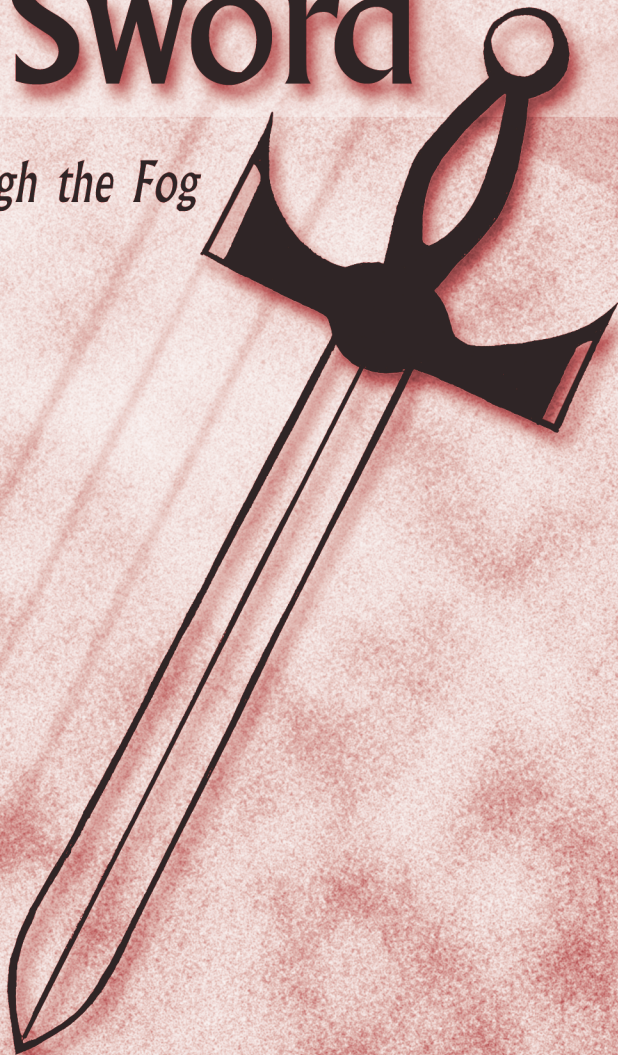


# The Sword

*Cutting Through the Fog*



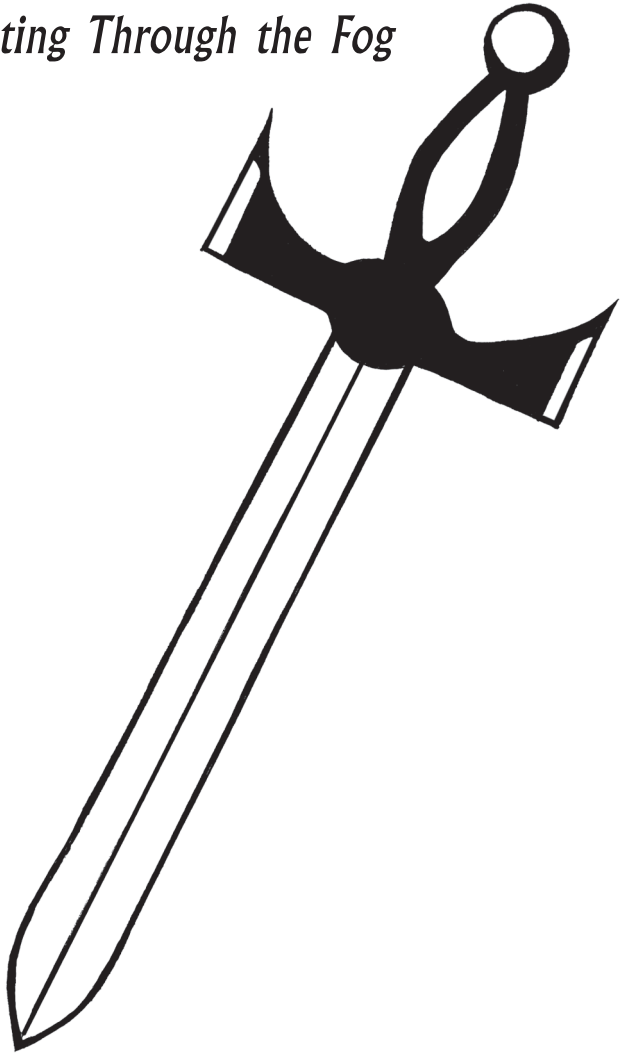
*“Do not suppose that I have come  
to bring peace to the earth.  
I did not come to bring peace,  
but a sword.”*

Matthew 10:34



# The Sword

*Cutting Through the Fog*



As always, if we can help you in any way, please contact the church here at  
P.O. Box 68309, Indianapolis, IN 46268 USA.

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# The Sword

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*Below is the list of titles in a 10-part series of books about Foundational Issues of the Kingdom of God and the Bride of Christ.*  
[www.JesusLifeTogether.com/Foundations/](http://www.JesusLifeTogether.com/Foundations/)

**THE HAMMER**—*Breaking Down Misconceptions*  
“Is not my word like fire,” declares the LORD, “and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?” *Jeremiah 23:29*

**THE PLOW**—*Planting Hope & Vision*  
“The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills.” *Amos 9:13*

**THE SCALES**—*Holding to God’s Standards*  
“The LORD abhors dishonest scales, but accurate weights are his delight.” *Proverbs 11:1*

**THE CRUCIBLE**—*Refining and Melding Relationships*  
“The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but the LORD tests the heart.” *Proverbs 17:3*

**THE SICKLE**—*Clearing the Land and Harvesting Change*  
“As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.” *Mark 4:29*

**THE TROWEL**—*It Matters How We Build!*  
“This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: ‘See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.’” *Hebrews 8:5*

**THE SWORD**—*Cutting Through the Fog*  
“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.” *Matthew 10:34*

**THE CHISEL**—*“I Will Build My Church...”*  
“In building the temple, only blocks dressed at the quarry were used, and no hammer, chisel or any other iron tool was heard at the temple site while it was being built.” *1 Kings 6:7*

**THE ANVIL**—*Forging Out a Life*  
“See, it is I who created the blacksmith who fans the coals into flame and forges a weapon fit for its work.” *Isaiah 54:16*

**THE PLUMB LINE**—*True Foundations*  
“Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord Almighty... Then he will bring out the capstone to shouts of ‘God Bless it!’... Who despises the day of small things? Men will rejoice when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel.” *Zechariah 4*

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# The Traditions of Men In the Churches of Men

1988

## Are Traditions of Men Really Neutral in God's Sight?

The truth is that these traditions that we've held so dear have done massive damage to the Body of Christ. They have become a comfortable substitute for the Headship and Lordship of Jesus Christ in His Church.

*Jesus answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men..." (Mark 7:6-8).*

Jesus Himself continually violated the seemingly "harmless" traditions and "expedients" knowing full well that it would stir the religious indignation of His religious leaders. One example:

*And as He spoke, a certain Pharisee asked Him to dine with him. So He went in and sat down to eat. And when the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that He had not first washed before dinner. But the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness. Foolish ones! Did not He who made the outside make the inside also? But rather give alms of such things as you have; then indeed all things are clean to you. But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like graves which are not seen, and the men who walk over them are not aware of them." Then one of the lawyers answered and said to Him, "Teacher, by saying these things You reproach us also" (Luke 11:37-45).*

Notice how simple it would have been to have just gone ahead and washed his hands like the religious leaders wanted Him to. Doesn't showing a little Christian love and courtesy and patience dictate that we "go the extra mile"? What could it hurt? "We have to meet people where they are" and be "all things to all men," don't we?

Actually, you know, Jesus *is* the full personification of love—HE and HE ALONE is our definition of what Christian love and patience and courtesy are. "All things to all men?" Only the life of Jesus can define what "all things to all men" really means to the Father. And Jesus did many things like this seemingly rude religious-tradition-busting dinner event. Other times, Jesus and the disciples went through the grain fields on the Sabbath Day and purposely, in the sight of the religious critics, devastated their *interpretation* and binding of what had begun as a genuine principle of God. These sincere "experts in the Law" had put themselves in opposition to God Himself by the way that they *applied* Scripture. And Jesus took it right to them, with no allowance for their man-made interpretations. Why? We hope to discover the answer to this question as we continue. Be prayerful!

The amount of ritual that Jesus developed as He walked the streets with His Twelve friends is just *exactly* the amount of ritual that He intended for His Followers of today. The Twelve, well trained in what Christianity was and was not to be, were then to lead the 3108+ new Christians into the Life of Christ after the Day of Pentecost, into the fullness of their life with Jesus. What they brought to the growing multitudes of those that had committed their lives to the Son...is the right amount of ritual and pre-programmed choreography ("order of worship," "men to serve list," etc.) for us also. And, the truth be known, even with many thousands of members in one "congregation" of the church of Christ of the Bible, there isn't even a hint of any programs, ritual or gimmicks. There was no organizational framework—at least the way we have done it—IBM or AMWAY style. Not without verse-plucking and an active imagination. Once again, our man-made additions to God's Church, often referred to as "harmless traditions", have effectively blocked (along with lack of personal holiness, infrequent faith-walking, and socially acceptable complacency) *most* of God's desired activity on this planet since sometime even before 100 AD.

Though we have drifted far away from the best ways of Jesus, these programs and gimmicks and hierarchies have at least been something to hang on to for these many generations. Some would rightly argue that most of the "fruit" that we truly have had in our churches has been the product of these externals, hierarchies and programs. So true. And children do need rules and an external framework to operate from. Crippled men do need

crutches and wheelchairs. But what if the children grew up? And what if the shriveled and atrophied Body was healed? And what if the church matured into the Stature of the Son...?

