to see opportunities in the problem. He went on to look for the good in the problem. To take that attitude to a problem allows your mind to be receptive to a solution.

Whenever you say, "Oh, no. I've got a big problem on top of me"—you consent to the problem. The problem is on top of you. It is in control. You are not on top of the problem.

To solve a problem, you must be on top of it. You must be in control.

An ancient Chinese secret—In Chinese language, whole



words are written as symbols. Two different symbols when put together have a different meaning from the other two. Man and woman, when combined, they mean good. How wise are the Chinese. The symbol for trouble and the symbol for crisis combine to form opportunity.

So, as the answers always lie in the question, opportunity lies in our problem.

When you project upon the screen of your subconscious mind a picture of what you want to happen, then the subconscious says, "Oh, yeah, I can do that! And I can do that! And I can do that and that and that!"

Thomas Edison said that there are far more opportunities than there are people to see them. Worry clouds opportunities. People project failure more than success.

And so tomorrow you are successful as a result of your programming your subconscious mind to accomplish that image that you have projected on it today. That is why happy, positive business leaders are the ones that are the successful ones. They are successful because they envision what they want to happen. Then they are happy and can function better at their task of reaching what they want.

The exciting thing is, they say, "I'm going to get that contract, and when we do, we are going to make a good profit and have a happy client." And after the work is done, they will say, "We got that contract and man, did we do good."

But you see, that old sore-headed individual that said, "I'll bet this won't work out, and even if we get it, I'll bet we lose our shirts," six months later when you see him, you know what he will say? "I told you! I just knew this wouldn't work out. We liked to have gone bankrupt."

Do you know why it works this way? It is because what we think about actually begins to become the linen with which we clothe ourselves. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

So anytime you catch yourself worrying or getting up-

tight about a situation, say to yourself, "Is that what I want to happen?" And the likelihood is you are going to say, "Well, certainly not."

Then ask yourself, "What do you want to happen?" And then immediately as you ask, "What do I want to happen," you create in your imagination a vivid picture of that desired outcome, and it will immediately make you feel better and start projecting you toward it.

For instance, if I asked you right now—and just speak right out—"What do you think is the strongest—will power or imagination?"

IMAGINATION! Say, I knew this was a smart group.

Imagination must be 20 times stronger than will power. What you think about begins to come about. Anytime your imagination and your will power are in conflict, imagination always wins.

You will never lose weight—thinking about how much overweight you are. You won't lose weight by gritting your teeth and saying, "I'm not going to eat." You won't lose weight until you capture the image of a slim, vivacious, healthy, beautiful person you want so very much to be.

If I were to take a 4" x 12" timber, 20 feet long, and place it here on the floor—right here—and I said, "Come up here and walk the length of it," you could do that easily, couldn't you? You might even turn around and wave to me. You might say, "See how easy it is."

It would be easy, wouldn't it.

But now, suppose I take the same 4" x 12" and put it on the top of two 20-story buildings, just 18' apart, and said, "Walk that plank." Could you do it?

Why not? Because you would be afraid of falling.

Now, when it was down here on the floor, your thoughts were on the victory of achievement. Could you imagine yourself falling? Why, of course not. But, when I put it up on that 20-story building, you see yourself going splat on the street below.



This is the exciting thing you need to see today. If you are to succeed in being a Christian, or being a mother or a grandmother, or father, or whatever you want, you have to see and vividly imagine and capture in your thoughts a picture of what you want to happen. Then you begin thinking of them as a reality.

Here is the way it works. Into each of us are planted seeds of thought. Whatever your thoughts are, you plant those, and immediately, those thoughts become something. For instance, if you are thinking a happy thought, what do you show on your face? A smile. Right! If you are thinking a sad thought, what do you show on your face? You show a frown.

Every thought immediately becomes an action. It is, in fact, impossible for you to think a thought and it not be transformed into an action.

For example, let's imagine something together.

Close your eyes. All eyes shut.

Now, imagine with me.

It is late at night. But you cannot sleep. You are hungry—so hungry you must eat something. You go to the refrigerator and open it. There is nothing there but a lemon. You pick it up and close the door. You are so hungry. You look at the yellow skin. You feel it. You pick up a knife and cut it in half. You pick up a half of the lemon and smell it. Then you bite into it. Let the juice swirl around all in your mouth.

Right now, your mouth is filling with saliva to dilute that lemon juice. Some of us got real tight in the jaws. Some even made faces.

You see, the thought we were thinking was immediately transmitted to action. It is impossible for you to have a thought without it becoming an action. So what you do is start feeding yourself wholesome positive thoughts, imagining what you want to happen instead of what you don't want to happen. Then your automatic subsystem goes to work to bring it to action.

If you repeat an action enough, what do you have? A habit! Actions develop habits. You can become a habitually positive person. By habit you can stop being a worrier and become a doer.

Not long ago, I gave a talk and afterwards a young man came up to me and said, "You always talk about the good things that happen to people, and all the things you need to achieve. How come none of that ever happens to me?"

I said, "Let's look at your situation. Have you received anything from Sears and Roebuck lately?"

"Why, no, I haven't."

"Well, have you ordered anything from Sears Roebuck lately?"

"Why, no, I have ordered nothing."

Well, maybe that is why you are not getting anything."

Today, many people complain, moan and groan and gripe because they are not getting anymore out of life—and the reason they are not is that they are getting everything they ordered.

They expect survival—and they get it.

They imagine failure—and they get it.

They worry about hard times—and they get it.

If you want more out of life—all you have to do is to start improving your line of thinking. And as your thoughts improve, then your actions start replacing those with positive actions that develop the habit of success.

But to stop worrying, you must want to. If you want to and do what I've told you, I'll guarantee you a good day—every day.

Colossians 3:23 says, "Whatever you do, work at it with all of your heart, as working for the Lord."

Can you do that when you are worried? No!

Galatians 4:2 says, "Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful."

Can you pray with faith and worry at the same time? No. You cannot affirm what you don't believe.



Can you worry and be thankful at the same time? No.

1 Thessalonians 4:1 says, "We have instructed you how to live in order to please God."

What did they have to teach about being a good worrier? They didn't. They said, Be joyful always. Pray continually. Give thanks in all circumstances. Avoid every kind of evil.

Worry is the greatest confession of the lack of faith I can imagine.

Let's put our faith in action. Let's think about what we want to happen. Let's forget completely what we don't want to happen. Then let's develop a plan of action. Then let's get on with it.

Blessed is a person too busy to worry in the daytime—and too tired to worry at night.

Worry stifles imaginative solutions to problems, growth in life, progress and pleasant relationships. It causes every talent we have to be buried in a muck that covers us up. And what did Jesus say to the servant who buried his talent?—"Depart from me, you slothful servant," and He cast him into outer darkness.

Will worry cause that to happen to us?

You and I have the promise:

Seek and ye shall find.

Ask and it shall be given unto you.

Knock and the door shall be opened.

Do you believe that? Then why worry? Worry has no place in the life of a Christian. In fact, we are told what to do instead of worry. Psalm 37:5 says, "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass."

Do we believe then when we worry?

Do you believe that promise?

Can you worry and trust in the Lord?

## STEWARDS OF OUR BODIES

BILL HALE

WILLIAM P. HALE is an elder at the Central Church of Christ in Amarillo, Texas. Having earned his B.A. at Eastern New Mexico University and his M.D. at the University of Kentucky, he is now an ears, nose and throat specialist. He has spoken at numerous churches on the subject of giving, and he has presented the harms of smoking, alcohol and drugs to various congregations, as well as to high school and college audiences.

Stewardship of the body is of vital interest to me, both as a medical doctor and as a Christian. As a doctor, this marvelous machine which operates non-stop for seven or eight decades fascinates me. As a Christian, I am awed by the human body, the most supreme and beautiful of all of God's creation. Almost all human bodies at birth are perfect and beautiful, and it is our responsibility to take care of them.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service (Rom. 12:1).

Therefore I am very perplexed that at least 50 percent of all hospital admissions in the United States today are illnesses caused by "living the good life." We are actually making ourselves sick by voluntarily abusing our bodies with alcohol and other drugs, tobacco and overeating. Abusing any of these can cause serious physical problems, and they are usually accompanied by moderate to severe emotional and psychological problems.

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are (1 Cor. 3:16, 17).

CIGARETTES

Why do people start smoking? It is probably because of peer pressure. The most common reason that people give is



because the rest of the crowd smokes—because their friends smoke or because they are in that group. Some say, "It makes me look big"; "it makes me feel sophisticated"; "because I was tense and nervous"; "because I enjoyed it"; "Because I was not supposed to"; these are the reasons most people give. So, it is the social stimulation of being a part of the crowd that causes a person to want to smoke.

Smoking is a many-faceted subject. From a medical point of view, it is the most common preventable cause of death in the world today. In this country, there are about one-half million deaths directly related to smoking annually.

A recent article stated that there are 132,000 cancer of the lung deaths related to smoking this year. Lung cancer is truly a horrible disease, and its direct cause is smoking. Although a few rare cases in non-smokers have been reported in medical studies, I personally, in 18 years of medical practice have never seen even one.

The most common death due to smoking is probably heart disease. Each year there are about 750,000 deaths due to heart disease; 250,000, it is thought, could absolutely be prevented. So we have 250,000 with heart disease, 50,000 with emphysema, 132,000 with cancer of the lung; this list does not include cancer of the larynx, tongue, mouth or cancer of the bladder and others. Probably, being conservative, there are one-half million deaths each year due to smoking. These are preventable deaths, and, unfortunately, very little is done about it. The list also does not even include disabling diseases like peripheral vascular disease.

There has been a lot heard recently about women smoking because many things have been brought to the attention of people in the last 10 years. The British Medical Association came out with a study about smoking and pregnant women. They said several things: 1) The average birth weight of a baby born to a smoker will be one-half pound less; this birth-weight would not make a difference unless the child was small anyway and then it could be very serious; 2) The rate

of miscarriage is much higher, possibly 20 percent higher; 3) Neonatal death is much higher in children of women who smoke because of the lack of blood supply to the uterus. There have been some other statistics that say that the infant IQ is less in children of smoking mothers. Some of these things have been pretty well documented, so it is a very serious thing for pregnant women.

Another related difficulty is emphysema. This is a hideous disease. Emphysema is a disease caused by the lungs losing their elasticity. A person with this disease can breathe in, but the lungs cannot get the air out. What happens is that the elasticity of the lungs is no longer there. This disease is seen more commonly in older people. Just as older people lose the normal elasticity of the skin and get wrinkles, the lungs, as a normal process, lose elasticity. Smoking greatly accentuates this problem. Smokers lose the elasticity in their lungs and the anterior-posterior diameter of the lung becomes expanded. The lungs cannot squeeze the air out. A person can force some air out with his muscles, but the rest of the air cannot be squeezed out by the lungs. Emphysema kills at least 50,000 people each year. To die of emphysema is a most hideous way to die. Those people are constantly trying to get their breath. In fact, all they do is try to breathe. They do not have time even to eat; so late in their life, all they have time to do is try to breathe. They carry an oxygen tank everywhere with them when they go. They get a walker so they can walk about 10 feet and then they have to stop and breathe.

Cigarettes certainly shorten the life expectancy tremendously, but also they can disable a person.

#### ALCOHOL AND RELATED DRUGS

Man has changed his world enormously but himself very minimally. Training of his intellect has far exceeded the training of his emotions. Some who cannot cope seek pleasures in drugs and demand freedoms but refuse responsibility.



Addiction to drugs is a state caused by periodic or chronic intoxication produced by the repeated consumption of a natural or synthetic drug. Its characteristics include 1) an overpowering desire or need to continue drugs, 2) a tendency to increase the dose, 3) a psychological and generally a physical dependence and 4) a detrimental effect on the individual or society.

One definition of drug abuse is the persistent and usually excessive self-administration of any drug which has resulted in psychological or physical dependence.

There are several reasons for drug taking: 1) avoidance of life stress, 2) retreat from problem-solving, 3) the refusal to cope with adversity, 4) the surrender to defeat and 5) directionlessness.

The world health organization classifies the following major types of drug dependence: 1) the morphine type, 2) the cocaine type, 3) the cannibus (marijuana) type, 4) the amphetamine type, 5) the hallucinogenic (LSD) type and 6) the barbiturate-alcohol type.

Morphine addiction became common during and immediately after the Civil War because thousands of wounded used morphine by injection, this being the only pain killer available to them. It was very easy to obtain, and it is estimated that 1.25 million people, 4 percent of our population, were caught up in some form of the opiate habit 100 years ago. Today one person in 2,000 of the population is an opiate addict in this country. The very powerful derivatives morphine and heroin and the use of the hypodermic needle created a quicker and stronger dependence. Morphine is a standard pain reliever still widely used. Codeine and Demerol are both widely used pain relievers which are less addicting than morphine.

The second group of drugs is the cocaine type. Cocaine is the drug of the elite because of the extremely high price, about \$2,000 per gram. Cocaine does not produce physical dependence, that is, tolerance does not occur nor do with-

drawal effects. However, the psychological craving is very strong because cocaine is a potent stimulant and exciter.

Physiologically, marijuana causes dilation of the pupils, increased secretion of adrenalin which produces a rise then a fall of blood sugar which then triggers an increased appetite, especially for sweets. Drowsiness is also seen with marijuana. In heavy smokers, emphysema and chronic bronchitis may eventually develop because of the need for prolonged deep and retained inhalation which is part of a marijuana smoker's technique for obtaining a maximal effect. Psychological dependence is certainly known and possibly it is addicting since it is taken up primarily by the fat of the body. After the fat is once saturated, it takes just one smoke to make one high.

The amphetamine drugs are used medically to treat narcolepsy and mild depression, but obesity is not generally helped by their usage. Amphetamines can prevent sleep, elevate blood pressure, dilate pupils and produce a hyperexcited state of mind. The longterm user may not experience these effects; however, he will probably experience some anxiety, jitteriness, wakefulness and a dry mouth. Malnutrition and debilitation due to self-neglect eventually appear. An aura of suspiciousness pervades the thinking of the user. Paranoid schizophrenia is the endstate of amphetamine abuse.

The psychedelics, LSD and others, the so-called hallucinogens are a diverse group of drugs which alter mood, perception, thinking and ego-structure. In small doses, they tend to cause euphoria and do not cloud consciousness. In large doses, the reaction can be from horror to ecstasy; from absence of thought to a maniacal flat of ideas; from intensity of color and depth to illusion and hallucinations; and from minor distortions of the body image to complete loss of ego.

Alcohol is one of the most abused drugs in America today. It destroys brain cells, adversely affects every single tissue



of the body and is dosage related; the more alcohol, the more damage.

We normally lose 10,000 brain cells a day. Someone who drinks heavily loses 100,000 brain cells a day. This fact is why we see senility occurring as early as age 45 in people who drink, whereas normally one is 75 or 80 when senility sets in. An alcoholic can be detoxified in three to five days; however, the brain is not normal for three to nine months afterwards. The toxic effect to the brain cells takes this length of time to clear. Even in someone who just drinks one nightcap, the alcohol is completely gone by the next day. However, it takes several days for his brain to get back to normal.

Alcohol causes peripheral vasodilation which then puts a greater effort on the heart to pump the blood into this area; so consequently, the cardiac output has to be increased, and that increases blood pressure. The valves of the heart also do not work properly when the heart is dilated, so this can then be heard by a murmur over the heart. Because of this acute cardiac dilation with relatively small amounts of alcohol, this relationship probably explains many of the sudden deaths in young adults who only had a moderate amount of exertion; for example, the business executive.

One adverse effect of alcohol on the body is momentary blindness from bright lights that are seen when one passes a car. These lights blind the driver of the passing car for about one second. If he is drinking alcohol, this blindness lasts 10 to 15 seconds. Also, a person does not scan a road when he is driving under the influence . . . he stares directly ahead. This momentary blindness may explain why there are so many alcohol-related car accidents.

Alcohol is a sedative drug; Valium is also a sedative, not a mild tranquilizer. Because Valium is the most widely prescribed drug in the United States today, many people think it is safe; however, it is extremely addicting. The half-life of alcohol is about one and one-half hours. The half-life of

Valium is 50 hours. The average prescription for Valium is 10 mg. four times a day. So, the first day, the patient gets 40 mg. The next day he has 20 mg. left; he takes 40 more leaving 60 mg. Even though medically prescribed, it is drug abuse because the amount of the drug in the body is being increased daily. Finally, the patient gets to the 79.9 mg. level where the dose levels out. Actually, the half-life of Valium can be as long as 15 days depending on the age and the physical condition of the patient.

Because of this tolerance to the drug, Valium-type drugs should not be prescribed for longer than five days at a time. If it is prescribed for longer than that, the patient needs drug-holidays, or days that he does not take any drugs at all.

#### OVEREATING

Fifty percent of women and men over 30 years of age are at least 10 percent overweight. So, we are talking about a major health problem. I do not even know of any other health problem that affects 50 percent of the population over 30. I do not have figures for under 30, but I strongly suspect a high percentage here also. Overweight and its related health problems have become so prevalent that a new field of medicine has developed. This field is called bariatrics, and an M.D. who specializes in problems related to weight is called a bariatrician. If everyone were at optimum weight we would have 25 percent less coronary heart disease and 35 percent less congestive cardiac failure according to Gordon and Kennel 1973.

About one-third of obese adults date the onset of weight problems to childhood. They, therefore, assume that their obesity is inherited. People also assume that since many children of overweight parents become overweight, it must be inherited. Although this fact might be true in some few cases, in a major percentage of those overweight, the cause is simply overeating or eating a little more than the body burns up, and doing this over a long period of time. Children usually adopt the eating habits of the family. If these eating



habits have made the parents overweight, then the children will also become overweight.

Other eating habits that contribute to overweight are compensatory eating or eating for the wrong reason—like for depression, boredom, lack of affection or anxiety.

Social factors have also been noted as contributing to obesity statistics:

In New York: Five percent of upper class are obese; 30 percent of lower class are obese.

In India: The opposite is true: 90 percent of the rich are obese, 10 percent of the lower class and 0 percent of the poor.

There are many health problems related to obesity. One of these problems is respiratory insufficiency. The body contains 4,000 feet of blood vessels per pound of fat. The extra load on heart and lungs in simple breathing involves moving a fat thorax and pushing the diaphragm down against fat in the abdomen and may bring about cardio-respiratory failure. Some severely obese patients have Pickwickian syndrome of episodic somnolence associated with hypoventilation and cor pulmonali. Hypoventilation may bring pulmonary embolism and death.

Cardiovascular disease can also be related to obesity. The major cause of increased mortality is increased incidence of hypertension and coronary artery disease. The Framingham heart study showed a dramatic increase in sudden death among men 20 percent overweight as compared with those of normal weight.

Pregnancy: Toxemia of pregnancy, 60 percent are overweight. Fetus mortality is 300 percent greater in obese mothers.

Diabetes: 0.7 percent if normal weight

2 percent if 20 percent overweight

10 percent if 50 percent overweight

Most maturity onset diabetes is directly caused by overweight. The patient did not have diabetes until he became

overweight. Some people think that the patient becomes overweight because of diabetes, but that is not so.

Overweight patients also face surgical problems. Gall stones occur more commonly due to increased blood cholesterol. Overweight patients face increased risk from surgery due to technical difficulty and increased risk of anesthesia. This doubles the mortality from relatively simple procedures like appendectomies and gall stone surgery.

Other problems more common in overweight people are as follows:

1. Umbilical and incisional hernias
2. Cancer of the colon
3. Diverticulum of the colon
4. Arterial disease
5. Hemorrhoids
6. Varicose veins
7. Thrombophlebitis
8. Cancer of the body of the uterus
9. In children—slipped femoral epiphysis

Some disadvantages of obesity:

Physical discomforts:

- a. Intertrigo
- b. Heat intolerance
- c. Painful weight-bearing joints

We are familiar with the usual things that defile the body: drugs, alcohol, tobacco and sexual sins. James says the uncontrolled tongue also defiles the body, but most subtle is the way the devil gets us to defile our bodies with food. We allow food to become too important. Thus we have Christians who would not think of lying or stealing or committing adultery becoming slaves to food. It is easy for the devil to make Christians fat. All he has to do is get us to eat a **LITTLE MORE** than we need. Food is a necessity. We have to eat. It is something God has ordained; it is pleasant. The devil merely entices us to eat **MORE** of something than is good for us, more than we should. The problem is not eating,



but overeating. When we overeat, we are *living to eat*, rather than *eating to live*.

Being overweight is the result of overeating, even though we might prefer to think it is inherited or caused by something beyond our control. The truth is that a very large percentage, about 99 percent, of overweight is caused by overeating. We Christians have not wanted to even consider this problem probably because we in this land of plenty are all guilty of overeating sometimes or maybe all the time. Even thin people overeat sometimes. Everyone has indulged himself at times, so it is something we all need to think about. But actually this thought is not new. Paul refers to those whose god is their stomach in Philippians 3:19:

Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.

The New American Standard version translates stomach as appetite.

These abuses of the body genuinely concern me as a Christian because alcohol and other drugs, cigarettes and overeating can become addicting or habituating to a point that a person is no longer in control of his appetites.

All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any (1 Cor. 6:12).

Being under the power of anything separates us from God. We cannot be totally in subjection to God if something else controls us.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service (Rom. 12:1).

We cannot present to God something that is not under our control. There is no way to present our bodies to God as long as the devil retains dominion over any part of it.

## HEAVEN'S INTEREST IN OUR SALVATION

PHILLIP MORRISON

PHILLIP E. MORRISON was born in Old Hickory, Tennessee, June 18, 1933. He graduated with honors from David Lipscomb College, and did graduate work at Abilene Christian University and the University of Miami. He served as minister in Sumpter, S.C., Northwest in Detroit, Central in Miami and Falls Church, Virginia. He now serves at White Station in Memphis.

How many people in the world are genuinely interested in us? Perhaps we think immediately of friends and family whose love and interest know no bounds. But it is somewhat chilling to realize how few such people there are, and how superficial is the professed interest of the world at large.

In this age of advertising—which exists more to create desire and demand than to inform about products and services—everybody claims to be interested in us. Manufacturers of deodorants, toothpaste, hair spray, diet pills—they all want us to be happier and healthier. Milk used to come from contented cows; now it is we who are supposed to be content, even though the “milk” for our coffee may be a frightening conglomeration of polysyllabic chemical names barely able to fit on the small container.

Deep inside we know there is little genuine concern. We know that the smiling pitchman or the curvaceous sex symbol on the TV screen doesn't really care how we smell, or how our teeth look, or whether our hair stays in place, or whether we have attained our ideal weight. Indeed, if such manufacturers and their hucksters ever came up with the ideal product, it would be disastrous to their own economic well-being.

NOBODY CARES

So, with the cynicism commonplace in our culture, we have decided that nobody cares. Business people are interested only in our money; politicians are interested only in



election and reelection; our childrens' teachers are marking time until they can start drawing retirement checks; the police are more interested in issuing their quota of tickets than in protecting us; physicians are more interested in the details of our health insurance than our medical history.

We have seen the paradox of loneliness in the middle of our crowded cities. Again and again we have heard the stories about people who were beaten and even killed while their cries for help went unanswered by those who didn't want to get involved. We shake our heads in disbelief, yet with understanding—nobody cares!

#### DON'T THE CHURCHES CARE?

But what about the churches? Surely they care! An occasional Albert Schweitzer or Sister Theresa reminds us that religion often brings out the best in people. Unfortunately the Elmer Gantrys of the world give religion a reputation not easily overcome.

More commonly we see the church neither at its best nor its worst, but at its complacent, apathetic, mediocre, routinely ordinary unexciting, undisturbing existence. With tongue prominently in cheek, Archie Robertson describes the process of becoming a member of a typical contemporary church: Give the preacher your hand, his secretary your name, and the treasurer your check.

Jess Moody describes the futility of a "dry-eyed church in a hell-bound world." In every community the church which dares to wear the name of Jesus Christ must be the church that cares—cares enough to rejoice with those who rejoice and enough to weep with those who weep. A ho-hum, so-what attitude has no place in the Lord's church, for it is the Lord's people. We are God's chosen people, but we sometimes act like God's frozen people.

"I went to a church office," a broken man told me, "and I found information, wintry efficiency, a dozen garbled theological expressions, and a methodical prayer. I was given a God-bless-you, a religious tract, and the front door. I went

out into the street just as I had come in from it—frustrated, sick of sin, and afraid. They gave me everything but the one thing I needed—help" (Jess Moody, *A Drink at Joel's Place*, p. 34).

#### WHY DO WE NEED HELP?

Before we become too involved in trying to determine who is really interested in us, we need to diagnose our true condition and understand the full dimension of our need. The Bible pulls no punches in describing our condition. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way. . ." (Isaiah 53:6). Just two pages later in my Bible it is made clear that our condition is the result of our own actions. "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you so that he does not hear" (Isaiah 59:1, 2).

There is really no question about our guilt and sinfulness, but many people are not convinced. Consequently, they have no motivation to do what must be done. As Vance Havner said, "Men will not seek a physician until they know they are sick, and they will not seek a closer walk with God so long as they are content to get along without it" (*Hearts Afire*, p. 104).

What happens when we do seek that closer walk with God? When we do fully comprehend our sinfulness and our need for a savior? Who is going to help? Friends? The world? The church? Even when all others fail, heaven does not, for heaven is interested in our salvation.

#### THE ANGELS AND THE SPIRIT

Jesus talked about a time when He will "send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds. . ." (Matthew 24:31). The next chapter describes the second coming of Christ and the judgment, and says that all the angels will come with Jesus (Matthew 25:31).



Jesus taught that confession of Him before men would be matched by His acknowledgment of the faithful before the angels of God (Luke 12:8). And these angels of God are pictured as rejoicing "over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10).

The interest of these mysterious heavenly messengers in our salvation is but a reflection of the interest expressed by the godhead. It was the Holy Spirit who impregnated the virgin Mary to set in motion an incredible scene in the redemption story (Matthew 1:18). In similar fashion it was the same Holy Spirit, present at Pentecost, who filled the apostles with His miraculous power and gave birth to the church (Acts 2:1-4).

We rejoice that heaven is interested enough to see that "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. . ." (Romans 5:5). We count it an honor and a privilege to be "born of water and the Spirit" (John 3:5). And we are secure in the knowledge that God "has put his seal upon us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee" (2 Corinthians 1:22).

Heaven is interested in our salvation—so much so that every inhabitant, whether angel, Spirit or whatever vividly demonstrates that interest! We cannot really differentiate and separate the work of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit, for they are deity. They comprise the indivisible godhead. Nevertheless, to use terms we can understand, God and Christ are the ones primarily interested in our salvation.

#### THE FATHER AND THE SON

Do you remember the prophetic words of Isaiah we mentioned earlier? "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). The verse just before that says that Jesus "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" (Isaiah 53:5).

Can there be a more beautiful or comprehensive statement of heaven's interest in our salvation? Probably not, but that interest is repeatedly expressed in a variety of ways.

Christ came to the earth on a mission of reconciliation and to pass along to us the ministry of reconciliation. But while He was here, "in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself. . ." (2 Corinthians 5:18, 19).

"Christ . . . died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God. . ." (1 Peter 3:18).

"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Jesus described himself as coming "not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). Paul enlarged the concept of ransom when he said that Christ Jesus "gave himself as a ransom for all. . ." (1 Timothy 2:5).

A somewhat different, yet similar idea is conveyed by Paul's declaration that "redemption . . . is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation. . ." or a propitiation for our sins (Romans 3:21-26).

The apostle Paul, no stranger to the life of sin, reminded the Ephesians of their former life. "But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. . ." (Ephesians 2:4-6).

#### HEAVEN'S HIGHEST EXPRESSION

As amazing and provocative as these statements are, they are greatly overshadowed by the "Golden Text" of the Bible, John 3:16—"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." In my mind there is a companion statement in the book of Romans: "God shows his love for us in



that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Every time we read those verses we need to pause for a bit and ponder the full scope of heaven's interest.

Nonagenerian E. W. McMillan summarizes the heavenly interest reflected in these passages with four challenging observations:

Infinite knowledge foreknew of man's guilt;

Infinite wisdom predetermined a way of escape;

Infinite power executed that plan;

Infinite love hallowed and glorified this plan.

In his *Daily Study Bible Series*, William Barclay makes three significant points about John 3:16. First, the origin and initiation of all salvation lies with God. Jesus is often pictured as gentle and kind, but God is sometimes portrayed as harsh and unforgiving. In fact it was God, gentle, kind and loving—who sent His Son.

Second, God's essence is love. He is not just capable of loving, not just characterized by loving deeds; He is love (1 John 4:8). He is the loving Father who cannot be content until His children are safely home.

Third, God's love extends to all the world. "It was not a nation; it was not the good people; it was not only the people who love Him; it was the world. The unlovable and the unlovely, the lonely who have no one else to love them, the man who loves God and the man who never thinks of God, the man who rests in the love of God and the man who spurns the love of God—all are included in this vast inclusive love, the love of God. As Augustine had it: 'God loves each one of us as if there was only one of us to love.'" (William Barclay, *The Gospel of John*, Volume I, pp. 128, 129).

God's love was exhibited long ago in His dealing with Abraham, His faithful servant. I can't comprehend what Abraham must have felt when God commanded him to sacrifice Isaac, nor can I comprehend the kind of faith which trusted God to supply the sacrifice. It was a last-second reprieve, the act of a loving God, which stopped Abraham's

hand just before the knife struck its fatal blow. Centuries later this same God, for His love of sinful man, raised His own hand against His own son; and there was no one greater who could stay the execution.

The wages of sin had to be paid (Romans 6:23). Sinners had to be sacrificed or one who had no sins had to be sacrificed in their stead. Didn't God love His only begotten Son? Yes, but He had an awful choice to make, and He chose our salvation rather than the preservation of Jesus' life. Our redemption had higher priority than the Son's exemption.

He "did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all. . ." (Romans 8:32); and in so doing He spared us the punishment for our sins. He poured out His love on us, and our sins on His Son!

#### CENTRAL IN HISTORY

On September 30, 1913, Sir William Ramsay delivered an address at the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. Speaking on the topic, "The Central Fact in History," Ramsay said, "I do not know whether we can see through what we don't understand, but still that marvelous fact, the death of Christ, remains above us and in front of us. It is the most fundamental, and yet in a way the most incomprehensible truth, in the world. It is incomprehensible because it is fundamental. All things rest on it, it rests on nothing deeper or simpler. It is the beginning and the end. The history of the creation centers, culminates, in the death of Christ. From that even history takes a new start, and the modern world begins. From this truth all knowledge begins and in this truth all knowledge culminates. It is the purpose of God from the beginning of the world, conceived in the creation, a fundamental fact in the whole plan of creation, that the world was to move onward towards that event and then to start afresh from it. It was not a device which was struck out in despair at the evil of the world; it was the plan of the world, conceived by the divine will in the beginning, and by this will



planned out." Is heaven really so interested in our salvation that everything else is insignificant in comparison?

J. P. Sanders reminds us that "[God loved the world] so much that He gave Jesus to die for it. He didn't love it because it was lovable; He didn't love it because it deserved to be loved; He loved it because it needed to be loved. . . . God's love is creative: there is a power in it to change the unlovely into the lovable, to change bad men into good men, and to change good men into better men still."

#### OUR RESPONSE

Change. That's what God's love is all about. That's the objective of heaven's interest—to change us from people of the world to people of God. And oh, how desperately that change is needed! And how great is our responsibility to let the world know of heaven's interest! The message is simple, yet majestic. "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were no people but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy" (1 Peter 2:9, 10).

According to a recently completed presidential study called *Global 2000*, the population of the world will be 6.35 billion by 2000 and 10 billion by 2030. Despite the great technological advances of our day, almost half the present world population of 4 and a half billion have never heard any part of the gospel, and almost 250,000 of these people die every day without any hope of eternal life.

A pagan writer of Paul's time said of Roman nobility something which sounds disturbingly familiar and appropriate to our own age: "Sick of home, he goes forth from it and as suddenly comes back, finding that he is no better off. He races to his country house from the town, driving his carriage furiously. He yawns the moment he has reached the door, or sinks heavily into sleep, or hurries back again to town." Sir William Ramsay said that Paul had to give

such people "something worth living for and something worth dying for." Isn't that true in our day as well?

Our world cannot accommodate a casual, business-as-usual approach to Christianity. In Jess Moody's words: "If one lonely preacher plants himself firmly on the New Testament and there abides, the world may not appreciate the preacher or remember his name; but it will be drawn closer to the cross . . . and that is what preachers are for" (*A Drink at Joel's Place*, p. 118). This kind of intensity prompted Martin Luther's statement: "I preach as though Christ was crucified yesterday, rose again from the dead today, and is coming back to earth tomorrow."

We seek to draw people closer to the cross. Why? Because there heaven's interest in our salvation is most beautifully and vividly expressed.

#### PAYING THE PRICE

In a recent issue of *Up Reach* magazine, Joe Barnett repeated the story of a Boston preacher, Dr. S. D. Gordon, who placed a beat-up, bent and rusted bird cage beside his pulpit one Sunday and told its story.

A dirty little boy about ten years old was coming up an alley swinging that old caved-in bird cage with several tiny birds shivering on its floor.

Dr. Gordon asked the boy where he got the birds and the lad said he'd trapped them.

"What are you going to do with them?"

"I'm going to play with them, have fun with them."

"Sooner or later you're going to get tired of that; then what are you going to do with them?"

"I have some cats at home. They like birds. I'll feed them to my cats."

The compassionate Dr. Gordon asked, "Son, how much do you want for the birds?"

The surprised boy hesitated, then said, "Mister, you don't want to buy these birds. They're just plain old field birds. They can't sing. They're ugly."



"Just tell me how much you want."

The grubby little lad thought about it, squinted one eye, calculated, hesitated and asked, "Two dollars?"

To his surprise, Dr. Gordon reached into his pocket, handed him two dollar bills and took the cage. The boy, in a flash, disappeared down the alley.

In a sheltered crevice between buildings Dr. Gordon opened the door of the cage and tapped on the rusty exterior, encouraging the little birds, one at a time, to find their way out through the narrow door and fly away.

Having accounted for the empty cage beside his pulpit, the preacher went on to tell what seemed at first like a separate story. About how once upon a time Jesus and the Devil had engaged in negotiation.

Satan boasted about how he had baited a trap in Eden's garden and caught a world full of people.

"What are you going to do with all those people?" Jesus wanted to know.

The Devil said, "I'm going to play with them, tease them, make them marry and divorce and fight and kill one another. I'm going to teach them to throw bombs at each other. I'm going to have fun with them."

Jesus said, "You can't have fun with them forever. When you get tired of playing, what will you do with them?"

Satan said, "Damn them. They're no good anyway. I'll damn them. Kill them."