## Food For Thought...and Digestion!

### Some Religious Vocabulary That Is Actually Non-Existent in the Bible (Poor Translations Teach Shallow or Wrong Concepts)...

“CHURCH”	“Ministry”	“Baptism”
“Religion”	“Pastor”	“Prayer”
“Christ”	“Apostle”	“Salvation”

While these words are commonplace in today’s Christendom, and the translations of the Bible that we have in our language do, in fact, use these words, I’d like you to think with me for just a moment. What if the words that Jesus spoke to the multitudes, and the words that Paul wrote to the churches of his day conveyed an entirely different meaning than that which we hear or read today? The word “gay,” for example, doesn’t mean what it used to mean, does it? The “gay nineties?” You get the point. The religious system of today has (more by inheritance than overt deception, for sure) adopted a vocabulary of ecclesiastical (churchy), poorly translated, or “transliterated” words from the Bible. Unfortunately, these words do not represent at all what Jesus, or Paul, or the others had in mind when they spoke them or wrote them. As you read your Bibles, henceforth, try to hear what *they* heard, rather than hearing these religious terms in their degenerated meanings of the present day. Deal? Look into it—it’s a fun and challenging search for Truth.

### Some Foundational Concepts of Today’s Religious World—That are Non-Existent in the Church of the Bible...

Worship Services	Sunday School
Sermons	Christian Colleges
Hiring and Firing Preachers (resumes, tryouts, interviews)	Choirs

Sunday as *the* special Day

Men chosen in advance for Christian Meetings to pray, preach or lead singing etc., etc., etc., etc....

## A Touch of History... Paul Didn't Carry A King James, Preach Sermons and Go to Bible Classes and "Services"

**Church Buildings.....** The original roots of christian "church buildings," seems to have been little sooner than 320 AD when Emperor Constantine decided that all of the pagan religions had Temples, so his new god, Jesus Christ, should have Temples also. The archaeologists have found no remains, whatsoever, of anything that could be construed as a Christian religious structure during the lifetimes of Jesus, or of the Twelve, or for 200 years thereafter. This is remarkable in light of the fact that virtually all of the tens of thousands of new converts to Christianity grew up "going to church"—either going to the Jewish Temple or Synagogues, or going to Pagan Temples. It would have been the most logical and natural thing in the world for Christians to build large buildings (as men do today) to have "worship services" in. But they didn't. For two centuries. Why not? Because the concept of "going to Church" on a special day at a special place is totally opposed to the very essence and substance of Jesus and the Church of the Bible that He died to establish.

Take a few moments to pray through some thoughts with me that are at the very core of what Jesus brought from Heaven to Earth...a Fellowship with the Godhead in His Church. It could change you forever. And it's exciting too!

*"However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says: 'Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. What house will you build for Me? says the Lord, or what is the place of My rest?'" (Acts 7:48-49)*

*"And the twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple" (Revelation 21:21-22).*

There is God's heart. And His church is still to be "according to the pattern," "on earth as it is in Heaven." A true, vital living Community (Church) of Believers that happens to own, at the moment, some structure with a roof on it, is not the issue here at all. That really has nothing to do with what we're considering here. We're just desiring to see clearly this "christianity" that "has a form of godliness" but denies the reality of it in their corporate or individual lives.

Again and again the Word of God testifies to a Glorious new Way. The new church in the city of Ephesus, by way of example, was facing a severe challenge. That city was graced with the overshadowing presence of one

of the seven wonders of the world, the Temple of Diana. The prevailing denomination in their town (from which many of them were no doubt converted to Jesus) had the best church building in the world. How could the Christians ever compete with that?! Paul spent much of his letter to them raising the “eyes of their hearts” to see the awesome Vision of a Kingdom, and a “church building” that can only be seen with eyes of the Spirit (Jn. 3:3,8; 1Cor. 2:8-16; Mat. 11:25-27)! Oh, that “new and living way” far surpasses anything that could be contained in buildings built by mere men. God is making YOU into a Habitation, a House for His Glory! Don’t you be so impressed with mere architecture of men; you are “living stones”—quarried from the same mega stone as Jesus Himself!

*“He raised us up together, and made us sit together [now] in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus...” (Ephesians 2:6).*

*“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:19-22).*

(See also Mat. 24:1-2; Jn. 2:18-22; Mk. 14:58; 1Cor. 3:9-10; 1Pet. 2:1-12; Isa. 51:1-2; Jn. 14:1-3, 14:15-21)

***WE ARE HIS TEMPLE!!! We are His Mansion! We are the only Christian Church Building that there will ever be!*** People...not places and times. We’ll be at places and times, at times, but if we *revolve* around them, something is seriously amiss. It’s not His Church, His Kingdom if it is subject to, or described by, a certain place at a certain time!

*“Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, ‘The kingdom of God is not coming in such a way that scientific study [“parateresis”] could detect; nor will they say, ‘Here it is!’ or ‘There it is!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is **within**, in the midst of, all of you” (Luke 17:20-21).*

*“And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. **But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.**”*

*“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be*

*exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Luke 12:29-34).*

*Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:21-24).*

*“But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain” (Galatians 4:9-11).*

How precious and awesome it is to see what God has really done for us and in us, and to live that to the max. Revolving around pre-set times and places and agendas of men instead of allowing the Head of the Church, Jesus Himself, to direct our lives and gatherings is to lose a glorious inheritance. Now, we feel the need to hedge our bet about having “a good worship experience” by preparing clever, compelling speeches (from the Bible, of course) days or weeks or years in advance, and pre-planning the songs and liturgy and the players involved in the staged drama of the “Worship Service.” It was never God’s idea to have a Christianity that is primarily defined by pews, sermons on Sunday to a well-dressed audience, “Bring Your Neighbor Sundays,” committees, professional religionists—“staff” employed by a church to be their leaders, or any such thing. And over time we have seen the result of this thing, which is far removed from the ways of Jesus and the Twelve, and the Church that knew them. The lives of men and women, girls and boys are needlessly left as easy prey for the pressures of the world and the attacks of satan. There really is that much at stake. The *real* thing is a church, as Christ Jesus said, that “the gates of Hell cannot withstand.” The programs and traditions have not worked. Only Christ expressed in His People—a church truly “joined and knit together by every supporting ligament,” a Kingdom of Priests, a Family functioning in *His* way rather than man’s can ever blow away the powers of Darkness.

As we venture back to taking a rational look at religious history, to see how we got where we are, we find that the “church building” kind of christianity took a new leap in the 1500’s. The Protestants took over the empty Roman Catholic Temples after Luther’s Reformation and used them in virtually an identical way as the Roman Catholics. Quoting the apostle Paul, “It is the same now.” Some much-needed “reforms” were

incorporated during Luther's lifetime. This is beyond question, and we need to be grateful that men like Luther were willing to risk their lives to challenge the jealously guarded man-made religious power-structure of their day. Nevertheless, a considerable amount of baggage, which is still controlling most of the religious scene to this day, was carried along from Luther's days as a monk.

The Church that Jesus built (and is building) is not a "here or there," time and place related Kingdom—as all the other world religions, and Judaism, have been.

Does that mean *less* activity, *less* fruitfulness, and *fewer gatherings* in the Church? *NO!!! Much, much more!* God allowed the crutches of religious good intentions and promotion of God's Cause by men's means for a time because of the hardness of our hearts. "But it was not so from the beginning!" God gave the "children" a Saturday "holy day." He gave us Jesus Christ, *the* "Sabbath Rest" (Heb. 4:1-11; Mat. 11:25-30). *Every day*, whether apart or when we're all gathered together, is equally incredible when we're really "seated with Christ in Heavenly Realms," "living and moving and having our being in Him." When we live fully in Him, the crutches of tradition, rote predictability, days and times, and imaginative agendas are *limiting* compared to what might happen without them amongst the Royal Priesthood. God's People are awesome when they are set free to live His Life out Together rather than to simply study it and sing about it!

Could it be that unregenerate and uncommitted men and women are generally the ones who must *demand* a "here or there Kingdom" with times and places on the calendar, and a schedule of what will happen when (or if) they get there? Why would they have a vested interest in ritual or traditions or predictability? Because "seeking first the Kingdom" is a hassle! Possibly pursuing God's Life and His Gatherings "daily in public and from house to house" isn't convenient enough to accommodate any 20th Century idolatrous lifestyles?

This is God's way, a Holy Nation seeking first the Kingdom, with Jesus living inside of them:

*"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate*

together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:42-47).

The only “cultural” aspects of the above passage are those of the “aliens,” “foreigners,” “pilgrims,” and “strangers” that had been translated from selfishness into “the Kingdom of the Beloved Son.” Purely and simply, those that have Jesus Himself living inside of them will “walk as Jesus walked”—“consumed with zeal for the Father’s House.” Just live out Luke 6:1-14:35 and you’ll end up with something very much like Acts 2! Can you think of any good reasons *not* to live for Him who died for you? Me neither. Let’s do it!

## Other Interesting Origins...

**Sunday School**—1840, USA

(Now, we feel sorry for a church without a “Sunday School.” Some say, “When they get bigger they can be a real church like the one Peter and John were part of...one with a ‘Sunday School’ and ‘Children’s Church.’” Actually, Sunday School is a very recent man-made concept to “classroom-ize” that which Jesus and the Apostles *purposefully* brought *out* of the classroom mentality of the Jews and the Greeks!)

**Pews**—Dark Ages, Roman Catholic

**Pulpits**—600 AD: Roman Catholics; 1520 AD: Martin Luther

**Stained Glass**—circa 800 AD

**Seminaries**—1300 AD

(to “train” men for the “ministry”—totally foreign, as such, to the ways and teaching of Jesus and the New Testament. In the Kingdom of Jesus, men are raised up in the crucible of Life, *never* as “test-tube”/classroom leaders.)

**Christian Colleges**—1640 AD

(to provide “christian education”)

**Sunday Morning Dress Up**—Dark Ages

(Neckties—evolved from men competing to see who could wear the fanciest napkin at dinner. High heels evolved, say the archaeologists and National Geographic, from Egyptian butchers not wanting to walk around in the remains of their occupation.)

Bear in mind there is nothing wrong, in and of itself, with “nice clothes” or neckties or heels. Yet expecting “nice clothes” for “Sunday Morning Services,” believe it or not, clashes with both the teaching and the lifestyle of the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ.

“Well if you’d dress up to go to your uncle’s funeral, why wouldn’t you dress up to go to church?”

While that sounds logical to the middle-class 20th Century American and European mindsets, it was not and is not the way of Jesus, or the Church that He established, to “dress up” to “go to church.” He didn’t, they didn’t, and we needn’t.

I know that all of this sounds strange, in light of all that we have all grown up seeing in Christendom. Remember though, we are not seeing the *results* of the Church we read about in the Bible either, are we? This is not simply trivia! We have been anesthetized by the seemingly harmless traditions of men, and it is time to put childish ways behind us! (Mk. 7:13, 12:38-40). As the Apostle Paul wrote, don’t allow anyone to judge you as you live in the Liberty of the Gospel of Jesus (don’t be contrary, of course, but see things the way God sees them).

Here are yet a few more to marvel at:

**Preachers, Pastors (as main speakers, MC’s, or corporate heads at church)—1520 AD.** Luther used converted ex-priests to continue to “bury the dead,” perform marriage ceremonies, and, during his Protestant version of Sunday Mass, to deliver speeches, or “sermons.” Can you see the similarities? My, my.

**Special Collars for “Clergy”—**Of course Jesus denounced the practice of wearing special garb to draw attention to one’s religiousness or credentials all the way back in His day. More recently, some sources indicate that we owe a debt to the Methodist “Circuit Riders” in the American frontier days. Apparently, as they rode from camp to camp on horseback preaching to whoever would listen, these “Circuit Riders” came to have a trademark of wearing sweat bandannas around their mouths and noses. They would then slip the sweatbands down around their necks when they stopped to preach. Thus, it seems, the modern “clergy collar” was born. Silly, aren’t we?

**Steeple, Bells, Altars, Mission Boards, Worship Services (as such), “Joe Schmo Ministries, Inc.”—**Need we go on?

None of these things characterized Christianity in the First Century. In fact, they put roadblocks in the way of our knowing in our own experience the *Life* of those first Believers, as a “Kingdom of Priests.”

I need to re-emphasize again and again a point that will cause some to shout “Hallelujah” that didn’t even know that word was in their vocabulary, and cause others to snarl and fail a blood pressure test. Most of Christendom today has been robbed by these props and inherited Roman Catholic hierarchies and knows little more than some Bible verses and how to be an audience and do some programs and committees. If the Creator of all of the Galaxies was really involved in our organizations, it couldn’t help but be far more evident than it is.

While the “props” mentioned above might seem harmless, try to envision what your church would be like without *any* of them. When you imagine that where you are, do you end up with the Power of the Church in the Book of Acts (*they* had none of these things)—or do you end up with a disjointed mess? If you were to remove all of these props, would there be anything left of your church? If your church couldn’t be sustained and even increase in Oneness and the Power of God without the props of programs, buildings, hired men, Boards, and regularly scheduled meetings with pre-arranged choreography, then it is built on the wrong Foundation. While the systems and hierarchy and form are foreign to the church of the Bible (even as it grew to 15,000 plus members in one congregation!), this is the concept that virtually all unbelievers and, tragically, the vast majority of Believers, have of 20th Century Christianity. Brothers, it ought not be so!

In truth, most of what we cling to is only necessary because of lack of relationship with Him, the Reality, the “soma,” of all that God ever wanted to do in you, and in His Church (Heb. 8:1-10:25; Col. 2:16-17). When we truly *know Him*, our security and minute-by-minute direction is *relational*, rather than *conceptual*. The record of the action of the Spirit-Empowered Church that we call “the Book of Acts,” was written about, and to (Acts 1:1) Theo-Philus—“Lovers of God,” not Theo-Logians. The record of His Glorious workings amongst mere men was not written to, or intended for, Theo-Logians (lovers of logic about God). You may need to ponder that one. To be truly free, your life in Christ, your Christianity, must be relational—a love affair, not conceptual.

Now that points us to the solution, doesn’t it! It is *not* that we now adhere to a *new* doctrine of no ritual (though the ritual must be destroyed in order to learn to trust God and function under the current Headship of the Lord of the Church). Rather, we desperately need to be healed of the emptiness of our 20th Century idolatry of running after career, suburban homes, IRA’s, social standing, college diplomas, laziness, television and meaningless (or wicked) “entertainment” for our flesh, craving for information, craving for comfort, and countless other sloppy idols in our lives. Only then can

we see the world and the Church “no longer after the flesh”—when the idols are torn down that blind us to Truth (Ezek. 14:3). Only then can we enjoy Jesus and the full Life of Glory that He Pioneered and left for us! (Heb. 3:1, 12:1-2; Jn. 17:5,22; Lk. 12:32; Mat. 16:19, 13:43, 13:52).

Contrast that with what Jesus left for those walking in “form” rather than in Him: Matthew 21:43, 23:13, 23:38. Not good.

May I end with a section from another writing? This has been brief, and only meant as a stimulus for further prayer and consideration. *Remember, if you react to this out of a “new concept” mentality, “the final condition will be worse than the first.” Only out of outgrowing the children’s clothing will we find God’s Will. Otherwise, if we simply curse and strip off the child’s clothing, we will only have a naked, vulnerable child. The crippled man has a desperate need for the wheelchair, the wheelchair ramp, the special parking places, and the special bathrooms. How much better, though, to heal the man—than simply improve the high-tech devices (programs, gimmicks, hierarchies) that generate a simulated freedom and life?!*

Moses ushered in an era of places and things and times and form, “because of the hardness of our hearts...but *from the beginning it was not so!*” Let’s “call a spade a spade”—and go on!!!

## There’s HOPE!

What then does the Kingdom of God really look like? What will a church **today** walking in God’s Presence and full of Grace look like? How can I recognize the Spirit of Christ, and His best Way for His people and for me?

Jesus’ Bride, His Church. She’s a special Lady, a “Bride PREPARED for the return of the Groom,” the King of Glory. She’s “a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without blemish.” She is an equal yoke for Jesus—compassionate, yet filled with fury towards hypocrisy; sensitive, yet relentlessly pursuing the completion of Her Father’s business. *This* is the church that Jesus bought with His very Blood...

She’ll be a church that is not bound by time and place, but “daily in public and from house to house.” She’ll be “joined and knit together by every supporting ligament,” everyone members of one-another,” “confessing sins one to another,” “admonishing one another daily so that none are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin,” always loving and serving and “bearing one-another’s burdens” in joy and thanksgiving. And a few tears. Her corporate gatherings will only be the overflow of what is happening on the streets and in the homes of all of her people. “Now the multitude of

those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own.”

The church will be characterized by “mega power” and “mega grace.” Sin will be exposed and eradicated with “ever-increasing Glory” in the lives of those in the church. Captives will, at long last, be set FREE. The singing of songs to our God won’t be written in a menu printed a week in advance, but will flow out of what God is doing in our midst at the moment. Watch out! Those joy-filled, faith-filled Saints of His may even erupt into song in the Burger King parking lot as the church descends on the restaurant for a meal. What’s real in one place must surely be real everywhere! (That New Wine, that Living Water has strange effects, you know. It’s just Biblical, normal, filled-with-Jesus Christianity!)

Together, with intimacy of relationships, we’ll *LIVE* as our Lord did. Jesus, the Christ of God, now lives within us, individually and as a People (Col. 1:26-27, 3:4; Gal. 2:20; Acts 17:28; Eph. 5:18; 1Jn. 2:6; Rom. 8:9).

This passage is the Eternal pattern of the church Jesus established, and is for every generation that will walk with Him, by His Spirit:

*“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to proclaim good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.*

*“And they shall rebuild the old ruins, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations.*

*“You shall be named the Priests of the Lord, men shall call you the Servants of our God” (Isaiah 61:1-7, Luke 4:18-19).*

Now, God’s version is better than man’s any day, isn’t it?! And such churches do actually exist! If you’d like to get in on it, rest assured, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.” Will you “go for it” no matter what everyone else is doing? Will you pay that price? I know you will. It’s entirely worth it.

*“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be GLORY in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen” (Ephesians 3:20). AMEN?*

## Epilogue

It has been the hope of every broken-hearted God-loving man and woman that one more good sermon, one more “new and improved” program, a new church building, or new elders being installed will heal the wounds and disappointments of their churches. Sincere, God-fearing disciples of Jesus are overwhelmed at their helplessness as the divorce rate in their churches is statistically equal to that of the world, rather than non-existent, as God has charged. They watch in horror as over 60% of their teens are admittedly engaging in pre-marital sex by age 15. In spite of the staggering proof that these institutional churches and other para-church organizations are not living in the fullness of Power and Love and Holiness of our God, some still relentlessly and passionately defend the status quo. Motives for clinging to traditions often include fear of rejection, fear of failure, fear of job loss (for clergymen—usually the primary opponents of leaving ritual and hierarchy behind), pride, or family heritage. Watch for these hidden motives in those that are angered by some of the thoughts offered here. If you burst the bubble of complacency and religious hypnosis, you’ll surely encounter such opposition, as Jesus did! Be ready for it, answering in wisdom and love. But the days of pretending are past. We’ve got to move on with our God into all that He has planned for us!