Jesus asked, "How much do you want for them?"

Satan said, "You can't be serious. If I sell them to you they'll just spit on you. They'll hate you. They'll hit you and hammer nails into you. They're no good."

Jesus asked, "How much?"

Satan said, "All your tears and all your blood; that's the price."

Jesus paid the price, took the cage and opened the door. And never ever could there be any question about heaven's interest in our salvation.

## MEET FOR THE MASTER'S USE

DAVID WALLACE

God's word is filled with vivid illustrations which express spiritual truth in beautiful ways. One of the visual aids often used to describe the spiritual purpose of man is the figure of the "vessel." In Bible times, vessels for service were fashioned from clay, straw, or precious metals. These instruments served their maker according to his design and purpose. Therefore, how beautifully descriptive is the parallel noted in scripture of the vessel as it depicts man and his spiritual relationship before God.

Jeremiah was once instructed to learn this visual lesson when the Lord directed him to go to the house of the potter and observe the craftsman fashioning his vessel (Jer. 18). The prophet observed as the clay was being formed at the potter's wheel. The potter's creation had purpose as it was designed for beauty and usefulness. Jeremiah learned as he watched the potter molding the clay that he was looking at a picture of not only a nation, but of himself individually and of every man. God, the Creator, designs us as a vessel in His hands for an instrument of excellence and purpose.

Isaiah joins in presenting this picture, saying, "We are the clay, and thou art the potter; we are all the work of thy hand" (Isa. 64:8). In the New Testament, the great passage in Romans 9 reminds us of this same truth. Paul argues that the clay has no right to say to the potter, "Why hast thou made me thus?" God is the sovereign designer. According to his purpose and infallible wisdom, he seeks to fashion each vessel. At the potter's wheel, the vessel is shaped according to the image in the potter's mind. Therefore, man's sole duty is to be molded according to the purposes of God in view of his infinite wisdom. Paul concluded, "O the depth of



the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11 :33). Above all that one may determine about his life and its purpose, no life perspective is satisfactory to happiness which leaves out the creative intent of the Master Potter.

No greater goal in life could exceed simply becoming what God designed one to be. In 2 Timothy 2:21, Paul described this most noble endeavor by encouraging us to be a "vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good." What greater purpose could guide our existence than being a vessel for honor, pleasing to the Lord, and useful in the Master's service?

If we are fit to be employed as a vessel of the Lord, however, there must exist three important qualities in the clay of our life. If we hope to be vessels unto honor, suitable as the instrument of the Master, we must prepare ourselves in three ways.

#### PLIABLE

First is the essential quality of being pliable—submissive to the will of the Potter. Only the willing response of yielded clay can be fashioned for beauty and service.

This important ingredient of submission is discovered in fresh clay as it is soft, compliant, and easily shaped. After a short while in the sun, however, the same clay can become quite unyielding, stubbornly inflexible, no longer impressionable. It was the rebellion of the nation of Judah which was described to Jeremiah as this kind of unsubmitive clay which resisted the shaping pressure of the potter's hand. As long as one refuses to be pliable, to yield and submit to God, he can never be fashioned into the vessel of honor God longs for man to be.

Furthermore, in failing to be pliable, one of the greatest dangers in refusing God's will is realized. Each stubborn refusal stiffens the clay in the hand of God's will as the "heart" begins to harden. The calloused heart may eventu-

ally render the gospel powerless as the seed of the kingdom falls on soil that is weather-beaten and hard-packed. Although the gospel is powerful enough to save the vilest sinner, the gospel can have no impact on an unyielding heart. An unrepentant soul ought seriously to consider the dangerous practice of repeatedly ignoring the appeal of the gospel. God is the Potter, but he does not coerce against the will. Every appeal rejected approaches that point of no return when the clay can no longer be shaped.

God dearly wants our lives to be filled with joy, beauty, and purpose. His longing desire is that we become a vessel unto honor. But we can never be "meet for the Master's use" unless we allow him to shape us according to his will. God's loving ways are unmeasured, but one thing God's love will not do is fashion our lives without submission. Through his word, he appeals in every possible way. He allows us to observe the results of our rebellion. "The way of the transgressor is hard." Our trials may even be used to build into life the qualities that the Lord wants (James 1 :2, 3; I Peter 1:6, 7). As a last loving resort, God even pleads with the strongest warnings of eternal judgment. But God never forces us to become an instrument of honor, meet for the Master's use, without the yielded submission of our lives.

That individual who truly desires to be all that God wants him to be, must honestly pray,

Have thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way!

Thou art the Potter; I am the clay.

Mold me and make me after thy will

While I am waiting, yielded and still.

#### PURITY IN CHARACTER

Secondly, if one wishes to be an honorable vessel, meet for the Master's use, he must purge himself from impurities. Clay which has foreign particles in its substance can never be shaped into the vessel the Lord desires. The lumps must be cast out, the clay purged, for the vessel to be usefully shaped for the Master.



As the potter discards unyielding material, so he must abandon the clay which is mixed with impurities. This kind of clay could only result in a weakened and misshaped vessel. Therefore, God's vessel courageously disciplines and prepares the clay of his life to be physically, mentally and spiritually pure.

From a physical standpoint, Paul buffeted his body daily in order to bring it under subjection (1 Cor. 9:27). As an instrument to be used in Christ's service, our physical bodies are to be our slaves rather than the reverse. We strive to be mastered by nothing (1 Cor. 6:12). We ought to prepare our physical bodies by constant purging from our lives any controlling habits which render our bodies unhealthy or deficient.

Furthermore, the purity of life must include the disciplined mind. We are to fix our mind on things above and not on earthly things (Col. 3:2). So imperative is this mental purity that Paul brought every thought into captivity in order to make it obedient to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). Actions are always the results of our thoughts, and we must diligently strive to eliminate those mental impurities which make the clay of our lives unproductive.

Spiritually, if we are to be vessels suited for the Master's use, the total life must be presented to the potter as pure clay. We "throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles" (Heb. 12:2). James declares, "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners and purify your hearts, ye double minded" (James 4:8). Paul adds, "Let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit" (2 Cor. 7:1). The Potter must have clay that is continually purged through self-examination of all unresolved loyalties and impurities.

#### AWARE OF OUR PURPOSE

Last, the vessel unto honor, meet for the Master's use, must know its purpose in life. We should know why God has made us and what he expects as he fashions us into a vessel

with beauty and design. Perhaps there is nothing more important in preparing ourselves to be meet for the Master's use than to have a clear understanding of our purpose.

God desires that we be conformed into the image of his Son. God created us with the capacity of spending eternal fellowship with him. Therefore, man's sole purpose in Christ, for which he is sanctified, set apart, is to glorify God in his life. "We make it our goal to please him" (2 Cor. 5:9). This is the transcending purpose of life.

Beyond those aptitudes and abilities which may have been developed in our lives, God wants us shaped into the character of Jesus, prepared for every good work. One might assume that God designed him to become a doctor, teacher, professional athlete or whatever. A person may very well have been given the abilities needed for a certain life direction, but this is not the transcending purpose of life. God has made us and set us apart for the privilege of spending eternal fellowship with him. Therefore, our purpose is to glorify his name through the character of Christ in our lives and through good works done in his strength.

The vessel that knows its purpose can thus avoid the disillusionment so prevalent in our day. A flower pot is not successfully used for a drinking glass. Nor is a mug satisfactory as a plate. Each utensil has its own design and purpose. As God's vessel, man will never find any lasting fulfillment in pursuit of something for which he is not designed. Solomon discovered this truth as he found that the purpose of a man's life is not in wealth or pleasure or human wisdom—all is vanity! The whole duty of man is to "fear God and keep his commandments" (Eccl. 12:13).

This explains why one experiences such fulfillment because of acts of kindness or good works performed. One is doing what he was created to do. Ask anyone about the happiest moment of his life who has witnessed the birth of a new Christian in which he has been instrumental. Why is he so fulfilled? He has been used according to his purpose.



Happiness will always result in the life of one who knows his purpose and seeks to fulfill it by bringing glory to God.

Not only will one experience happiness; the vessel which realizes its purpose will have a confidence that is unshakable. Knowing why God made us brings a poise and consistency to life that does not panic in self-pity when the storms rage. There is a composure and calmness about life because the vessel unto honor is resolutely governed by his sense of purpose. The stresses are lessened and the spirit can soar on the wings of an eagle. This confidence even brings adversity under its power and compels it to serve. We who know our ultimate purpose are absolutely unthreatened by any foe. Even death does not intimidate since we have been made for this very purpose (2 Cor. 5:5) in order to spend eternity in fellowship with our Creator.

Christ was this kind of vessel. Always he lived entirely for the glory of God. He summarizes his life at the end by praying, "Father, I have glorified thee on earth, having accomplished the work thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). His whole life was lived for God and was given to glorifying God. This must also be our supreme purpose—to please God, accomplish his objectives, and glorify him in all things. If this is our goal, the vessel of our life will be used for the purpose it was created.

What kind of vessel are you? You can prepare yourself to allow God through His grace and power to shape you into that "vessel unto honor" meet for the Master's use" if you willingly submit with the will, constantly examine and rid yourself of impurities and strive to live according to the single purpose of glorifying God.

## CHRIST, AN EXAMPLE OF GIVING

JOHN W. DALE

### INTRODUCTION

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

*"Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father" (Gal. 1:4).*

*"And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour" (Eph. 5:2).*

*"Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Tit. 2:14).*

*"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)*

### JESUS, AN EXAMPLE OF GIVING

There is no part of life in which Jesus is not a worthy example to follow. He "left us an example that we should follow in his steps" (1 Peter 2:21). We sing that we will follow the steps of Jesus where-ere they go. Will we? If so, we are going to be generous givers.

"Giving" involves 'giving over into the hands of another; to give over into one's power or use; to deliver to someone something to keep, to use or to manage.' It is 'to present; to bestow a gift, a bounty or benefaction.' (Thayer).

Jesus owns all things. "By him all things consist" (Col. 1:17). "All things are of God" (2 Cor. 5:18). "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof" (Ps. 24:1; 1 Cor. 10:26, 28). Now notice this sequence: "For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world of life or



death or the present or the future, all are yours; and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. 3:21-23).

When we think of His wealth, and we then see Paul saying that He "loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20), we're going to better understand Jesus as our example of giving. The key to the gift's significance is "he *loved me and gave himself* for me." Any giving that isn't prompted by love simply isn't acceptable giving. ". . . though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing" (1 Cor. 13:3). Jesus was willing to give his body, but he did so in love—love for God, love for the Law and its fulfillment, and love for men who were lost. "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine . . . As the Father knoweth me, even so I know the Father: and I *lay down my life* for the sheep" (John 10:14, 15). "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends . . ." (John 15:13).

Not only did Jesus demonstrate his love by giving himself for us, he also taught us (by example and by precept) on the subject of giving. The message of the rich farmer (Luke 12) clearly shows Jesus as one who did not mis-emphasize possessions and condemned man's mis-emphasis. Zaccheus declared that "half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold" (Luke 19:8). A great spirit of restitution was in Zaccheus' heart. That's what happens to people when salvation comes to them, when they come to know Jesus as He really is. They lose that sense of selfishness, that attitude that says "*get all I can, and can all I get.*" They admit to being on earth, not for the almighty dollar, but for the Almighty God.

This message won't be complete until we see Jesus as a giver for the purchasing of the church. "Husbands, love your wives, even as *Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it*" (Eph. 5:25). Again, the giving was predicated by the loving. The church was purchased with the blood of Christ

(Acts 20:28), as was redemption (1 Peter 1:18, 19), the forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7). Isn't it obvious, then, that when one is granted the remission of sins, redemption, he is added to the church which was purchased by the same blood that did the redeeming? (Acts 2:37-47).

Since Jesus, our example in giving, gave himself for the church, how could any of us who love Him and appreciate His gift, look with disdain upon the church? How could we fail to stress the importance of membership in the body, the church? We are to be "baptized for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). We are to be "baptized into the one body" (1 Cor. 12:13). What is required for membership in the church is likewise required for salvation; and what is required for salvation is likewise required for membership in the church. 'Getting saved' and then joining the church of one's choice is a prominent doctrine and false to the core. Letting the Lord who saves us (by his blood) add us to his church (purchased by his blood) is the correct approach (cf. Acts 2:38, 41, 47; Eph. 1:7; 5:23, 25; Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 12:13).

Truly, he paid a debt he did not owe; I owed a debt I could not pay. By his gift, the debt is cancelled and we are free.

*I gave my life for thee, my precious blood I shed,  
That thou might'st ransomed be, And quickened from  
the dead;*

*I gave, I gave my life for thee: What hast thou given for  
me?*

*My Father's house of light, my glory-circled throne,  
I left for earthly night, for wandrings sad and lone;*

*I left, I left it all for thee: hast thou left aught for me?*

*And I have brought to thee, down from my home above,  
Salvation full and free, my pardon and my love;*

*I bring, I bring rich gifts to thee: what hast thou  
brought to me?*

William McCormick said:

Jesus gave His head to the crown of thorns,

He gave his back to the cruel lash,

He gave his cheeks to those who smote Him,

He gave his face to rude, dirty human spittle,



He gave his shoulders to be draped with the robe of  
mock human royalty,

He gave his clothes to His murderers,

He gave his mother to His beloved apostle, John,

He gave his hands and feet to be transfixed with nails to  
the accursed tree,

He gave his body for the life of the world,

He gave his spirit to God,

He gave himself, He gave His everything for me.

Jesus knew the reality of the lesson he taught when he  
said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:  
35). He derived the personal satisfaction of "fulfilling all  
righteousness" in doing God's will. When we make up our  
minds to "live for Him who died for me," we will also derive  
great personal satisfaction in finding meaning for life as we  
follow the example of Jesus.

## ALL OF GRACE

RON WHITE

RONNIE WHITE received his B.B.A. in finance at Texas Tech.  
University in 1969 and in 1976 completed his B.A. in Bible. He is  
presently in his fourth year of service as pulpit minister for the  
Village Church of Christ in Oklahoma City, Okla. White engages  
himself as a speaker for various churches, youth groups, and civic  
organizations across the country.

Grace, what is it? From the time we were toddlers we  
have heard the term "grace" and its definitions. Some have  
defined it as the "unmerited favor of God." Others have  
called it "an undeserved gift." I do not know of a more im-  
portant concept in all of Christianity than the grace of God.  
It explains the incarnation, the suffering, the cross of Jesus.  
Grace is that which gives man hope and assurance of our  
salvation in Christ Jesus. Yet, so many people have a very  
vague understanding of grace. What is it?

Roy Angell in his book, *Baskets of Silver*, gives the best  
working definition of grace that I have ever seen. He tells  
the story of a friend of his, Dr. S. M. Lindsay of Boston, and  
how Dr. Lindsay taught a class of junior boys the meaning  
of grace. He reports the story something like this: Dr. Lind-  
say was teaching a class of junior boys on Sunday mornings.  
One particular Sunday, his Bible School lesson was on grace  
and the text they studied was this second chapter of Ephe-  
sians. He said he repeated for them several times during the  
class the definition of grace, but he wasn't sure if the boys  
had gotten the idea even when the class had ended.

The next day he was to go to formal tea in the late after-  
noon in connection with his work. So he got out the striped  
pants, the cutaway coat, the spats and even the high silk hat.  
It was only about 10 blocks from his house to the place of  
the engagement and it was a beautiful April day, so he de-  
cided to walk. It just so happened that as he walked down



the street, one of the boys in his Bible class saw him coming. There was still a little bit of wet icy snow in the shady places that hadn't completely melted yet, and the high top hat was much too much for little Bobby to pass up! He made a couple of quick ice snowballs and hid behind some shrubs. When Dr. Lindsay got right even with Bobby, ol' Bobby raised and fired away at the top hat. He missed the top hat and hit Dr. Lindsay right in the side of the head. What results! There was a sudden cluster of stars and dizziness and the hat went flying into the gutter of the street. Young Bobby was so surprised at what happened, he panicked and ran all the way home and never looked back.

When Dr. Lindsay recovered somewhat he said his first reaction was to run catch him and put some heat on his backside. Then he decided to go to his house and tell his folks. But before the afternoon was over he thought of his Sunday school lesson the day before on grace. He knew he had the chance to show Bobby what grace was all about in a meaningful way. He knew Bobby didn't have a fishing pole, because the junior boys had gone fishing a couple of Saturdays before and Bobby had borrowed one so he could fish. So after the tea, he went to the sporting goods store and bought Bobby a 3-joint rod and took it by his house on the way home. He said Bobby must have seen him coming because he was no where to be found. So he gave it to his mother and asked her to give it to Bobby as an advanced birthday gift because he needed a fishing pole. He asked Bobby's mother to be sure and emphasize that he knew Bobby *needed* the pole.

About an hour later, there was a timid knock on Dr. Lindsay's door. He opened it to find Bobby holding out the fishing pole and saying, "I brought your fishing pole back, Mr. Lindsay. I can't take it."

"Why, Bobby?"

"If you had known it was me who hit you in the ear with

that ice snowball, you wouldn't have given it to *me*," he answered.

Dr. Lindsay startled him when he said, "That is exactly why I gave it to you, Bobby."

"I don't understand, Mr. Lindsay."

"Bobby, what was the Sunday school lesson about yesterday?"

Bobby honestly reported, "I don't remember."

Dr. Lindsay said, "It was about grace, and grace is something you need but don't deserve." Bobby's eyes brightened and a slow grin came across his face as he began to understand.

"All right, Bobby—question and answer—what is grace?"

Like a bolt out of the blue, Bobby answered, "It's getting a fishing pole when you deserve a boot in the pants."

I love that story and that definition of grace—something needed, but not deserved. Our N.T. is filled with examples of that kind of grace. Jesus' life and death is the perfect example of grace. Jesus' two most beautiful stories have grace at the center of them. In the story of the Prodigal Son the word "grace" does not even appear. But the prodigal had taken his share of the inheritance from his father and gone off into a far country where he squandered his property away like a sower throws seeds on the ground. When he began feeding pigs and was starving, the Bible says he came to himself and, in essence, said, "I don't *deserve* to be called a son." He was right. He did not deserve fellowship with his father. He deserved starving in a pig pen. But that is not what he needed. He needed his father to run out to meet him as he came home with the smell of pigs on him. He needed his father to call for the best robe and a ring and sandals and for the servants to kill the fatted calf. That is what he needed. And that is what he got. The father of the prodigal is the perfect example of giving his son what he needed, not what he deserved. That is grace.

In Jesus' story of the Good Samaritan, grace is the theme.



As the Samaritan traveled down the road between Jerusalem and Jericho, he found a Jew who needed something. The way Jews had treated Samaritans, the Jew did not deserve anything from the hands of the Samaritan. But the Samaritan bound up his wounds, put him on his own donkey, took him to an inn and cared for him throughout the night. If that were not enough, the next morning the Samaritan gave the innkeeper some money and told him if the Jew needed anything more than that to put it on the Samaritan's bill and he would pay it. The Samaritan is an example of practicing grace. He gave the Jew something he needed and not what he deserved.

I think of grace when I think of the story recorded in John 8. The scribes and Pharisees brought to Jesus a woman who had been caught in the very act of adultery. They said, "The law of Moses commands that we stone such, but what do you say?" The woman *deserved* to be stoned for her infidelity, but a stoning is not what she needed. Jesus stooped to write with his finger on the ground as the Jewish leaders continued to badger him for an answer. After Jesus' poignant statement, "Let him who is without sin among you cast the first stone at her," the crowd dissipated, leaving only Jesus with the woman. He asked if there was no one to condemn her. She said, "No one, Lord." Jesus replied, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." Jesus practiced grace on her. He gave her what she needed and not what she deserved.

Folks, that is what God has done for us; he has given us what we need and not what we deserve. Because of our sin and rebellion, we *deserved* to be lost, separated from God throughout all eternity. But that is not what we needed. We needed a Savior. Lo and behold, from the very heart of God came his own Son to die at Calvary to give us life and fellowship with God. There is nothing in this world we could do to earn that. It was a gift of love that can never be repaid. As Paul says in Ephesians 2:8, "It is the gift of God—not

because of works, lest any man should boast." Grace saves us. We have not earned our salvation—and we never could! All we can do is accept it by faith. Trying to earn God's favor is a hopeless venture, an exercise in futility. God, by his *grace*, gives us our salvation when we respond in faith and obedience to Jesus.

Let us go a step further. The Christian consent from the N.T. is that *God is love* (1 John 4:8). Sin, therefore is a crime not only against God's law, but against his *love*. I suppose it might be possible to make atonement for a broken law, but it is impossible to make atonement for broken love. Suppose you break some law. You can pay the penalty—either a fine or imprisonment, and then the law has no further claim on you; you're free of the law. But if you break someone's heart, you can never atone for that. To use a crude analogy for a moment, let's suppose a drunken driver loses control of his car and runs over and kills a 4 or 5 year old child. Now, he is arrested and tried and found guilty of negligent homicide. He's sent to prison for 20 years and has his driver's license permanently removed and is fined \$5000. But after he's paid the fine and spent his time in prison, the law has been atoned for and it has no further claim on him. As far as the law is concerned, the matter is settled. But it's not settled as far as the parents of that dead child are concerned. The drunk driver can *never* put things right with them by serving a prison term and paying a fine. He's committed a crime against their love—the only thing that can restore his relationship with them is an act of free forgiveness on their part—an act of grace!

So it is with God. No amount of works can atone for the crime we commit against his love. No amount of works can put us in position to say, "OK, now I've paid the debt and I'm free; let me have my salvation." Our crime is against his love and can only be atoned for by an act of free forgiveness on God's part—an act of grace! His grace is the only thing that can put us back into the proper relationship with



him. We can't earn it; we can only accept his gift by faith. Grace is something needed, not deserved!

How should grace apply in our lives? It makes a difference and leaves visible signs in the way we live. What are some of the signs of grace in us? If you consider carefully Ephesians 2:10, Paul says, "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works." Now that poses a sort of paradox because he said in verse 9 that it was *not* because of *works* we receive salvation, but because of *grace*. Then he turns right around and says, the reason we were created in Christ Jesus was for good works. All the good works in the world can't put us right with God—only grace can, but after we've been put right with him there is something radically wrong with a Christian whose life doesn't issue in good work.

We accept God's grace through faith and accept it as a gift, but that does not mean we are not to do anything about it. It means that from that moment on our lives are to be one continuous outpouring of our gratitude to God for what he has done for us. So what are some of the signs of grace in our lives? Peace and serenity in the face of trials. Jesus had that peace as he faced the cross. Paul had that peace as he faced the executioner. Stephen had it as they stoned him. When I see a man become bitter and resentful because of some of the things that have happened in his life, I see a man who is void of some of the signs of grace. When I see brothers and sisters in Christ hold grudges and refuse to forgive one who has wronged them, I see Christians who are lacking in signs of grace. Forgiveness then is a vital sign of grace. Jesus said in his sermon on the mount, "Love your enemies." Don't give them what they *deserve*, give them what they *need*.

In Colossians 4:6, the Bible says, "Let your speech always be with *grace*, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer every one." A sign of grace is a word uttered at just the right time in just the right tone of voice

that makes the difference. It's saying the right thing at the right time to make a situation better. People who are harsh and critical and degrading of others are people void of signs of grace! Be gracious in your speech and in your discussions of others.

I want us to take a special note of a passage in 2 Corinthians 8 that addresses our stewardship. The way we handle our money is a sign of grace according to this passage. Paul writes in verse 7, "But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving." Paul is saying to the Corinthian brethren, "You Corinthians excel in everything—in faith, speech, knowledge, earnestness, and in your love for us. You excel; you are above average in all these areas. You are a people who are accustomed to excelling in what you do. Be sure to excel in this sign of grace in your lives."

Have you ever been around anyone who just excelled in about everything they set their minds on accomplishing? I like to be around people like that. I like to watch them and try to learn how and why they excel. I like to give people like that the ball so they can run with it because I know the job will not be mediocre or indifferent when those achievers are involved. When I was a student at Texas Tech in the late '60's, there was a man there who excelled. His name is John Scovill. He excelled in everything he did. He was the starting quarterback on Tech's football team and he led Tech to its first victory over the University of Texas. He was an officer in the Tech chapter of the FCA (Fellowship of Christian Athletes). He was an outstanding student scholastically, graduating with an accounting degree and a grade point average of 3.9. He was an excellent speaker and had a great sense of humor. If you wanted a project to go big on the Tech campus, just get John Scovill involved because he could make it go.

That is the way the body at Corinth had responded. They



were a people who *excelled*. They had gone beyond the normal expectations of Paul in about everything he had set before them. Paul had given them the compliment by saying, "You are accustomed to excelling, but make sure you also excel in this grace of giving." A sign of God's grace in our lives is our stewardship—the way we give of our money and of ourselves and of our talents. And we need to excel in this sign of grace.

It concerns me that most of our people in the Lord's church have not caught or not applied that concept. In our congregation at home, about 20% of the people give 80% of the money. About 20% of the people do about 80% of the work. About 20% of the people perform about 80% of the services for Jesus. If the average contribution were compared to the gross income of our members, we would be giving about 3-5% of our incomes. I doubt that many are doing better. It seems to me if we have understood the grace concept in the N.T. we would do better in our giving.

Dr. John Claypool relates an experience in his life. He was part of one of the most heart-breaking tragedies you have ever heard of. A young father was watching a baseball game on TV one Saturday afternoon and proceeded to drink too much in the process. Something his wife said struck him the wrong way, and in a fit of drunken irritation, he got up, went out and got into his car and proceeded to back out of his driveway. Unknown to him, his 3-year-old son had run out of the house after him, and as the father angrily wheeled the car into the street, he heard this terrible crunching sound and looked back to see the crumpled heap of his only child lying dead in the driveway. Dr. Claypool sat with the father just a couple of hours after it happened as he began to try to piece things together. He said, "I have never seen a human being in deeper remorse than that young father. He asked me this: 'How can I go on living when every time I close my eyes all I can see is the image of that crumpled body and realize that I did that to my own flesh and blood?'" You talk

about guilt, remorse, regret—here it is in overpowering intensity. Here was a man who had done something he would to God he had not done. If he could only run back the clock and relive those hours of what had begun as a "normal" Saturday. But, of course, he couldn't. There was no way to turn back the clock!

Do you know what that man is doing today? He founded a little league in Atlanta, Georgia, for underprivileged children. He is doing for fatherless boys what he intended to do for his own. Once he understood the grace principle, that God could forgive him of such a horrible act, that God's grace was big enough even for him, he began giving himself to help others—not to earn his forgiveness or to make it up to someone, but as an expression of gratitude for the grace of God in his life.

When you and I understand the significance of God's grace in our lives, that our forgiveness is a gift of God, then we will give God our very lives and all we have to him as an expression of our gratitude. We are not stewards in order to earn our salvation because after we have given all we have, we are still unprofitable servants. We are stewards giving God our all as an expression of gratitude for his grace in our lives.



## YE ARE NOT YOUR OWN

GLEN PACE

GLEN PACE is a graduate of Freed-Hardeman and of Arkansas College, Batesville. He has served as a minister to churches of Christ in Malvern and Benton, Ark. and Snyder, Texas, in addition to the Downtown Church in Searcy, where he preached for 19 years. He is now preaching for the congregation in Magnolia, Ark.

I consider it an honor to speak on this lectureship and to occupy this time with my peers in the gospel of Christ. With a title that is so full of great thoughts and the ramifications so varied, one might have a tendency to engage in a homiletical odyssey. I shall try to resist the temptation; however the flesh is weak. I seldom preach a sermon without consulting the thoughts of others whom I believe to be wise. One of these calls my subject "A Plea for Purity." I have no quarrel with this thought. Another speaks humorously of the "Know Ye Nots." I suspect he picked up Paul's method of teaching and thought it effective. Another just calls it, "Glorify God." I could never fault one for this great thought. However, I will, hopefully, just stick to the subject and title assigned. "And Ye are Not Your Own."

It should seem foolish to the Christian that this point is controverted or should be argued. However, we do live in a materialistic age and dwell among a people who do not all recognize Christ as Lord and Master. Lip service is often given, but permitting the Lord and the word to dwell richly within their souls with all wisdom seems not to have entered their minds (Col. 3:16). A person can be religious, intelligent, moral, concerned and yet not please the Lord Jesus. The young ruler was rich, came to Jesus ostensibly possessed of all the above mentioned virtues. But he did not possess eternal life. While he showed great humility and piety, he did not show true commitment and fidelity. He

thought he was his own, see? He wore his own collar. He did his own thing and did it in his own way.

Christians should acknowledge Jesus Christ with great pride and joy. Three factions existed in Corinth that did not have their heads on straight. While they embraced the names of men, the men they attempted to honor were not in sympathy with their efforts (1 Cor. 1:12, 13; 3:1-9). They claimed to belong to these men. I like the fourth group who said, "I am the Christ." Some have seen four factions here. Maybe. I see three who were carnally minded and one group who still thought with wisdom.

I was traveling once when my car stopped. I had not applied the brakes . . . it just quit. An old black gentleman came over and offered aid. In fact he took me to the nearest town to get help. He was friendly, so I determined to know him better. I asked him his name, where he worked and if he was a Christian. The only answer I received was this. He looked into the distance where a large house could be seen and then said, "I am one of his men." He identified himself by the man for whom he labored, paid his salary and gave him security. We too, are HIS men. We are not our own. We have been bought and paid for . . . by Jesus Christ our Lord.

1. Have you ever wondered how we are governed by another? Just look. 1) I am part of my family. Having been reared in a family of ten, I learned early in life that I could not have my way. Too, I had to share what I had with other family members. It never occurred to me that I ought to be reluctant to remind other family members that they too should think in like manner. 2) I have engaged in sporting events for many years. Yet I have never been allowed to play by my own rules. Rules really do not bind; they make the game interesting. They do not bring a halt to the game; they permit it to be played. 3) I spent three years in the U. S. Marine Corps. I found out very quickly that "Ye are not your own." They told me when to go to bed, when to get up. When to eat, to take liberty and when to return. "No soldier



on service gets entangled in civilian pursuits" (2 Tim. 2:4). Although one cannot trace the Marines back to Paul's day, he seemed to know something about our rules.

4) I am married. Now this ought to illustrate the point very effective like. "A man has not power over his own body, but his wife" (1 Cor. 7:4). If those of you who listen (or read) who are married do not feel regimented, you at least feel that you belong to another. 5) I am an American. Born free with no walls to bind me. Yet come April 15 each year I am reminded of the dues I pay to be an American. But I pay, rather than go to Russia, Cuba or to jail. We have a 55-mile speed limit. "It is a law you can live with." I know we can because I read this on a bumper sticker of a car that zoomed around me going much faster. Later when thoughtlessly speeding, tired and late at night, it cost me \$38 to learn the very lesson taught on that sticker. "No man is an island." "No man lives to himself." "YE ARE NOT YOUR OWN."

6) We are members of Christ's body (1 Cor. 12:27). The church for which I preach has a rather long and illustrious history. The building is Gothic, impressive and also in need of repair. We have inadequate class rooms and parking space. So, I presented some of my own plans for improvement. The business meeting was one year ago. We are still in the same class rooms, same parking lot and the building still needs repair. Nothing has been added nor planned. Yet someone said, "Brother Pace took over this church." I didn't. "Ye are not your own."

I do not even ditch the water from my yard into my neighbor's. I must not let my dog bark at night and disturb him. If he has a garden, my chickens better stay in their own hen-house.

*II. Ye Were Bought with a Price.* Under new management. New heart, new clothing, new aim and destiny. New and living hope. New and living way. Strangely enough, in all the items just mentioned where there has been seeming bondage, I have not felt unduly oppressed. Paul's imagery

suits me fine. All of us are yoked to something. But Jesus said, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." Paul speaks often of Christians having been bought and purchased. To the Ephesian elders he said in Acts 20:28, "Take heed unto yourselves and to the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, that you feed the church of the Lord which he has purchased with his own blood." Similar imagery is used in 1 Corinthians 7:23. Being bought by blood, I belong to the one who shed it for me; viz., Jesus Christ, my Lord. Blood means life. Both physically and Spiritually.

Some months ago a young boy was to have surgery. He needed blood. Under the most favorable circumstances I gave a pint. Attractive nurses spoke kindly and gave me cookies and a soft drink to consume following the incident. They then gave me a pin which said, "Be good to me today; I gave blood." I wore it two days. Now, in my billfold I carry a red credit card that says I gave blood and therefore permits me to receive it back again. And yet, in my hand, I hold a book that says, "He gave and I can receive." While one might save a life, the blood of Jesus, the purchased price, saves one's soul. A small, sterilized needle pierced my arm and just the prescribed amount of blood was taken for the young lad. It took no more than five minutes. Yet, nails were driven into the hands of Jesus and there was a crown of thorns placed upon his brow. Later, a spear knifed into his side. The blood left over from the dripping of his hands, feet and his head, then came forth with water. I have never yet fainted at the sight of human blood, but I have never rejoiced to see it flow. However, that "Fountain filled with blood permits us to lose all our guilty stains."

My house was purchased with money. My automobile was secured by similar effort. Money passed hands when the beautiful suit I wear was obtained. Someone paid the doctor when I was brought into the world. Yet, Jesus paid for my sins with his blood. Money could not cleanse nor secure my pardon. He bought and paid for me.



*III. The One Who Owns Me Also Orders My Life.* I would have it no other way. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). "The world in its wisdom knew not God" (1 Cor. 1:21). "Let us live according to the Scripture" (1 Cor. 4:6). Jesus said, "Why do you call me Lord, Lord and do not the things I tell you to do?" In essence he said, "You say I am your master, then why do you treat me like I am an unwanted relative?" The Lord wants me to speak to him and ask of him the things I need and want. Even though he knows our needs before we ask. We ask anyway. I trust him to supply every need of mine according to his grace.

I once visited my doctor to obtain relief from an allergy. And since I was there to also find out how to lose some weight. Now I can eat anything that doesn't have salt, sugar, starch or caffeine. I did not know there were other foods. His advice did not suit me at all. I wanted a big bottle of red medicine that tastes good that I could take three times a day. But my doctor did not agree. He took something away and then added something.

Jesus does this. He takes away the things that hurt, hinder and hold us back. The sins that beset, the woes that bring us low. And he replaces all of this with virtues that attract. Should I argue with the process, it will be done to my hurt and to the jeopardy of my soul. He who bought me, made me. He who purchased me knows my diet. He knows my frame. Both power and weakness. Since he has the power to save, he also has the power to keep (Heb. 7:25). I obeyed his commands and was cleaned from my sins through his blood. I belong to him. So, I follow like a sheep that is obedient to the shepherd (John 10:27-28). God lives in me, Christ lives in me, through faith. "He may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you being rooted and grounded in love may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ

which surpasses knowledge that you may be filled with all the fulness of God" (Eph. 3:16-19).

*IV. Our Bodies Are the Temple of God.* In us, the Holy Spirit dwells. He comes from God. God sent the Spirit of his son into our hearts crying Abba, Father. God doesn't want certain things ON or IN his property. Join them to a harlot? Never! "Continue in sin?" God forbid (Rom: 6:1). "Present them as a living sacrifice unto God?" Right! And through this medium our minds are also renewed (Rom. 12:1, 2). I preached in meetings under a big tent once. I had always wanted to do this and refer to it as "The Big Tent." One evening I asked with great fervor, "Are you trying to live the Christian life?" A brother rose and said, "No sir, I have quit trying to, I am living it now." We are taught to "glorify God in our bodies." Also, to "adorn the gospel of our Savior" (Titus 2:10). I heard what might seem a profound explanation of this verse. "When we adorn something we make it to look better than it really is." "It is like a woman" he went on, "who is not so pretty, so she adorns herself to look better." Is this what we do to the gospel? Which one of us makes it look better than it is? My friends, in all seriousness, often time when we get through with the gospel, it bears only a faint resemblance to what we read in the book. The gospel is powerful, living, convicting and comforting. Yet, often we are weak, anemic, dull and abrasive and also lackluster. Yet by showing true fidelity and thus letting our light shine, great power is added to the spoken word. "The kingdom does not consist in talk, but in Power" (1 Cor. 4:20).

*V. Glorify God in Your Bodies.* Our bodies are tied more intimately to God than many teachers have indicated. Someone says, "Ah, but I serve the Lord with my spirit, but the old body does as it pleases." "The sins of the Body cannot damn the soul" "ad infinitum, ad nauseam. And while remarks like this are endless and also foolish, they are also false. My text today says to "Glorify God therefore in your



body." Well, can we do it? Surely one can or it would not have been commanded. Romans chapter 8 is a great treatise on this very theme. "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit" (Rom. 8:1). If you have read or will read this chapter, you will note that "To set the mind on the flesh is death but to set the mind on the spirit is life and peace" (Rom. 8:6).

I listened to a man pervert Paul's teachings on Romans 8:8. The scripture says "Those who are in the flesh cannot please God." How lamentable that he should end his research with the one verse and not even glimpse at the next one. It says, "But you are not in the flesh but in the spirit if so be the Spirit of Christ dwells in you." Verse 9 is also timely here too. "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." All of this is manifest in our lives. Our speech shows it; our actions indicate it. Our deeds glorify the risen Lord. You should note that what we do with our bodies also determines where we will stand in the judgment. As a sheep or a goat. On his left or his right hand (Matt. 25).

The Spirit of the Lord will not abide where he feels uncomfortable. If we permit sin to infest our lives we also permit the devil to rule our hearts. "For what ever overcomes a man, to that he is enslaved" (2 Peter 2:19). In my teen years I called upon a young lady I had learned to like. I thought she was pretty. Her mother was dead. She and her father lived alone. One might think they would enjoy company after supper. She did. He did not. We sat in the living room and looked through a magazine (great entertainment). He was in the next room with the door half opened. We talked and he also listened. We finished the book in minutes, also the *Ladies' Almanac* and had just started on a mail order catalog when he entered. He had not been invited. "Young man," he said, "Do you work during the day back at your house?" Well, since my parents were not there to give their side I confessed that I did. "Then go home, get

some sleep, so you can work tomorrow," he added. I think I detected that I was not welcome on his property. I got up to leave and paused at the gate, briefly, for the benediction. He walked out on the front porch and insisted that I tarry no longer. His voice was not freindly; my presence no longer desired, I left.

My brethren, I do not feel the Holy Spirit stays where he is not wanted. I read where God gave up on some who apparently had served him at one time. "They knew God, but glorified him not as God, neither were they thankful. They became vain in their imagination and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things" (Rom. 1:21-23). So, what happened- "God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonored among themselves: for that they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. A-men" (Rom. 1:24, 25).

If one will read the rest of this chapter, he will note that one cannot please God and live after the flesh. The carnal mind is against God. These lived this way and God gave them up to their evil ways. If they lived in our age, involved in the same sins, they might appear on the talk shows and receive the cheers of the audience who long to learn of the unusual and think of sex as a "peep-show." They would write their memoirs in paper backs and try to out-do any previous effort of like nature.

They thumb their noses at God instead of repenting in sackcloth and ashes. Whereas they ought to lower both their heads and hearts and say, "God have mercy upon me a sinner," they look proud and talk filthy in order to impress those of like nature.



The circumstances can never arise when we can forget that we belong to God. "Ye are not your own." When Paul was in Athens, he could not view the splendor of the buildings for the idolatry of their lives. No way he could be impressed with the culture of their schools, while he beheld the evils of their lives. We cannot counsel with the lost, offering little formulas for living, without telling them of the power and love of our Lord Jesus, whose we are, and whom we serve.

## CAN I RETURN MY HERITAGE?

MARY OLER

"Boy, accept the responsibilities of your heritage!" a father once said to his son. What does heritage mean? The dictionary says it means that which is inherited, inheritance, the lot, condition, or status into which one is born.

"Children are an heritage of the womb" (Ps. 127:3) is one of the 28 Bible verses using the word under discussion. Children—living, breathing—are given something, come in for, come to, acquire, have, hold, possess, occupy, enjoy—inherit.

A mother received a card from her son—at a strange time of year—not a birthday, mother's day, anniversary or holiday date. "Thanks, Mother. . ." the front of the card said. "Thanks—for what?" the mother mused as she opened the card to read two words: ". . . for life!" "Thanks for life!" The heritage of the womb! A child is possessing, endowed with, fraught with, master of, in command of—life. What a heritage! Take the responsibilities of your heritage, Child! You are the temple of the living God, Children!

### WHAT ARE YOUR POSSESSIONS?

Few people would write money or worldly goods at the head of a list of possessions passed on by parents. Rich is the heart which had instilled the belief in a divine power, the belief that some how, somehow, all things work together for good to those who love the Lord, and a sense of optimism that helps one greet every sunrise and sunset with the cry: "This is a day the Lord made for me!"

Sam Levinson in *Everything But Money*, a best seller week after week, writes: "Most of us were reared wrong. I didn't know every child had a right to have a room to himself. I grew up believing the more boys slept in one bed, the



more fun you would have!" He continued that they "got swatted, and wore hand-me-downs," but they had the feeling that tomorrow would see them all together. They had tender loving care when sick, and had the feeling no one in that family could ever die. We didn't have to be perfect. They loved us when we missed a word in spelling, they loved us when we were bad. We never played hookey. When we were sick, they knew it was real—no psychiatrist for us—just TLC."

Hank Ketcham's *I Wanna Go Home* spoke of travel in lands where no one asked questions about America. Had they been trained not to ask? Would answers have discouraged them? Freedom? Food? Books? Choices? Candies? Churches?

A mother of eleven children was asked by a young mother: "Which one of your children did you love the best?" The answer: "The one that was away from home until he came back, and the one that was sick until he got well!"

You know your heritage—pass it on to your children. Tell children about the great people in their families. If big mistakes were made, help children understand how such events came about, and how they can be avoided. Teach children the Bible—to love it, believe it—obey it. Avoid shallowness in religion. Sermons and songs should praise God as the Almighty God, the giver of every good and perfect gift, the one who makes the clouds his chariot, and whose voice is heard to the uttermost parts of the earth.

#### "CANNOT GO OUT OF THE WORLD"

While we have life, we cannot go out of the world to get away from liars, fornicators, users of foul words, people filled with envy, malice, and jealousy. There will always be wars and fightings among us, in communities, and in nations. The ungodly will be met in personal and business associations. Temptations will come from the wearers of immodest apparel to those who follow completely in the footsteps of one who "transforms himself into an angel of light"

(2 Cor. 11:14). One cannot go out of the world, but as a physician does not have to contract every disease his patients have, so a child of God keeps himself spiritually healthy in order to save himself and others. Complete dedication to God is the answer.

#### I BELIEVE I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

"Ye are the light of the world!" Jesus told his disciples at the beginning of their life of great responsibility. Obey the Lord, and see a new creature begin walking in the light, avoiding whisperings, backbitings, malice and all deeds harmful to the body of Christ.

Peter had all doubt driven out of his heart, and could bravely say to authorities: "We must obey God rather than men!" Peter spoke of the peace of God that "passes all understanding" as the child of God learns to have confidence in the guidance of a heavenly father, to put away anxieties, and to fill life with prayer. Study the contrasts: believers-doubters; righteousness, unholiness, light-darkness. Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman who needeth not to be ashamed." A child of the king! No need for shame, but one possessing a rich inheritance, a full bestowal.

#### AN ABUNDANT LIFE

"I came that ye might have life, and have it more abundantly," Jesus said. Eternal life is promised, but a 100-fold life is also promised. The life we know on earth can be rewarding, elevating, pulsating with joy.

A few years ago, in New York City, the wife of an ambassador from a foreign country pushed her young baby girl, and a two-year-old boy from a skyscraper bedroom, then followed them to her death. Reports were that she had no friends.

Christians, with the heritage of stories of Bible men and women of faith, written for our admonition, find their own lives filled with indestructible courage. Make friends with people in the park, with the elevator boy, the janitor, learn a new language, learn to cook, sew, paint pictures, have a



hobby, hide blues under a paintbrush. "I am the light of the world!" Whatever comes, all things are working together for my good because I love the Lord!

#### AQUILA OF CORINTH

Priscilla . . .

As we sew now, making tents,  
We scarce believe it true that we came here  
Distressed when Claudius bade us leave Rome,  
And we fled . . . criminals, who did no crime!

Priscilla . . .

It is true our hearts knew fear  
Of all who served the emperor that day.  
No . . . we were not alone in terror then,  
Our entire race was ordered, driven, forced,  
Unwanted people . . . desolate . . . despised.  
Never . . .

In all our married years

Did we hold love as in those troubled days!  
Hurried, rushing along the city streets,  
Pushed on by soldiers . . . leaving worldly goods  
In Roman rooms . . . caring only for breath . . .  
And safety across some land . . . some sea.

Priscilla . . .

I knew then my life would be  
Filled with rewards . . . if we could stay as one . . .  
No matter what the toil,  
How far the land!  
Our sufferings can never be denied,  
But joy is here . . .  
As we work side by side.

#### PROFILE OF THE CHURCH

##### ALLAN ISOM

ALLEN ISOM is a graduate of Harding and of Harding Graduate School of Religion, where he received the M.R.E. and the M.Th. He attended the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, receiving the Ed.D. in 1972. Isom became part of the Harding faculty in 1963 and is now a professor of Bible at the University.

During the school year of 1978-79, a survey was conducted by the students of Dr. Allan L. Isom of Harding University among adults throughout the brotherhood in order to gain some insights into the thinking and behavior of adults around the country. One thousand, one hundred and sixty-one (1,161) good questionnaires were returned. A good questionnaire means that 90 percent or more of the questionnaire was completed.

Regional differences did not prove to be very diverse. Twenty-eight percent of those used in this study came from the Southeast, 33 percent came from the Southwest, 11 percent were from the North, and two percent the West; and 25 percent from Mid-America. Fifty-six percent of the sample were female, 76 percent were married, 70 percent were parents, nine percent divorced and of that nine percent, 83 percent had not remarried. Twenty-four percent (24 percent) was from 18-24, 24 percent, 25-34; 32 percent 35-50, 15 percent, 51-65, 5 percent, 66 and up.

##### FINANCIAL SITUATION

Both parents of 43 percent of the families worked outside the home, and 17 percent were holding down a second job. Forty-one percent, (41 percent) were paid a salary, 24 percent worked by the hour, nine percent self-employed, eight percent retired, and 17 percent marked the questionnaire "other ways of making money" than those listed above. Eleven percent made less than \$7,284, which was the pover-



ty level for the Spring of 1979. Eleven percent made between 7,285-9,999, 19 percent made between 10,000-14,999, 20 percent between 15,000-19,999 and 30 percent over \$20,000 a year.

#### CHURCH MEMBERSHIP AND TRAINING

Three percent of those responding were not members of the church. Of the others who responded 13 percent had been members less than five years, 35 percent had been members between 6-15 years, 24 percent members between 16-25 years, and 25 percent had been members for over 26 years. Seventy-six percent (76 percent) of those responding had taught a Bible class, and 56 percent had attended a soul-winning class. Seventy-one percent had had a part in bringing a soul to Christ.

#### MORAL BEHAVIOR

Only one percent said they use illegal drugs presently but eight percent had at one time or another used illegal drugs. Twenty-one percent saw nothing wrong with public dances and 10 percent attend such dances. Fifty-six percent mix swim in public places and 11 percent drink alcoholic beverages. Twelve percent smoke cigarettes and three percent believe the use of marijuana is okay if it is not habitually used.

#### DOCTRINAL QUESTIONS, ETC.

Eighteen percent would dissolve the marriage of a divorced couple, who had married one another, before they would baptize them, 26 percent believed that baptism forgives divorce and therefore would not dissolve the marriage, while 39 percent were undecided on this question. Some nine percent believed that the Jews who are currently returning to Jerusalem are fulfilling prophecy, 56 percent did not believe those Jews were fulfilling prophecy and some 33 percent were undecided. Twenty-four percent of the sample believed that it is okay for women to pray aloud in the presence of adult males other than their husbands, 65 percent

felt this to be wrong. Twenty-four percent thought it would be wrong to use instrumental music in a church building for a wedding ceremony. Seventy-one percent thought that baptism for remission of sins, if performed by a denominational preacher, was a valid baptism. Fifty percent of the sample think that there are some saved by misguided people in religious groups other than those who worship in buildings owned by the churches of Christ.

Seventy-eight percent of the males and 75 percent of the females thought they would go to heaven if they were to die at the time they filled out the questionnaire.

This report makes no attempt at interpreting the results. And one must be careful in stating why adults act as they do.

Now, why such a study as the above? Ignorance condemns us to little or no progress. We hope Christians will use this data in at least two ways. First, we need to understand some of our differences and learn to communicate love and compassion to one another as we continue to study.

Second, we need to develop constructive plans of actions which will develop more Christlike persons.

Lastly, we must express a special thanks to those who took the time to fill out the questionnaire and the students who helped in this project.



## 1 PETER 4:8-11

AVON MALONE

AVON MALONE is a graduate of Abilene Christian University. He has served as a local minister in Colorado, Texas and Illinois. He has taught at the Bear Valley and the Preston Road Schools of Preaching and has spoken widely on college campuses. In addition to his work as an assistant professor of Bible at Harding University, he often speaks during gospel meetings and nationwide lectureships.

Though the dark cloud of the Neronian persecution loomed ominously on the horizon, Peter writes in positive tones as he exhorts Christians to action. As God's stewards in perilous times, Peter's readers are exhorted to exercise their God-given endowments:

Above all things being fervent in your love among yourselves; for love covereth a multitude of sins: using hospitality one to another without murmuring: according as each hath received a gift, ministering it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God; if any man ministereth, ministering as of the strength which God supplieth: that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, whose is the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen (1 Peter 4:8-11, ASV).

Should the full fury of Nero's irrational persecuting power fall on these first-century Christians, they are to be found in the way of dynamic stewardship and service.

Peter urges Christians—God's elect who are both priests (2:5, 9) and pilgrims (2:11)—to love one another with great intensity (cf. 1:22). He speaks of fervent love and uses the great word for love, *agape*. The word "fervent" (or "unfailing", RSV) means to "stretch out to full limit." It can describe the stretching of a string until it is taut and fully extended on an instrument. This emphasizes the great intensity with which Christians should love one another.

Peter, along with other New Testament writers, insists on the priority of love—"above all things" (1 Cor. 13:13). His Lord, in a way never forgotten by Peter, stressed the centrality of love, ". . . hereby shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another . . ." (John 13:34, 35).

The expression "love covereth a multitude of sins" reflects Proverbs 10:12, and seems to refer to the mantle of charity that love throws over the frailties of another.

When free from envy, scorn and pride,  
Our wishes all above,  
Each can his brother's failings hide,  
And show a brother's love.

Peter urges the "using of hospitality one to another without murmuring." The English word "hospitality" here translates a word which literally means "love of strangers." The term appears here and in the qualifications of elders in 1 Timothy 3:2 and in Titus 1:8. The responsibility here enjoined is of fairly frequent emphasis in the New Testament (Heb. 13:2; Rom. 12:13; 2 John; 3 John).

The spirit in which Christians extend hospitality is important. It is to be exercised ungrudgingly and without complaint. A joyful generosity growing out of gratitude should characterize God's child.

At this point in the passage Peter makes his great appeal for the vigorous use of the gifts given his readers by God: ". . . according as each hath received a gift, ministering it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10). The expression, "as each hath received a gift," deserves special emphasis. Then and now each Christian receives God's good gifts (James 1:17). You have a gift to use in the service of your God!

Some of the greatest gifts are the capacities and abilities to serve which God gives us. This is very much at the heart of the point made here by Peter. While the word "gift" (from the Greek *charisma*) could refer to a miraculous gift,



it was not limited to such in its New Testament usage. It could and did refer as well to natural but God-given endowments. Peter is saying in the first-century historical context, every gift possessed by the Christians, natural or miraculous, is to be used fully to God's glory. Although the miraculous gifts of the apostolic age are no longer extant on earth, the principle in the passage still applies. To the glory of our God we must enthusiastically and joyfully use our capacities for service.

The gifts come from an inexhaustible store—the manifold grace of God. Grace is more than purging power to cleanse our past. Divine grace is the source of the gifts by which we presently serve. Paul sees his ministry to the Gentiles as “the grace of God given me” (Gal. 2:6-9; Eph. 3:7-9). When the Macedonians are moved to marvelous sacrifice in behalf of the needy, Paul sees it as “the grace of God bestowed upon the churches of Macedonia” (2 Cor. 8:1f).

The diversity of endowments may be suggested by the word “manifold” which describes the variety and diversity of His grace and its expressions. (A cognate form of the word “manifold” is used in the Septuagint to describe Joseph's coat.) Emanating from God's diverse, “multi-colored” grace we receive varied and differing gifts. We all are the beneficiary of heaven's bounty. *Every* Christian is endowed with faculties, capacities, “gifts” to be used fully to God's glory.

Peter charges his readers to use their gifts “as good stewards.” With this comes the sobering realization that “it is required of stewards that a man be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2). Jesus teaches that “unto whomsoever much is given; of him much shall be required” (Matt. 25). We are richly blessed with gifts from God. This is true, not just of the “gifted” (as we sometimes use the term), but of all of us. However, heavenly blessings are always bestowed with commensurate responsibilities. Along with our gifts from God,

we are placed under heavy obligation. We must use our gifts fully as good stewards.

There is an advance from the general to the specific in verse 11. The apostle moves from a broad reference to the gifts that come from God's grace to a reference to two definite gifts: speaking and serving. “If any man speaketh, speaking as it were oracles of God . . .” is Peter's way of conveying the urgency of speaking only what God has revealed with a realization of the great responsibility resting on the speaker (cf. James 3:11). “Oracles” is a word denoting that which is spoken. Derived from the word *logia*, “oracle” was used in the classical Greek of the alleged sayings of heathen deities. It, of course, does not retain that significance in its biblical usage. In the New Testament it is used to refer to divine utterances—God's word—coming through inspired men and found in scripture (Acts 7:38; Rom. 3:2; Heb. 5:12).

The clear call to “speak as the oracles of God” is both timely and timeless. It is needed and must be heeded now, even as it was needed in the 60's of the first century when Peter wrote.

Thomas Campbell made his famous statement about the sufficiency of scripture at the home of Abraham Altars: “Where the scriptures speak, we speak and where the scriptures are silent, we are silent.” Some years ago I heard Bill Humble, now dean of Abilene Christian University, comment on this well-known restoration slogan. He said: “It is this commitment to speak where the scriptures speak that is the source of our uniqueness; our strength, and our growth. If we should ever cease to speak where the scriptures speak, it would make little difference what we speak, or whether we speak at all. We would have committed spiritual suicide.” May we all reaffirm our commitment to “speak as the oracles of God”!

“If any man ministereth, ministering as of the strength which God supplieth . . .”, introduces a gift that all can ex-



ercise. "Ministering" (from a root word from which we get the word "deacon") simply means "serving" and in a very real sense we have all been called into the ministry. Our Lord is the suffering servant of Jehovah (Isa. 53), and we are to follow in His steps (1 Peter 2:21). A church of 1000 members should have 1000 ministers! We should all be ministering in the strength which God supplies.

This great passage closes "that . . . God may be glorified through Jesus Christ . . ." (verse 11). Peter here strikes a note that rings throughout the New Testament. In the sermon on the mount Jesus spoke of men seeing "your good works and glorifying your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:13-16). Paul makes it clear that a major purpose of the eternal purpose is that God might be glorified (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14). As Christians gratefully accept and enthusiastically exercise the gifts of God, the great river is glorified.

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen (Eph. 3:20, 21).

## PARABLES OF THE TALENTS AND POUNDS

DENNIS CRAWFORD

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The judgment ended quickly. He was stripped of the large sum of money he had been carrying and was dragged away. In the scuffle a brown scrap of paper was dropped. It looked like a napkin—a dirty napkin.

It happened so fast, I'm sure we would have stared in disbelief. We might have tried to justify him! If not for the prospect of sharing his fate, we would have protested!

After all, what he did seemed so right. So good and honest and . . . careful. He was a good steward. He did take care of the talent!

Or did he? . . .

The bit of fantasy we have just indulged in could have been the ending of the parable of the talents recorded in Matthew 25:14-30. A parable of stewardship.

Jesus often addressed his hearers in parables, for he was a master communicator. Knowing our natural tendency to misunderstand and misapply, the Lord used stories from daily life to illustrate kingdom life. When teaching, Jesus spoke of the market place, daily happenings and mundane things we can all understand. Many teachers have since made the gospel difficult to grasp. Not Jesus. The Savior can remove our spiritual blind spots and make us say, "Oh, now I see."

The lesson is easy to grasp. Jesus teaches responsible, ad-



venturous stewardship with a simple story retold in the following paragraphs.

As he planned a journey a rich man called his servants to him. He wished to divide his holdings among them. (This was not uncommon in ancient times.) To one he entrusted five talents; a sum of money worth about \$30,000 in the first century. To another servant he gave two talents and another received one talent.

Immediately the five talent man began investing the money. He probably followed the markets closely, knew the prospects of the crops, invested and reinvested so shrewdly that he realized a profit of a hundred percent on his investment.

Most likely the servant entrusted with two talents was not as quick nor as shrewd as his fellow five-talent servant. No matter. He too could invest wisely and work hard. If he turned toward farming, he drove his oxen hard. If in a vineyard, he worked from daylight till dark. By sheer hard work, we imagine, he turned two talents into four.

But the one-talent man was different. He made no investments. Perhaps he thought of all the things which could happen to money. The thought of thieves, market crashes, economic recessions, and such haunted him. So he dug a hole and buried his master's money in the ground. It looked like the smart thing to do.

The master was gone a long time. But upon his return he called for the money he had entrusted with the stewards. "Well done, good and faithful servant. . . ." he said to the five and two-talent stewards who had invested well. But when he called the one-talent servant his mood changed instantly. There was no gain to report. The servant tried unsuccessfully to justify himself. His talent was given to the servant with ten talents. Then, stripped of his goods, he was thrown into outer darkness.

The implications of this parable should make us uncomfortable and jerk us into spiritual reality. It's impossible to

overlook the application. We already know who the characters are. The man is Christ and we are the servants (stewards). The talents are gifts or opportunities given to us for service to God and our fellowman. The general application is evident: Invest or die, give or have removed, use it or lose it.

But although the general application is easy to see, the specific application for the individual disciple or local church may not be so evident. Just how does this parable relate to us? What does it mean to an individual steward or a body of stewards (the church)?

To make the application, let's consider the key concept of the parable to be adventure. That's right, this parable fairly hums with excitement and adventure. Webster defines adventure as: "a business venture or speculation, an exciting and dangerous undertaking, the encountering of danger."

Now let's look at the one talent man. As I understand it, Jesus spoke the parable to focus on the one talent man. We must look closely at him. What was his problem? He didn't fail because he had only one talent for one talent was twenty years' wages or more. One talent was a great trust. A wonderful opportunity from a gracious Lord.

Did he look at the others' talents and become bitter. No, there's no indication of this in the text. Did he misunderstand his task? Probably not. His misunderstanding was more basic—more deadly.

It seems he misunderstood God. The God of grace and love became to this man an unreasonable, hard, demanding Lord (Matthew 25:24).

*The Challenge To One-Talent Religion:*

Jesus, in this parable, issued his challenge to sterile, bland, one-talent religion. Don't misunderstand the message: There is no true religion without risk; there is no life short of death (Matt. 16:25).

Do we misunderstand God? Can we be too hard on the



one-talent man? Have we caught a glimpse of the God of adventure?

A fresh look at God challenges me! The Old Testament shows God's adventure with man. God placed his work in the hands of a has-been Egyptian nobleman turned shepherd named Moses. God adventured with Joshua, Gideon, Amos and others.

I see the risk and chance of the faithful in the five and two talent men. I hear the Master saying, "Well done" not because they made a lot of money but because they did something! They entered into God's adventure.

Are we too careful? Have we realized our God is a God of adventure?

The greatest adventure of all was lived by Jesus. Jesus—God on the earth. His adventure started by "the word" being reduced to the lowest common denominator of life—a single cell. This tiny cell was placed inside a little virgin girl of Nazareth, to become Immanuel (Matt. 1:22). He was born into a mostly hostile world. As John said, "He came into his own things and those who were his own did not receive him" (John 1:11).

Jesus invested. His entire life was lived on the edge of adventure. Speaking the truth, he suffered the consequences. He ate with the outcasts and was criticized for it. Jesus challenged the stubborn traditionalism of the Jewish leaders of his day. He was the "grain of wheat" that had to die (John 12:24). And die he did. His adventure nailed him to a cross (John 19:17, 18).

The God of adventure looks ahead to a great future. One-talent religion looks back to a "golden age." "But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrine the precepts of men" (Matt. 15:9).

What a challenge! Jesus, in a single parable, rips to shreds the one talent "only-orthodoxy" stance. One historian said, "The Jews wanted to build a fence around the law." This parable was aimed at the Jews who were the "keepers

of orthodoxy" of their day. Fences and God's revelation don't go together!

The one-talent is a witness to us. He would say get up and get out with the gospel. Let others have it, tell it everywhere, it can't be harmed! "My word shall not return to me void" (Isa. 55: 10, 11). Don't worry, God will take care of his word! Our defensive stance must be changed! Sure we've kept his word and nothing has happened to it. But are we doing business? God's business?

Some like to dwell within the sound of church and chapel bell;

But I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of hell!

The Father is not the God of the status quo. He is the God of talents invested. Jesus came with new ideas, new revelations, new words from God, and he was crucified by the status quo. Would we crucify him if he came today? Jesus and the one talent man don't get along together.

The words of Jesus in this parable are a painful reminder that as God's children we either use our gifts and opportunities to serve or we lose them. Buried money won't ever draw interest. Buried talent never glorifies God. Jesus said, "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in Heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

Where do we fit into Jesus' parable? Could many local congregations identify with the one-talent man? Aren't there many churches today which are bodies of stagnant talent rather than active bodies of Christ? Have we apostatized from the road of adventure which Jesus walked and started practicing a bland form of churchanity? Are we being challenged to live the adventure of stewardship?

May God help us to wake up and exhort one another to invest our gifts and talents in the work of God.

This is not an exhortation to preach and teach more on "soul-winning." We know this is the task of the church (Matt. 28:18-20). But . . . "We have many members in one



body and all the members do not have the same function" (Rom. 12:4). Often our over-zealous, if not misguided pulpit messages, give the impression there are only two or three tasks a Christian can do in the body and be pleasing to God. This is unbiblical and promotes talent-burying!

Jesus wants his people to invest and grow spiritually. The parable of the talents illustrates how-to and shows us what to avoid. To grow and please him we risk and invest. To receive a curse we hide and defend.

Last year in northwest Arkansas a farmer was bulldozing around a fence row. Seeing something shining in the up-turned dirt, he looked to see what it was. It turned out to be a \$5 gold piece! The old-timers told him it was the custom to bury money under trees and along fence rows. There could be more! Before he finished he had dug up the whole fence! Our farmer spent a lot of time and money but found no more gold.

The children of the world are quick to dig up buried assets. Christians must learn this lesson!

A lot of God's people have symptoms of the one-talent syndrome. The root problems are fear, misunderstanding our Father, wickedness and laziness. The end result is a buried talent and a lost soul.

I hope we can be impressed with this message today. May we get a fresh insight into the beauty of adventure and the horror of hiding.

May we shake up the status quo and spread the Gospel with the same abandon and unselfishness as did Paul who said, "I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ, for the sake of my brethren . . ." (Rom. 9:3). Dare we be more careful than Paul? May we invest the buried talent that stands between us and joy-filled stewardship in the kingdom of God. May the God of adventurous stewardship help us to see the loveliness of sharing.

The opportunities are great for God has entrusted us with the Gospel (1 Thess. 2:4; 1 Tim. 1:11, 18) and has equipped

us for service with various gifts (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-27).

The King is coming. The Master will call for his talents. Where are they? Let's dig today and find them. Individually we will give an account (Matt. 25:27; Rom. 14:12). But more than this, shepherds of local churches must help the body become mobile and effective. When individuals dig up talents, churches become God-glorifying organisms.

Get the shovels! There is still time. Is it out under the big tree? . . . Or was it in the fence row? . . . Remember?



## SAVED TO SERVE

### JERRY JONES

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If you could be transposed to the days of Jesus and given a free 30-day trip with the Lord, what would you do? I am sure you would take advantage of such an opportunity. You would be filled with many exciting events and memories. If you were asked to tell the most outstanding observation of Jesus' character that you made during the 30 days, what would it be? His wisdom, his knowledge, his compassion. I have never had a 30-day trip with Jesus, but I have looked at his life through the gospels. One thing that made Jesus unique is the fact that he was a servant. Unless one understands the servant heart of Jesus, he will never be what God intends him to be. To see the application of the servant heart of Jesus in our lives, we must lay the foundation by seeing Jesus as a servant.

### JESUS WAS A SERVANT

The prediction of Jesus as a servant goes back 700 years to the days of Isaiah. In Isaiah 53:1-9 Jesus' life is described. In Isaiah 53:10-11 he is referred to as a servant; consequently, 700 years before our Lord came into this world, he was designated a servant.

In addition to being predicted a servant, our Lord chose to come in the form of a servant. In Philippians 2:6-8 Paul stresses the servant form of Jesus.

Jesus came as a servant, and he lived the life of a servant. In John 13 Jesus performed the task of a servant when he

washed feet. In verse 12 he asked the question, "Do you realize what I have done to you?" In verses 13 and 14, he established the fact that since he was their master, he washed their feet, and so they ought to wash one another's feet. Jesus said, "This is an example that I have left for you to do" (v. 15). The basis for this standard is found in verse 16 in the fact that the servant is not greater than his Lord.

As Jesus continued to live his servant life before others, he taught the importance of service. In Mark 10:35 and following, Jesus taught James and John the importance of service. When they made the request to have the place of pre-eminence, Jesus informed them that they did not really understand what they were asking. In verse 42 he took an example from civil government: greatness was measured by the ones that you exercised authority over. In verse 43 he said this standard was not the standard of his disciples, but that greatness was measured in service. He repeated this great truth in different words in verse 44. In verse 45 he said that the man with this type of life is based upon his life and ministry.

### DISCIPLES ACCEPTED THE SERVANT ROLE

Because of Jesus' emphasis on being a servant, the disciples began to react to this great truth. The reaction of John is very interesting. The early life of John would not indicate to us that he was interested in being a servant (Mark 3:17); Luke 9:54; Mark 10:37ff). However, when the book of Revelation was written (Rev. 1:1, 2), John was depicted as a servant. From the time of the ministry of Jesus to the writing of the book of Revelation, John's life began to change into a servant life.

Paul did not have the advantage of being with Jesus in his personal ministry; but, nevertheless, he viewed himself as a servant. In Acts 26:16-18 the appearance of the Lord to Paul was explained in order that he might be a witness and a servant. In Paul's preaching life he considered himself a servant (Rom. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; 2 Cor. 4:5). Even the ene-



mies of Paul saw him as a servant (Acts 16:17). Paul viewed his preaching as serving the Lord (Acts 20:19).

#### CHRISTIANS ARE TO BE SERVANTS

Christians do not have the option of whether or not to be servants of Jesus. If they are disciples or followers, they must be servants. We are commanded to be servants upon two major bases: the example of Jesus as a servant and the inspired statements of the New Testament (Rom. 12:11; Acts 4:29; II Tim. 2:24; Rev. 19:5).

The basic barrier to the servant role is self. It is for this reason that Jesus struck so hard at the problem of selfishness (Mark 8:34). Sin is clothed in selfishness. Immorality, lying, stealing and coveting are expressions of selfishness. One cannot be a selfish servant.

#### EVIDENCES OF THE SERVANT ROLE

The New Testament has much to say concerning the evidences of being a servant. One of the important demonstrations of the servant role is that one considers himself to be less than Jesus. In John 13:16 Jesus establishes the truth that the servant is not greater than his Lord. In 1 Peter 2:21 we find that Jesus suffered in order that he might leave us an example that we should follow in his steps. Consequently, when one endures any type of hardship because of his allegiance to Jesus, he has no room to complain since he is not greater than his Lord. The inconveniences and problems that we encounter in our daily following of Jesus are not justifiable reasons for us to leave him unless we feel that we are greater than he is.

In 2 Timothy 2:24 the servant of the Lord is not quarrelsome but is kindly to everyone. The servant is to be a teacher. Paul became a servant of the Lord in order that he might win others (1 Cor. 9:19). Because a servant obeys his master, he is involved in the teaching of others (Matt. 28:18-20).

The servant of the Lord is a follower of the Lord. In John 12:26 Jesus said the one who serves is the same one who fol-

lows. The one who follows is the one who will be where Jesus is. Do you go where Jesus goes? Would Jesus go where you go? I believe John 12:26 would solve a lot of the decisions concerning what the Christian can or cannot do. If the Lord would not do it, the decision of the servant of the Lord is obvious. One of the major problems that Christians face in a daily walk with the Lord is that of keeping their eyes focused on him and what he would do and be.

The servant of the Lord does not involve himself in agreements that would jeopardize his service (2 Cor. 6:14-16). If we could convince our young people that they are servants of the Lord, they would not marry one who is not a servant or one who would jeopardize their service. Even though marriage is not discussed in 2 Corinthians 6:14-16, I believe the principle would lead us to this type of application.