The Prophet Isaiah declared that the Word of God would “not return void.” Jesus elaborated further and with powerful implications. Our Lord taught us that there was yet *ONE* thing that could make null and void the Word of God in your life:

*“Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that” (Mark 7:13).*

And finally...

*“Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case—things that accompany salvation. God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised!” (Hebrews 6:9-12).*

# A World Without Towns

(an allegory)

Imagine for a moment that towns do not exist. Centuries in the future the world is such that none of the populace has ever personally known or experienced what life in a town is all about. Life has become up-town, impersonal, and institutional.

In this generation, historical accounts of what towns used to be like, when men were men, and people and families were more than zone units, are all that remain.

Stop and imagine with me for a moment what it would be like to live in this world without towns.

Suppose now that a group of people in that generation decided to change things and make things like they used to be. They decided to “restore the town” and reestablish the “town” as the functioning unit of community life. It would be called “Anytown.” It must be just like towns used to be. The first priority, naturally, was to go to the archives and study and study and study to learn everything they could about towns.

Based on their research, they committed together that they would restore “town life” in their generation.

Together they built a make-shift town out of cardboard and wood scraps, complete with a grocery, restaurant, hotel, houses, a bank, a school, a general store, and even a little police station.

These dedicated men and women devoted themselves to the task of restoring true “town life” to a lost and townless world. They decided that for an hour every day, they would practice “town life.” The man who played the grocer (he was chosen to be a grocer, but that’s not who he really was deep down inside) dug up a few vegetables for his little store. The bank teller (his mom and dad had always thought that he would have a lot of money some day) got a few dollars for his bank. And the teacher (he had always wanted to be before crowds and be looked up to) got a few books, and a couple of unsuspecting children, for his school.

The policeman, in restoring his office “by the book,” ran into a little more trouble (authority figures always have to stretch a little further in cardboard towns). Like towns, guns did not exist anymore, either. But that was okay. Where there’s a little 22nd Century ingenuity, there’s a way. He did some research in the original language and found a way out of the predicament. He located a dusty book that recorded the fact that in Britain

in the 1980's, policemen (known as Bobbies) didn't use guns; they used billy clubs. In context, it was clear (to him) that policemen only needed guns in earlier centuries to establish themselves as authority figures. After that, he decided to decide, society had "advanced" such that they did not need guns to "confirm" their authority anymore. The other countries in the 1980's that still used guns were obviously, therefore, backward countries and uncivilized. In context. Thus the dilemma was resolved. The gun was cultural, an expedient. He could do it the way that was most convenient to his situation.

As a side benefit, he could also now put on seminars and hold meetings for would-be policemen since all of his studies of the original had made him something of a scholar.

And so, growing crowds of sincere men and women went everyday, religiously, to their cardboard town and practiced "town-life." As the townspeople purchased the grocer's cucumbers and lettuce, the grocer ran to the bank with the proceeds from his sales. The policeman then stood guard to keep the grocer from being robbed. The schoolmaster was busy teaching, of course. For at least the hour that town was in session each day, everyone tried (within the bounds of reason) to use the vocabulary of the century of "town-days." And do their town-jobs well enough.

This all proved to be quite a popular pastime for more and more people. Certainly there were difficulties upon occasion, but that's to be expected. Some might say that all of the "new and improved" cardboard towns that sprang up came from division or ambition. Most felt more comfortable with the idea of "pursuit of truth," "growth," and "town planting."

One day a man from the past, from a real town, showed up. He watched as the men in this town of props diligently carried on their business. With great seriousness they rushed here and there as if everything depended on the outcome of their every conversation and business transaction. After all, this matter of restoring "town-life" is most serious. The man from the past was heartbroken, bewildered, amused, and angered all at the same time. What was this all about? Restoration of "town-life"—this?

He was so anxious and excited to teach them that there was so much more to town-life than propping up the externals to look the same as a town! All of the book learning they had done about his era had only served to provide a substitute that *seemed* to fit all of the categories of "town-life" component by component...yet without the Life behind them.

This newcomer to "town" was just too critical to suit the "townspeople." Things were pretty comfortable. Kind of like family. "Sure, there are a few

problems, but couldn't he just work from within the system to help instead of being so confounded holier than thou?" they said to one another in whispers as they passed in the streets. "We know for a fact that we are really a town." They had all the proof they needed!

"Is there anything wrong with banks having money?!" they objected.

"Aren't there real vegetables in the grocery?!" they asked.

"Aren't there real books in the school?!"

(As they envisioned the outcome of the newcomer's challenge if he was not silenced, their questions grew more intense.)

"Try to take some money from the bank and see if the policeman's billy club is fake!" they jeered.

"Listen, buster," some said, "if you don't like the way we build, just start a building here yourself. Make a fire station, if you'd like. You know where the cardboard is. Instead of criticizing so much, why don't you build along with us? Are you better than everyone else?"

Needless to say, the stranger went away saddened and confused. And the "townspeople" continued faithfully to "go to town" every day at each appointed time, each and every opportunity, whenever the doors were opened. Faithful unto death. Decently, and in order.

You see, the cloak of fear, and pride, never allowed them to see the difference between "going to town"...and being a town.

May the men in this town teach us not to confuse reality with historical knowledge. May we be determined not to settle for less than the full expression, inside and out—and never just an accurate simulation and well-oiled scaled model. The scholarly detail work of the props does not a town, or a church make. Nor does talking in the lingo of town-life or studying towns compare to the experience and joys and benefits of town-life. Or Life in God's Kingdom. The benefits and power of true Life will *never* exist as long as our town, or our churches, remain only high-tech, detailed props. Don't be satisfied to walk through the wax museum. Step into the substance of that Life with all your heart! Settle for no "logical explanations," or guilt trips about being patient for another ten generations or so. Powerful speeches from an orator behind a pulpit is not a substitute for a true expression of God's Heart for His People in this day (Eph. 3:10... "now"). May God bless and help us all as we seek to be his People, a Bride that has "made herself ready for the return of the Groom," our Glorious Lord, Jesus Christ. Praise His Name!

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# We're SO Funny!! Oh, But It's Time to Grow Up, You Know? 😊

*Sunday Night, May 5, 2002*

## Wine Experts Fooled Into Thinking White Wine Is Red

Psychologists have fooled a group of wine experts into praising a white wine that had been coloured red. The German magazine *Psychology Today* gathered 54 wine tasters in Bordeaux to taste the wine that had tasteless food dye added. It says none of them realized the wine had been doctored—they thought it was a legitimate red because of its colour.

The magazine said of the first experiment: None of them guessed that it had been a wine that we had tampered with. “It is a psychological phenomenon that they marked it down as tasting what their senses told them it should taste of because it was coloured red. Actually it tasted of hardly anything.”

In a second test, it says the experts praised another cheap wine that had been poured into an expensive bottle. When it was offered in its real bottle, they criticized it. The magazine says the experts described it as “marvelous,” “forward but charming,” “fruity” and “robust.” When it was poured into its proper bottle, the experts described it as “thin,” “weak” and “too light.” “It shows that not all experts should be believed,” the magazine warned.

How weak is the human mind! How gullible the church world, and the world at large, can be....

We tend to believe anything, as long as it comes in a convincing and pleasing package! Everything is “good”—as long as it appeals to our minds

and senses and emotions—whether it violates all sorts of things that are precious and essential to Jesus, or not.

But Jesus, and Jesus IN us, isn't gullible, if we'd Listen.... 😊 Yes, I'm picking on gullibility again. J The test of Godly authenticity is not whether it makes us feel good, meets human needs, or makes the hair on the back of our neck stand up and our skin tingle. Jesus was clear that even miracles don't prove that He even knows a man. Buddhists speak in tongues, Muslims pray, and Mormons do good deeds and emphasize "family values." SO?! 😊 Those things are not the Measure!

So, we're just asking you, all of us, always, to weigh your circumstances in TRUTH. And be willing to be appalled by the contradictions of "leaven in the batch," lukewarmness, and other Issues...and deal energetically and passionately and relentlessly and lovingly with these and other Biblical mandates from God. TRUTH, not sentiment. That's how Jesus did it and does it. And so shall He today, in our lives and in our environments, if we'll Listen and have the courage to risk for Him. Ah, times are changing, for those who will care more for the pillar of Fire than for the oasis of comfort, prestige, and avoidance of the Cross and controversy....

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# Tasting the Powers of the Coming Age

1986

*an evening in Indianapolis*

**I**n Hebrews 6:4-5 we find a list of some very basic descriptions of a Christian: “...*who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age...*”

Do you know what it means to “taste the powers of the coming age”? It is said to be the *normal* experience of a Christian life. This is something *real* and *powerful* and it is meant to be the EXPERIENCE of every Believer. Do you know what it means?

I think it is safe to say that “tasting the powers of the coming age” is more than “going to church” and singing a few songs, even dancing, and going home. Nobody being honest could say, “Now *that* was tasting the powers of the coming age.” Only those who have never Tasted MORE would say so! Right?

Jesus said that the norm of a Believer is to have rivers of living water *gushing* out of their belly. So, *truly* stepping into the Kingdom of God must be more than some ritual of dressing up and going to “church” on Sunday. As Paul said, the Kingdom of God consists not of mere words, but of dynamis—of dynamite—of power. It’s not just a bunch of talk, with a “bible study” here and there and a couple of prayers. There is *power*, and that power is real. Maybe “dynamo” would be a better way to express that, because a dynamo is a waterfall that is generating power day after day, whereas dynamite is one “flash in the pan.”