The servant of the Lord serves the whole body (1 Cor. 12:15-17). One should be interested in how he or she could best render a service to the other members of the body. Many Christians cannot do many functions well, but they can find something that they can do.

A servant is evidenced by the attitude that he owns nothing and he is owned (1 Tim. 6:7; 1 Cor. 6:19; 7:23). We must be willing to accept Jesus not only as a teacher but also as an investment counselor (Mark 10:29-30). No one should be judged a fool for turning loose of what he cannot keep any way in order to gain what he cannot lose anyway. This is not meant to say that he cannot lose his right to eternal life, but he must realize that he must turn loose in order to gain.

#### THE BLESSINGS OF THE SERVANT ROLE

The blessings of the servant role are manifold. In John 12:26, Jesus says the one who serves will be honored by God. In Matthew 25:21 the servant of the Lord will inherit the joys of the Lord. In Revelation 19:5 the servant of the Lord will praise God in eternity. In Luke 12:37 the servant of the Lord is the one who is really happy.



One becomes a servant of the Lord by looking to Jesus as his example. In Philippians 2:6-8 one has to humble himself and become obedient even unto death to be the type of servant that Jesus was. The word *obedient* is not a nice word in our vocabulary, but the servant of the Lord does not have the right to disobey his master. Submission and service to Jesus Christ are the heart and core in conversion (1 Thess. 1:9, 10). We have been saved from sin in order to serve, but we do not serve in order to be saved. The church must come to grips with the truth that all of us have the role of a servant. This role is not limited to those who are paid on a full-time basis but to all those who claim to be redeemed by grace through faith. It is this type of submission (Eph. 5:21) which will bring together the proclamations in the Lord's body. It is to this type of life that Jesus calls us to live (Matt. 10:39).

## WHOLEHEARTED SERVICE

RON WHITE

There is a verse in 1 Corinthians that has become one of my favorites in all the Bible. Just in the last couple of years has the importance of this verse made its mark on my life. Let me read it to you. "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." I realize the context is in consideration of eating meat sacrificed to idols and being considerate of a brother's conscience. But think of the implication of that verse in the broad sense. "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do *all* to the glory of God."

It seems to me that one of the major problems we face in 1980 in the church of our Lord is that of *mediocrity*. Members of the Lord's body seem to be more and more content with the average and the mediocre in their service to Jesus. I see men and women spend themselves and give all their hearts to their jobs and careers while the Lord gets the leftovers—mediocre leftovers at best. I see young people spend themselves in their schools and give all their hearts to study or to student senate or to athletics or to their club and the Lord Jesus gets what is left—an hour or two of mediocrity in worship or sitting through a Bible class.

I see Christians give all their hearts to a hobby or recreation—from golf to woodworking and from tennis or racquetball to sewing or working on cars—and then render an apathetic attempt of serving the Lord who died for them. I see young couples full of talent and ability, couples who could be great servants in the kingdom, spend all their time pursuing fortune and fame to the point that Jesus comes way down the list of priorities and receives precious little from His people. I see congregations of God's people who seem to be content with keeping house and mediocrity. It is



time we recognized that average and mediocre performance will not lead this lost world to Jesus. It is time we resolved among ourselves individually and collectively that we will use what God has given us with all our hearts out of gratitude for what he has done for us. It is time we gave to God the first fruits and not the leftovers of our lives.

In the Bible, God says over and over again in a myriad of ways that he wants us to be zealous and wholehearted in our service to him. Paul writes in Romans 10:1-2, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them (Jews) is that they may be saved. I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened." It broke Paul's heart that the Jews had not come to Christ in faith, but he complimented them for their zeal. Later in the Roman letter Paul exhorted the Roman Christians "Never flag in zeal" (Rom. 12:11). We need to be a people who enter our service to the Lord with zeal. The apostle Peter said in his second epistle, "Therefore, brethren, be the more *zealous* to confirm your call and election, for if you do this you will never fall." God is trying to tell us something—He wants our *wholehearted* service!

There are numerous other passages we could consider, but I want you to think about Jesus' attitude along this line. Jesus condemned the sin of uselessness as strongly as anyone in the Bible. In the parable of the talents, the one talent steward is condemned to be thrown into outer darkness where men weep and gnash their teeth. Why? Because he had stolen his master's property? No! Because he had squandered it away in riotous living? No! Because he had not used his master's talent for anything! In Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan, the priest and the Levite are condemned because they did nothing to help the wounded traveler in need. And maybe the strongest words of our Lord recorded in the New Testament are seen in Revelation 3:16 as He addressed the church at Laodicea. He says in verse 15, "I know

your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot!"

Jesus is saying to the Laodicean brethren "you have lost your zeal. You are settling for average, mediocre! You just don't care anymore!" Then comes the hammer blow of verse 16: "So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth." Those words literally say "I will vomit you up!" Lukewarmness, apathetic attitudes make our Lord sick! He does not want the average and the mediocre—he wants wholehearted service!

Paul stands as a perfect example of a disciple of Jesus who understands that Jesus wants our wholehearted effort. As you read the book of Acts you get the feeling that the Jews did not have a fond appreciation of Paul. They chased him, plotted against him, imprisoned him, beat him, stoned him and whipped him but Paul just kept coming back preaching Jesus. Then in Romans 9:3 Paul says about these same Jews, "I would give my own soul to Satan if it would mean salvation of the Jews!" Paul put his own soul on the line in his service to Christ Jesus. Nothing less than that can be acceptable. He wants wholehearted service.

There are two resolves I would like you to make along with me. First of all, resolve to deepen your commitment to Jesus our Lord. It needs to be said of us what was said of the household of Stephanos in I Corinthians 16:15, "they have *devoted* themselves." That word translated "devoted" could be rendered "addicted." To what or whom are you addicted?

The drug addict wakes in the morning and the primary objective during the day is getting his "fix." From his first waking moment his mind is on his fix for the day. As the day wears on, it becomes increasingly imperative that the addict get his fix and he will do anything to get it. Why? Because he is addicted to drugs. The alcoholic in the advanced stage of alcoholism awakes in the morning and reaches for the bottle. His primary objective for the day is drinking a little more



until he drowns himself into a deep sleep of drunkenness. Why? Because he has become addicted to alcohol. The cigarette smoker wakes in the morning and the first thought is to smoke a cigarette. During the day over and over again they light up. The last thing they do before going to sleep is smoke. Why? They have addicted themselves to nicotine.

Would to God more Christians would addict themselves to Jesus! Wouldn't it be grand if our addiction were to the point that at our first waking moment we thought of Jesus, and during the day our primary thought would be to glorify and serve our Jesus? Wouldn't it be grand if our addiction, devotion were to the point that our last thought before closing our eyes in sleep would be, not on tomorrow's problems and demands, but *Jesus*?

I see that degree of devotion or addiction in the lives of the apostles in Acts 5. You will remember that the Sanhedrin had the apostles arrested and brought in before the ruling body of the Jews. The high priest made the accusation, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled all Jerusalem with your teaching and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us." After Peter had responded, "We must obey God rather than men," the council was enraged and wanted to kill them. Only Gamaliel's counsel saved the apostles from the mob. But the Bible says in Acts 5:40 that they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus. I have never seen a man beaten except in the movies. But as good as the Hollywood make-up artists are, I do not believe they can capture the cruelty and the pain of a beating.

Picture their agony and their bloody backs as the council threatens them to shut up about Jesus. How do the apostles respond? Listen to this amazing passage in verses 41-42: They left the presence of the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. And every day in the temple and at home they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ." There is the amazing

picture of devotion, addiction to Jesus! Nothing short of death could stop them from sharing Christ Jesus with their world because they had devoted themselves, addicted themselves to the Lord Jesus. It ought to be that way in our lives!

That spirit of devotion is not dead among God's people today. There is a woman in Jacksonville, Fla., who serves as a bus captain. Every week she brings in over seventy children to learn about Jesus. That may not sound so outstanding because there are a lot of bus captains in our country who bring in children every week to learn about Jesus. But this lady has multiple sclerosis. She has someone take her out to her bus route and help her into her wheelchair then she wheels herself around the neighborhood inviting children to Sunday school. When she comes to a house that has a terraced yard or steps, she shouts until the people come to the door. That is addiction, devotion to Jesus that we all need to imitate. Would you resolve with me to deepen your commitment to Christ?

There is a second resolve I want you to make with me: resolve today to set a goal of excellence in your Christian life. Resolve that you will not settle for the average, mediocre, lukewarm effort of serving Jesus.

I love the story our brother Jack Paul tells. He said he was with a friend of his who raised thoroughbred horses. Jack said he made a comment about the beauty of one of the animals when his friend responded, "Jack, he is a plug." Jack said he must have had a questioning look on his face because his friend asked, "Do you know the difference between a plug and a thoroughbred? A plug looks the same, has the same structures and muscles, but you have to whip him just to get him to break into a run. But, Jack, a thoroughbred you just touch and he is off! He will run and run until he drops if you do not stop him."

What we need are some more thoroughbreds in the church of our Lord. We have enough plugs that we continue to urge and plead and browbeat just to get them minimally involved.



We need more thoroughbreds who refuse to settle for the mediocre and who will serve and serve and serve until Jesus comes or until He calls us home! Are you a plug or a thoroughbred?

We need more "and then some" Christians. We need those who will do their part "and then some." We need those who will give their fair share "and then some." We need those who will accomplish the average and the mediocre "and then some." We need those who will render their expected service to Jesus "and then some." We need more who will set a goal of excellence in their Christian lives. Will you resolve to do that? You encourage me and I will encourage you and together we will come out of the mediocre into the excellent to the glory of our God.

God has blessed us so greatly. He has given us the time, the money, the media, the transportation, the knowledge, the power and the opportunity to bring the world on its knees confessing Jesus as Lord. The question is: are we going to be about it? As stewards of all God has given us, let us be about the task he has entrusted to us with zeal and fervor we have never given before! Let us go out in wholehearted service to our great God who loves us!

## THE FORGOTTEN GRACE

L. V. PFEIFER

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In the Corinthian correspondence, Paul refers to giving as a grace no less than eleven times. In 2 Cor. 8:7 he says, "But as you abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all earnestness, and in your love to us, see that you abound in this grace also." This instruction to "abound in this grace" of giving implies that the Corinthians were amiss at this point in their Christian maturity. Could it be the same with us today? Have we forgotten to add this "grace" to our Christian character?

The evidence of 2 Cor. 8 and 9 points out the need to teach and train members of the church in the grace of giving. Have we really understood our giving to be a grace? Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the church is lacking in financial strength and individual Christians are lacking in spiritual strength.

Since Paul teaches Christians to abound in the grace of giving, it is then mandatory that we know what is meant and involved in giving as a grace.

### I. THE GRACE OF GIVING

*Paul's usage of the term.* "Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia." (2 Cor. 8:1) Grace, referring to giving, is used in the following verses in 1 and 2 Corin-



thians: 2 Cor. 8:1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 16, 19; 2 Cor. 9:8, 14, 15; 1 Cor. 16:3. In fact, according to Nelson's *Concordance* of the ASV, some 44 times in the NT grace is associated in some manner with the idea of a gift or giving.

William Barclay, in *Letters to the Corinthians*, page 182, states that Paul used nine different Greek words for giving (translated variously). As one studies these words carefully, not a single one has any concept of an extraction or payment of debt, but of an outright gift, freely offered, which is of grace. (Passages containing the nine words are: 1 Cor. 16:1, 2, collection; 2 Cor. 8:7, grace; 2 Cor. 8:4, fellowship; 2 Cor. 9:12, 13, service; 2 Cor. 8:20, abundance, or lavish gift; 2 Cor. 9:5, bounty; 2 Cor. 9:12, service or volunteered privilege of serving another; Acts 24:17, offering.)

Giving as grace then moves this act out of the realm of donation, payment, extraction, or compulsion by human motives, into the realm of goodness, love, spontaneity, and worship of God. Indeed giving cannot be considered worship unless it is a grace; and contrariwise, grudgingly-made donations or payments to a church treasury are not worship and certainly not of grace.

*The meaning of grace.* In the context of giving, "grace" must be understood if one is to grow or abound in this forgotten grace.

The word translated grace (*Charis*) is defined by Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 666, as follows: "*Charis* contains the idea of kindness which bestows upon one what he has not deserved. A token or proof of grace, a gift of grace, benefaction, or bounty." Cremer, *Biblico-Theological Lexicon of NT Greek*, p. 572, says the word means "courteous or gracious disposition, friendly willingness, favour, kindness, inclination towards; the dispositions as generally cherished and habitually manifested, and as shown in the bestowment of a favour or in a service of love to any one."

A. Stewart, in the *Dictionary of the Bible*, edited by J. Hastings, in the entry of "Grace," Vol. II, p. 254, writes:

Grace (*Charis*) is that which bestows or occasions pleasure. It thus denotes the favorable, friendly dispositions or nature out of which the gracious act proceeds . . . it is the favour manifested . . . *spontaneous* favour. Its fundamental thought is that the benefit conferred is recognized by giver and receiver alike as not *due*; it is that to which the receiver has no right, which has not been earned, or perhaps deserved, but which the giver freely, out of pure goodness, bestows. This spontaneous character, along with the more or less direct reference to the pleasure or joy either designed or experienced, —which is indeed suggested by the connection of the word with *Chairein*, 'to rejoice'—is always implied.

*The meaning of giving.* Not only is it essential to define grace, but one must also know the meaning of "giving."

Webster defines giving as follows: "To make a present of, to grant or bestow." David McConoughy, in *Money the Acid Test*, p. 33, says, "Giving is the unselfish outpouring of one's self in substance. It is the voluntary bestowing of one's own possessions, expecting nothing in return. With the gift goes one's own goodwill, a part of the one's very self."

*Giving as a grace as seen 2 Cor. 8 and 9.* The fullest view of giving as a grace, which combines the above definitions, is found in 2 Cor. 8 and 9. Note with penetrating thought these expressions in this passage: 2 Cor. 8:1, we make known the grace of God; 2, abundance of their joy; riches of liberality; 3, beyond their power, they gave of their own accord; 4, fellowship in ministering; 5, gave of their own selves; 8, proving (testing) the sincerity of your love; 9, for your sakes he became poor; 11, readiness to will; 14, your abundance being a supply; 19, ministered . . . to the glory of the Lord; 20, bounty; 21, take thought for things honorable; 24, proof (evidence) of your love; 2 Cor. 9:5, a matter of bounty (blessing) and not of extortion (avarice, *i.e.*, a gift which betrays the giver's covetousness); 6, he that soweth bountifully (blessings) shall reap also bountifully (blessings); 7, purposeth in his heart, not grudgingly (with a



sour, reluctant mind), not of necessity (what ought according to the law of duty to be done), cheerful giver; 8, God is able to make all grace abound unto you . . . that you may abound unto every good work; 10, shall supply and multiply; increase the fruits; 11, being enriched in everything unto all liberality, which worketh . . . thanksgiving to God; 12, ministration of this service, abound through many thanksgivings unto God; 13, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession, liberality of your contribution; 14, supplication on your behalf, long for you; 15, thanks be to God for his unspeakable (to describe or commemorate which words fail) gift.

## II. WHEN GIVING IS NOT A GRACE

*Assessment is not of grace.* Any tax, rate, demand, imposed deductions of compulsions used by churches to produce revenue are contrary to the Scriptures. If giving is not spontaneous it is not a "gift" or "grace."

*Raising money.* Getting sums of money for the church by means of gimmicks, sales, bingo, forms of entertainment, or other commercial enterprises, is to ignore Paul's teaching on giving as a grace. "Giving is not *man's* plan for raising money, but *God's* plan for raising *men!* (Layton, *This Grace Also*, p. 34.)

*Meeting budgets and raising contributions.* Many times church leaders are desperate for funds and thus turn to various schemes to get more money. When people give out of guilt that has been caused by arm-twisting, hounding, nagging, cajoling, and a constant pressure to meet a budget just to raise more money, then this violates the spirit of grace. Mac Layton, in *This Grace Also*, p. 29, asks, "Is it securing so much for projects, or greater concern for spiritual enrichment? We must preach *on* money, but let us never preach *for* money? We must *build souls* instead of *raise funds!*" Paul says, "I seek not yours, but you." (2 Cor. 12:14)

*Giving in exchange.* Giving in exchange for service rendered, deductions, payment of a debt, or for some spiritual

entertainment, is not giving but paying. Privileges or powers must never be offered those who are prestigious or "big" contributors. Such actions are not of grace.

*Begging.* Some worthy local church projects and some worthy mission activities are so poorly funded that God's servants many times have had to beg for support. Giving must never turn into donations collected by begging.

*Covetousness.* Giving that is not of grace robs the Christian of spiritual blessings. Mac Layton observes that giving which is not of grace but is of covetousness (2 Cor. 9:5), reverses the fruit of the Spirit: "In the place of love is suspicion; in the place of joy is discontent; in the place of peace is trouble; in the place of longsuffering is short temper; in the place of kindness is cruelty; in the place of goodness is sin; in the place of self-control is selfish indulgence." (*This Grace Also*, p. 159).

*Giving not of grace.* When one's giving is considered to be payment of a debt or settling of an account, payment of a tax levied on him, done with reluctance, done for selfish reasons, done to glorify the giver or to be seen of men, done to make "points" with God, then such is not of grace.

*Giving out of grace.* When one's giving is a pure outright gift with no strings attached, compelled by love, done out of a spirit of "I cannot help but give," done spontaneously and not out of demand (Love's best gifts are received before they are asked for.), then such giving is of grace.

Perhaps one of the most beautiful memorials to Jesus, and example of giving as a grace is that of the breaking of the alabaster box of precious nard and its contents poured on Jesus (Mark 14:3-9). Upon a closer look at this woman's deed—this extravagant act of love—one is able to see her gift was out of grace. She did not *have* to do this—she did it because she *wanted* to. She did this not for her glory but for Christ's. She was not thinking of the worth of her gift, but of the worth of the one honored. Motivated by love, it was a pure gift with no reward or reciprocity sought. Grace is ex-



pensive—it costs—but willingness to display devotion ignores the cost and focuses on the value inherent in the giving.

### III. MOTIVES PROMPTING THE GRACE OF GIVING

*The grace of Christ.* “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might become rich.” (2 Cor. 8:9) Out of the heart of grace Jesus was motivated to leave the riches of heaven, to “empty himself” (Phil. 2:7), and become poor for us. Such grace prompts us to give so as to empty ourselves.

*Love.* “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son . . .” (Jn. 3:16) Such love moves us to give ourselves for God and His Son. “We love because He first loved us.” (1 Jn. 4:19)

“Love ever gives—  
 Forgives—Outlives—  
 And ever stands  
 With open hands,  
 And while it lives  
 It gives.

For this is love’s prerogative,—  
 to give,—and give,—and give.

—John Oxenham

*We freely received.* All that God has done for us, which is too great to account, has cost us nothing. Jesus said, “. . . freely you have received, freely give.” (Matt. 10:8) Since we have been the recipients of everything from God then we need to give freely from ourselves according to our abilities.

*Glorifying God.* “. . . Do all to the glory of God.” (1 Cor. 10:31) When we give so as to honor God with our substance (Prov. 3:9), seeking to glorify God and not ourselves or some other man, then our giving will be motivated by a holy purpose.

Giving that is properly motivated is a privilege—it is never accompanied by a spirit that debases or lowers the spiritual character of the giver.

### IV. BLESSINGS OF THE GRACE OF GIVING

*Makes us like God.* Grace is a divine attribute of God. Therefore, when one grows in the grace of giving, he grows to be like God. The very essence of the nature of God is to give. In this act of worship, when giving is of grace, one becomes more like God than in any other thing he does!

*Attracts the love of God.* “God loves a cheerful giver.” (2 Cor. 9:7)

*Affords great joys.* Grace is always connected with joy and pleasure, as seen from the definitions given above. Giving out of a gracious heart of love is also joyous. In giving there is the joy of: Fellowship with Christ, (Phil 1:5); honoring God (Prov. 3:6); sharing with others (2 Cor. 9:12); claiming God’s promises, (2 Cor. 9:6-11); and seeing God’s work prosper (Phil 4:10-18).

*True worship occurs.* Giving is an opportunity to express appreciation and gratefulness—it is a free voluntary offering to God out of hearts filled with love. Worship is giving, offering, not getting. Worship that is empty-handed is no worship at all! “None of you shall appear before me empty-handed.” (Ex. 23:16). “Nor shall they ever appear before the Eternal empty-handed; every man must offer what he can afford, according as the Eternal your God has made you prosper.” (Deut. 16:16). God has so fixed the blessings of worship, that none are received until the worshipper first gives. This is a true serendipity!

*More blessed to give than receive.* “. . . Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Acts 20:35). When I was a child, Acts 20:35 was difficult to understand. I just couldn’t believe it. Especially when I had a birthday party and received many nice presents. But now that I am a man and have a little boy of my own, I can understand why it is more blessed to give than to receive. Even so, as we grow in faith and in spirituality we can better understand this verse.



Getting without giving makes one spiritually dead and stagnate just as the Dead Sea of Palestine.

When one gives out of a heart of grace there accompanies that giving a sense of well-being, peace, and honor. What a sense of inward satisfaction—what blessedness!

#### CONCLUSION

In light of our study we can more fully agree with the words of Paul, "see that you abound in this grace also." Much emphasis is placed on many things in our preaching and teaching, but from the evidences of our financial power in the churches of Christ, it appears giving has been a forgotten grace which we have failed to add to our faith.

We claim to be dedicated to the complete restoration of the church revealed in the New Testament. We believe we have restored this church in organization, worship, creed, and plan of salvation, etc., and we have even made progress in recent years in an attempt to restore the spirit of Christianity; but we have not as yet restored the "grace of giving"! Horace Bushnell once said, "One more revival, *only one more*, is needed—the revival of Christian stewardship, the consecration of the money power to God." When this is restored to the church, then the kingdom will go forward as rapidly as it did during the first century. Then we will be able to preach the gospel to every creature—but not until we have restored the liberality demonstrated in New Testament days.

Is this the time, O Church of Christ! to sound  
Retreat? To arm with weapons cheap and blunt  
The men and women who have borne the brunt  
Of truth's fierce strife, and nobly held their ground?  
Is this the time to halt, when all around  
Horizons lift, new destinies confront,  
Stern duties wait our nation, never wont  
To play the laggard, when God's will was found?  
No! rather, strengthen stakes and lengthen cords,

Enlarge thy plans and gifts, O thou elect,  
And to thy kingdom come for such a time!  
The earth with all its fullness is the Lord's.  
Great things attempt for him, great things expect,  
Whose love imperial is; whose power sublime.

—Charles Sumner Hoyt



## HOW MUCH SHOULD I GIVE?

MAC LAYTON

"What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" (Ps. 116:12). That many Christians have learned to *give*, to *give regularly*, and to give in the *proper spirit*, cannot be denied. But that the church in general has made a serious and diligent study of the *acceptable amount* to render to the Lord is debatable.

In acceptable giving to the Lord, liberality is the only accepted standard of giving. God has not commanded a *donation* as though an object of charity; nor has he said give *something*, as though every man is a law unto himself. But in clear, unmistakable terms he has declared, "He that giveth, let him do it with liberality" (Rom. 12:8). *So until we have given liberally, we have not given at all!*

The words of the New Testament are vivid and beautiful that describe acceptable giving. Liberality is one. Abound is another. As prospered is a third. Bountiful is the last (Rom. 12:8; 2 Cor. 8:7; 1 Cor. 16:1, 2; 2 Cor. 9:6).

The words liberal and liberality occur 11 times in the New Testament. Thayer says of it, "singleness, simplicity, sincerity, mental honesty, openness of heart manifesting itself in benefactions." And Trench adds, "to spread without wrinkles or folds." Obviously, the Christian who possesses mental and spiritual honesty, will be liberal in outward giving. The command of God to give as one is prospered is not an arbitrary command, but one wrapped up in the very nature of the Christian life. One gives liberally because he is a good Christian, not just to become one! Stinginess with material goods is a sure evidence of a wrinkled, shriveled soul!

Many have grown in the areas of Bible knowledge, teaching, and leadership, who have not grown in liberality. Just

as the Corinthians possessed many beautiful gifts, much of the beauty of those gifts was missing as long as they were not abounding in "this grace also" (2 Cor. 8:7).

But what does it mean to be liberal? How much should we give? Why didn't God set the amount of giving for us? Especially are these questions of vital concern when we see that stewardship and giving occupy more space in the New Testament than any other grace.

If God had set the exact amount, we would do no more than that. Just as the Jews gave that amount set for them in the Old Covenant. But every sincere student of the Bible knows that in the Christian age God is much more concerned about what our giving to him represents in ability, rather than amounts. A set amount would name the limits, while giving on our honor leaves our spirits free to soar to the heights. When an honorable man is put on his honor, he will do far more than the requirements of any law.

Free-will giving, "as each hath purposed in his heart" *works*. It was good enough to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth in the first century, and it is good enough today (Col. 1:23).

But we do not believe that God has left us out on the sea of life without chart or compass in this vital grace. He has left us principles and guideposts to help each of us decide how much to give to please Him.

We must ever remember that *liberality is the only accepted standard of giving in the New Testament church!* It is an abominable prayer that is worded before the giving by many of our men who say, "help us to give back a portion to thee." God does not take portions. If our giving is not a proportion, reflecting our ability, and liberality, and "as prospered," it is an abomination. Just as a man's prayer is an abomination to God who turns away his ear from hearing the law (Prov. 28:9), so the giving of the Christian who is not liberal is an abomination to God.

Is the tithe binding? Tithing is mentioned in Hebrews 7:4



and by Jesus in Matthew 23:23, without approval or disapproval. In the Patriarchal age it is obvious that tithing was a practice. Melchizedek and Jacob are both examples of tithing (Gen. 14:20; 28:20-22).

From all indications the Law of Moses bound three tithes on the Jews at Sinai: (1) The Levitical tenth, for the support of the ministry and priests (2) the Festive Tenth, for the feast days, and, (3) The Third Year tenth, for the support of the poor (Num. 18:21, 24; Lev. 27:30-33; Deut. 14:22-27; 12:15-17; Deut. 14:28-29).

In addition to the basic tithes, the first fruits of the field and the womb were dedicated to the Lord; the corners of the fields were to be left for the poor at harvest time, and other free will offerings. While various estimates ranging from 10 to 50% are made as to the amount given by the Jews, the tithe seems to have been the basic minimum.

But to bind the tithe, or any portion of the Mosaic law on Christians, is to fall from grace and be severed from Christ. The exception of course would be any law "repeated" in the New Covenant of Christ (Gal. 5:4-6). Most of the religious groups of America bind the tithe on their membership as the base of giving. Most offer the approval of Jesus on the tithing of the Pharisees in Matthew 23, and His own observance of the Law of Moses. Yet it is a poor argument indeed to bind tithing on the basis of Jesus' practice during his earthly ministry, for He kept all the other ordinances of the Law as well, including animal sacrifice.

Some among us have contended that the tithe is a good and fair proportion to ask for the Lord's work, and have suggested that it is much better than the some 3% to 5% that our people presently average. But it could very well be that our vision of the magnitude of the divine work committed to our hands is very dim that we feel that we must ask for only 10%! What is lacking in all the arguments for the tithe is New Testament authority. The truth of the mat-

ter is that we have been *liberated from the law of the tithe that we may become liberal!*

A tragic fact is that to bind the law of 10% giving on the Christian may cast a stumbling block in the way of his eternal salvation. God may require of him 20%, 50%, or even more! Our giving must be based on ability, a proportionate, liberal amount, rather than a fixed amount for life! A danger is ever present in preaching that the tithe is a good place to begin, for that may not be the place for many to begin who could far exceed that. Too many have accepted the 10% figure as final, of whom God requires much more. The freeness of our giving must ever be based on the freeness of our receiving from God! (Matt. 10:8). There must be a sliding scale of giving according to our prosperity (1 Cor. 16:1, 2).

Yet many say, "We are not commanded to give a tenth," while implying error. The inference in such a statement, and the conclusion which many Christians practice, is that we need not give as much as a tenth. Many have presumed that because they are not under the law of the tithe they can give less to Christ than the Jews did without him. They think that Jesus died on the cross so they could give 2% instead of 10%, less under the realm of grace than under law. That conclusion is miles from the truth.

While rushing away from a legalistic system we must not fall into the quicksand of a willy-nilly, reckless religion. Some are so fearful of getting it down to a fine point, a specific figure in their giving, that they wind up with no point at all. The man who argues for less than the basic minimum of the Jews in the Old Covenant says more about his heart than he may intend to say. He says he aims to do as little as he can!

The evidence is very clear that the Lord requires of us much more than a tenth in the Christian age. The examples are very clear that much more than a tenth is demanded. The nature of the commission of our Lord to a lost world is such that Christians will give much more than a tenth.



Everything in Christianity has been raised. The standards of living, and of giving, are much greater under Christ than Moses! Note the following:

WHICH IS THE HIGHER STANDARD?

<i>Old Testament</i>	<i>New Testament</i>
"Thou shalt not kill"	"Whosoever hates his brother is a murderer"
"Thou shalt not commit adultery"	"Whosoever lusts commits adultery in his heart"
"You shall not swear by my name falsely"	"Swear not at all"
"The tenth shall be holy to the Lord"	"Let each of you give as God hath prospered him"

By no stretch of the imagination can any think that Christ lowered the standard of giving, while raising everything else. It is a contradiction of the highest rank to suppose that under grace and love we can give cheaper than under law.

The Christian should give much more than a tenth because we give for the advancement of an eternal, unshakable kingdom, founded on the revelation of the boundless love of God in the sacrifice of his only begotten Son. Those of the Old Covenant did not know the unspeakable blessings we have in Christ, nor had they been charged with the salvation of a lost world.

The Christian should give much more than a tenth because of the showcase examples of the New Testament church. Surely no one could think that the early Christians gave less under Christ than they had formerly given as Jews. Such cannot be the case for those brethren sold their lands, houses, possessions, and goods for the care of their brethren, and the advancement of the gospel. The progression of their giving must be noted: they sold their lands, then their houses, and when they had no more lands and houses, they sold their possessions, and, finally, down to the

last ownership, their goods! And "Not one of them said ought of the things he possessed was his own" (Acts 4:32).

The Christian should give much more than a tenth because Christ calls his followers to love more, do more, and give more, than others. The fact is that the heirs of the Restoration Movement have allowed many religious groups to outlive, and outgive us. We must never allow the forces of darkness to be more liberal than the sons of light. It is a fact that all around us sectarian causes are capturing much more than a tenth from their followers, while those who preach so much truth, those who contend for the pure gospel, average less than 3% to 5% of total income.

The Christian should give much more than a tenth because most have more than that amount for luxury items, and taxes paid to an earthly kingdom. The average member of the church could triple his weekly giving to the Lord and not miss a single luxury! How will we answer our dear Lord in the Judgment when we spent far more on luxurious homes, carpets, payments on two and three autos, boats, golf clubs, tobacco, food for our pet dogs and cats, than we thought of giving to the Lord and Master of life for his work on earth! How will we answer when we live in the lap of luxury, the most prosperous people in the history of the world, and souls are perishing all around us? C. R. Nichol said it was a far greater privilege to be a member of the eternal kingdom of Christ than any earthly kingdom. For that reason he never allowed the amount of his taxes to exceed his giving to the church. How many Christians have thought of their citizenship in the kingdom of heaven worth more than any citizenship in an earthly kingdom? Many tip on a scale far greater than any percentage for Christ!

Is liberality a virtue with varying degrees? If one man gives more than a tenth, another a twentieth, and one a ninetieth, is one liberal, the other less liberal, and the last less still? Surely God has not left liberality to every man's whim.



How much is liberal? How much should I give? *How much is liberal depends on how much we have been prospered* (1 Cor. 16:1, 2). To prosper means "to gain, to have income." That alone answers that old time worn excuse, "I don't know what I am prospered, is it before or after taxes, or is it take home pay, or what?" The biblical injunction is that we must give out of every source of income and prosperity, the total of our income. The rule is: prospered much, give much; prospered little, give little. However, we must remember that that "little" is great if it is in proportion to our ability, as we have been prospered. The divine rule of giving is a slide rule, based on prosperity. Every increase in salary means our giving will increase.

*How much is liberal depends on present needs in the kingdom.* The day may come, as it did in Jerusalem, when faithful children of God will give 100%! As genuine Christians we are "always ready to communicate to the necessities of the saints" (Rom. 12:13). In the first church of Christ in Jerusalem, God's example for the ages, no one considered anything his own until the need was met. No one ever said, "I have given my percent, if that is not enough let them starve!" The parable of the Good Samaritan says that we must give without sparing to help our neighbors.

*How much is liberal depends on vital principles of Scripture:* (1) We must put the kingdom of God first, even before the necessities of life (Matt. 6:33). (2) We must sacrifice, know loss, give up all, for Christ (Matt. 16:24). (3) We must adjust our standard of living by our standard of giving. (4) We must show by our gifts that Christ is Lord of life, and we are his true stewards.

Surely we do not believe that we can give too much! Jesus watched the poor widow give her all and did not reprimand her. He sent out the rich young ruler to sell and give all.

*How much is liberal depends on ability.* As ability varies, so God's law of liberality varies, "it is accepted according to

what a man hath" (2 Cor. 8:12). The man who can give \$1.00 a week must do that, and the man who can give \$1,000.00 a week must do that. What the Father in heaven asks of us is that we do our best!

It is entirely possible for a man to increase his giving when he has increase in income, yet not to the extent his offering is accepted as liberal. In other words, having established a comfortable standard of living, does not God expect the percentage of our giving to go up as well as the amount? Too many are trusting the amount rather than the percentage. They think God is counting dollars rather than ability. They are still thinking of *portion* rather than *proportion*. It is not merely giving the Lord requires. He has not simply commanded us to give. It is liberality for which we strive!

When John Wesley was a young preacher he got 30 pounds income. He lived on 28 and gave 2. In his prime he received 60 pounds. He then lived on 28 and gave 32. Whatever you may say about his doctrine, you must admire his attitude toward stewardship.

*How much is liberal depends on how good an example one wants to become.* The calculation of liberality will take into consideration the contagion of a Christian example. Words are cheap, but liberal giving proves God is in the soul as few things will. Losing ourselves in generosity and service is the way to find ourselves, and life indeed. Just a few brethren setting the right example of faithful giving can set an entire church on fire for Christ, and much more than dozens of sermons. It does not fail when one man confesses his neglect in this vital area of life, and begins giving as God has prospered him, it has a spectacular effect on others. For the more our society seeks for security, and the love of ease and money, the greater the admiration for those who can turn a deaf ear and lose himself, or herself, in true Christian giving.



We have all been "enriched unto all liberality" (2 Cor. 9:11). God has blessed us richly so we can bless His work! The Twentieth Century Translation of 2 Corinthians 9:8 reads, "God has power to shower all kinds of blessings on you, so that, having under all circumstances and on all occasions, all that you need, you may be able to shower all kinds of benefits on others."

One of the grand truths about giving is: Bountiful and liberal giving secures God's blessings on what we decide to keep, and guarantees us more seed for sowing. With the power of God He can make 50¢ go twice as far as \$1.00!

The challenge went out long ago, and is still our challenge, "Try me saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Mal. 3:10).

May God help us all to learn to give much more than 10% of our prosperity to the Lord. And may we learn how to teach others to abound in this grace of giving. It is true that "it is more blessed to give than it is to receive" as our Lord Jesus himself declared (Acts 20:28). Those who lead others to give are leading them to happiness, and life eternal.

God grants the liberal blessings that cannot be obtained in any other way. He finds deepening of spiritual life, money for the Lord's work, ease in meeting obligations, preparation of heart to be a faithful steward over all he decides to keep, and ability to go even beyond what he promised, And, finally, a new appreciation for the grace and goodness of God.

It takes twice as much power to get an airplane off the ground as it does to fly it. And it takes more power to begin faithful giving than to sustain it. But we have the promise of God to help and be with us.

Remember, our giving is to Christ. We place our contribu-

tion in his hands. He has power to take it and multiply it, just as he did the loaves and fishes, for his glory. With this in mind,

Give as you would if an angel awaited your gift at the door.

Give as you would if tomorrow found your giving here all o'er.

Give as you would to the Master if you met His loving look.

Give as you would of your substance if His hand the offering took.



## “WILL A MAN ROB GOD?”

CARL W. WADE

CARL W. WADE preached his first sermon at age 15. He began his full-time pulpit work in 1965 and has since served churches in Kentucky, Michigan, Indiana and Tennessee. Traveling full time as an evangelist, he conducts meetings on church growth, evangelism and the home, and he participates in lectureships, workshops and seminars throughout the country. He also serves as staff writer for four religious periodicals and contributes to others. Wade is active in the Pro-Family Forum.

One of the most intriguing questions of the scriptures is asked in Malachi 3:8, “Will a man rob God?” Surely God is asking an absurd question! How can lowly man rob God? It is impossible to reach into his treasure chest! We cannot break into his bank vault! Is it possible for us to raid God’s cookie jar? Surely there is no way for mortal man to rob the omnipotent creator. However, God speaking through the prophet Malachi confirms the practice.

The people would be quick to respond to this allegation, “Wherein have we robbed thee?” (3:8). They challenged the charge of thievery. They were religious! They worshipped God. They even gave of their flocks, herds and other means! How could God’s prophet make such a charge? No doubt they thought, “The preacher really erred in his sermon today. We have not robbed God!”

### WHAT THEY DID

They gave! No questions about it. They brought gifts to God. Sabbaths, feast days and holy times were observed. They were proficient in assembling.

But look at their gifts; “contemptible” (1:12). And their “tithes” were not true tithes consisting of the *first* and the *best* but rather were “that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick” (1:13). They had brought to God in the guise of worship the scraps, the worthless, the leftovers of their

lives. What they could not, or would not, use they gave to God. God said, “I’ll not accept it!”

Even the priests had become involved in this travesty of worship to God. God calls to them, “O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, ‘Wherein have we despised thy name?’ Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, ‘Wherein have we polluted thee?’ In that ye say, ‘The table of the Lord is contemptible.’ And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts” (Mal. 1:6b-8).

God’s holy men had become more concerned with pleasing men than with God’s pleasure. They would not insult the “governors”—the influential, the powerful, the wealthy—with second-hand or second-rate gifts. But God, ah, that was another matter!

Apparently they had lost their close relationship spiritually with God. The rulers of the land were a real force to be appeased and with which to reckon. But God was of little consequence in their overall scheme of “who called the shots.”

God’s holy men had looked the other way while God’s people had paraded in and out bringing lame lambs, sick sheep and wounded doves. They came bringing the least they could bring of the worst they had and left with a smug satisfaction of having done God’s service.

While the “storehouse” of God was filled with polluted and evil sacrifices, they feasted in their own houses on the choicest and tastiest of morsels.

They were liars. God calls them “deceivers” (1:14). They pretended “This is the best I can do.” God said, “I know better!” His anger was kindled. His vow was, “Ye are cursed with a curse!” (3:9a).

This rebuke from God would ring in their ears for over 400 years! There would come no other word from the heav-



only lips. Silence would follow this divine reprimand. Before there would be a "restoration" of heavenly blessings in their lives, they must make moral and spiritual "restitution."

It must be significant that the last words of God in the Old Testament are, "lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (4:6b). It is contained as the climax of a prophetic utterance but to the people of Malachi's day and for the next four centuries it would serve as a continuing warning to future generations who might become lax and disregard the house of the Lord as being supremely important. Malachi's message is a message for today!

#### WHY HAD THEY DONE IT?

Their failure to worship God properly in their "tithes and offerings" (3:8b) was only symptomatic of their disobedience from the heart.

God said the curse was to be upon them "because ye do not lay it to heart" (2:2b). It was not in their heart to honor God. He had become "god" and not "God"! They did not have a "giving" problem, they had a "heart" problem. Their heart was not right before God. It was reflected in the tithes and offerings they brought to God in the sacred assemblies.

God was not measuring the *amount* of their gifts as much as he was the *quality*. He was not putting a tape measure around their pocketbooks but around their hearts! Their gifts were blemished, lacking and pitiful, not because there was an economic recession but because there was a love depression.

The leaven of sin had spread. God rebukes them for their sorcery, adultery, false swearers, oppression of widows, orphans and strangers and the "putting away" of their wives (2:14-16; 3:5). Their disobedience had multiplied. God said, "Clean it up!" He demanded repentance and restitution. God reaffirmed that he had not changed in his moral, material and spiritual expectations, "I am the Lord, I change not!" (3:6a). But they had moved from God's original position. God said, "Come back, or . . .!"

#### BLESSINGS OR CURSING?

"Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation" (3:9). A nation under the curse of God is a calamity of great measure. There would be no good nor pleasure in their lives, "and I will curse your blessings" (2:2b).

Even the good things and items of beauty and joy would not give them happiness. They were a nation under a curse. Yes, they had prosperity. They had abundance. They had a chicken in every pot and two carts in every garage. But they would find that truly man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.

God would demonstrate in a very real way to them that when a nation leaves him they cannot find happiness.

They divorced, deceived and played the hypocrite. They defrauded the innocent and the helpless. They robbed one another for self-gain and in the midst of all of this they turned to rob God. Since the rights and lives of others were of little value, except for gain, the reverence and respect of God was equally of little value, except to justify self through religious ritualism. People with such motives cannot long remain as a nation.

But God did not want to curse them. He pleads for their repentance and promises abundant restoration. He urges, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts" (Mal. 3:10-12).

Their leaders of the faith had failed in proclaiming the law. God's house was despised and God "wearied" at their



disobedience. God's people compounded their sins against each other with robbery against God. Yet, the loving God of heaven says, "I have loved you . . ." (1:2), and now, he says, "I want to continue to love you."

God calls for their repentance. There is no problem with God in forgiving. You easily forgive the one you love when penitent humility is coupled with sincere confession.

God desired to open the floodgates of heaven and have them deluged with his riches. Their bins would burst with God's heavenly blessings realized in real measures, "there shall not be room enough to receive it" (3:10b). Blessings or cursings, the choice was theirs. God made his offer. Would they accept him, believing the promise or continue with their contemptible pollution of gifts? As a people of God today we differ little and God has not changed, "I am the Lord, I change not" (3:6a).

#### MALACHI'S MESSAGE AND MODERN MATERIALISM

The people of Malachi's day were commanded to take their tithes and offerings "into the storehouse" (3:10). The New Testament "storehouse" is a collective action in and by the church (Acts 4:34-37; 5:1, 2; 1 Cor. 16:1, 2). Robbery of this storehouse is no less uncommon today than in 430 B. C. God's people under the new covenant are not immune from becoming thieves any more than the people of Malachi's day.

I think it noteworthy to mention here that in Malachi's day their sin in giving was symptomatic of a host of other transgressions which we today would characterize as grievous against God. We tend to place less emphasis on improper giving while stressing impropriety in other less tolerable areas of living and practice of beliefs. God apparently does not make the distinction.

Although we are not under the command to "tithe" today, we must note the importance of the tithe *principle*. The tithe was constituted basically by the first and the best of each household's possessions. It was not limited to the Mosaic

law period. Abraham, the father of faith, tithed to the high priest of Salem, Melchizedek. Paul refers to Abraham as "the father of all them that believe" (Rom. 4:11) and to Melchizedek as being "a type of the Christ" (Heb. 7:15-17, 21). What he did, he did "by faith." Our obedience today is "by faith" and that "by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). It must be our conclusion that whatever we intend to do "by faith" in the matter of our giving, God must have the *first* and *best* of our lives. And, a generous portion indeed!

Robert Laidlaw gives this example: "I go to a home where there is a little girl, five or six years of age, and give her a box of chocolates. She straightway disappears, and when she returns her lips and fingers are covered with chocolate. In another home, however, the box is opened at once, and the little lassie brings it to me and says, 'You have the first one.' 'Oh, no!' I say, 'they are for you.' 'But please,' she pleads, 'you brought them to me, do please have the first one.' And helping myself I say, 'Thank you, dear.' Which child has the warmest place in my affections, and which is more likely to get another box of chocolates?" We need to open our box of chocolates to God! We need not worry, he will not take them all and he deserves the first chocolate!

We must examine our giving. Not just "Do I give,?" but also "How do I give?" That "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7b) is a foregone conclusion and is explicit. God does not debate. *He who is love* loves the one *who returns in love*!

It is not difficult for the church today to become a nation of thieves. We live in the most prosperous nation ever known to the world. Americans compose approximately 6% of the world's population and we have an estimated 90% of the world's goods! And in the midst of abundance *we are not a happy people*! America also has among the highest divorce rates in the world. We suffer with among the highest of suicide rates in the world, especially among those under age 24. Alcoholism, drug addiction, inhuman treatment of other family members also head our national list of "highs." Then



add our insatiable appetite for things and the fact we never seem to be satisfied with what we have and are hardly happy very long. The joy is gone out of many lives. Contentment, joy and happiness are elusive to our society. We have found no real reason to rejoice.

It seems as though the "curse" of God four centuries before the coming of the Lord has extended into our fast-moving, highly technical age! Is it possible we have evoked the curse upon our lives today? The church moves and lives among this society. It, in part, comprises modern society. It, too, has been affected by the materialism of the age. God's people today may indeed have to answer in the affirmative the question, "Will a man rob God?"

Mission works are being strangled worldwide due to a lack of funding. "Will a man rob God?" Preachers are existing on meager incomes while church members continue to get raises and benefits. "Will a man rob God?" Benevolent cupboards are bare, clothes closets for the poor are filled with outcast rags (we sell our better ones at our garage sales!). "Will a man rob God?" Buses are too expensive to run to pick up innocent children and bring them in to learn about Jesus while their hearts are still pliable. Yet, we purchase expensive cars, loaded with gadgets, and travel whenever our heart desires in the name of "the pursuit of happiness." "Will a man rob God?" We have constructed great cathedral temple-like buildings for our assemblies and classes *for us* in the name of God's work and worship. And in these palatial edifices we talk to ourselves, sing to ourselves and congratulate ourselves that "we are not as other men," while our communities, cities, and country convulse in an epileptic-like seizure of sin and froth at the mouth, regularly, daily, constantly. And God's medicine men make weekly applications to themselves but little to the really sick. "Will a man rob God?"

We do not have a money problem in the churches of Christ. In recent months we have seen individual congrega-

tions raise tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, one million and even over two million dollars contributions on one Sunday, respectively. The ability to give is there, unquestionably, undeniably. Even the poorest of us are wealthy compared to the rest of the world whom God loves also. No, we do not have a money problem; rather, as with Malachi's contemporaries, we have a "heart" problem.

Paul states it, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give" (2 Cor. 9:7). When the heart is not given to God, neither will much else. And what is given will always be "grudgingly and of necessity" (2 Cor. 9:7b). *Robbery begins where God is not honored in the heart, first!* Oh yes, the solemn assemblies are attended, the feast day is observed and the giving is done, but the heart is absent. The first and the best are denied God and are reserved for the chief god—self!

"Will a man rob God?" Indeed yes! Not by gunpoint from the church treasury but by penpoint from the checkbook. We have expended on ourselves, prospered ourselves, increased our goods, built our bigger barns and "lived in pleasure on the earth" (James 5:5a). Thus, we have raised and opened the umbrella of a "curse" over our own heads. God's showers of blessings cannot reach us. We embrace our possessions and cannot be possessed of God. As did the rich young ruler of Mark 10, so do we. As he lacked one thing, so do we. He had accumulated "great possessions," so have we. He could not hold the hand of God while clutching his valuable things of this world, neither can we. He could not let go of his "possessions"; can we?

"Will a man rob God?" We must ask it each day of ourselves. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves" (2 Cor. 13:5a). Self-inspection is expected of us, each to his own.

In his book, *The Grace of Giving*, Stephen Olford tells this story. It is appropriate for the close of this lesson:

During his reign, the king of Prussia, Frederick Wil-



liam III, found himself in great trouble. He was carrying on expensive wars; he was endeavouring to strengthen his country and make a great nation of the Prussian people. But he did not have enough money to accomplish his plans. He could not disappoint his people, and to capitulate to the enemy would be unthinkable.

Thus what he did was, he approached the women of Prussia and asked for their jewelry of gold and silver. Each one in turn would be given a bronze or iron decoration as a token of his gratitude with the inscription, "I gave gold for iron, 1813."

The response was overwhelming. The Order of the Iron Cross became a more cherished object than did gold or silver jewelry. The king had honored his subjects for their sacrifice. Many wore only the Iron Cross void of other jewelry. They had sacrificed for the cause of the king and kingdom!

Today, we need an army of men and women who will cherish more dearly the honor of the King and be willing to sacrifice willingly to expand his kingdom. Then great victories will be known in his name. Such an army will never know defeat. Such an army which gives its hearts and follows with its goods will always know the honor and blessings of bearing The Order of the Daily Cross of Christ. Such a people will never be found guilty of answering *yes* to the question, "Will a man rob God?"

## ALL THIS—BY REASON OF STRENGTH!

MARY OLER

Give unto the Lord, ye kindreds of the people,  
Give unto the Lord glory and strength!

(1 Chron. 16:28)

Someway, despite humble origins, drastic changes, and stress and storm, God's gift of life to me can be channeled into ways to bring him glory! Job thought of comparisons, and said: "If I speak of strength, lo, he is strong" (Job 9:19). David blessed the Lord before all the congregation when he saw unprecedented generosity, and in his praise, said: "In thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all" (1 Chron. 29:12). God is strong, undoubtedly, and he gives us strength. Job reasoned: "Will he plead against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me" (Job 23:6). I, a child of God, have every encouragement to use my mind and body to let the part of the world my life touches hear the name of God, and believe his wonderful works.

*Why am I here? Who am I?*

In a world where fear walks the streets, it is calming to read: "Whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps. 27:1). In the midst of millions who frantically search for identity, it is good to know one can really belong to someone who loves and cares. "The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace" (Ps. 29:11).

*What do we mean, "strength"?*

Suppose we commit ourselves to serve the Lord. Sometimes, even at the time of commitment, our bodies are not strong. Disease, congenital or contracted, leaves us physically incapable of accomplishing, achieving, attaining. Perhaps



we cannot work with our hands to relieve the necessities of the saints. Personal affliction, or the responsibilities of caring for those of our own households seem to hinder us from being as active in the Lord's work as we wish to be. Often the aged and infirm feel their worth is a thing of the past. A song of trust tells us that God looks from heaven and sees the sons of men, and considers all their works. We are comforted with the knowledge that "there is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength" (Ps. 33:16).

I serve God with the strength of the body I have, realizing "my flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever" (Ps. 73:26). I can never feel there is no place for me, despite the changes that come, for the word of God bolsters my courage: "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small" (Pr. 24:10).

*"And He healed them all . . ."*

"And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people" (Matt. 4:23). Jesus' fame spread, because sick people with divers diseases and torments, the demon-possessed, the lunatic, the palsied, all were healed by Jesus. Their strength returned. Once more they could function in a world where there was work to be done, people to be loved.

To stay physically strong, people are today advised to eat, drink, and exercise sensibly, and to be checked regularly by a physician. I list three outstanding characteristics of this Son of man/Son of God I have chosen to be my great physician:

1. *He is interested in every patient.* "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). Gold ring? Vile raiment? Neither is considered! Treatment is not determined by the patient's status in life, or place of residence, or bank account.

2. *He knows I will not be a perfect patient.* Physicians are aware that patients forget to take medicines, neglect to follow prescription times regularly, listen to old wives' tales, and lose confidence in the physician because a friend or neighbor speaks disparagingly of him. The great physician knows our weaknesses, and warns: "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation" (Matt. 26:41). He said to Peter: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen the brethren" (Luke 22:32). When we feel unworthy, faith fails us, we doubt, even deny, the Lord loves us and wants us to be strong.
3. *He gives me prescriptions.* In order to be well and strong, and shine as lights in the world, we are given prescriptions to meet our special needs. "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Matt. 7:12), "If he compels you to go with him one mile, go with him two" (Matt. 5:41), and "Pray for them that despitefully use you" (Matt. 5:44) are to make alterations and bring about changes in one's spiritual condition. Peace in the home, the community and the church will follow.

*Life is brief . . .*

Suppose a man lives to be 100 years old—a century. He lives only 36,525 days. Suppose you live twenty-five more years. You have only 9,125 days to live! Our days on earth are a shadow" (Job 8:9). All the days of man's vain life he "spendeth as a shadow" (Eccl. 6:12). There is no permanency to shadows. They grow shorter in the mornings, longer in the evenings. Coming and going continually, when they are gone, nothing is left to show where they have been. Rather than making us sad and sorrowful, scriptures on waning strength and the brevity of life are prescriptions to



make us sane and sensible. We have a "few days" to do the will of the Lord—to bring him glory.

*What shall we have?*

"Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundred fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark 10:28-30).

Yes, life is a "few days." It passes like a shadow, but when following Jesus, I not only have the promise of eternal life, but the promise that my days on the earth will be abundantly blessed. All this—because the Lord is the strength of my life!

#### THE GREAT PHYSICIAN

My neighbor gave me a physician's name  
As one who pitied man,  
Spoke kindly . . . touched,  
And I was moved to take him as my own,  
To tell my guilt,  
My shame, my life's disease.  
His trained ear listened at my sad heart's door;  
Divine Love said:  
"Be strong! Go! Sin no more!"

#### STEWARDS OF OUR ESTATE

AL FOWLER

Much has been said about stewardship during the four days of this lectureship. We have discussed stewardship of our minds, souls, talents, possessions, time and families. Time and time again during these presentations, the biblical basis of stewardship has been stressed. If you have not been convinced by now of this scriptural principle, there would be little need for me to talk to you about the stewardship of your estates. Therefore, our time today will be based on the following assumptions:

1. Stewardship is a personal responsibility.
2. This responsibility is to God.
3. This responsibility cannot be turned over to another.
4. Each of us must give an accounting.

In light of these assumptions, the question for each one of us is, "Will we be prepared?" From the parable of the ten virgins, we find that there were five prepared and five unprepared. The Lord called those who were prepared wise and those who were unprepared foolish.

Let us now look at how stewardship relates to our estate. Please do not turn me off at this point. So many times we look at our meager material possessions and say, "I really don't have much of an estate to be concerned about." However, the principles are the same, whether the estate is small, modest or large. In fact, good estate planning may be more important to the small estate than to the modest or large one. Regardless of the estate size, there are many non-monetary decisions to be made. Also, all Christians (rich or poor) have the same responsibility to include the Lord in their plans.

Today when you mention the word *estate*, different images form in each one's mind. In general, we think of the Rocke-



fellers, Fords, Vanderbilts and Carnegies. Also, we envision a mansion in Beverly Hills, a fleet of cars, a yacht in the harbor, or some huge financial empire, beyond the realm of reality as far as we are concerned. But in reality, each one of us does have an estate. For our purposes, an estate simply means all that we possess. In order to help each one put this into perspective, let us look at the following list of items that might make up a person's estate. This list is not intended to be all-inclusive.

Cash	Life Insurance	Household Goods
Stocks	Coin Collections	Mineral Rights
Bonds	Stamp Collections	Interest in Trusts
Land	Antiques	Annuities
House	Automobiles	Farm Equipment

As you can see, each one owns possessions that place him in the category of having an estate. If we consider the fact that, for estate tax purposes, these items will be assessed at their current fair market value, we probably all have a larger estate than we think.

Once we accept the fact that we all have an estate, we must then look carefully at estate planning. The purpose of estate planning is to secure to the property owner maximum benefits from the possession and use of his property and to enable him to dispose of the property as he chooses, with a minimum of shrinkage from taxation and other expenses. You can see from this definition that estate planning relates to the lifetime use of our possessions, as well as the ultimate disposition of our property at death. We are involved in estate planning throughout our lifetime, whether we realize it or not. Such things as opening a bank account, buying and selling property, signing contracts, or even purchasing life insurance all fall within the realm of estate planning. Due to time limitations, our emphasis will be on death planning, rather than lifetime planning. Our decision is not made due to the fact that death planning is more important than lifetime planning. However, in the interest of time, we have chosen to

deal with the one that relates to the largest disposition that we as individuals will ever make.

What, then, does all this mean to us as Christians today? We might note that times have changed significantly since biblical days when Isaac had only to be concerned with family conflicts in blessing Jacob and Esau, and the prodigal son's father contended only with his elder son's bickering. Today we are faced with a myriad of tax legislation, including the Tax Reform Act of 1969, the Tax Reform Act of 1976, the Revenue Act of 1978, the Technical Correction Act of 1979 and many other Federal laws, as well as legislation by the various states. All of this is designed to tax (and thereby inhibits) the transfer of property. In turn, this challenges us to use new and imaginative techniques in exercising good stewardship. While planning may have become more involved and inconvenient, we must not allow our estate plan to be decided by default. What we do not know and/or understand can hurt us. More specifically, it can cause hardships to fall upon our heirs.

#### INTESTATE DISTRIBUTION

Before we notice a few of the things that can and cannot be accomplished by estate planning, let us look at what happens when one dies without planning his estate. When a person dies without a will, he is said to have died intestate.

Each individual state has enacted a set of laws that controls the distribution of the property of each person who dies intestate. Although these laws are similar in some respects, there are significant differences from state to state. For illustration purposes, we will use Arkansas statutes. Generally speaking, after the payment of taxes, debts, administrative expenses, funeral bills and family allowances, the following results:

1. If a married Arkansas resident dies leaving children, one-third of the personal property and a one-third lifetime interest in the decedent's real property goes to the surviving



spouse, with the remainder being divided equally among the children.

2. If there is no issue (children, grandchildren, etc.) the surviving spouse receives all property, unless the couple has been married less than three years at the date of death. If the couple has been married less than three years at the time of death, the surviving spouse's share is less, as determined by state statute.

3. The probate court decides who will manage your estate. An administrator must be appointed and may not necessarily be the person you would have chosen.

4. If there are surviving minor children, the probate court decides on a suitable guardian. Again, the court may not necessarily choose the person you had in mind.

5. Depending on each actual situation, other important decisions are made under the rigid laws of descent and distribution.

To say that these provisions do not reflect the wishes of most Christians is an understatement. However, many of us have already decided that this is the way we want our estates administered. We have done so, not by signing a will to that effect, but by failing to exercise our own personal responsibility to do otherwise.

#### CORNERSTONE OF ESTATE PLANNING

Now, let us look at the will, which is without question the cornerstone of all estate planning. Wills have been used for thousands of years to distribute property according to one's wishes. The Code of Hammurabi (2270 B.C.) included rights of a person to distribute property by will. Our own rights today are based on English law established in 1541 under Henry VIII. In essence, we have the right to dispose of our property as we choose through one of these marvelous little documents known as a "Last Will and Testament." Christians today are quite familiar with the Old and New Testaments, which we acknowledge as the will of God. Unfortu-

nately, many are not as familiar with the laws of the state relative to their own Last Will and Testament.

The laws governing wills differ from state to state, but, again, Arkansas statutes will give everyone an idea of the basics.

1. The maker of a will must be 18 years of age or older.
2. The will must be in writing (handwritten or typed).
3. The maker must be of sound mind.
4. Certain procedures must be followed in the preparation and execution of a will.
5. Finally, each will must be proved and accepted (probated) by the Court.

Before we look at what a person can and cannot do by will, let me dispel a couple of widely held notions. First of all, having a will does not make for more probate expense. If there is property in one's estate to be administered or an estate tax return to be filed (or both), having a will does not increase the probate expense. Whether there is a will or not, the Probate Court must determine who gets what. To the contrary, a properly drawn will can often reduce the expense of probate.

Secondly, a wife should also have a properly drawn will. Many times a couple will think that they own all of their property jointly and, therefore, there is no need for either one of them to have a will. Occasionally, all of the property will be in the husband's name and he will see the need for a will to pass the property to the wife. The logic behind this is that after the husband dies, the wife will have a will prepared. Of course, these situations do not take into consideration what happens if the husband and wife die as a result of a common accident. If the wife survives for even a very short period of time, she would inherit the property from her husband and would then die without a will. This can cause many problems relative to the dispositions of property, as well as the guardianship of minor children.

Let me make one more point before we look at some of the



things that can be accomplished through a properly drawn will. Although most states recognize a "holographic" will (one written entirely in the testator's own handwriting), it is not a recommended procedure. Drawing a will is not a do-it-yourself project. Each one needs the assistance of an attorney licensed to practice in his state to prepare the will. Each person's situation is unique and, therefore, each will must be tailor-made to fit different needs and problems.

Now let us look at a few of the many things that can be accomplished through a properly drawn will.

1. You, as a Christian, make the decisions relative to your affairs. As we have already mentioned, this is your responsibility and should not be passed on to anyone else. Only you understand your unique situation and the circumstances surrounding your family and possessions.

2. You may name an executor to handle the administration of your estate.

3. You may relieve your executor of costly bonding requirements and burdensome reporting procedures.

4. You may name a guardian for any minor children that survive you.

5. You may create trusts for your spouse, children or others, that can protect your assets as well as save taxes.

6. You may reduce or even eliminate estate taxes.

7. You may make gifts to charities that you have supported throughout your lifetime.

8. You may change your will as often as you wish. This is extremely important as our families grow and mature. As our circumstances and needs change, our wills should change accordingly.

While much can be accomplished through a properly drawn will, we should note that there are some things that a will cannot do.

1. Gentlemen, you cannot disinherit your wife. By law, she is entitled to certain dowry interests in your estate and cannot be denied.

2. You cannot control the disposition of jointly owned property, such as bank accounts and real estate. These assets will pass by operation of law.

3. You cannot control the disposition of life insurance proceeds which are payable to someone other than the estate. These proceeds are controlled by the insurance contract and, therefore, pass outside the will.

4. Generally speaking, you cannot control your assets in perpetuity. You must, eventually, let go.

Regardless of the size of one's estate, the decisions to be made are responsibilities that should not be left to such an inflexible system as exists in our states today. As Christians, it is even more imperative that we exercise good stewardship.

#### JOINT OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY

Now that we have discussed the importance and usefulness of wills, along with some of the things that we can and cannot do with a will, let us examine an often-overlooked area of equal importance. We have already mentioned that a will cannot control certain assets. Life insurance proceeds and jointly held property are two that were specifically discussed. If we go through the process of having our wills properly prepared and executed, we should not make the mistake of overlooking the effect that joint ownership has on our plan to distribute property.

First of all, there are several different types of joint ownership that we should define.

1. The most common form is joint tenancy, where two people hold a specific asset (stock certificate, bank account or piece of real estate) in both of their names. The result is that the ownership of the property will pass automatically to the surviving party upon the death of the first.

2. Tenancy by the entirety is recognized in some states as a special tenancy between husband and wife. This is used most often for the ownership of a personal residence. Prop-



One becomes a servant of the Lord by looking to Jesus as his example. In Philippians 2:6-8 one has to humble himself and become obedient even unto death to be the type of servant that Jesus was. The word *obedient* is not a nice word in our vocabulary, but the servant of the Lord does not have the right to disobey his master. Submission and service to Jesus Christ are the heart and core in conversion (1 Thess. 1:9, 10). We have been saved from sin in order to serve, but we do not serve in order to be saved. The church must come to grips with the truth that all of us have the role of a servant. This role is not limited to those who are paid on a full-time basis but to all those who claim to be redeemed by grace through faith. It is this type of submission (Eph. 5:21) which will bring together the proclamations in the Lord's body. It is to this type of life that Jesus calls us to live (Matt. 10:39).

## WHOLEHEARTED SERVICE

RON WHITE

There is a verse in 1 Corinthians that has become one of my favorites in all the Bible. Just in the last couple of years has the importance of this verse made its mark on my life. Let me read it to you. "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." I realize the context is in consideration of eating meat sacrificed to idols and being considerate of a brother's conscience. But think of the implication of that verse in the broad sense. "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do *all* to the glory of God."

It seems to me that one of the major problems we face in 1980 in the church of our Lord is that of *mediocrity*. Members of the Lord's body seem to be more and more content with the average and the mediocre in their service to Jesus. I see men and women spend themselves and give all their hearts to their jobs and careers while the Lord gets the leftovers—mediocre leftovers at best. I see young people spend themselves in their schools and give all their hearts to study or to student senate or to athletics or to their club and the Lord Jesus gets what is left—an hour or two of mediocrity in worship or sitting through a Bible class.

I see Christians give all their hearts to a hobby or recreation—from golf to woodworking and from tennis or racquetball to sewing or working on cars—and then render an apathetic attempt of serving the Lord who died for them. I see young couples full of talent and ability, couples who could be great servants in the kingdom, spend all their time pursuing fortune and fame to the point that Jesus comes way down the list of priorities and receives precious little from His people. I see congregations of God's people who seem to be content with keeping house and mediocrity. It is



time we recognized that average and mediocre performance will not lead this lost world to Jesus. It is time we resolved among ourselves individually and collectively that we will use what God has given us with all our hearts out of gratitude for what he has done for us. It is time we gave to God the first fruits and not the leftovers of our lives.

In the Bible, God says over and over again in a myriad of ways that he wants us to be zealous and wholehearted in our service to him. Paul writes in Romans 10:1-2, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them (Jews) is that they may be saved. I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened." It broke Paul's heart that the Jews had not come to Christ in faith, but he complimented them for their zeal. Later in the Roman letter Paul exhorted the Roman Christians "Never flag in zeal" (Rom. 12:11). We need to be a people who enter our service to the Lord with zeal. The apostle Peter said in his second epistle, "Therefore, brethren, be the more *zealous* to confirm your call and election, for if you do this you will never fall." God is trying to tell us something—He wants our *wholehearted* service!

There are numerous other passages we could consider, but I want you to think about Jesus' attitude along this line. Jesus condemned the sin of uselessness as strongly as anyone in the Bible. In the parable of the talents, the one talent steward is condemned to be thrown into outer darkness where men weep and gnash their teeth. Why? Because he had stolen his master's property? No! Because he had squandered it away in riotous living? No! Because he had not used his master's talent for anything! In Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan, the priest and the Levite are condemned because they did nothing to help the wounded traveler in need. And maybe the strongest words of our Lord recorded in the New Testament are seen in Revelation 3:16 as He addressed the church at Laodicea. He says in verse 15, "I know

your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot!"

Jesus is saying to the Laodicean brethren "you have lost your zeal. You are settling for average, mediocre! You just don't care anymore!" Then comes the hammer blow of verse 16: "So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth." Those words literally say "I will vomit you up!" Lukewarmness, apathetic attitudes make our Lord sick! He does not want the average and the mediocre—he wants wholehearted service!

Paul stands as a perfect example of a disciple of Jesus who understands that Jesus wants our wholehearted effort. As you read the book of Acts you get the feeling that the Jews did not have a fond appreciation of Paul. They chased him, plotted against him, imprisoned him, beat him, stoned him and whipped him but Paul just kept coming back preaching Jesus. Then in Romans 9:3 Paul says about these same Jews, "I would give my own soul to Satan if it would mean salvation of the Jews!" Paul put his own soul on the line in his service to Christ Jesus. Nothing less than that can be acceptable. He wants wholehearted service.

There are two resolves I would like you to make along with me. First of all, resolve to deepen your commitment to Jesus our Lord. It needs to be said of us what was said of the household of Stephanos in I Corinthians 16:15, "they have *devoted* themselves." That word translated "devoted" could be rendered "addicted." To what or whom are you addicted?

The drug addict wakes in the morning and the primary objective during the day is getting his "fix." From his first waking moment his mind is on his fix for the day. As the day wears on, it becomes increasingly imperative that the addict get his fix and he will do anything to get it. Why? Because he is addicted to drugs. The alcoholic in the advanced stage of alcoholism awakes in the morning and reaches for the bottle. His primary objective for the day is drinking a little more



until he drowns himself into a deep sleep of drunkenness. Why? Because he has become addicted to alcohol. The cigarette smoker wakes in the morning and the first thought is to smoke a cigarette. During the day over and over again they light up. The last thing they do before going to sleep is smoke. Why? They have addicted themselves to nicotine.

Would to God more Christians would addict themselves to Jesus! Wouldn't it be grand if our addiction were to the point that at our first waking moment we thought of Jesus, and during the day our primary thought would be to glorify and serve our Jesus? Wouldn't it be grand if our addiction, devotion were to the point that our last thought before closing our eyes in sleep would be, not on tomorrow's problems and demands, but *Jesus*?

I see that degree of devotion or addiction in the lives of the apostles in Acts 5. You will remember that the Sanhedrin had the apostles arrested and brought in before the ruling body of the Jews. The high priest made the accusation, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled all Jerusalem with your teaching and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us." After Peter had responded, "We must obey God rather than men," the council was enraged and wanted to kill them. Only Gamaliel's counsel saved the apostles from the mob. But the Bible says in Acts 5:40 that they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus. I have never seen a man beaten except in the movies. But as good as the Hollywood make-up artists are, I do not believe they can capture the cruelty and the pain of a beating.

Picture their agony and their bloody backs as the council threatens them to shut up about Jesus. How do the apostles respond? Listen to this amazing passage in verses 41-42: They left the presence of the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. And every day in the temple and at home they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ." There is the amazing

picture of devotion, addiction to Jesus! Nothing short of death could stop them from sharing Christ Jesus with their world because they had devoted themselves, addicted themselves to the Lord Jesus. It ought to be that way in our lives!