## Before Time Began: The Promise of Eternity

Let’s go all the way back to creation and look at some of what God is doing. Before creation, what was in existence? *GOD!* Period. That’s all. Everywhere, God. Nothing else. That was even **before** *the beginning*

*of time* because when creation came into being, time itself was *part* of that creation! In Titus Chapter 1 it says: “Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God’s elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness—a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life...” That sounds good, right? Anyone in their right mind is interested in eternal life. You can go all the way back to Ponce de Leon and his search for the fountain of youth and find that eternal life is something that man, just out of his natural mind, *wants*. Obviously, it would be a real curse to live forever in a place that is not good, so NO ONE desires that. But man *longs* to be able to live forever in a good place...in some place where he could **enjoy** living forever. Eternal life is something that *God created*, and now He is trying to tell us what that’s all about.

A person consists really of three things—a body, a soul and a spirit. A spirit is “conceived” when God breathes life from another world into the womb of that expecting mother. At that point, a spirit is born that cannot die. It is **impossible** that it can die. The only question that remains is: Does that spirit spend eternity in a paradise or in a torment? As it turns out, that is a choice that we make.

So, as we explore “creation,” we’ll see that “creation” involves the nature of God and eternal life, because all these things work together “...*a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time...*” (*Tit. 1:2*). That promise (that thought in God’s mind of eternal life) happened **before** time ever began. That promise happened before any creation, and even before there was such a thing as “time.”

“...*and at his appointed season he brought his word to light through the message entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior*” (*Tit. 1:3*). You can see that in God’s heart is also this aspect of “bringing His Word to light *through the message*.” We have to be TAUGHT. You see creation. You see God. You see that before the beginning of time there is salvation or eternal life...and then you see that Paul says that he has been brought this knowledge from God about what it’s all about. I am glad that Paul received that (and that we have received that), so we can know what’s going on! A person who is ignorant of facts is going to make bad decisions. You need to have facts to make decisions; otherwise, you go blindly through life tripping and falling all along the way. You go blindly through whatever your situation is, and you blow it because you didn’t know the *facts*. God, who does not lie, mercifully stretches out His hand and says, “I’ll give you facts. I will ‘bring to light’ the reality of what the universe is all about. Before time began, I had specific intentions, and I will make those things

known to you if you will search. If you seek, you will find. If you ask, you will receive. If you knock, the door will be opened. For those who are honest and are seeking, I will make known the reality of My presence and what I have in store for them. I will let you know what I have prepared for you from the beginning of creation—even **before** there was time. ETERNAL LIFE!”

So, not only do we see this idea of salvation and a knowledge that rests on the hope of eternal life, but we also see that God intends for this message of God to be *proclaimed!*

## In Heavenly Realms...in Christ!

Before the beginning of time there was just GOD. When God created, He created things called “heavenly realms,” and then He created things that we’ll call the “natural” or “physical” realm.

In the letter to the Christians in Ephesus Paul is referring to the heavenly realms. He is opening the mind of God to them: *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For He chose us in Him—in Christ—before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves—Jesus Christ. In Him we have redemption through Jesus’ blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. He made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ”* (Ephesians 1:1-10).

What phrase keeps popping up over and over again? **“In Him, in the One He loved. In Christ, In Christ.”** All spiritual blessings are where? In Christ. In heavenly realms, *in Christ*. This thing we call “heavenly realms” is part of God’s creation, and that’s where all the blessings of the universe are. The blessings are all in heavenly realms, and heavenly realms are Christ! Christ is in heavenly realms, *“...and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength [the mighty strength of Almighty God], which he exerted in Christ when he raised Jesus from the dead and seated him at the right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the*

one to come [“tasting the powers of the coming age”]. *And God placed all things under his feet and appointed Christ to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of Jesus, who fills everything in every way”* (Eph. 1:19-23). He said the **Church**, which is His Body, is the fullness of the Godhead, the fullness of deity who fills everything in every way! You see all that, right?

Do you feel like everything is grand and glorious and absolutely perfect in the physical realm here on planet Earth? ☺ No. That’s because the blessing isn’t in the physical realm, is it? But there is another realm called the heavenly realm, where **all the blessings of the universe are**, and all the authority is. Jesus Christ sat down at the right hand of the Father in heavenly realms with all power and dominion and authority over all things for the Church, which is His body, which “fills everything in every way.”

*“Because of God’s great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages [“tasting the powers of the coming age”] he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus”* (Ephesians 2:4-7).

*With ever-increasing glory* God is breathing into people who are part of His Kingdom. He is breathing His power, His authority, His wisdom and His creativity—and the heavenly realms are astounded at this! When you become a disciple of Jesus, you are “seated in heavenly realms.” You are not seated on planet Earth anymore. You become a partaker of heavenly realms. All spiritual blessings are given to us. He *blessed* us—past tense! It is not that He *will* bless us, but He *has blessed* us, past tense, with every spiritual blessing in Christ in the heavenly realms. It has already been established.

This heavenly realm is where everything good is. Every spiritual blessing, every blessing that really makes any difference, is in heavenly realms. It is not in earthly realms. There’s some mingling, but the gold is in heavenly realms. When you become a disciple of Jesus you are seated (past tense) in the heavenly realms. He has blessed us (past tense) in heavenly realms with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. You can see this thing that is happening as part of creation, a part that we don’t see all together clearly, but heavenly realms *is* a glorious part of creation.

## The Battle is There, Too

In Ephesians 6:10-12 we find that there is a whole “other” part of heavenly realms: *“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms....”*

Wait a minute! We are not talking about “heaven.” We are talking about a whole other part of creation, because even the devil himself is in heavenly realms. Some how, some way, satan is in heavenly realms. Now, who were the “Ephesians”? Who was Paul writing this to? Christians, or non-Christians? He was writing to Christians. Notice he said, “Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against rulers, authorities, powers of the dark world, against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” He said our battle is in the heavenly realms. As Christians, our battle—the warfare that we wage—is not with weapons of this world, as it says in 2 Corinthians 10. We’re not throwing hand grenades. The physical realm stuff has nothing to do with it because our battle is not in the physical realm. Our battle is in the heavenly realms, and against dark forces, dominions and powers. Satan is not Captain Kangaroo. He is not some imaginary force of evil. He is a very real, created being that once went by the name of Lucifer, the most powerful created being that ever was. He stood at the right hand of God as the anointed cherub, the anointed angel that covers. He was filled with all wisdom and all beauty. He is a powerful being. He is a created being, and he is just as real as you and I are...except for one difference, he is in the heavenly realms. Our battle, when we become a disciple of Jesus, is now in heavenly realms.

Has anybody ever noticed that when you become a Christian, things that used to be “easy” seem to all of a sudden be hard? Even though life was a real pit when you weren’t a Christian, it’s almost like things that **were** easy to deal with when you were not a Christian become things you start struggling with all of a sudden. You think, “I’m not supposed to be struggling because I’m a Christian now.” And yet, in some ways you are struggling even **more** than you were. In different ways, but now all of a sudden there is turmoil in your heart that you might not have had before you stepped into heavenly realms. It’s because THAT’S where the battle is. When you step into heavenly realms, when you become a Disciple of Jesus, now all of a sudden you are a very clear mark for satan. Now he can see you face to face, because now you are in his realm, in a sense. He’s the “god of this age,” and he’s taken dominion over planet Earth, but even so, the heavenly realm is where the battle is waged.

It's like a man who is very clumsy. If he's sitting in a chair, would you ever know that he is clumsy? No. But if you gave him five things to do and five minutes to do them, you would find out pretty quickly how clumsy he is. All of a sudden he is all thumbs and he can't do anything right. And that's the picture of what happens when we become a Christian. That's what Paul is talking about in Romans 7. If you are not a disciple of Jesus, if you are not pursuing the things of God but you are just living your life for yourself, it's like you're just sitting in a chair. You don't "see" or notice how clumsy you are until you stand up and start to do something in heavenly realms, then you find out that you need perfecting! You need ever-increasing glory. You need to grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. You need to grow into maturity and strength. But you never knew that as long as you were just sitting there. That's why, when you become a Christian, sometimes you find yourself starting to battle with things and wage war with things that never were a big problem before you became a Christian. There is a war that you are waging, according to the Word of God. That war is in heavenly realms. Satan is in those heavenly realms also.

## Everything "Real" Has a Shadow

God has created this invisible world that He refers to at the end of 2 Corinthians 4 as "*what is seen is temporary, what is unseen is eternal.*" The things we can't see are the only things that are going to last. Peter said that everything else is going to be burnt up with a fervent heat. There is going to be a meltdown. And the physical realm, which is the other half of creation, is going to be burnt up. The chair you are sitting on and everything you can see right now in this world is going to be burnt up, because it is part of the physical realm, not the supernatural realm or the heavenly realms.

When God decided to create us and to create planet Earth and all the things that we see, and when God created this thing called religion, He was taking the reality of the heavenly realm and making little miniature models of it on planet Earth. When he brought the seen world (the physical realm) into existence, those things were **shadows** of the heavenly realms. There was a purpose for them. It wasn't that God just randomly decided to create this, that, and the other. But there was a whole creation called heavenly realms, and God decided to create miniature models of it to paint a picture of reality. If you set up a canvas and you paint a picture of someone, the person is real, but the painting is not. They look alike, but the painting is in two dimensions and the person is in three dimensions.

The painting doesn't have life, but the person does. But they look alike. That is what creation is. The physical realm is a shadow, or picture, of the heavenly realms. God in His infinite wisdom did something pretty incredible in that.

*"The priests serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven..." (Heb. 8:5).* God went into great detail to talk to the Jewish people about how big the temple was supposed to be and the different kinds of gold and jewels that went into it. He gave specific details about how the ark was to be so long and so wide, and have angels sitting on top...and that there would be manna, Aaron's rod, and stone tablets inside. The Jewish people were scratching their heads saying, "What's going on? Why are we supposed to do all these religious rituals?" Well, the word of God says those things were a *shadow*, a miniature model, of the reality in the heavenly realms. There is a temple in the heavenly realms, and that temple is Jesus. There is an ark in the heavenly realms, and that ark is Jesus! Everything points back to the reality in heavenly realms.