That spirit of devotion is not dead among God's people today. There is a woman in Jacksonville, Fla., who serves as a bus captain. Every week she brings in over seventy children to learn about Jesus. That may not sound so outstanding because there are a lot of bus captains in our country who bring in children every week to learn about Jesus. But this lady has multiple sclerosis. She has someone take her out to her bus route and help her into her wheelchair then she wheels herself around the neighborhood inviting children to Sunday school. When she comes to a house that has a terraced yard or steps, she shouts until the people come to the door. That is addiction, devotion to Jesus that we all need to imitate. Would you resolve with me to deepen your commitment to Christ?

There is a second resolve I want you to make with me: resolve today to set a goal of excellence in your Christian life. Resolve that you will not settle for the average, mediocre, lukewarm effort of serving Jesus.

I love the story our brother Jack Paul tells. He said he was with a friend of his who raised thoroughbred horses. Jack said he made a comment about the beauty of one of the animals when his friend responded, "Jack, he is a plug." Jack said he must have had a questioning look on his face because his friend asked, "Do you know the difference between a plug and a thoroughbred? A plug looks the same, has the same structures and muscles, but you have to whip him just to get him to break into a run. But, Jack, a thoroughbred you just touch and he is off! He will run and run until he drops if you do not stop him."

What we need are some more thoroughbreds in the church of our Lord. We have enough plugs that we continue to urge and plead and browbeat just to get them minimally involved.



We need more thoroughbreds who refuse to settle for the mediocre and who will serve and serve until Jesus comes or until He calls us home! Are you a plug or a thoroughbred?

We need more "and then some" Christians. We need those who will do their part "and then some." We need those who will give their fair share "and then some." We need those who will accomplish the average and the mediocre "and then some." We need those who will render their expected service to Jesus "and then some." We need more who will set a goal of excellence in their Christian lives. Will you resolve to do that? You encourage me and I will encourage you and together we will come out of the mediocre into the excellent to the glory of our God.

God has blessed us so greatly. He has given us the time, the money, the media, the transportation, the knowledge, the power and the opportunity to bring the world on its knees confessing Jesus as Lord. The question is: are we going to be about it? As stewards of all God has given us, let us be about the task he has entrusted to us with zeal and fervor we have never given before! Let us go out in wholehearted service to our great God who loves us!

## THE FORGOTTEN GRACE

L. V. PFEIFER

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In the Corinthian correspondence, Paul refers to giving as a grace no less than eleven times. In 2 Cor. 8:7 he says, "But as you abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all earnestness, and in your love to us, see that you abound in this grace also." This instruction to "abound in this grace" of giving implies that the Corinthians were amiss at this point in their Christian maturity. Could it be the same with us today? Have we forgotten to add this "grace" to our Christian character?

The evidence of 2 Cor. 8 and 9 points out the need to teach and train members of the church in the grace of giving. Have we really understood our giving to be a grace? Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the church is lacking in financial strength and individual Christians are lacking in spiritual strength.

Since Paul teaches Christians to abound in the grace of giving, it is then mandatory that we know what is meant and involved in giving as a grace.

### I. THE GRACE OF GIVING

*Paul's usage of the term.* "Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia." (2 Cor. 8:1) Grace, referring to giving, is used in the following verses in 1 and 2 Corin-



thians: 2 Cor. 8:1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 16, 19; 2 Cor. 9:8, 14, 15; 1 Cor. 16:3. In fact, according to Nelson's *Concordance* of the ASV, some 44 times in the NT grace is associated in some manner with the idea of a gift or giving.

William Barclay, in *Letters to the Corinthians*, page 182, states that Paul used nine different Greek words for giving (translated variously). As one studies these words carefully, not a single one has any concept of an extraction or payment of debt, but of an outright gift, freely offered, which is of grace. (Passages containing the nine words are: 1 Cor. 16:1, 2, collection; 2 Cor. 8:7, grace; 2 Cor. 8:4, fellowship; 2 Cor. 9:12, 13, service; 2 Cor. 8:20, abundance, or lavish gift; 2 Cor. 9:5, bounty; 2 Cor. 9:12, service or volunteered privilege of serving another; Acts 24:17, offering.)

Giving as grace then moves this act out of the realm of donation, payment, extraction, or compulsion by human motives, into the realm of goodness, love, spontaneity, and worship of God. Indeed giving cannot be considered worship unless it is a grace; and contrariwise, grudgingly-made donations or payments to a church treasury are not worship and certainly not of grace.

*The meaning of grace.* In the context of giving, "grace" must be understood if one is to grow or abound in this forgotten grace.

The word translated grace (*Charis*) is defined by Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 666, as follows: "*Charis* contains the idea of kindness which bestows upon one what he has not deserved. A token or proof of grace, a gift of grace, benefaction, or bounty." Cremer, *Biblico-Theological Lexicon of NT Greek*, p. 572, says the word means "courteous or gracious disposition, friendly willingness, favour, kindness, inclination towards; the dispositions as generally cherished and habitually manifested, and as shown in the bestowment of a favour or in a service of love to any one."

A. Stewart, in the *Dictionary of the Bible*, edited by J. Hastings, in the entry of "Grace," Vol. II, p. 254, writes:

Grace (*Charis*) is that which bestows or occasions pleasure. It thus denotes the favorable, friendly dispositions or nature out of which the gracious act proceeds . . . it is the favour manifested . . . *spontaneous* favour. Its fundamental thought is that the benefit conferred is recognized by giver and receiver alike as not *due*; it is that to which the receiver has no right, which has not been earned, or perhaps deserved, but which the giver freely, out of pure goodness, bestows. This spontaneous character, along with the more or less direct reference to the pleasure or joy either designed or experienced, —which is indeed suggested by the connection of the word with *Chairein*, 'to rejoice'—is always implied.

*The meaning of giving.* Not only is it essential to define grace, but one must also know the meaning of "giving."

Webster defines giving as follows: "To make a present of, to grant or bestow." David McConoughy, in *Money the Acid Test*, p. 33, says, "Giving is the unselfish outpouring of one's self in substance. It is the voluntary bestowing of one's own possessions, expecting nothing in return. With the gift goes one's own goodwill, a part of the one's very self."

*Giving as a grace as seen 2 Cor. 8 and 9.* The fullest view of giving as a grace, which combines the above definitions, is found in 2 Cor. 8 and 9. Note with penetrating thought these expressions in this passage: 2 Cor. 8:1, we make known the grace of God; 2, abundance of their joy; riches of liberality; 3, beyond their power, they gave of their own accord; 4, fellowship in ministering; 5, gave of their own selves; 8, proving (testing) the sincerity of your love; 9, for your sakes he became poor; 11, readiness to will; 14, your abundance being a supply; 19, ministered . . . to the glory of the Lord; 20, bounty; 21, take thought for things honorable; 24, proof (evidence) of your love; 2 Cor. 9:5, a matter of bounty (blessing) and not of extortion (avarice, *i.e.*, a gift which betrays the giver's covetousness); 6, he that soweth bountifully (blessings) shall reap also bountifully (blessings); 7, purposeth in his heart, not grudgingly (with a



sour, reluctant mind), not of necessity (what ought according to the law of duty to be done), cheerful giver; 8, God is able to make all grace abound unto you . . . that you may abound unto every good work; 10, shall supply and multiply; increase the fruits; 11, being enriched in everything unto all liberality, which worketh . . . thanksgiving to God; 12, ministrations of this service, abound through many thanksgivings unto God; 13, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession, liberality of your contribution; 14, supplication on your behalf, long for you; 15, thanks be to God for his unspeakable (to describe or commemorate which words fail) gift.

## II. WHEN GIVING IS NOT A GRACE

*Assessment is not of grace.* Any tax, rate, demand, imposed deductions of compulsions used by churches to produce revenue are contrary to the Scriptures. If giving is not spontaneous it is not a "gift" or "grace."

*Raising money.* Getting sums of money for the church by means of gimmicks, sales, bingo, forms of entertainment, or other commercial enterprises, is to ignore Paul's teaching on giving as a grace. "Giving is not *man's* plan for raising money, but *God's* plan for raising *men!* (Layton, *This Grace Also*, p. 34.)

*Meeting budgets and raising contributions.* Many times church leaders are desperate for funds and thus turn to various schemes to get more money. When people give out of guilt that has been caused by arm-twisting, hounding, nagging, cajoling, and a constant pressure to meet a budget just to raise more money, then this violates the spirit of grace. Mac Layton, in *This Grace Also*, p. 29, asks, "Is it securing so much for projects, or greater concern for spiritual enrichment? We must preach *on* money, but let us never preach *for* money? We must *build souls* instead of *raise funds!*" Paul says, "I seek not yours, but you." (2 Cor. 12:14)

*Giving in exchange.* Giving in exchange for service rendered, deductions, payment of a debt, or for some spiritual

entertainment, is not giving but paying. Privileges or powers must never be offered those who are prestigious or "big" contributors. Such actions are not of grace.

*Begging.* Some worthy local church projects and some worthy mission activities are so poorly funded that God's servants many times have had to beg for support. Giving must never turn into donations collected by begging.

*Covetousness.* Giving that is not of grace robs the Christian of spiritual blessings. Mac Layton observes that giving which is not of grace but is of covetousness (2 Cor. 9:5), reverses the fruit of the Spirit: "In the place of love is suspicion; in the place of joy is discontent; in the place of peace is trouble; in the place of longsuffering is short temper; in the place of kindness is cruelty; in the place of goodness is sin; in the place of self-control is selfish indulgence." (*This Grace Also*, p. 159).

*Giving not of grace.* When one's giving is considered to be payment of a debt or settling of an account, payment of a tax levied on him, done with reluctance, done for selfish reasons, done to glorify the giver or to be seen of men, done to make "points" with God, then such is not of grace.

*Giving out of grace.* When one's giving is a pure outright gift with no strings attached, compelled by love, done out of a spirit of "I cannot help but give," done spontaneously and not out of demand (Love's best gifts are received before they are asked for.), then such giving is of grace.

Perhaps one of the most beautiful memorials to Jesus, and example of giving as a grace is that of the breaking of the alabaster box of precious nard and its contents poured on Jesus (Mark 14:3-9). Upon a closer look at this woman's deed—this extravagant act of love—one is able to see her gift was out of grace. She did not *have* to do this—she did it because she *wanted* to. She did this not for her glory but for Christ's. She was not thinking of the worth of her gift, but of the worth of the one honored. Motivated by love, it was a pure gift with no reward or reciprocity sought. Grace is ex-



pensive—it costs—but willingness to display devotion ignores the cost and focuses on the value inherent in the giving.

### III. MOTIVES PROMPTING THE GRACE OF GIVING

*The grace of Christ.* "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might become rich." (2 Cor. 8:9) Out of the heart of grace Jesus was motivated to leave the riches of heaven, to "empty himself" (Phil. 2:7), and become poor for us. Such grace prompts us to give so as to empty ourselves.

*Love.* "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son . . ." (Jn. 3:16) Such love moves us to give ourselves for God and His Son. "We love because He first loved us." (1 Jn. 4:19)

"Love ever gives—

Forgives—Outlives—

And ever stands

With open hands,

And while it lives

It gives.

For this is love's prerogative,—

to give,—and give,—and give.

—John Oxenham

*We freely received.* All that God has done for us, which is too great to account, has cost us nothing. Jesus said, ". . . freely you have received, freely give." (Matt. 10:8) Since we have been the recipients of everything from God then we need to give freely from ourselves according to our abilities.

*Glorifying God.* ". . . Do all to the glory of God." (1 Cor. 10:31) When we give so as to honor God with our substance (Prov. 3:9), seeking to glorify God and not ourselves or some other man, then our giving will be motivated by a holy purpose.

Giving that is properly motivated is a privilege—it is never accompanied by a spirit that debases or lowers the spiritual character of the giver.

### IV. BLESSINGS OF THE GRACE OF GIVING

*Makes us like God.* Grace is a divine attribute of God. Therefore, when one grows in the grace of giving, he grows to be like God. The very essence of the nature of God is to give. In this act of worship, when giving is of grace, one becomes more like God than in any other thing he does!

*Attracts the love of God.* "God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Cor. 9:7)

*Affords great joys.* Grace is always connected with joy and pleasure, as seen from the definitions given above. Giving out of a gracious heart of love is also joyous. In giving there is the joy of: Fellowship with Christ, (Phil 1:5); honoring God (Prov. 3:6); sharing with others (2 Cor. 9:12); claiming God's promises, (2 Cor. 9:6-11); and seeing God's work prosper (Phil 4:10-18).

*True worship occurs.* Giving is an opportunity to express appreciation and gratefulness—it is a free voluntary offering to God out of hearts filled with love. Worship is giving, offering, not getting. Worship that is empty-handed is no worship at all! "None of you shall appear before me empty-handed." (Ex. 23:16). "Nor shall they ever appear before the Eternal empty-handed; every man must offer what he can afford, according as the Eternal your God has made you prosper." (Deut. 16:16). God has so fixed the blessings of worship, that none are received until the worshipper first gives. This is a true serendipity!

*More blessed to give than receive.* ". . . Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35). When I was a child, Acts 20:35 was difficult to understand. I just couldn't believe it. Especially when I had a birthday party and received many nice presents. But now that I am a man and have a little boy of my own, I can understand why it is more blessed to give than to receive. Even so, as we grow in faith and in spirituality we can better understand this verse.



Getting without giving makes one spiritually dead and stagnate just as the Dead Sea of Palestine.

When one gives out of a heart of grace there accompanies that giving a sense of well-being, peace, and honor. What a sense of inward satisfaction—what blessedness!

#### CONCLUSION

In light of our study we can more fully agree with the words of Paul, "see that you abound in this grace also." Much emphasis is placed on many things in our preaching and teaching, but from the evidences of our financial power in the churches of Christ, it appears giving has been a forgotten grace which we have failed to add to our faith.

We claim to be dedicated to the complete restoration of the church revealed in the New Testament. We believe we have restored this church in organization, worship, creed, and plan of salvation, etc., and we have even made progress in recent years in an attempt to restore the spirit of Christianity; but we have not as yet restored the "grace of giving"! Horace Bushnell once said, "One more revival, *only one more*, is needed—the revival of Christian stewardship, the consecration of the money power to God." When this is restored to the church, then the kingdom will go forward as rapidly as it did during the first century. Then we will be able to preach the gospel to every creature—but not until we have restored the liberality demonstrated in New Testament days.

Is this the time, O Church of Christ! to sound  
Retreat? To arm with weapons cheap and blunt  
The men and women who have borne the brunt  
Of truth's fierce strife, and nobly held their ground?  
Is this the time to halt, when all around  
Horizons lift, new destinies confront,  
Stern duties wait our nation, never wont  
To play the laggard, when God's will was found?  
No! rather, strengthen stakes and lengthen cords,

Enlarge thy plans and gifts, O thou elect,  
And to thy kingdom come for such a time!  
The earth with all its fullness is the Lord's.  
Great things attempt for him, great things expect,  
Whose love imperial is; whose power sublime.

—Charles Sumner Hoyt



## HOW MUCH SHOULD I GIVE?

MAC LAYTON

"What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" (Ps. 116:12). That many Christians have learned to *give*, to *give regularly*, and to give in the *proper spirit*, cannot be denied. But that the church in general has made a serious and diligent study of the *acceptable amount* to render to the Lord is debatable.

In acceptable giving to the Lord, liberality is the only accepted standard of giving. God has not commanded a *donation* as though an object of charity; nor has he said give *something*, as though every man is a law unto himself. But in clear, unmistakable terms he has declared, "He that giveth, let him do it with liberality" (Rom. 12:8). *So until we have given liberally, we have not given at all!*

The words of the New Testament are vivid and beautiful that describe acceptable giving. Liberality is one. Abound is another. As prospered is a third. Bountiful is the last (Rom. 12:8; 2 Cor. 8:7; 1 Cor. 16:1, 2; 2 Cor. 9:6).

The words liberal and liberality occur 11 times in the New Testament. Thayer says of it, "singleness, simplicity, sincerity, mental honesty, openness of heart manifesting itself in benefactions." And Trench adds, "to spread without wrinkles or folds." Obviously, the Christian who possesses mental and spiritual honesty, will be liberal in outward giving. The command of God to give as one is prospered is not an arbitrary command, but one wrapped up in the very nature of the Christian life. One gives liberally because he is a good Christian, not just to become one! Stinginess with material goods is a sure evidence of a wrinkled, shriveled soul!

Many have grown in the areas of Bible knowledge, teaching, and leadership, who have not grown in liberality. Just

as the Corinthians possessed many beautiful gifts, much of the beauty of those gifts was missing as long as they were not abounding in "this grace also" (2 Cor. 8:7).

But what does it mean to be liberal? How much should we give? Why didn't God set the amount of giving for us? Especially are these questions of vital concern when we see that stewardship and giving occupy more space in the New Testament than any other grace.

If God had set the exact amount, we would do no more than that. Just as the Jews gave that amount set for them in the Old Covenant. But every sincere student of the Bible knows that in the Christian age God is much more concerned about what our giving to him represents in ability, rather than amounts. A set amount would name the limits, while giving on our honor leaves our spirits free to soar to the heights. When an honorable man is put on his honor, he will do far more than the requirements of any law.

Free-will giving, "as each hath purposed in his heart" *works*. It was good enough to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth in the first century, and it is good enough today (Col. 1:23).

But we do not believe that God has left us out on the sea of life without chart or compass in this vital grace. He has left us principles and guideposts to help each of us decide how much to give to please Him.

We must ever remember that *liberality is the only accepted standard of giving in the New Testament church!* It is an abominable prayer that is worded before the giving by many of our men who say, "help us to give back a portion to thee." God does not take portions. If our giving is not a proportion, reflecting our ability, and liberality, and "as prospered," it is an abomination. Just as a man's prayer is an abomination to God who turns away his ear from hearing the law (Prov. 28:9), so the giving of the Christian who is not liberal is an abomination to God.

Is the tithe binding? Tithing is mentioned in Hebrews 7:4



and by Jesus in Matthew 23:23, without approval or disapproval. In the Patriarchal age it is obvious that tithing was a practice. Melchizedek and Jacob are both examples of tithing (Gen. 14:20; 28:20-22).

From all indications the Law of Moses bound three tithes on the Jews at Sinai: (1) The Levitical tenth, for the support of the ministry and priests (2) the Festive Tenth, for the feast days, and, (3) The Third Year tenth, for the support of the poor (Num. 18:21, 24; Lev. 27:30-33; Deut. 14:22-27; 12:15-17; Deut. 14:28-29).

In addition to the basic tithes, the first fruits of the field and the womb were dedicated to the Lord; the corners of the fields were to be left for the poor at harvest time, and other free will offerings. While various estimates ranging from 10 to 50% are made as to the amount given by the Jews, the tithe seems to have been the basic minimum.

But to bind the tithe, or any portion of the Mosaic law on Christians, is to fall from grace and be severed from Christ. The exception of course would be any law "repeated" in the New Covenant of Christ (Gal. 5:4-6). Most of the religious groups of America bind the tithe on their membership as the base of giving. Most offer the approval of Jesus on the tithing of the Pharisees in Matthew 23, and His own observance of the Law of Moses. Yet it is a poor argument indeed to bind tithing on the basis of Jesus' practice during his earthly ministry, for He kept all the other ordinances of the Law as well, including animal sacrifice.

Some among us have contended that the tithe is a good and fair proportion to ask for the Lord's work, and have suggested that it is much better than the some 3% to 5% that our people presently average. But it could very well be that our vision of the magnitude of the divine work committed to our hands is very dim that we feel that we must ask for only 10%! What is lacking in all the arguments for the tithe is New Testament authority. The truth of the mat-

ter is that we have been *liberated from the law of the tithe that we may become liberal!*

A tragic fact is that to bind the law of 10% giving on the Christian may cast a stumbling block in the way of his eternal salvation. God may require of him 20%, 50%, or even more! Our giving must be based on ability, a proportionate, liberal amount, rather than a fixed amount for life! A danger is ever present in preaching that the tithe is a good place to begin, for that may not be the place for many to begin who could far exceed that. Too many have accepted the 10% figure as final, of whom God requires much more. The freeness of our giving must ever be based on the freeness of our receiving from God! (Matt. 10:8). There must be a sliding scale of giving according to our prosperity (1 Cor. 16:1, 2).

Yet many say, "We are not commanded to give a tenth," while implying error. The inference in such a statement, and the conclusion which many Christians practice, is that we need not give as much as a tenth. Many have presumed that because they are not under the law of the tithe they can give less to Christ than the Jews did without him. They think that Jesus died on the cross so they could give 2% instead of 10%, less under the realm of grace than under law. That conclusion is miles from the truth.

While rushing away from a legalistic system we must not fall into the quicksand of a willy-nilly, reckless religion. Some are so fearful of getting it down to a fine point, a specific figure in their giving, that they wind up with no point at all. The man who argues for less than the basic minimum of the Jews in the Old Covenant says more about his heart than he may intend to say. He says he aims to do as little as he can!

The evidence is very clear that the Lord requires of us much more than a tenth in the Christian age. The examples are very clear that much more than a tenth is demanded. The nature of the commission of our Lord to a lost world is such that Christians will give much more than a tenth.



Everything in Christianity has been raised. The standards of living, and of giving, are much greater under Christ than Moses! Note the following:

WHICH IS THE HIGHER STANDARD?

<i>Old Testament</i>	<i>New Testament</i>
"Thou shalt not kill"	"Whosoever hates his brother is a murderer"
"Thou shalt not commit adultery"	"Whosoever lusts commits adultery in his heart"
"You shall not swear by my name falsely"	"Swear not at all"
"The tenth shall be holy to the Lord"	"Let each of you give as God hath prospered him"

By no stretch of the imagination can any think that Christ lowered the standard of giving, while raising everything else. It is a contradiction of the highest rank to suppose that under grace and love we can give cheaper than under law.

The Christian should give much more than a tenth because we give for the advancement of an eternal, unshakable kingdom, founded on the revelation of the boundless love of God in the sacrifice of his only begotten Son. Those of the Old Covenant did not know the unspeakable blessings we have in Christ, nor had they been charged with the salvation of a lost world.

The Christian should give much more than a tenth because of the showcase examples of the New Testament church. Surely no one could think that the early Christians gave less under Christ than they had formerly given as Jews. Such cannot be the case for those brethren sold their lands, houses, possessions, and goods for the care of their brethren, and the advancement of the gospel. The progression of their giving must be noted: they sold their lands, then their houses, and when they had no more lands and houses, they sold their possessions, and, finally, down to the

last ownership, their goods! And "Not one of them said aught of the things he possessed was his own" (Acts 4:32).

The Christian should give much more than a tenth because Christ calls his followers to love more, do more, and give more, than others. The fact is that the heirs of the Restoration Movement have allowed many religious groups to outlive, and outgive us. We must never allow the forces of darkness to be more liberal than the sons of light. It is a fact that all around us sectarian causes are capturing much more than a tenth from their followers, while those who preach so much truth, those who contend for the pure gospel, average less than 3% to 5% of total income.

The Christian should give much more than a tenth because most have more than that amount for luxury items, and taxes paid to an earthly kingdom. The average member of the church could triple his weekly giving to the Lord and not miss a single luxury! How will we answer our dear Lord in the Judgment when we spent far more on luxurious homes, carpets, payments on two and three autos, boats, golf clubs, tobacco, food for our pet dogs and cats, than we thought of giving to the Lord and Master of life for his work on earth! How will we answer when we live in the lap of luxury, the most prosperous people in the history of the world, and souls are perishing all around us? C. R. Nichol said it was a far greater privilege to be a member of the eternal kingdom of Christ than any earthly kingdom. For that reason he never allowed the amount of his taxes to exceed his giving to the church. How many Christians have thought of their citizenship in the kingdom of heaven worth more than any citizenship in an earthly kingdom? Many tip on a scale far greater than any percentage for Christ!

Is liberality a virtue with varying degrees? If one man gives more than a tenth, another a twentieth, and one a ninetieth, is one liberal, the other less liberal, and the last less still? Surely God has not left liberality to every man's whim.



How much is liberal? How much should I give? *How much is liberal depends on how much we have been prospered* (1 Cor. 16:1, 2). To prosper means "to gain, to have income." That alone answers that old time worn excuse, "I don't know what I am prospered, is it before or after taxes, or is it take home pay, or what?" The biblical injunction is that we must give out of every source of income and prosperity, the total of our income. The rule is: prospered much, give much; prospered little, give little. However, we must remember that that "little" is great if it is in proportion to our ability, as we have been prospered. The divine rule of giving is a slide rule, based on prosperity. Every increase in salary means our giving will increase.

*How much is liberal depends on present needs in the kingdom.* The day may come, as it did in Jerusalem, when faithful children of God will give 100%! As genuine Christians we are "always ready to communicate to the necessities of the saints" (Rom. 12:13). In the first church of Christ in Jerusalem, God's example for the ages, no one considered anything his own until the need was met. No one ever said, "I have given my percent, if that is not enough let them starve!" The parable of the Good Samaritan says that we must give without sparing to help our neighbors.

*How much is liberal depends on vital principles of Scripture:* (1) We must put the kingdom of God first, even before the necessities of life (Matt. 6:33). (2) We must sacrifice, know loss, give up all, for Christ (Matt. 16:24). (3) We must adjust our standard of living by our standard of giving. (4) We must show by our gifts that Christ is Lord of life, and we are his true stewards.

Surely we do not believe that we can give too much! Jesus watched the poor widow give her all and did not reprimand her. He sent out the rich young ruler to sell and give all.

*How much is liberal depends on ability.* As ability varies, so God's law of liberality varies, "it is accepted according to

what a man hath" (2 Cor. 8:12). The man who can give \$1.00 a week must do that, and the man who can give \$1,000.00 a week must do that. What the Father in heaven asks of us is that we do our best!

It is entirely possible for a man to increase his giving when he has increase in income, yet not to the extent his offering is accepted as liberal. In other words, having established a comfortable standard of living, does not God expect the percentage of our giving to go up as well as the amount? Too many are trusting the amount rather than the percentage. They think God is counting dollars rather than ability. They are still thinking of *portion* rather than *proportion*. It is not merely giving the Lord requires. He has not simply commanded us to give. It is liberality for which we strive!

When John Wesley was a young preacher he got 30 pounds income. He lived on 28 and gave 2. In his prime he received 60 pounds. He then lived on 28 and gave 32. Whatever you may say about his doctrine, you must admire his attitude toward stewardship.

*How much is liberal depends on how good an example one wants to become.* The calculation of liberality will take into consideration the contagion of a Christian example. Words are cheap, but liberal giving proves God is in the soul as few things will. Losing ourselves in generosity and service is the way to find ourselves, and life indeed. Just a few brethren setting the right example of faithful giving can set an entire church on fire for Christ, and much more than dozens of sermons. It does not fail when one man confesses his neglect in this vital area of life, and begins giving as God has prospered him, it has a spectacular effect on others. For the more our society seeks for security, and the love of ease and money, the greater the admiration for those who can turn a deaf ear and lose himself, or herself, in true Christian giving.



We have all been "enriched unto all liberality" (2 Cor. 9:11). God has blessed us richly so we can bless His work! The Twentieth Century Translation of 2 Corinthians 9:8 reads, "God has power to shower all kinds of blessings on you, so that, having under all circumstances and on all occasions, all that you need, you may be able to shower all kinds of benefits on others."

One of the grand truths about giving is: Bountiful and liberal giving secures God's blessings on what we decide to keep, and guarantees us more seed for sowing. With the power of God He can make 50¢ go twice as far as \$1.00!

The challenge went out long ago, and is still our challenge, "Try me saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Mal. 3:10).

May God help us all to learn to give much more than 10% of our prosperity to the Lord. And may we learn how to teach others to abound in this grace of giving. It is true that "it is more blessed to give than it is to receive" as our Lord Jesus himself declared (Acts 20:28). Those who lead others to give are leading them to happiness, and life eternal.

God grants the liberal blessings that cannot be obtained in any other way. He finds deepening of spiritual life, money for the Lord's work, ease in meeting obligations, preparation of heart to be a faithful steward over all he decides to keep, and ability to go even beyond what he promised, And, finally, a new appreciation for the grace and goodness of God.

It takes twice as much power to get an airplane off the ground as it does to fly it. And it takes more power to begin faithful giving than to sustain it. But we have the promise of God to help and be with us.

Remember, our giving is to Christ. We place our contribu-

tion in his hands. He has power to take it and multiply it, just as he did the loaves and fishes, for his glory. With this in mind,

Give as you would if an angel awaited your gift at the door.

Give as you would if tomorrow found your giving here all o'er.

Give as you would to the Master if you met His loving look.

Give as you would of your substance if His hand the offering took.



## “WILL A MAN ROB GOD?”

CARL W. WADE

CARL W. WADE preached his first sermon at age 15. He began his full-time pulpit work in 1965 and has since served churches in Kentucky, Michigan, Indiana and Tennessee. Traveling full time as an evangelist, he conducts meetings on church growth, evangelism and the home, and he participates in lectureships, workshops and seminars throughout the country. He also serves as staff writer for four religious periodicals and contributes to others. Wade is active in the Pro-Family Forum.

One of the most intriguing questions of the scriptures is asked in Malachi 3:8, “Will a man rob God?” Surely God is asking an absurd question! How can lowly man rob God? It is impossible to reach into his treasure chest! We cannot break into his bank vault! Is it possible for us to raid God’s cookie jar? Surely there is no way for mortal man to rob the omnipotent creator. However, God speaking through the prophet Malachi confirms the practice.

The people would be quick to respond to this allegation, “Wherein have we robbed thee?” (3:8). They challenged the charge of thievery. They were religious! They worshipped God. They even gave of their flocks, herds and other means! How could God’s prophet make such a charge? No doubt they thought, “The preacher really erred in his sermon today. We have not robbed God!”

### WHAT THEY DID

They gave! No questions about it. They brought gifts to God. Sabbaths, feast days and holy times were observed. They were proficient in assembling.

But look at their gifts; “contemptible” (1:12). And their “tithes” were not true tithes consisting of the *first* and the *best* but rather were “that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick” (1:13). They had brought to God in the guise of worship the scraps, the worthless, the leftovers of their

lives. What they could not, or would not, use they gave to God. God said, “I’ll not accept it!”

Even the priests had become involved in this travesty of worship to God. God calls to them, “O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, ‘Wherein have we despised thy name?’ Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, ‘Wherein have we polluted thee?’ In that ye say, ‘The table of the Lord is contemptible.’ And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts” (Mal. 1:6b-8).

God’s holy men had become more concerned with pleasing men than with God’s pleasure. They would not insult the “governors”—the influential, the powerful, the wealthy—with second-hand or second-rate gifts. But God, ah, that was another matter!

Apparently they had lost their close relationship spiritually with God. The rulers of the land were a real force to be appeased and with which to reckon. But God was of little consequence in their overall scheme of “who called the shots.”

God’s holy men had looked the other way while God’s people had paraded in and out bringing lame lambs, sick sheep and wounded doves. They came bringing the least they could bring of the worst they had and left with a smug satisfaction of having done God’s service.

While the “storehouse” of God was filled with polluted and evil sacrifices, they feasted in their own houses on the choicest and tastiest of morsels.

They were liars. God calls them “deceivers” (1:14). They pretended “This is the best I can do.” God said, “I know better!” His anger was kindled. His vow was, “Ye are cursed with a curse!” (3:9a).

This rebuke from God would ring in their ears for over 400 years! There would come no other word from the heav-



only lips. Silence would follow this divine reprimand. Before there would be a "restoration" of heavenly blessings in their lives, they must make moral and spiritual "restitution."

It must be significant that the last words of God in the Old Testament are, "lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (4:6b). It is contained as the climax of a prophetic utterance but to the people of Malachi's day and for the next four centuries it would serve as a continuing warning to future generations who might become lax and disregard the house of the Lord as being supremely important. Malachi's message is a message for today!

#### WHY HAD THEY DONE IT?

Their failure to worship God properly in their "tithes and offerings" (3:8b) was only symptomatic of their disobedience from the heart.

God said the curse was to be upon them "because ye do not lay it to heart" (2:2b). It was not in their heart to honor God. He had become "god" and not "God"! They did not have a "giving" problem, they had a "heart" problem. Their heart was not right before God. It was reflected in the tithes and offerings they brought to God in the sacred assemblies.

God was not measuring the *amount* of their gifts as much as he was the *quality*. He was not putting a tape measure around their pocketbooks but around their hearts! Their gifts were blemished, lacking and pitiful, not because there was an economic recession but because there was a love depression.

The leaven of sin had spread. God rebukes them for their sorcery, adultery, false swearers, oppression of widows, orphans and strangers and the "putting away" of their wives (2:14-16; 3:5). Their disobedience had multiplied. God said, "Clean it up!" He demanded repentance and restitution. God reaffirmed that he had not changed in his moral, material and spiritual expectations, "I am the Lord, I change not!" (3:6a). But they had moved from God's original position. God said, "Come back, or . . .!"

#### BLESSINGS OR CURSING?

"Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation" (3:9). A nation under the curse of God is a calamity of great measure. There would be no good nor pleasure in their lives, "and I will curse your blessings" (2:2b).

Even the good things and items of beauty and joy would not give them happiness. They were a nation under a curse. Yes, they had prosperity. They had abundance. They had a chicken in every pot and two carts in every garage. But they would find that truly man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.

God would demonstrate in a very real way to them that when a nation leaves him they cannot find happiness.

They divorced, deceived and played the hypocrite. They defrauded the innocent and the helpless. They robbed one another for self-gain and in the midst of all of this they turned to rob God. Since the rights and lives of others were of little value, except for gain, the reverence and respect of God was equally of little value, except to justify self through religious ritualism. People with such motives cannot long remain as a nation.

But God did not want to curse them. He pleads for their repentance and promises abundant restoration. He urges, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts" (Mal. 3:10-12).

Their leaders of the faith had failed in proclaiming the law. God's house was despised and God "wearied" at their



disobedience. God's people compounded their sins against each other with robbery against God. Yet, the loving God of heaven says, "I have loved you . . ." (1:2), and now, he says, "I want to continue to love you."

God calls for their repentance. There is no problem with God in forgiving. You easily forgive the one you love when penitent humility is coupled with sincere confession.

God desired to open the floodgates of heaven and have them deluged with his riches. Their bins would burst with God's heavenly blessings realized in real measures, "there shall not be room enough to receive it" (3:10b). Blessings or cursings, the choice was theirs. God made his offer. Would they accept him, believing the promise or continue with their contemptible pollution of gifts? As a people of God today we differ little and God has not changed, "I am the Lord, I change not" (3:6a).

#### MALACHI'S MESSAGE AND MODERN MATERIALISM

The people of Malachi's day were commanded to take their tithes and offerings "into the storehouse" (3:10). The New Testament "storehouse" is a collective action in and by the church (Acts 4:34-37; 5:1, 2; 1 Cor. 16:1, 2). Robbery of this storehouse is no less uncommon today than in 430 B. C. God's people under the new covenant are not immune from becoming thieves any more than the people of Malachi's day.

I think it noteworthy to mention here that in Malachi's day their sin in giving was symptomatic of a host of other transgressions which we today would characterize as grievous against God. We tend to place less emphasis on improper giving while stressing impropriety in other less tolerable areas of living and practice of beliefs. God apparently does not make the distinction.

Although we are not under the command to "tithe" today, we must note the importance of the tithe *principle*. The tithe was constituted basically by the first and the best of each household's possessions. It was not limited to the Mosaic

law period. Abraham, the father of faith, tithed to the high priest of Salem, Melchizedek. Paul refers to Abraham as "the father of all them that believe" (Rom. 4:11) and to Melchizedek as being "a type of the Christ" (Heb. 7:15-17, 21). What he did, he did "by faith." Our obedience today is "by faith" and that "by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). It must be our conclusion that whatever we intend to do "by faith" in the matter of our giving, God must have the *first* and *best* of our lives. And, a generous portion indeed!

Robert Laidlaw gives this example: "I go to a home where there is a little girl, five or six years of age, and give her a box of chocolates. She straightway disappears, and when she returns her lips and fingers are covered with chocolate. In another home, however, the box is opened at once, and the little lassie brings it to me and says, 'You have the first one.' 'Oh, no!' I say, 'they are for you.' 'But please,' she pleads, 'you brought them to me, do please have the first one.' And helping myself I say, 'Thank you, dear.' Which child has the warmest place in my affections, and which is more likely to get another box of chocolates?" We need to open our box of chocolates to God! We need not worry, he will not take them all and he deserves the first chocolate!

We must examine our giving. Not just "Do I give,?" but also "*How* do I give?" That "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7b) is a foregone conclusion and is explicit. God does not debate. *He who is love* loves the one *who returns in love*!

It is not difficult for the church today to become a nation of thieves. We live in the most prosperous nation ever known to the world. Americans compose approximately 6% of the world's population and we have an estimated 90% of the world's goods! And in the midst of abundance *we are not a happy people*! America also has among the highest divorce rates in the world. We suffer with among the highest of suicide rates in the world, especially among those under age 24. Alcoholism, drug addiction, inhuman treatment of other family members also head our national list of "highs." Then



add our insatiable appetite for things and the fact we never seem to be satisfied with what we have and are hardly happy very long. The joy is gone out of many lives. Contentment, joy and happiness are elusive to our society. We have found no real reason to rejoice.

It seems as though the "curse" of God four centuries before the coming of the Lord has extended into our fast-moving, highly technical age! Is it possible we have evoked the curse upon our lives today? The church moves and lives among this society. It, in part, comprises modern society. It, too, has been affected by the materialism of the age. God's people today may indeed have to answer in the affirmative the question, "Will a man rob God?"

Mission works are being strangled worldwide due to a lack of funding. "Will a man rob God?" Preachers are existing on meager incomes while church members continue to get raises and benefits. "Will a man rob God?" Benevolent cupboards are bare, clothes closets for the poor are filled with outcast rags (we sell our better ones at our garage sales!). "Will a man rob God?" Buses are too expensive to run to pick up innocent children and bring them in to learn about Jesus while their hearts are still pliable. Yet, we purchase expensive cars, loaded with gadgets, and travel whenever our heart desires in the name of "the pursuit of happiness." "Will a man rob God?" We have constructed great cathedral temple-like buildings for our assemblies and classes *for us* in the name of God's work and worship. And in these palatial edifices we talk to ourselves, sing to ourselves and congratulate ourselves that "we are not as other men," while our communities, cities, and country convulse in an epileptic-like seizure of sin and froth at the mouth, regularly, daily, constantly. And God's medicine men make weekly applications to themselves but little to the really sick. "Will a man rob God?"

We do not have a money problem in the churches of Christ. In recent months we have seen individual congrega-

tions raise tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, one million and even over two million dollars contributions on one Sunday, respectively. The ability to give is there, unquestionably, undeniably. Even the poorest of us are wealthy compared to the rest of the world whom God loves also. No, we do not have a money problem; rather, as with Malachi's contemporaries, we have a "heart" problem.

Paul states it, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give" (2 Cor. 9:7). When the heart is not given to God, neither will much else. And what is given will always be "grudgingly and of necessity" (2 Cor. 9:7b). *Robbery begins where God is not honored in the heart, first!* Oh yes, the solemn assemblies are attended, the feast day is observed and the giving is done, but the heart is absent. The first and the best are denied God and are reserved for the chief god—self!

"Will a man rob God?" Indeed yes! Not by gunpoint from the church treasury but by penpoint from the checkbook. We have expended on ourselves, prospered ourselves, increased our goods, built our bigger barns and "lived in pleasure on the earth" (James 5:5a). Thus, we have raised and opened the umbrella of a "curse" over our own heads. God's showers of blessings cannot reach us. We embrace our possessions and cannot be possessed of God. As did the rich young ruler of Mark 10, so do we. As he lacked one thing, so do we. He had accumulated "great possessions," so have we. He could not hold the hand of God while clutching his valuable things of this world, neither can we. He could not let go of his "possessions"; can we?

"Will a man rob God?" We must ask it each day of ourselves. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves" (2 Cor. 13:5a). Self-inspection is expected of us, each to his own.

In his book, *The Grace of Giving*, Stephen Olford tells this story. It is appropriate for the close of this lesson:

During his reign, the king of Prussia, Frederick Wil-



liam III, found himself in great trouble. He was carrying on expensive wars; he was endeavouring to strengthen his country and make a great nation of the Prussian people. But he did not have enough money to accomplish his plans. He could not disappoint his people, and to capitulate to the enemy would be unthinkable.

Thus what he did was, he approached the women of Prussia and asked for their jewelry of gold and silver. Each one in turn would be given a bronze or iron decoration as a token of his gratitude with the inscription, "I gave gold for iron, 1813."

The response was overwhelming. The Order of the Iron Cross became a more cherished object than did gold or silver jewelry. The king had honored his subjects for their sacrifice. Many wore only the Iron Cross void of other jewelry. They had sacrificed for the cause of the king and kingdom!

Today, we need an army of men and women who will cherish more dearly the honor of the King and be willing to sacrifice willingly to expand his kingdom. Then great victories will be known in his name. Such an army will never know defeat. Such an army which gives its hearts and follows with its goods will always know the honor and blessings of bearing The Order of the Daily Cross of Christ. Such a people will never be found guilty of answering *yes* to the question, "Will a man rob God?"

## ALL THIS—BY REASON OF STRENGTH!

MARY OLER

Give unto the Lord, ye kindreds of the people,  
Give unto the Lord glory and strength!  
(1 Chron. 16:28)

Someway, despite humble origins, drastic changes, and stress and storm, God's gift of life to me can be channeled into ways to bring him glory! Job thought of comparisons, and said: "If I speak of strength, lo, he is strong" (Job 9:19). David blessed the Lord before all the congregation when he saw unprecedented generosity, and in his praise, said: "In thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all" (1 Chron. 29:12). God is strong, undoubtedly, and he gives us strength. Job reasoned: "Will he plead against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me" (Job 23:6). I, a child of God, have every encouragement to use my mind and body to let the part of the world my life touches hear the name of God, and believe his wonderful works.

*Why am I here? Who am I?*

In a world where fear walks the streets, it is calming to read: "Whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps. 27:1). In the midst of millions who frantically search for identity, it is good to know one can really belong to someone who loves and cares. "The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace" (Ps. 29:11).

*What do we mean, "strength"?*

Suppose we commit ourselves to serve the Lord. Sometimes, even at the time of commitment, our bodies are not strong. Disease, congenital or contracted, leaves us physically incapable of accomplishing, achieving, attaining. Perhaps



we cannot work with our hands to relieve the necessities of the saints. Personal affliction, or the responsibilities of caring for those of our own households seem to hinder us from being as active in the Lord's work as we wish to be. Often the aged and infirm feel their worth is a thing of the past. A song of trust tells us that God looks from heaven and sees the sons of men, and considers all their works. We are comforted with the knowledge that "there is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength" (Ps. 33:16).

I serve God with the strength of the body I have, realizing "my flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever" (Ps. 73:26). I can never feel there is no place for me, despite the changes that come, for the word of God bolsters my courage: "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small" (Pr. 24:10).

*"And He healed them all . . ."*

"And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people" (Matt. 4:23). Jesus' fame spread, because sick people with divers diseases and torments, the demon-possessed, the lunatic, the palsied, all were healed by Jesus. Their strength returned. Once more they could function in a world where there was work to be done, people to be loved.

To stay physically strong, people are today advised to eat, drink, and exercise sensibly, and to be checked regularly by a physician. I list three outstanding characteristics of this Son of man/Son of God I have chosen to be my great physician:

1. *He is interested in every patient.* "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). Gold ring? Vile raiment? Neither is considered! Treatment is not determined by the patient's status in life, or place of residence, or bank account.

2. *He knows I will not be a perfect patient.* Physicians are aware that patients forget to take medicines, neglect to follow prescription times regularly, listen to old wives' tales, and lose confidence in the physician because a friend or neighbor speaks disparagingly of him. The great physician knows our weaknesses, and warns: "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation" (Matt. 26:41). He said to Peter: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen the brethren" (Luke 22:32). When we feel unworthy, faith fails us, we doubt, even deny, the Lord loves us and wants us to be strong.

3. *He gives me prescriptions.* In order to be well and strong, and shine as lights in the world, we are given prescriptions to meet our special needs. "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Matt. 7:12), "If he compels you to go with him one mile, go with him two" (Matt. 5:41), and "Pray for them that despitefully use you" (Matt. 5:44) are to make alterations and bring about changes in one's spiritual condition. Peace in the home, the community and the church will follow.

*Life is brief . . .*

Suppose a man lives to be 100 years old—a century. He lives only 36,525 days. Suppose you live twenty-five more years. You have only 9,125 days to live! Our days on earth are a shadow" (Job 8:9). All the days of man's vain life he "spendeth as a shadow" (Eccl. 6:12). There is no permanency to shadows. They grow shorter in the mornings, longer in the evenings. Coming and going continually, when they are gone, nothing is left to show where they have been. Rather than making us sad and sorrowful, scriptures on waning strength and the brevity of life are prescriptions to



make us sane and sensible. We have a "few days" to do the will of the Lord—to bring him glory.

*What shall we have?*

"Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, But he shall receive an hundred fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark 10:28-30).

Yes, life is a "few days." It passes like a shadow, but when following Jesus, I not only have the promise of eternal life, but the promise that my days on the earth will be abundantly blessed. All this—because the Lord is the strength of my life!

#### THE GREAT PHYSICIAN

My neighbor gave me a physician's name  
As one who pitied man,  
Spoke kindly . . . touched,  
And I was moved to take him as my own,  
To tell my guilt,  
My shame, my life's disease.  
His trained ear listened at my sad heart's door;  
Divine Love said:  
"Be strong! Go! Sin no more!"

#### STEWARDS OF OUR ESTATE

AL FOWLER

Much has been said about stewardship during the four days of this lectureship. We have discussed stewardship of our minds, souls, talents, possessions, time and families. Time and time again during these presentations, the biblical basis of stewardship has been stressed. If you have not been convinced by now of this scriptural principle, there would be little need for me to talk to you about the stewardship of your estates. Therefore, our time today will be based on the following assumptions:

1. Stewardship is a personal responsibility.
2. This responsibility is to God.
3. This responsibility cannot be turned over to another.
4. Each of us must give an accounting.

In light of these assumptions, the question for each one of us is, "Will we be prepared?" From the parable of the ten virgins, we find that there were five prepared and five unprepared. The Lord called those who were prepared wise and those who were unprepared foolish.

Let us now look at how stewardship relates to our estate. Please do not turn me off at this point. So many times we look at our meager material possessions and say, "I really don't have much of an estate to be concerned about." However, the principles are the same, whether the estate is small, modest or large. In fact, good estate planning may be more important to the small estate than to the modest or large one. Regardless of the estate size, there are many non-monetary decisions to be made. Also, all Christians (rich or poor) have the same responsibility to include the Lord in their plans.

Today when you mention the word *estate*, different images form in each one's mind. In general, we think of the Rocke-



fellers, Fords, Vanderbilts and Carnegies. Also, we envision a mansion in Beverly Hills, a fleet of cars, a yacht in the harbor, or some huge financial empire, beyond the realm of reality as far as we are concerned. But in reality, each one of us does have an estate. For our purposes, an estate simply means all that we possess. In order to help each one put this into perspective, let us look at the following list of items that might make up a person's estate. This list is not intended to be all-inclusive.

Cash	Life Insurance	Household Goods
Stocks	Coin Collections	Mineral Rights
Bonds	Stamp Collections	Interest in Trusts
Land	Antiques	Annuities
House	Automobiles	Farm Equipment

As you can see, each one owns possessions that place him in the category of having an estate. If we consider the fact that, for estate tax purposes, these items will be assessed at their current fair market value, we probably all have a larger estate than we think.

Once we accept the fact that we all have an estate, we must then look carefully at estate planning. The purpose of estate planning is to secure to the property owner maximum benefits from the possession and use of his property and to enable him to dispose of the property as he chooses, with a minimum of shrinkage from taxation and other expenses. You can see from this definition that estate planning relates to the lifetime use of our possessions, as well as the ultimate disposition of our property at death. We are involved in estate planning throughout our lifetime, whether we realize it or not. Such things as opening a bank account, buying and selling property, signing contracts, or even purchasing life insurance all fall within the realm of estate planning. Due to time limitations, our emphasis will be on death planning, rather than lifetime planning. Our decision is not made due to the fact that death planning is more important than lifetime planning. However, in the interest of time, we have chosen to

deal with the one that relates to the largest disposition that we as individuals will ever make.

What, then, does all this mean to us as Christians today? We might note that times have changed significantly since biblical days when Isaac had only to be concerned with family conflicts in blessing Jacob and Esau, and the prodigal son's father contended only with his elder son's bickering. Today we are faced with a myriad of tax legislation, including the Tax Reform Act of 1969, the Tax Reform Act of 1976, the Revenue Act of 1978, the Technical Correction Act of 1979 and many other Federal laws, as well as legislation by the various states. All of this is designed to tax (and thereby inhibits) the transfer of property. In turn, this challenges us to use new and imaginative techniques in exercising good stewardship. While planning may have become more involved and inconvenient, we must not allow our estate plan to be decided by default. What we do not know and/or understand can hurt us. More specifically, it can cause hardships to fall upon our heirs.

#### INTESTATE DISTRIBUTION

Before we notice a few of the things that can and cannot be accomplished by estate planning, let us look at what happens when one dies without planning his estate. When a person dies without a will, he is said to have died intestate.

Each individual state has enacted a set of laws that controls the distribution of the property of each person who dies intestate. Although these laws are similar in some respects, there are significant differences from state to state. For illustration purposes, we will use Arkansas statutes. Generally speaking, after the payment of taxes, debts, administrative expenses, funeral bills and family allowances, the following results:

1. If a married Arkansas resident dies leaving children, one-third of the personal property and a one-third lifetime interest in the decedent's real property goes to the surviving



spouse, with the remainder being divided equally among the children.

2. If there is no issue (children, grandchildren, etc.) the surviving spouse receives all property, unless the couple has been married less than three years at the date of death. If the couple has been married less than three years at the time of death, the surviving spouse's share is less, as determined by state statute.

3. The probate court decides who will manage your estate. An administrator must be appointed and may not necessarily be the person you would have chosen.

4. If there are surviving minor children, the probate court decides on a suitable guardian. Again, the court may not necessarily choose the person you had in mind.

5. Depending on each actual situation, other important decisions are made under the rigid laws of descent and distribution.

To say that these provisions do not reflect the wishes of most Christians is an understatement. However, many of us have already decided that this is the way we want our estates administered. We have done so, not by signing a will to that effect, but by failing to exercise our own personal responsibility to do otherwise.

#### CORNERSTONE OF ESTATE PLANNING

Now, let us look at the will, which is without question the cornerstone of all estate planning. Wills have been used for thousands of years to distribute property according to one's wishes. The Code of Hammurabi (2270 B.C.) included rights of a person to distribute property by will. Our own rights today are based on English law established in 1541 under Henry VIII. In essence, we have the right to dispose of our property as we choose through one of these marvelous little documents known as a "Last Will and Testament." Christians today are quite familiar with the Old and New Testaments, which we acknowledge as the will of God. Unfortu-

nately, many are not as familiar with the laws of the state relative to their own Last Will and Testament.

The laws governing wills differ from state to state, but, again, Arkansas statutes will give everyone an idea of the basics.

1. The maker of a will must be 18 years of age or older.
2. The will must be in writing (handwritten or typed).
3. The maker must be of sound mind.
4. Certain procedures must be followed in the preparation and execution of a will.
5. Finally, each will must be proved and accepted (probated) by the Court.

Before we look at what a person can and cannot do by will, let me dispel a couple of widely held notions. First of all, having a will does not make for more probate expense. If there is property in one's estate to be administered or an estate tax return to be filed (or both), having a will does not increase the probate expense. Whether there is a will or not, the Probate Court must determine who gets what. To the contrary, a properly drawn will can often reduce the expense of probate.

Secondly, a wife should also have a properly drawn will. Many times a couple will think that they own all of their property jointly and, therefore, there is no need for either one of them to have a will. Occasionally, all of the property will be in the husband's name and he will see the need for a will to pass the property to the wife. The logic behind this is that after the husband dies, the wife will have a will prepared. Of course, these situations do not take into consideration what happens if the husband and wife die as a result of a common accident. If the wife survives for even a very short period of time, she would inherit the property from her husband and would then die without a will. This can cause many problems relative to the dispositions of property, as well as the guardianship of minor children.

Let me make one more point before we look at some of the



things that can be accomplished through a properly drawn will. Although most states recognize a "holographic" will (one written entirely in the testator's own handwriting), it is not a recommended procedure. Drawing a will is not a do-it-yourself project. Each one needs the assistance of an attorney licensed to practice in his state to prepare the will. Each person's situation is unique and, therefore, each will must be tailor-made to fit different needs and problems.

Now let us look at a few of the many things that can be accomplished through a properly drawn will.

1. You, as a Christian, make the decisions relative to your affairs. As we have already mentioned, this is your responsibility and should not be passed on to anyone else. Only you understand your unique situation and the circumstances surrounding your family and possessions.

2. You may name an executor to handle the administration of your estate.

3. You may relieve your executor of costly bonding requirements and burdensome reporting procedures.

4. You may name a guardian for any minor children that survive you.

5. You may create trusts for your spouse, children or others, that can protect your assets as well as save taxes.

6. You may reduce or even eliminate estate taxes.

7. You may make gifts to charities that you have supported throughout your lifetime.

8. You may change your will as often as you wish. This is extremely important as our families grow and mature. As our circumstances and needs change, our wills should change accordingly.

While much can be accomplished through a properly drawn will, we should note that there are some things that a will cannot do.

1. Gentlemen, you cannot disinherit your wife. By law, she is entitled to certain dowry interests in your estate and cannot be denied.

2. You cannot control the disposition of jointly owned property, such as bank accounts and real estate. These assets will pass by operation of law.

3. You cannot control the disposition of life insurance proceeds which are payable to someone other than the estate. These proceeds are controlled by the insurance contract and, therefore, pass outside the will.

4. Generally speaking, you cannot control your assets in perpetuity. You must, eventually, let go.

Regardless of the size of one's estate, the decisions to be made are responsibilities that should not be left to such an inflexible system as exists in our states today. As Christians, it is even more imperative that we exercise good stewardship.

#### JOINT OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY

Now that we have discussed the importance and usefulness of wills, along with some of the things that we can and cannot do with a will, let us examine an often-overlooked area of equal importance. We have already mentioned that a will cannot control certain assets. Life insurance proceeds and jointly held property are two that were specifically discussed. If we go through the process of having our wills properly prepared and executed, we should not make the mistake of overlooking the effect that joint ownership has on our plan to distribute property.

First of all, there are several different types of joint ownership that we should define.

1. The most common form is joint tenancy, where two people hold a specific asset (stock certificate, bank account or piece of real estate) in both of their names. The result is that the ownership of the property will pass automatically to the surviving party upon the death of the first.

2. Tenancy by the entirety is recognized in some states as a special tenancy between husband and wife. This is used most often for the ownership of a personal residence. Prop-



erty held in this manner passes automatically to the survivor when one dies.

3. Tenancy in common is a form of joint ownership that allows each of two or more owners to have an undivided interest in a particular piece of property. When one of the owners dies, his share passes to his heirs or the beneficiaries under his will. Unlike joint tenancy or tenancy by the entirety, the surviving tenants do not automatically take title to the deceased party's interest. The will can control this type of jointly-held property.

4. Community property is a form of joint ownership that exists in eight of our southwestern states. These states that recognize community property are Arizona, California, Idaho, Louisiana, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas and Washington. This type of ownership relates only to married couples. The underlying principle is that one-half of what the husband and wife earn while married belongs to the other. Upon the death of one, the surviving spouse automatically becomes the owner of one-half of all community property. The other half is distributed according to the will of the deceased spouse.

5. Occasionally, a savings account is opened in the name of one person "in trust for" another. The creator of this "trust" continues to control the account until his death. When the creator dies, the account automatically passes to the beneficiary.

6. Often, U.S. Savings Bonds are registered to "Jim Smith or Mary Smith" or "Jim Smith, payable upon death to Mary Smith." In either case, when one dies, the other owns the bonds.

Joint ownership of property is a well established convenience in our system today. However, it should be used only when it accomplishes your desires. Looking back, you probably cannot remember the reasons some of your assets were placed in a joint ownership arrangement. Let us now look at some of the problems joint ownership can cause.

1. Federal estate taxes may be increased. As a general rule, federal estate tax law requires that the entire value of jointly-owned property be included in the estate of the first to die. The only exception is when the survivor can prove that he or she contributed to the acquisition of the jointly-owned property out of his or her separate resources. Of course, this is difficult to determine in many joint-ownership arrangements, due to the passage of time and the inadequacy of most individuals' records. The unfortunate result is that more may be taxed in the estate of the first to die.

Aside from the question of which estate the joint property ought to be included in, there is an even more serious problem. This occurs when the surviving owner dies. At that time, the entire value of the jointly-owned asset is included in his estate, regardless of who originally purchased it. This means that the survivor's estate is larger and subject to a second estate tax. Federal law does recognize the inequity of this second estate tax and allows a credit for the federal estate taxes paid in prior estates. However, this credit is phased out over a ten-year period and, therefore, does not benefit the survivor if he lives more than ten years. While your intentions may be to pass property to a surviving owner, the tax implications should be considered and accepted. The disastrous effect on a married couple's estate will be seen in a following section that discusses estate taxes in detail.

2. In addition to the federal estate tax problems that joint ownership causes, there is a possibility of creating a federal gift tax liability by establishing a joint ownership arrangement. Whether a gift is intended or not, the simple act of placing an asset in certain forms of joint ownership can constitute a taxable event. Please consult with your advisors before entering such an arrangement.

3. Continuing to hold property by joint ownership or placing newly acquired property into certain types of joint-ownership arrangements may very well nullify an estate



planning arrangement that incorporates a trust. Oftentimes trusts are used to provide for a beneficiary's needs, save taxes, insure wise asset management and distribute property at appropriate dates in the future. Since joint-ownership arrangements cannot be controlled by a will, many well thought out plans have been frustrated.

As a case-in-point, let us consider the estate plan of John and Mary Smith. John's will establishes a trust to manage the assets for Mary's benefit. The trust assets will be managed by the Third National Bank trust department, with income being paid periodically to Mary. At Mary's death, the principal will be distributed according to her will. If she fails to provide in her will for the distribution of these assets, they will be divided equally among the children. However if most of John and Mary's property is owned jointly, it passes directly to her at his death. The estate plan and trust arrangement is completely voided.

4. Since joint-ownership arrangements are not controlled by one's will, inequities among heirs can sometimes occur. This can be seen in the cases where an elderly widow places her checking and savings accounts in joint tenancy with her daughter who lives in a nearby town. Although she has two other children who live in distant states and her will calls for an equal distribution among her three children, these jointly held assets pass automatically to the joint owner, rather than being controlled by the will. The joint ownership had simply been a matter of convenience in the event that she needed someone to withdraw funds from her checking or savings accounts.

5. Allowing joint ownership to serve as a substitute for a will often causes unplanned results. In an effort to avoid probate expense and save the trouble of making wills, husbands and wives will occasionally title everything they own jointly. Let's look at two examples of what happens to John and Mary Smith.

In the first example, assume that they both die as a result of a common accident, with Mary living a few hours longer than John. In this example there are no children. According to the state laws of descent and distribution, the entire estate will pass to Mary's heirs. John died before Mary and, therefore, his entire estate passed to her and then to her family. John's relatives will not receive anything from the estate.

In the second example, assume that they both died as the result of a common accident, but that there were minor children surviving. Most state laws provide that the children would inherit the entire estate. Because they are minors, the court would have to appoint a guardian to manage their assets. The right person may or may not be selected to serve as guardian, but, in any event, he would be subject to very inflexible statutory requirements. Furthermore, the children would be entitled to receive their share of the estate when they reach legal age (18 or 21 in most states). The obvious question is whether or not they are capable of managing significant assets at this age. It is doubtful that this is what John and Mary want.

Joint ownership does serve many useful purposes. However, let's not press the arrangement beyond its capabilities.

#### FEDERAL ESTATE TAXES

Until now, we have mentioned estate taxes only briefly. A discussion of stewardship of our estate would be seriously lacking without a mention of this most important topic. The federal estate tax is often described as a tax on the right to pass property at one's death, as opposed to most states' inheritance tax, which is a tax on the right to receive property from an estate. Regardless of how one defines the tax, it seems to get worse each year. However, in a well planned estate these taxes can be reduced and sometimes entirely eliminated. Since the inheritance taxes vary from state to state, we will consider only federal estate taxes during our time today.



## UNIFIED TAX TABLE

Amount of property subject to tax	Tax (before deducting credit)	Rate on next bracket
Under \$10,000	18%	—
\$ 10,000	\$ 1,800	20
20,000	3,800	22
40,000	8,200	24
60,000	13,000	26
80,000	18,200	28
100,000	23,800	30
150,000	38,800	32
250,000	70,800	34
500,000	155,800	37
750,000	248,300	39
1,000,000	345,800	41
1,250,000	448,300	43
1,500,000	555,800	45
2,000,000	780,800	49
2,500,000	1,025,800	53
3,000,000	1,290,800	57
3,500,000	1,575,800	61
4,000,000	1,880,800	65
4,500,000	2,205,800	69
5,000,000	2,550,800	70

The Tax Reform Act of 1976 brought about an entirely new way of looking at federal gift and estate taxes. Gone are the familiar \$30,000 lifetime gift tax exemption and the \$60,000 estate tax exemption. Now we compute federal estate and gift taxes under a unified system that combines lifetime gifts (since January 1, 1977) with estate assets. The Unified Tax Table (see above) imposes a tax on lifetime gifts and/or estate assets at rates ranging from 18% on taxable amounts up to \$10,000 to 70% on taxable amounts over \$5 million. From this computed tax, a unified tax credit is allowed as follows:

Year	Unified Credit	Exemption Equivalent
1980	\$42,500	\$161,563
1981 and thereafter	47,000	175,625

The most obvious question now is "What is my taxable estate?" Although we have found that our wills do not control all of our assets, our estate for federal estate tax purposes does consist of all the assets we own at the time of our death, whether passing under our will or outside the control of our will. From this all-encompassing definition, we are allowed several specific deductions, as outlined below:

**DEBTS**—Any of our legal debts are subtracted from our gross estate.

**FINAL EXPENSES**—Burial expenses and any costs associated with our final illness are deductible from our gross estate.

**ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES**—The cost of processing our assets through probate court (whether we have a will or not), along with attorney's fees, executor's fees and anything else relative to the settlement of our estate are deductible from the gross estate.

**CHARITABLE DEDUCTIONS**—If we have planned our estates in such a way that our wills include a bequest to a qualified charity, these amounts are deductible in full at the current fair market value from the gross estate.

**MARITAL DEDUCTION**—The Tax Reform Act of 1976 allows a marital deduction from our gross estate for qualified property passing to a surviving spouse. The deduction is the greater of \$250,000 or one-half of the adjusted gross estate.

**ORPHANS' EXCLUSION**—The Tax Reform Act of 1976 allows an exclusion from the gross estate for amounts a widow or widower leaves to a child that is under 21 years of age. The amount of the exclusion is \$5,000 multiplied by the number of years the child is away from 21. Although the amounts may vary from child to child, the maximum exclusion is \$50,000 per child.

As you think about your own personal situation, please remember that for federal estate tax purposes, assets are taxed, based on their current fair market value, not your



lower cost basis. While special valuation provisions are available for farmland and closely held businesses, there are some restrictions that make the special use valuation a most complex section.

Now, to illustrate the federal estate tax, let us look at an example under the new unified estate tax law. For simplicity, we will ignore state inheritance taxes. Unfortunately, you will not be able to ignore them in your own planning.

#### EXAMPLE ONE

Assume that John Doe died in 1981, having assets valued at \$450,000, which he leaves to his wife, Mary. The following estate tax calculation would result:

MR. DOE'S ESTATE	
Gross Estate .....	\$450,000
Less: Final expenses .....	\$ 5,000
Administrative expenses .....	9,000
Debts .....	<u>36,000</u>
Adjusted gross estate .....	400,000
Marital deduction .....	250,000
Taxable estate .....	<u>150,000</u>
Tentative tax .....	\$ 38,800
Unified tax credit .....	38,800
Federal estate taxes payable .....	<u>\$ —0—</u>

Assume Mrs. Doe dies several years later, leaving all the assets to the couple's three children. The following would result:

MRS. DOE'S ESTATE	
Gross Estate: .....	\$400,000
Less: Final expenses .....	\$5,000
Administrative expenses .....	<u>8,000</u>
Adjusted gross estate .....	387,000
Marital deduction .....	<u>—0—</u>
Taxable estate .....	<u>\$387,000</u>
Tentative tax .....	\$117,380
Unified tax credit .....	47,000
Federal estate taxes payable .....	<u>\$ 70,380</u>

The net result is that the children receive \$316,620 (Mrs.

Doe's taxable estate \$387,000, minus estate taxes of \$70,380) of the original \$450,000 estate. This is generally what happens when most assets are held jointly, or the husband has a typical "I love you" will, which passes all property to his wife.

Now let's look at what a good steward might consider. Assume that John Doe dies in 1981 with an estate of \$450,000, which he leaves—one-half to his wife and one-half in a family trust for his wife's benefit, with the principal to go to the children at her death. We find that the following would result:

MR. DOE'S ESTATE	
Gross Estate .....	\$450,000
Less: Final expenses .....	\$ 5,000
Administrative expenses .....	9,000
Debts .....	<u>36,000</u>
Adjusted gross estate .....	400,000
Marital deduction .....	200,000
Taxable estate .....	<u>\$200,000</u>
Tentative tax .....	\$ 54,800
Unified tax credit .....	47,000
Federal estate taxes payable .....	<u>\$ 7,800</u>

MRS. DOE'S ESTATE	
Gross Estate .....	\$200,000
Less: Final expenses .....	\$5,000
Administrative expenses .....	<u>4,000</u>
Taxable estate .....	<u>\$191,000</u>
Tentative tax .....	\$ 51,920
Unified tax credit .....	47,000
Federal estate taxes payable .....	<u>\$ 4,920</u>

The combined federal estate taxes total only \$12,720, compared to \$70,280 in the first example. The property passed to the children totals \$378,280. In addition to the \$57,660 savings in federal estate taxes, Mrs. Doe's administrative expenses were \$4,000 less, due to the fact that only \$200,000 was administered at her passing in Example Two. Also, Mrs. Doe still had the same assets available to meet her needs.



The Family Trust pays her income for life. From these examples, you can readily see that the results of planning can be very dramatic, as well as profitable. Only an unwise steward would fail to take advantage of the opportunities available to him or her.

Special attention should be given to the fact that the most serious tax bite comes in the estate of the surviving spouse, when there is no marital deduction available to reduce the taxable income. Of course, this is the same situation faced by any single person. Although time does not permit us to discuss them now, there are planning opportunities to help singles minimize the tax burden.

#### CHARITABLE DEDUCTIONS

Some of you may have looked at this section of the lecture program as a veiled commercial to acquaint you with ways to make gifts to Harding through your will. Although we do solicit your support and want to be included in your estate plan, that is not the intent of this session. Much more time would have to be allocated to cover charitable estate planning. There are many good pamphlets available to help explain and illustrate the planning opportunities available through charitable gifts. Even though we have covered the fact that charitable bequests reduced estate taxes, I would like to use one example to illustrate this as a point of good stewardship.

This example involves the estate plan of Mrs. Smith. She has an estate of \$250,000, which includes a house, that passed to her at Mr. Smith's death. The house has a fair market value of \$50,000. Mrs. Smith plans to leave her entire estate to Harding. Since this bequest will be deductible as a charitable contribution, there will be no federal estate taxes upon her death. Recently, her teacher retirement check, along with investment income from insurance proceeds, has pushed her annual taxable income into a thirty percent bracket. She has asked us for advice. Our recommendation was that she deed her house to Harding, retaining a life

estate for herself. This means that she may live in her house for the rest of her life or receive the income therefrom, if she decides to move out to a smaller apartment or nursing home. At her death, the house passes automatically to Harding.

In essence, this accomplishes the desires of her will, with one major improvement. Since she deeds the house to Harding now, there are some current benefits. The Internal Revenue Service recognizes this gift and allows Mrs. Smith a charitable contribution on her current income tax return. Using the fair market value of \$50,000 and her present age of 70, a deduction of approximately \$26,000 would be allowed. This would save approximately \$7,800 in current income taxes for Mrs. Smith. The deduction is limited to thirty percent of her adjusted gross income and any unused deduction may be carried forward for five additional years. Mrs. Smith's situation did not change very much, and her original plan to leave her estate to Harding is still intact. However, she has increased her estate by almost \$8,000.

#### A TEAM EFFORT

From what has been said thus far, you have probably decided that estate planning is going to take some time, effort and money. Of course, anything worthwhile requires something of us. Here on campus, we have the Belden Center for Free Enterprise Education. One of their favorite slogans is "There ain't no such thing as a free lunch." This principle holds true in estate planning, as it does in all other aspects of our life. We generally get what we pay for. Good advice is not cheap—cheap advice is. If we are to do a good job of planning our estates, we must be willing to seek out competent advisors and be willing to pay them for their services.