In Hebrews 9:8-9 *"The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing. This is an illustration for the present time indicating that gifts and sacrifices were not able to 'clear the conscience' of the worshippers."* This is an illustration of what these people were supposed to do, an example or shadow of the reality of something else God was doing. The Most Holy Place was to be in the presence of God.

*"The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming; not the realities themselves..." (Heb. 10:1).* Even the laws of God, where God says "Do this, do that," are only a shadow of what is already happening in heavenly realms. Remember "Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven," as Jesus told Peter. He is referring to these heavenly realms. All these things—the laws, the righteousness and the holiness of God, and the characteristics of God—are real up there and are only shadows down here. "Do not steal." That's only a shadow of a reality in heaven.

*"Do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ" (Col 2:16-17).* Again, you see this idea of a shadow. If you were to go to the book of Hebrews in Chapter 4 or to the book of Revelation in Chapters 21 and 22, what you would find if you are trying to understand what is in these heavenly realms, is that there are shadows on Earth that represent **REALITIES found in the Heavenly Realms**. We have a shadow

of the Sabbath on Earth, and there is a *reality* of the Sabbath in heavenly realms. It talks about food, what you eat and drink, and these are a shadow of the reality that is to come. There is a reality of food in heavenly realms, and what we eat today is only a shadow, a mirage. There is a river on planet Earth, but that's only a shadow of a reality that is in heavenly realms. There is a real river in heavenly realms, and God gave us an "illustration" of a river that we could understand on planet Earth.

The temple is that way. A banquet is that way. We have parties and celebrations here, but there is a reality in heavenly realms. Jesus talked about the great banquet that we are going to be going to. A "party in the sky," if you will...a festival going on in heavenly realms. It says that that's a shadow of the reality that's in Christ, *and Christ is heavenly realms*. We are walking around and doing things on planet Earth, and we need to realize that all of this creation is only a mirage, only a shadow of the heavenly realms. God created this Earth that we are walking around on as a shadow. And everything about it is only a little miniature model, a painting, of the **reality** that is in heavenly realms in Christ. And that's what we are going to experience.

## The Realms, Melted and Meshed Together!

When God created man He did something really amazing. He took a handful of clay from planet Earth and molded a man out of that clay, and then He breathed on it. He didn't do that with any of the rest of creation. In man, God did something that He had never done before. **He took some of heavenly realms and some of earthly realms and put them together.** That's the first time He ever did that. He breathed on it. He said, "I created man and woman in my own image." He had never done *that* before! Of all the animals on all of planet Earth, He had never done that before. But now, in man, God took some of heavenly realms... "*pneuma*, spirit, breath"...and He blew His Spirit into man. He took something out of the heavenly realms, the reality in the heavenly realms, and He took something out of the earthly realms at creation, and He put them together in one package. That's what you and I are. That's why we've got to come to grips with that if we are going to find this thing called salvation. We have to realize that God created us in His own image, and He took part of heavenly realms and part of earthly realms and put them together in this thing called "man." That's why we have *eternal life*—*because part of us is heavenly realms*. It's spirit that can't be destroyed. It's reality. Our bodies can be destroyed because they're only the physical realm, but the spirit within us can't because it came directly out of heavenly realms.

## Disobedient and Darkened

Here's what happened though. Man messed up. Remember what happened with Adam and Eve, when man fell? He ate from the tree of good and evil, deciding to make himself a god—"I'll make my own decisions. I'll do what I feel like. I'm going to look out for 'Number 1.' If I want to do something, I am going to do it." And God called that sin. He put a name on it. When man sinned, he darkened the spirit that was within him. He became numb to it. The relationships of man broke down—Adam and Eve started arguing with each other. "She made me do it." And then, eventually, we have murder on our hands with Cain and Abel. Man's relationship with God broke down. All of a sudden people started being afraid of God. Before that sin, they walked with Him and talked with Him because there was part of them that was in the supernatural realm, in heavenly realms, so they could communicate with God.

Part of them was "heavenly realm," which could communicate with God, who was Christ, who was seated in heavenly realms. But when man sinned, he darkened his understanding in the heavenly realms, and no longer could he have fellowship with God. Now he is hiding from God. He had to have his fig leaf, he had to try to hide and protect himself. He said, "Oh, God, I was afraid of You, and I had to hide from You." That's what people do today. They either hide from God by creating all kinds of things to keep themselves occupied and amused, or they hide from God by calling God names. "You are just a mean God. I wouldn't serve a God like you anyway." All that came because **sin** entered our hearts and darkened our spiritual understanding. We can look at that in a couple of places in the Scriptures.

*"As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient" (Ephesians 2:1-2).*

Paul said, "You were dead in your transgressions and sins. When you selfishly decided to live for yourself and to make your own decisions rather than letting God make your decisions for you. When you decided that you were going to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and *you* were going to decide what was good and what was evil rather than God, you died." Paul is saying to the Ephesians, to these Christians, "You used to follow the ways of this world. You used to do what everybody else did. You used to dress like they dress, you used to talk like they talk, you used to do what they did in all their habits and pleasures and hobbies. And while you followed that way you were DEAD. You were dead in your heart

and your sin. You didn't have the heavenly realms that you were created for!" That's not an insult. He is saying, "You were created for something **wonderful** and you blew it. You followed your own ways and the ways of this world, and you followed the prince of the power of the air who is at work in those who are disobedient. For those who disobey God and serve themselves, satan himself is at work within them." They move in the heavenly realms to serving satan, who is also in heavenly realms, and they became darkened to the Glory of God.

*"We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."* We have all fallen short of the heavenly realms. This tremendous power, the awesome inner strength, the gleam in our eye, the joy inexpressible and full of glory, the peace that transcends understanding...does anybody NOT want those things? Of course we want those things. People would die to have peace, to have joy, some how, some way. People would *die* for that, no matter how much "seen-world" stuff and money they have.

The richest people in the world have committed suicide. They thought they could get peace and joy by having money or power, but they found out *it doesn't work!* And the reason it doesn't work was because **we are created to be in heavenly realms**. As much as you accrue in the physical realm, it is never going to satisfy you. It all stinks. You will never be satisfied.

So if the "heavenly realms" part of you is darkened by "moving over" to serving the prince of the power of the air by being disobedient, you die. In a way, you die to all the glory that God has inside of you. Paul said to the Ephesians, "**All of us** also lived among them..." You can't do any of this "holier-than-thou" stuff. You can't say, "I'm a great guy and you're a sinner." Forget that! "*We also* lived at one time among them, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were objects of wrath." We were craving the satisfaction of our own bodies, we were craving pleasures, and Paul is saying that you are missing what God created you for when you do that. You're missing it! He created you for something glorious and powerful, not to be on your hands and knees trying to get through life—just trying to survive, hating yourself and hating others. He created us to be seated in heavenly realms with Christ Jesus.

## The Turning Point

Now, there is a point at which you can step "back in" to what God is doing. In 2 Corinthians 3:16 it says: "*Whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.*" [That veil is the darkening in our understanding.] "*I tell you*

*this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more...”(Eph. 4:17-19).*

There’s this darkening in understanding, there’s not the Life of God that He created us for, and it is futile thinking and just doesn’t pay off. Everywhere you turn is a dead-end road. But that’s not the way it has to be! In Christ there’s a better way, a powerful way that releases you from that darkness and it brings Life and Spirit and Peace and Joy and inner strength that you will **never** find when you are darkened in your understanding by the prince of the power of the air.

But, again, in 2 Corinthians 3:16 it says, “Whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.” That “darkness” of not being able to understand is taken away. “*Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom*” (2 Cor. 3:17). Remember Jesus said, “If the Son sets you free you shall be free indeed.” Where is Jesus seated? In heavenly realms. And all spiritual blessings are where? In heavenly realms. And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

There’s freedom when you move into heavenly realms. When the veil is taken away and we are in fellowship with God, then we find that freedom. “*We who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into the likeness of Jesus with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit*” (2 Cor. 3:18). We all sin and fall short of the glory of God. But when our faces are unveiled and our understanding is no longer darkened, now with ever-increasing **glory** we move into the image of Jesus Christ who is seated in heavenly realms. Now, because of what God is doing within us, we (who were created in **His** image) can reestablish what God created us for. He created us for dominion over the Earth—the power and the authority that He meant for us to have, and we had in the Garden of Eden. Okay? When we sinned we fell short of all of that. But God intends to reestablish that in our lives.

*“Therefore since through God’s mercy we have this service we do not lose heart. Rather we renounce the secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary by setting forth the truth plainly, we commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. And if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers so they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God. For we do not*

*proclaim ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God who said let the light shine out of darkness back to creation [that same God that said, "Let the light shine out of darkness"], made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:1-6).*

We can have our understanding darkened by the god of this age. When sin came into our lives satan came in and darkened our minds and we couldn't understand the glory of God anymore. We fell short of that and we couldn't see it, we couldn't comprehend it. We couldn't understand it. We were "veiled." Satan was leading us down this primrose path. We were dead in our transgressions. We were dead in our sins. We were darkened in our understanding and the futility of our thinking, giving ourselves over to the craving of the flesh and all types of sensuality and wickedness. We were in the middle of that stuff. We were **all** that way.