Please keep in mind that good stewardship does not cost, it pays. While the legal fees will vary, depending on the complexity of your estate, most people can expect to pay less than \$100 for a simple will. In almost every estate-planning situation, hundreds and even thousands of dollars can be



saved. Although planning may sound costly, confusing and complex, please keep in mind that this is a team effort. While your estate plan may not require the involvement of every team member, let me mention the basics.

**ATTORNEY**—This is the advisor who has the ability to draft all the necessary legal documents and advise you in matters of law and taxes.

**CPA**—This advisor may be the one most familiar with your personal financial position and, therefore, able to give valuable tax and financial advice.

**INSURANCE AGENT**—This advisor can help analyze the liquidity needs of your estate and provide coverage to insure that they are met.

**BANKER**—This advisor will be able to provide trust services or financial management advice as needed.

**OTHERS**—If you are interested in Harding and how charitable estate planning can benefit you and your heirs, we welcome the opportunity to work with you and your other advisors.

There is no doubt that we are the most blessed people the world has ever known. Are we to assume that these material possessions are merely for our own personal convenience and pleasure? I think not! There is no question that we have a tremendous responsibility. Luke 12:48b says "Everyone to whom much is given, of him much will be required; and of him to whom men commit much, they will demand the more" (RSV). To add even more weight to our responsibility, there is 1 Timothy 6:17-19, which says, "As for the rich in this world, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on uncertain riches, but on God who richly furnishes us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good deeds, liberal and generous, thus laying up for themselves a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life which is life indeed" (RSV).

Do not look around to see whom this is meant for. We have all been richly blessed and must accept the correspond-

ing responsibility. The Lord's message is clear. If we have included the Lord's work in our plans throughout our life, isn't it just as important to include those good works in our Last Will and Testament? Hopefully, you will set the proper example for your children in matters of stewardship, as well as other areas of Christian influence.

If the mortality tables are correct, some of us will not be back next year. We have lost two of our Board members, several President's Development Council members and a number of other alumni and friends within the past year. The current year will be no different and we should not expect it to be. None of us have the promise of tomorrow. What we must consider is whether or not we are satisfied with the stewardship we have actually exhibited thus far. Will we be able to stand before God and say, "I have done my best"? Will we be able to say, "Lord, I've used my possessions to your glory during my lifetime. In fact, they are still doing good, even though I'm gone."

Hopefully, this discussion will motivate each one into action. The responsibility is yours. The decisions are yours. regardless of what action you take, you are making a decision. It is either your will or the state's will. The Lord will call us "wise" or "foolish."

This publication is not intended to provide legal or tax advisory service. Rather, it is designed to provide general information in the area of estate planning. For advice and assistance in specific cases, the services of an attorney or other professional person should be obtained.



## THE CHRISTIAN FATHER

ALLAN ISOM

"Father" is one of those words that is a favorite of mankind. All people use the word "father" in their vocabulary and most use it daily in communication. But what does the word mean? It can refer to one's biological parent or to a psychological relationship. Psychological fathering involves the greater part of a lifetime while biological fathering involves a simple act. Outside of heredity, psychological fathering is the far more important word of the two words.

In Genesis 2:24 God used the term father in telling a newly married "to leave his father and mother and cling to his wife." Also God is referred to as Father in the Scriptures (Isa. 9:6, Luke 11:2). And He commands those who would be biological father to be a good psychological father (Eph. 6:4). This latter concept will now be explored in this paper.

Actually very little has been written about fathering in comparison to what is available on mothering. Some have sought to compare the animal world with what probably needs to happen in the human world. Therefore, they see the adult female as being more important and involved in rearing their offspring. And if one looks at the human race one can see that man often chooses to live on the level of animals. Many fathers withdraw from domestic relationships and leave that to the wife while they partially provide (working wives) protect (policeman) and love (that's more a feminine task), their families.

Of course what has just been said pinpoints our problem. The role of the father has changed. There was a day, in rural life especially, when a father's role was more clearly distinguished from that of mothering. But today's father

finds it difficult to know just what is his role. It is at this point that some less than profitable arguments are being made. That is, some wish to keep the role of the male clearly distinguished from the female. However, many of those terms, outside of physical descriptions, which refer to mothering, can also be uses of fathering. For example, tenderness, kindness, and strength can be used of either sex as one attempts to relate to one's family.

In a sense the term "father" needs to be freed from some of its old definitions and should be replaced with concepts that reflect what God is to us. God is kind, tender and strong. Jesus is a perfect example of what the term father should mean to us. Now some charge that this leads to unisex and is one of major goals of the E. R. A. We must not allow such emotional issues of the day to cloud our thinking and keep us from doing what is right.

It seems to me that what many think a mother does are those very things fathers can do with their families today. Since many of us do not have to spend all of our time "making a living" for the family, why not work on relating to our children in a loving way? One can compare fathering and mothering to a male and female working in an office somewhere doing the same job. Let's say they work on a team together as computer technicians. Each one will use the computer terminal, some facts and figures, have the same goals, etc. The one vital difference between them will not be their work but the fact that one is a male and the other female. And in the home relationship the male will be seen as the head of the family and the wife in subjection to him. Yet many of the things they do will be similar.

In the home fathering involves such words as cares, understands, limits, protects, nurtures, listens, stimulates, teaches, encourages and is available. But so does mothering. And when each one is self-aware, responsible, empathic, flexible and powerful they will be most effective in this work. What we do does not make us male but who we are, our own self



identity. Therefore washing dishes, is neither a male or female role but the person who does it will be either a male or female. Every child needs a father that is warm and tender, responsible and guiding. But so should be the mother.

A good father needs to teach (Gen. 18:19), provide (I Tim. 5:8), guide (Eph. 6:4), love (Eph. 5:28), forgive (Matt. 6:12), etc. Yet, these are not clearly distinctive roles for the father. They can and should be done by the mother. In families some girls can communicate with their fathers better than they can their mothers. So be it. Fathers in such cases, are meeting important needs.

So what is fathering, as one child said, "it is being someone you can trust who loves you." May we be good fathers in the sight of our children, but also in God's sight.

## THE CHRISTIAN MOTHER

JOHN GIPSON

JOHN D. GIPSON, a graduate of Abilene Christian University, has devoted the past 26 years to full-time preaching. He is presently serving as minister to the Sixth and Izard Church of Christ in Little Rock, Ark.

There are few words which stir deeper emotions than the precious word, "Mother." We agree with Helen Steiner Rice who wrote:

It takes a mother's love to make a house a home,

A place to be remembered, no matter where we roam.

It takes a mother's patience to bring a child up right,

And her courage and her cheerfulness to make a dark day bright.

It takes a mother's thoughtfulness to mend the heart's deep "hurts"

And her skill and her endurance to mend little socks and shirts.

It takes a mother's kindness to forgive us when we err

To sympathize in trouble and bow our head in prayer.

It takes a mother's wisdom to recognize our needs

And to give us reassurance by her loving words and deeds.

It takes a mother's endless faith, her confidence and trust

To guide us through the pitfalls of selfishness and lust.

And that is why in all this world there could not be another

Who could fulfill God's purpose as completely as a mother.

And who could ever forget the glowing tribute paid to mothers in the book of Proverbs?

Who can find a virtuous woman?

for her price is far above rubies.

The heart of her husband doth safely

trust in her

So that he shall have no need of spoil.

She seeketh wool and flax

and worketh willingly with her hands

She is like the merchant ships

she bringeth her food from afar



She riseth also while it is yet night  
 and giveth meat to her household.  
 Her candle goeth not out by night  
 She layeth her hands to the spindle  
 and her hands hold the distaff  
 She stretcheth out her hand to the poor  
 yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy,  
 She is not afraid of the snow  
 for her household  
 For all her household are clothed  
 with scarlet.  
 She maketh herself coverings  
 of tapestry;  
 Her clothing is silk and purple.  
 She looketh well to the ways of her  
 household  
 And eateth not the bread of idleness  
 Her children rise up and call her  
 blessed.  
 Her husband also, and he  
 praiseth her.  
 Many daughters have done virtuously  
 but thou excelleth them all.

(Proverbs 31)

"Mother" is almost a sacred word to me, because long before I could read the Bible and discover the meaning of the subject assigned to me, "The Christian Mother," I knew exactly what one was. Therefore, I trust you will forgive me if I speak more from personal experience and observation than from the things I have read and studied. Incidentally, the latter only confirms the former.

#### A CHRISTIAN MOTHER IS DOMESTIC

Mother was fond of home and home duties. Evidently she had read Titus 2:4, 5 which urges young women "to love their husbands and children, to be sensible, chaste, domestic, kind and submissive to their husbands." Friends have told me that she was an outstanding speech teacher before I was born, but upon my arrival she became a "keeper at home" and remained there until all three of her sons were grown.

It must have been conviction with her, because I know that we could have used the additional income. But somehow we managed, and in the process we children had a full-time mother. What a joy it was to burst through the door when school was out and hear her respond as you cried, "Mother!" Some of our best visits took place right then as she asked about the activities of the day. I wouldn't take anything for those times we had together.

Many of my thoughts of Mother are associated with smells. The smell of hot water and soap, and bluing being added to the cold rinse water; the smell of pinto beans and corn bread cooking; and especially the smell of apricot fried pies; the smell of fresh wax on wooden floors; and green beans being canned for the winter; the smell of flour upon her hands and apron and hot rolls in the oven; or the smell of weeds burning in the back yard when she had finished her hoeing. I'll never forget those domestic smells.

#### A CHRISTIAN MOTHER IS LOVING

I don't know whether someone taught Mother to love her husband and children or not. I just know that she did (Titus 2:4). This love manifested itself in many ways. You could see it in the three hot meals prepared each day; the clean clothes and freshly starched shirts; the smile on her face; and the arm around your shoulder. You could see it as she put bluing on red ant bites (Mother used bluing for a lot of things), and bandages on your cuts. You knew that love was there when she talked to you about your grades in school, or comforted you when you broke up with your girl friend. Mother sure knew how to love.

This love even showed itself in discipline. Mother wasn't afraid to give us a whipping. She didn't say, "You just wait till Daddy gets home." She took care of the matter right then. She seemed to put a very literal interpretation on 1 Timothy 5:14 which talks about women bearing children and *ruling* their households. Mother lived before Dr. Spock



came along. Even if she had known about him, she would have placed a lot more confidence in Solomon:

He who spares the rod hates his son,  
but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.  
Discipline your son while there is hope.  
Folly is bound up in the heart of a child,  
but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.  
Do not withhold discipline from a child;  
if you beat him with a rod, he will not die.  
If you beat him with the rod you will save his  
life from Sheol.

I have never doubted that Mother believed in Solomon. Of course, it took me a few years to understand that discipline was loving.

#### A CHRISTIAN MOTHER IS RELIGIOUS

Mother believed in Bible reading both for herself and for her children. She tried to follow the teaching of Deuteronomy 6:6, 7, "And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk to them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise." Mother saw to it that the Bible was read in our home each night. Following the reading of God's word, she would read a chapter to us from Hurlbut's Story of the Bible. There may be better Bible Story books available now, but Hurlbut's is still my favorite. As a child I learned how thrilling a study of the Bible can be, and that love has grown with the passing years. How thankful I am that she loved the Bible, and whetted my appetite for God's word.

How precious is the Book divine,  
By inspiration giv'n!  
Bright as a lamp its precepts shine,  
To guide my soul to heav'n.  
Holy Book divine!  
Precious treasure mine!  
Lamp to my feet and a light to my way  
To guide me safely home.

—L. O. Sanderson

Attendance at all worship services was a rule at our house. There was never a discussion about whether we were going to attend. That issue was decided long before I ever came along. One of my most vivid childhood memories has to do with a Sunday morning. Dad and I had gone over to Grandmother's house to pick up some of his hunting dogs before church. On the way back as I hung out the car window watching the dogs follow behind, I fell out and cut a long gash in my chin. Dad immediately took me to the doctor, and by the time he had finished with me I had enough bandages around my head to have been mistaken for King Tut. As we arrived home Mother asked what happened. Before we could get the answer out she said, "Hurry up! We're going to be late for church." Hebrews 10:25, "Not neglecting to meet together," could have been left out of her Bible with no harmful results because I don't think she ever considered the possibility of missing services. Everything she said and did taught us that the Lord and the church were the most important things in life.

Of course her religion was not confined to the church house. Though she has been dead now for many years I can still hear her singing "Blessed Assurance" in the kitchen. It was easy for her to talk about God anytime of the day, or sing praises as she did chores. We never got the idea that God was locked up in a church building.

Prayer was a constant part of her life. Before every meal we gave thanks. As children she taught us how to pray as she tucked us into bed at night. We prayed before we went on trips, and upon arriving. Even today when I hear the injunction, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17), I think of Mother.

Mother did not hesitate to make vows to God. Several years after she had passed away I commented to my father that Mother truly possessed "a meek and quiet spirit," and that I could never remember hearing her complain during all the years she suffered with cancer before her death. Dad re-



plied, "Son, that's because of a vow she made to God. She promised that she would never complain about anything that happened to her if God would only permit her to live long enough to raise her three sons." God granted that request, and she faithfully kept that vow through her twenty-year ordeal. Today one of my favorite passages of scripture is Philippians 2:14, 15, "Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world." I only wish I could live that passage like Mary Del Gipson did.

There are many things in life I have never had, but I am here to tell you that I had a Christian mother, and I cannot think of any greater blessing. It is a joy to rise up and call her blessed!

I know that women are busy these days, but in the midst of all of your activities don't forget to be a Christian mother. There is no more important work upon earth, or one that can return greater dividends to you or the world. Your life will be sweeter, and the world better because you did your job as a mother.

Years ago I ran across a parable by an unknown author. It made sense to me then, but now I know it is true:

#### A LIVING PRESENCE

A young mother set her foot on the path of life. "Is the way long?" she asked. And the guide answered, "Yes, and the way is hard. And you will be old before you reach the end of it. But the end will be better than the beginning."

But the young mother was happy and she could not believe that anything could be better than these days. So she played with her children, and gathered flowers for them along the way. And the sun shone on them and life was good. And the young mother cried, "Nothing can be lovelier than this."

Then came night and storm; and the path was dark and the children shook with fear and cold. But the

mother drew close to them and covered them with her mantle, and the children said, "We are not afraid mother, for you are near; and no harm can come to us." And the mother said, "This is better than the brightness of day, for I have taught my children courage."

And the morning came and there was a hill ahead, and the children climbed and grew weary. But at last she said to the children, "A little patience and we will be there." So the children climbed and when they reached the top they said, "We could not have done this without you, mother."

And that night the mother looked up at the stars and said, "This is a better day than the last, for my children have learned fortitude in the face of hardship. Yesterday I gave them courage; today I gave them strength."

And the next day came strange clouds which darkened the earth—clouds of war and hate and evil, and the children groped and stumbled. The mother said, "Look up; lift your eyes to the light." And the children looked and saw above the clouds the everlasting light, and it guided them and brought them beyond the darkness. And that night the mother said, "This is the best day of all, for I have shown my children God."

And the days went on and the weeks and the months and years, and the mother grew aged, and she was little and bent. But the children were tall and strong and walked with courage. And when the way was hard, they lifted her over the rough places. At last they came to a hill and beyond the hill they could see a shining road and the golden gates they flung wide.

And the mother said, "I have reached the end of my journey, and now I know the end is better than the beginning, for my children can walk alone, and their children after them." And the children said, "You will always walk with us, mother!" They stood and watched her walk through the golden gate; then the gates closed after her. And they said, "We cannot now see our mother but she is with us still—she is a living presence."



## THE HUSBAND/WIFE RELATIONSHIP

JAMES MOFFETT

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### INTRODUCTION

Husband-and-wife love and the love of God are to be joined together in a beautiful unity. The crisis facing many Christian homes would disintegrate if husbands would assume the leadership God planned and the Holy Spirit directed.

The suggestions of this talk are based on key words in 1 Peter 3:7: "Ye husbands, in like manner, dwell with your wives according to knowledge, giving honor unto the woman, as unto the weaker vessel, as being joint-heirs of the grace of life; to the end that your prayers be not hindered" (1 Peter 3:7, ASV). The ideas presented are practical. No husband will be entangled in the logic here. However, many will turn away from these simple principles available to all.

Men are amazing creatures, constantly startling us with,

1. The lack of common sense in relationship to women.
2. And, the lack of Biblical sense when it comes to, "How to treat a wife."

### "HUSBANDS"

The apostle Peter has a word for all, "How it should be with us." Husbands are not excluded. The admonitions given in the Bible to husbands are interesting and informative. Notice how we can paraphrase them;

1. Husband, cleave to your wife: and the two shall be one flesh (Matt. 19:4).

2. Husband, love your wife as Christ loved the church (Eph. 5:25).
3. Husband, do not be harsh with your wife (Col. 3:19).
4. Husband, render to your wife due benevolence (I Cor. 7:3).
5. Husband, dwell with your wife according to knowledge (I Pet. 3:7).

The responsibility of a man who enters into marriage is, "A husband first and then. . . ." A right relationship with the Lord involves being a good husband.

### "DWELL"

There is a manner in which a man dwells with his wife. A husband raises the level of his house to a *dwelling* by,

1. Recognizing the importance of his role as a husband.
2. Finding fulfillment in his responsibilities as a husband.
3. Letting strength distinguish everything he does as a husband.
4. Setting aside time for his wife as a husband.
5. Helping his wife grow spiritually and intellectually.
6. Continuing to learn for her sake about being a husband.

### "KNOWLEDGE"

Peter recognizes that good husbands do not happen, they become such through knowledge. There is a spirit at work among us to the effect, "A man doesn't need to study, 'How to be a good husband.'"

A recent survey by the New York trade publishers revealed that 70 per cent of the book purchases in the United States are by women. The comparable figure for Christian books is 80 per cent. It is evident men do not read!

Men need to study to be a good husband. Study what?

1. *The Bible*: the word of God. What passage in the Bible that involves human relations does not apply to the husband-wife relationship? Matthew 7:12 should begin at home. Ephesians 4:32, applied at home, would solve every case of incompatibility.



2. *Books*: By Knowledgeable Authors.

There are many books dealing with marriage, the home and, now the husband-father role. Thomas B. Warren wrote a book a few years ago entitled, *Marriage is For Those Who Love God and One Another* (Christian Publishing Co.; Dallas, 1962). This is an excellent book, and in the chapter, "Your Marriage Can Be A Success"—to husbands, he listed a number of things they should do, like,

1. Gain the right conception of marriage.
2. Learn about emotional and psychological differences between men and women.

This book is filled with information for developing a good marriage, but the emphasis here is to show how Dr. Warren recognizes the importance of the husband obtaining knowledge—learning, studying—"How to be a good husband."

3. *Listening*: The Experience of Others.

There are programs designed now to help men be better husbands. They are called "marriage seminars." (Much you hear there will sound a lot like preaching—it's hard to get away from God's word when you want to know "How to be a good 'anything'"). Many cassette tapes are available with vital instructions for "building a marriage."

Husbands must take the lead in using this material—too long men have refused to read or to go and learn how "To dwell with your wives according to knowledge."

## "HONOR"

Husbands, honor your wives! When men honor women, homes and nations are exalted, because God has instructed, "Giving honor unto the woman." How can a man honor his wife? He can honor her,

1. By thinking of her constantly.
2. By wanting her as a "friend."
3. By wanting to please her.
4. By wanting to give her gifts.
5. By accepting her relatives and her friends.
6. By putting his trust in her.
7. By talking to her about his successes and his failures.

8. By being concerned about his appearance and his actions.

9. By involving her in his present plans.

10. By including her in his future plans.

These simple suggestions reveal loud and clear that your wife is, "the one in your life." What greater honor can one have than this?

## "VESSEL"

Husbands are to recognize that the wife is the "weaker vessel." He is a vessel to be used in God's service and she is a vessel in God's service. A survey of the New Testament will help one to see that the apostle Peter is recognizing that a wife is to receive concern, consideration and care. How can a husband care for the "weaker vessel"?

1. He can provide for her.
2. He can protect her.
3. He can be proud of her.
4. He can hold her when she cries.
5. He can vow he will never lay a hand on her except in love.

Husbands who so honor their wives, as the "weaker vessel" recognize that they are "joint-heirs of the grace of life." A Christian husband, with his Christian wife, understands that before Christ they are equals and through Christ they have different roles. The thrust of I Peter 3:7 is not "superiority" but support for the "weaker vessel."

## "PRAYERS"

Husbands are to pursue this admonishment from God that their prayers "be not hindered" (cut off). There are two ideas interwoven here that reveal an unworthy husband destroys the spiritual development of the home.

1. Refuses to acquire knowledge
2. Refuses to honor his wife
3. Refuses to provide for her
4. Refuses to protect her
5. And, refuses to love her.

Any man can see he is not listening to God. Who does the Lord hear? The apostle Peter says five verses from 1 Peter



3:7, "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."

It is serious when a man ignores God. We know this! We preach it to our friends. Peter is saying, "Mistreat your wife—no! Refuse to *treat* your wife with honor and be cut off from God!" Strong language? Yes! Those who plead with men to, "Learn to be good husbands—love and honor your wives," are not mealy-mouth, spineless "junior counselors," but men of God honoring God's word.

The second idea is that a man who does not follow God's instructions is not interested in prayer. He may say a mechanical prayer at the services, but he is not a man of prayer—his prayer life is "hindered."

Let us treat our wives like Peter said and we will find that it will help our prayer life. There is not anything we need more in our homes than prayers. Husbands need to lead the way in this. Kneel beside your bed regularly, hold your wife and pray, and a multitude of your problems will be taken away. This is not "light devotional" advice. It is foundational spiritual instruction from the word of God.

#### CONCLUSION

Husbands, a good man is a good husband; good men have access to God; and, good husbands make good homes and good churches. Husbands, look to God and the word of God— *dwell, learn, honor and serve your wives. Husbands, those who follow God's directives are successful; your prayers are heard and you and yours are "joint-heirs of the grace of life."*

## "FIRST THEY GAVE THEMSELVES"

FRANK PACK

FRANK PACK attended David Lipscomb College, receiving his B.A. from the University of Chattanooga, his M.A. from Vanderbilt University and his Ph.D. from the University of Southern California. He has taught at David Lipscomb and at Pepperdine, Abilene Christian and Southern California Universities, in addition to serving churches in Tennessee, Texas and California. He has ministered to the Culver Palms Church in Los Angeles since 1963. Pack serves on the staff of the Gospel Advocate and the 20th Century Christian and has authored several religious books.

This lectureship's theme, "We Give Thee But Thine Own," appropriately closes with the subject of our lesson tonight, "First They Gave Themselves." This text from 2 Corinthians 8:5 is found in the context of Paul's teaching on the collection being gathered for the poor Christians in Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8 and 9). Paul had first mentioned this collection to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4, noting in passing that he had previously given the same instructions to the Galatian churches, perhaps orally. The Corinthians had inquired about the contribution and 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 was Paul's response. His last mention of the collection in Romans 15:25-28 informed the Roman church of what he and the Gentile churches were doing for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem and his hope to visit Rome after the collection had been delivered to the brethren there. Interestingly Luke only refers to it incidentally in Acts 24:17, but gives a list of Paul's traveling companions on his return to Jerusalem in Acts 20:4, 5.

#### THE BACKGROUND OF THE COLLECTION

Paul and Barnabas at the meeting in Jerusalem (Gal. 2:1-10) had committed themselves and the Christians they worked with to "remember the poor," and Paul adds his personal comment, "Which very thing I was eager to do" (Gal.



2:10). In visiting again the churches on his third journey, Paul had gone through Galatia (Acts 18:23) instructing them about this collection (1 Cor. 16:1). The Corinthians had never given to Paul's support (2 Cor. 11:7-10), and they needed to learn to give to others. Paul instructed them that on each first day of the week each Christian should set aside a gift according as he had prospered in preparation for Paul's visit. Week by week these small gifts set apart would fulfill the plans each had made for the collection.

Roughly a year had passed since the Corinthians had enthusiastically under Titus' leadership begun this work (2 Cor. 8:6; 9:2). Paul had used their zeal and readiness to stir up the Macedonian churches to prepare for their collection. Meanwhile apparently attacks made on Paul in his absence by the new intruders in Corinth, whom he calls "false apostles," had caused the Corinthians to lag in their enthusiasm and Paul writes to encourage them to finish what they had begun so well (2 Cor. 8:10, 11). Paul now asks Titus to return to Corinth to complete the project, and he is also sending two trusted unnamed companions to help in this work before he arrives (2 Cor. 8:16-23).

It is interesting to notice the manner in which Paul writes about the collection. He uses the following seven Greek words for it: *logeia* translated "contribution, collection;" *charis*, "grace, gift, favor, gracious work;" *koinonia*, "fellowship;" *diakonia*, "ministry, service;" *hadrotēs*, "liberal gift;" *eulogia*, "bountiful gift;" *leitourgia*, "service." But he uses no commercial terms nor any monetary words in writing of the contribution.

What purposes did Paul have in mind to accomplish by means of this combined generosity of the Gentile churches? First, he had a genuine concern for poor and needy everywhere but especially in Jerusalem, perhaps because he had committed himself to that in the Jerusalem meeting with the other apostles (Gal. 2:10). This was to be an action of

love to those in need. He had been sensitive to the needs of the poor Christians even in Corinth and had rebuked the calloused behavior of some toward those "who had nothing" (1 Cor. 11:22). This collection was no emergency measure meeting some immediate calamity. It was a long range project, stretching over a period of approximately four years or more.

Second, he had great concern to show the brotherhood and unity of God's people, Jew and Gentile in Christ. To Rome he wrote, "For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings" (Rom. 15:27). This would be a visible and practical means of demonstrating Paul's own good will toward the Jerusalem church and the Gentile Christians' good will toward their Jewish brethren whom they had never seen. Thus he describes the collection as "fellowship" (2 Cor. 8:4; 9:13). Whatever opposition and ill will might exist against him in the Jerusalem church (Acts 21:20ff) would be neutralized by this outpouring of generosity from Paul's Gentile churches.

Third, Paul reminds the Corinthians that the poor saints in Jerusalem would glorify God for their obedience and their liberality, pray for them and yearn for their welfare "because of the surpassing grace of God in you" working out its expression in this generous gift (2 Cor. 9:13, 14). All would serve to bridge any gaps between these two groups in the church universal.

#### THE CONTEXT OF OUR TEXT

We are all stirred to action by the use of examples handled judiciously and Paul does that in this case. He is very anxious that what the Corinthians do should come of their own free will, and not be coerced by him. This emphasis on a voluntary offering runs throughout the context (2 Cor. 8:3; 9:5, 7). As he had used the readiness of the Corinthians to stir up the Macedonians at the outset of this project, so now



he uses the liberality of the Macedonians to revive the fires of enthusiasm among the Corinthians.

The Philippian, Thessalonian, Berean and other Macedonian churches had been gathering their gifts as God's grace worked in their hearts and showed itself in their action. So Paul begins his description of the Macedonian experience by calling attention to God's grace showing itself in them (v. 1). God's love unmerited by sinful men working through Jesus Christ was moving in the lives of these people, and making them act in most unusual ways, far from the expected. They have been going through difficult times, being persecuted for their faith (cf. Phil. 1:29). "A severe test of affliction" would not ordinarily be the situation for expecting a great outpouring of liberal giving. In addition, they were in deep poverty, partly brought on by the persecution they were suffering, and partly perhaps by the economic difficulties into which the Roman government had forced the province of Macedonia.

Also many of the early Christians were slaves as well as poor so that Paul could describe their poverty literally as "down to the depths." In striking contrast there was their overflowing joy which led to their overflowing liberality. A more unlikely setting for overflowing liberality could scarcely be found than the Macedonia situation. In fact, Paul was most hesitant to lay this burden on these poor suffering Christians, but they begged for the privilege of giving. Instead of complaining and groaning under the duress of their suffering, they fulfilled Jesus' hard command in the Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad" (Matt. 5:11, 12a). Joy overflowed in an overflow of giving.

Verses 3-5 add four more things to the list of three we have already seen in verse 2. Fourth, the Macedonians gave not only according to their ability, but quite beyond their ability, so that they went far beyond Paul's hopes and ex-

pectations. Fifth, all of this was done "of their own free will." No word of command had been given them by Paul and no pressure had been placed upon them. God's grace working in their hearts expressed itself in the joyous gratitude for his love displayed to them in Christ, and like a full running spring, abundantly they gave sacrificially. Like the Lord who had so freely and willingly given himself for them and for the whole world, they gave of their own free will.

Sixth, instead of Paul's coercing them, they begged Paul for the opportunity to give. To follow the literal meaning of the verb here, "they kept on begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part" in their great ministry. They would not be content until they had a significant part in this gift, even though it meant further deprivation to themselves. Seventh, they gave themselves not only to the Lord, but also in a special way to Paul in full cooperation with him in a manner beyond his expectations.

In a unique way the Macedonian churches had sent gifts in the past to Paul to support him in his efforts to spread the gospel of Christ. They had sent to his needs while he was in Corinth according to 2 Corinthians 11:9. In Philippians 4:15 he remembered that they had sent twice to his needs even while he was working in Thessalonica, and later they would send to him by Epaphroditus while he was a prisoner in Rome (Phil. 4:18). This same wonderful spirit shows itself now in their liberality for the poor Christians of Jerusalem.

#### THE MACEDONIANS' SECRET

What was the secret of the Macedonians' action that went far beyond what Paul had hoped? Verse 5 describes it in simple language, "First they gave themselves to the Lord." First not only in time had they given themselves to the Lord in becoming Christians, but first in importance, above all, they gave themselves to the Lord. That word, "first" is so important here. But, in the Greek sentence the word "themselves" stands in the emphatic position. In response to God's



grace in Christ they had responded not only initially, but they continued to respond to the ideal of complete self giving. As Paul had said in 2 Corinthians 5:15, "And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised."

The most difficult thing for any one to do is surrender self completely to the Lord, and they had done that. To give one's self to the Lord completely without reservation is a costly sacrifice, for it means giving up so much that a person has become attached to, forsaking so many relationships of the past, turning one's back on the wrong to which one has become accustomed, crucifying the old self with all of its selfishness and personal likes. It means committing one's self in complete devotion to the Lord and being willing to live for him who died for all men.

Many people are willing to give money who will not give themselves. Many will even allow the use of their names and influence who will not give themselves to a project. But the liberality of these Macedonians arose from a prior commitment of themselves to the Lord, and their monetary gifts expressed that commitment in love. Nothing seemed too much for them to give or to do for the Lord's cause. Down through the centuries the generosity of these Macedonian Christians has impressed so many to give themselves, their money, talents, time, and everything and to do great things for the Lord. Often the people who have so little to give are the most willing to give. William Barclay wrote, " 'It is the poor who help the poor,' because they know what poverty is like" (*The Daily Study Bible on the Corinthian Letters*, p. 255). True stewardship arises out of full commitment.

Joe Barnett in his book, *The People Who Tested God*, tells the story of the great Broadway Church, Lubbock, Texas, and the largest single-day collection taken by any local church with two and a quarter million dollars in one great outpouring of love and support for their work. Among the many stories of sacrificial giving he shares in that book,

one of the most moving tells of a young couple just beginning their life together who stopped him in the hall of the church building the Sunday of the great collection. The young wife placed in his hand a small bundle containing her rings, a necklace and other items of jewelry with tears in her eyes as her husband said, "W don't have much but we want to be a part of this." Joe wrote, "I wanted to give them back to her, tried to tell her it was their spirit we wanted, but her mind was made up. An appraiser valued the jewelry at \$300, but perhaps few gifts were more precious." People moved like that have learned the great lesson of Macedonian giving.

Paul had already pointed out to the Corinthians in his previous letter that one can give money without giving himself in love, and if giving is of that kind, it really profits nothing. One can give all his goods to feed the poor, but without love he gains nothing. He can even give his body to be burned but without the motive of love it is of no value (1 Cor. 13:3). But when love for God and one's fellowmen comes in, the whole thing changes.

"How can one give like that without love?" someone may ask. One may give because he feels it is a duty he must fulfill, and driven like a galley slave he follows through, but has no higher motive than that. This brings no overflowing of joy such as the Macedonians had. One may give because he finds a great deal of self satisfaction and benefit from giving. While this is surely an accompanying motivation, Macedonian giving must rise above that. Otherwise, self is not surrendered and what one does he does to please self rather than the Lord. Many times people give to various good causes to receive prestige for their gift and have their names honored. Still self occupies the center in such giving. But the complete self surrender involved in responding to God's grace means that the Lord is placed first, above all, and such giving is accompanied with overflowing joy. This is Macedonian giving.



## THE SUPREME EXAMPLE

Such a lesson from 2 Corinthians 8 would not be complete without citing the supreme example for self giving. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). Because the Macedonians had first given themselves to the Lord they could give sacrificially. The tremendously impressive love of Jesus Christ in giving himself for us all comes now in full view as Paul appeals to this motive. Christ was "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). The Corinthians, as have all Christians, had already experienced and thus known "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." He was rich in all the majesty, glory and wealth of heaven itself "being in the bosom of the Father" (John 1:18). Although closest to the Father "for your sake" to procure salvation for all men "our Lord became poor," by contrast entering into the lowly estate of a man, a servant. He left the glories of heaven to identify himself with man's poverty, with his earthly condition.

He not only became a man, but was born of a poor family, lived among the poor and was a humble, lowly, meek man (Phil. 2:5-8). He knew what men suffered, what were their needs, and depended on the gifts of friends to support him and his little band of followers while on earth (Luke 8:1-3). Through his poverty and lowliness he gave himself in love for men, "that you might become rich"—rich with a new life, sins forgiven, guilt taken away, new hope, new love, new peace and new power through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We are as Christians now children of the King, royal priests, sons and daughters of God, with the Spirit of his Son enabling us to cry, "Abba Father." We have the hope of living with God through eternity because of the self giving love of our Lord Jesus Christ. We walk with Christ by faith now, and he lives abundantly in our hearts and lives. All of this is because of his self sacrificing love for us all.

When men realize God's great grace extended to them in Christ, and when they experience it in the forgiveness of their sins, in their being made members of God's family and blessed and sustained constantly by his grace, their lives are filled with thankfulness and joy, and out of that gratitude flow rivers of living water to bless other lives and fill the world with the praise of God. What higher motivation could we have for giving ourselves than the self giving Lordship of our Savior? What greater example of self surrendering love than his love continually shown to us?

True stewardship recognizes God as the owner of all things, and of all that the Christian is and possesses. When we surrender ourselves to him, our giving becomes a privilege. Since what we have we have received, in our giving we are only returning what is really his to begin with. Truly, "we give thee but thine own."

James Russell Lowell said it well in *The Vision of Sir Launfal* when he has Christ say,

Who gives himself with his alms feeds three  
Himself, his hungering neighbor and me.