Man fell from the glory that God meant for him to have, but God promised that He would reestablish His Plan. He said, "I'll send a man, born of a woman, to crush the head of the serpent, of satan, to crush the head of the god of this age." When man fell, satan took dominion over the Earth. He became the god of this age. The "prince of this world," Jesus called him. He took control of planet Earth, which God originally gave to man. God had given us dominion over it, but satan took it over when we gave him that authority by following his lie. When satan lies to us and we willingly follow his lies, we are giving him authority that he doesn't have a right to. Satan does not have a right to push us around because we were created in the image of God. We don't have to blindly follow everything satan and the world tells us to do—as if we've got some ring in our nose! We don't have to do that because we are created in the image of God.

So satan took over planet Earth and he blinded our minds so we couldn't even see the gospel. But Paul said it'll be okay because God sent His Son. The **same God** that said, "Let the light shine out of darkness" sent His Son to planet Earth to reveal the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. He reestablished that glory to planet Earth, and now the light began to show through the darkness. And now we can begin to see what God blinded our minds to...with unveiled faces now.

When we call on the name of the Lord, when we turn to Jesus, the veil falls away. The "darkened understanding" falls away. That's what God is calling each of us to do, to turn to Jesus so the light can shine in the darkness and reveal the Glory of God again. He can show us truth. Paul said, "I taught that. Through the word of God I will show you who Jesus Christ is, and if you will turn to Him through the proclaiming of the word of God, He will

let the light shine in the darkness in your life.” He’ll scatter the darkness and satan will flee from that. Good news? Good news!

## Jesus, The Radiance of God’s Glory

Luke 1 talks about a young woman named Mary that the angel Gabriel came to and said, “Guess what? **God** is going to be born in your womb.” And she said, “What?! How could that be? I don’t understand that. But let it be done according to your word.” The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will visit you, and even though you are a virgin, even though it is impossible for you to bear a child...you, a woman, are going to bear a son and His name shall be called Emmanuel, which means, ‘God with us.’ This little baby will be called ‘God with us.’ His name shall be called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins.” He shall save them from the darkness and the blindness that is in front of them. He will save them from the god of this world that is now at work in those who are disobedient. Jesus will come and visit His people. He is born of a woman, but He is also born of God. He is half God and half man. He is half from heavenly realms, half from physical realms, and now He can walk through planet Earth and penetrate what satan is taking control over. Because He came from heavenly realms, but was born of physical realms, now the problem can be solved that was from the very beginning. Glory to God!

That’s what God intended to do and we can read in Hebrews 1 all about who Jesus is: *“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven” (Hebrews 1:1-3).*

“He is the radiance of God’s glory, the exact representation of God.” Have you ever wondered who Jesus Christ is? He’s the radiance of God’s glory, just as the sun shines and the rays of the sun reach out. We’re not touching the sun and yet something about the sun warms us, right? You say, “Well, there is only ‘nothingness’ between us and the sun. How can we feel something we can’t touch with our hands? How could that possibly be?” And yet the rays, the radiance of the sun, warm us. We see the light, we feel the warmth from it, we know it is absolutely very real, and yet we’re not actually “touching” the sun. That’s what happened in the Son of God.

He is the exact representation of God the Father and the **radiance** of God's glory that was made to shine in the face of Jesus Christ. We feel the warmth and the power of the sun...we use our little solar calculators that prove that there is power in that sun even though it never touches us. That's what happened in Jesus. The radiance of the glory of God was poured out in Jesus Christ and it was like the rays of the sun.

Phillip said, "Show us the Father, Jesus." What did Jesus say? "Have you been with me so long and you still don't understand? When you've seen Me, you've seen the Father! I am the exact representation of the Father. The radiance, the warmth of the Father, the goodness of God, the compassion of God, the power of God...you've seen all of those things, in Me. I AM WHO AM. Before Abraham was, I AM."

"You are not yet fifty years old, how can you say that you knew Abraham?"

"Well, before Abraham was, I AM, because I lived in the heavenly realms. I am the Ancient of Days! I lived before **anything** was. I lived before there was time. And yet, I'm born of a woman. And yet, I'm from heavenly realms. Totally God and totally man. Totally of heavenly realms and totally of physical realms." Paul said, "The mystery of incarnation... I don't understand it. And yet, it's true." That's who Jesus is.

## Jesus, Reconciler

*"Jesus is the image of the invisible God..." (Col 1:15).* See that? The image of the invisible God. The heavenly realm is invisible. What is unseen is eternal; what is seen is temporary and will be burned up. Jesus, when He walked on planet Earth, was visible. He was a shadow of the reality that was in heaven. Jesus Christ, as He walked on planet Earth, was a physical representation of an eternal, invisible being. He represented heavenly realms, and His body was a shadow, just like our bodies are shadows, of the heavenly realms. "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created..." Jesus created all things. He was with the Father in creation (Jn 17).

*"For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible...and in Jesus all things hold together. And he is head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in Jesus, and through Jesus to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross" (Colossians 1:17-20).*

What does reconciliation mean? If you and I have a fight and we “reconcile,” it means we “make up,” and there is peace. Reconciliation means to bring two things back together. So, that means there was a **war** going on between heavenly realms and physical realms that requires reconciling. This war is going on because the physical realm was rebellious against God, and there is a reconciliation that must be made between the heavenly realm and the physical realm. He wants to reconcile those things, making them the way they were in the beginning. So Jesus Christ, who was the image of the invisible God, came down to the physical realm—being part God and part man—to bring those two realms that had been alienated (that had been made dead) back together. He came to bring Life into people and to be the “firstborn from among the dead”—birthed back into the original plan in the image of God. His plan is for us to be seated back again in heavenly realms, to be seated with Christ Jesus, to receive all spiritual blessings in heavenly realms, again. Jesus Christ, by His blood, by His death, brought that back into availability to a fallen, wretched, pitiful people that have no ability to raise themselves from the dead.

You can see how important Jesus is! DON’T tell me, “I will take Confucius, and they can take Buddha. They are all roads leading up the same mountain.” That is so ridiculous when you truly understand what all of creation is pointing towards. *Impossible* reasoning. **JESUS is the image of the invisible God.** No one else. All things were created by *Him*, not by some fat, bald guy. But by Jesus Christ! Before Abraham was, I AM. There’s power in that.

Jesus came to merge God and man (reconciliation) in order to conquer sin. *“The Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil.”* Why did Jesus come? He came that He might destroy the works of the devil. Yes, it’s true, that when we sinned—when we decided to live for ourselves in selfishness and sin and gratifying the flesh—we lost all that we were created for. We were created in the image of God to experience peace that passes understanding and all the spiritual blessings, *to taste the powers of the coming age.* We lost all of that. We **lost** all those spiritual blessings we were created to receive when we decided to live for ourselves in selfishness and sin and gratifying the flesh. But Jesus came to reconcile that and to bring us up into heavenly realms where He is, that we might find all those spiritual blessings with ever-increasing glory as our faces are unveiled and we see Jesus Christ and the image of the Father in Jesus and are drawn up into that. We received the glory that we lost when we sinned. “All have sinned and fallen short of the glory.” But Jesus said in John 17, “I’m leaving my glory behind. The glory that you gave me, Father, I’m leaving my glory for them.” “Do not fear, little children. It pleased the Father to give you the Kingdom.”

## Heaven Reigns

Jesus came to bring the **Kingdom** of heavenly realms back again. What was the message Jesus and John the Baptist kept declaring? “The Kingdom is at hand. The Kingdom is at hand.” What does the Lord’s prayer say about that? “Thy Kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven.” Heavenly realms and physical realms coming and being joined together as they were meant to be in the beginning—in man, not just in the rest of creation because those weren’t partakers of the divine nature. “*Great and precious promises, partakers of the divine nature*” (2Pet. 1). “*Christ in you, the hope of glory*” (Col 1:27). “*Christ lives in you by faith*” (Eph. 3:17). “*Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit*” (1Cor 6:19). **Heavenly realms dwelling within us.** That’s the way it was meant to be. Yet, we were dead and apart from that in our sins and transgressions, and we were blinded in our minds. But Jesus came to restore that dominion of the heavenly realms. He came to restore that power and to destroy the works of the devil.

Do you remember when Jesus came to earth that He walked on the water? Physical realms couldn’t stop Him because heavenly realms have dominion over the physical realm. Right? He said, “I give you dominion over the creeping things. I give you dominion over the earth.” The physical realm is controlled by the supernatural realm, the heavenly realm, and Jesus came to prove that fact. He was able to prove it because He was living a life in fellowship with the Father and living in the fullness of heavenly realms. And guess what? He could say “Peace, be still” to a storm, because heavenly realms are in control of the physical realms. The heavenly realms were there first and had priority, or preeminence, over the physical.

Jesus was the first one to be born through a fallen earth and to be born back into heavenly realms again. He took that preeminence by conquering satan and destroying the works of the devil. He could turn water into wine. What kind of person can do that? Someone who is living in heavenly realms! Because physical realms are only a shadow of the **reality** that is in heaven, if you are living in heaven, then the physical realm is not a big deal. You change reality and the shadow changes. What you bind on earth will be bound in heaven. If a shadow of your hand is cast on the wall, if you change the shape of your hand, the shadow has to follow. If I am making my hand into the shape of a duck and then I make it in the shape of a rabbit, the shadow has to follow! So when you change realities, the shadow changes. Because Jesus lived His life in fellowship with the Father and He was seated in heavenly realms and was in fellowship with the Father, He only did the “reality” of what He saw the Father doing. That’s reality. He didn’t live in the figment of His imagination. He didn’t live for Himself

in the mirage. Could you ever drink a mirage? Maybe you've seen the picture of a man crawling across the Sahara Desert and he sees a mirage of a lemonade stand and he tries to grab a glass of lemonade and drink it. It's not very satisfying, is it? It **looked** good, but when he tried to drink it, it didn't satisfy him. And that is what happens, if we live for the "mirage" of pleasure. When we live for our hobbies or alcohol and drugs or power or money, we are living for a mirage and it **can't** satisfy because it is in the physical realm and **you were created in the image of God for heavenly realm satisfaction**. Amen! All spiritual blessings, not some but **all** of them, are in heavenly realms. Every last one of them. The rest of it is just drinking a cup of sand. It's not going to satisfy the thirst.

So Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil, and because He lives in heavenly realms, guess what? We've seen miracles in God conquering health problems and other things. Why? Because heavenly realms has dominion over physical realms. If you change the reality in heaven the shadow changes. That's why Jesus could walk on water, because He was in heavenly realms. He was "physical," He was a man, but His life was hidden in Christ, if you will, because Christ is in heavenly realms. He hid His life in God the Father, and for that reason the physical realm couldn't take dominion over Him. It didn't have authority over Him. He said, "The prince of this world is coming, and he has no hold on Me" (Jn. 14:30). He could say that because He lived in fellowship with the Father, and living in fellowship with the Father puts you in heavenly realms where the physical realm cannot control you anymore. "Peace, be still" to a storm. Or, like Elijah who was "a man like us." The Holy Spirit made that so clear! A man of like passions. A man, just like us. And this man commanded the clouds not to rain for three and a half years *and they did not rain*. "Sun, stand still." And it did. Why? Because it's a shadow of the reality in heaven. Even the sun. A New Moon festival is in heavenly realms also. The one on Earth is just a shadow of the festival of New Moons in heavenly realms.

## And Remember, Reconciliation Comes by Death

That's what Jesus came to do. He came to conquer and to humiliate by His blood, by His death. And I want you to know this too, that the way back into heavenly realms is **by death**. It's by a death to our life. That's what Jesus did. In Colossians 2 it says that He conquered satan, made an open show and publicly humiliated him. Does that sound good to you? To stick your tongue out at satan and say, "You can't have my life"? To

publicly humiliate satan? Well, that happened by Jesus' death on the cross, and that is the way **we** step into heavenly realms too. "*Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me.*" Die to your own passions. Die to your own selfishness. Die to gratifying the flesh. Die to those things and call on the name of the Lord. There is that freedom and that new power that comes from being reunited with Christ in heavenly realms to destroy the works of the devil.

## Son of MAN...Salvation!

Jesus was called over and over again "the Son of Man," and He referred to Himself a number of times as "the Son of Man." But the devil only called Him "the Son of God." "*Many deceivers who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is a liar, the deceiver and the antichrist*" (2Jn. 7). What is this antichrist? What does this wicked, demonic person do? They deny that Jesus came in the flesh. Why? Because they have no discernment about a kingdom they are not part of. They can't see it. And even beyond that, if satan can prove (which he can't) that God is "up there" and man is "down here," then he's got us all in his stronghold. But there is a man named Jesus Christ who was part God and part man—VERY MUCH a man. He came in the flesh and had flesh and bones like we do—and still He conquered satan. So guess what? The gig's over! There is nothing satan can do to us anymore. If Jesus Christ came in the flesh, then there is nothing satan can do to us anymore, because a **man** has conquered satan. A man in the heavenly realms has drawn on the power of God to push satan out of His life, to destroy the works of the devil. So we too can declare: "The prince of this world has come, *but he has no hold on me* because I am seated with Christ in the heavenly realms. Christ took captives in His train and gave gifts to men and delivered them in heavenly realms...salvation is full and free."

Salvation! We think of that as, "Well, salvation means when I die I can go to heaven and my sins are forgiven." I want to tell you what salvation is. **Salvation is the restoration of the glory of God in heavenly realms to a person's soul.** It's the restoration of what man was created for in the first place. He was created to be in the image of God. Salvation is the restoration of His fullness in the glory of God. We've sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. But when we call on the name of the Lord—cry out for salvation, identify with Christ and die to our sins—at that moment in time Christ has reconciled us to God the Father so that the glory of God in heavenly realms is restored to us. Satan can't deal with that because Jesus came in the flesh and as a man in the image of God

conquered satan. That was the end of it. The ball game was over. That's good. That's very good.

This message that Jesus declared was that the kingdom of God was at hand, "Thy kingdom come," the restoration of the kingdom of God and the kingdom of man, heavenly realms and physical realms. There would be a restoration of those things. The kingdom is coming. "A time is coming," saith the Lord, "when I will breathe my spirit in them. I will turn their hearts of stone into hearts of flesh, and I will pour out my spirit on all men. John baptized you in water, but Jesus will baptize you in the Holy Spirit." He will baptize you in a divine nature. In the nature of the Glory of God, not just a physical thing, but something of a heavenly thing. The heavenly realms are going to be poured out into your life when you become a disciple of Jesus, a Christian. *Then* you will share in the divine nature.

As we are restored in heavenly realms, there are some other things that happen. In 2 Corinthians 10 it says that we can tear down satan's strongholds. We use divine weapons. We use weapons in heavenly realms—not of this world, but in heavenly realms—to destroy satan's strongholds, to destroy the works of the devil and to have authority over the works of the devil.

## One New Man

In Ephesians 1, Paul writes to Christians, *"I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you might know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints..."* When is that going to happen? When is the glorious inheritance? Now! Paul said He "has blessed us (past tense) with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus" and "he seated us (past tense) in heavenly realms." Paul is saying I want you to open your eyes to the glorious inheritance of the heavenly realms that God has given you *"...and his incomparably great power for us who believe [those who are seated with Christ in heavenly realms]. That power is like the same power that raised Christ from the dead and seated Him in heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and every title that can be given. Not only in the present age, but also in the age to come"* (Eph. 1:18-21). When you are seated with Christ in heavenly realms, it is far above any authority, over any power. Far above satan. Not a little bit above, but *far above* satan. All authority, dominion, and power. *"And God placed all things under Jesus' feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the Church, which is His Body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way."* Now you see the church coming in to play.

“I can be a Christian, but I don’t need the church.” Wrong. Because God in His infinite wisdom said that Jesus Christ is the head of His Body, and IN His Body He has chosen to invest HIS SON as “the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way.” COULD there be someone who says they love Jesus, but wouldn’t want THAT?! Unless you are a daily part of a local body of true Heaven-Born Believers, a Lampstand (not simply an “attendance-based” clergy-laity organization), you are missing SO much, for yourself and your family. A REAL Church is to be a daily Christ-honoring, Christ-centered, Bible-believing people who are walking in obedience to God—not just talking about it.

There is no such thing as an “independent Christian” running around *BECAUSE* God saw fit to breathe the fullness of deity—of the divine nature—into His Body, which, He says, is the Church. “*I will build my church and the gates of hell cannot stand against it.*” The power of hell is no match for the Church, for a Body of people that are joined together heart, soul, mind and strength, laying down their lives for one another, “loving each other,” “sharing all things in common,” “daily and in public and from house to house,” “enjoying the favor of all the people,” enjoying the favor of God and seeing the presence of God in the things they are doing.

The Church was and is God’s divine plan for extending the power of Jesus Christ from the heavenly realms. The heavenly realms is located in the Church. Not simply in “isolated” believers. That is why Jesus said, “Where two or three are gathered in My name, there I am in their midst.” He wants to draw us together... “confessing sins one to another” and “bearing each other’s burdens.” If we are not relating to one another, like Paul said in 1 Corinthians 12, then we don’t have that power.

The Body has many members: “*The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ*” (1Cor. 12:12). The Greek has a definite article before Christ—“so it is with THE Christ.” He goes on to say: “*For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body...*” You see the descending heavenly realms there. But if you were to read this carefully I think what you’d see is that the Body is called THE Christ. “So it is with Christ.” That’s not referring to Jesus. That’s referring to Jesus’ Body, which is the Church, and it says that we are one Body and we are “the Christ.” We are the Christ. We are God incarnate. We are the “word become flesh.” Now, I say that in a sense where I know these awesome things are “mind-boggling,” and I want to say them as carefully and as reverently as I can. But this is very truly the nature of what God has said that His people are. **The Body** is the same Spirit that dwelt in Jesus, that gave Him Life and gave Him fellowship with the Father. It is the same

Spirit that gave Him authority over the dark warrior, and is the same spirit that lives collectively within us. The fullness of deity dwells *in us as His Church*, as His Body, and we are called THE Church...THE Christ...THE Body, almost synonymously all in just a few verses (1Cor. 12).

*“Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called ‘uncircumcised’ by those who call themselves ‘the circumcision’...remember that at that time you were separate from Christ...”* [Christ is in heavenly realms and you weren’t] *“...you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise...”*

There are no spiritual blessings outside of Christ. You are “...without hope and without God in the world...” ***Do you see that? Without Christ, without Jesus the Son of God, you are without hope and without God in the world.***

*“But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ, for he himself is our peace who has made the two one, has destroyed the barrier by dividing the wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself **one new man** out of the two, thus making peace and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross.”* [That’s how the reconciliation comes], *“...through the cross by which he put to death their hostility.”* He reconciled the hostility. *“He came and proclaimed peace to you who were far away and peace to those who are near. For through him we both have access to the Father **by one spirit**. Consequently you are no longer foreigners and aliens but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, being built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In Christ the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord, and in him you too are being built with ever-increasing glory together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his spirit”* (Ephesians 2:11-22).

“A habitation of God through the spirit,” the King James version says. You are becoming a habitation of God through His Spirit. You no longer live as the Gentiles do in the futility of their thinking. They are separate from God and have lost all sensitivity. When Paul is speaking of Gentiles, he is not talking about simply Jew vs. non-Jew. He is talking about someone who is an alien—a foreigner—to the promise of God, dead in his transgressions and cut off from the life of God. There is no Life in him. He is without hope and without God in the world. And yet we are *reconciled* by the cross of Jesus, by the blood of Christ, and we are made **one new man**. One man. We are made the Christ. We are made one man that now has the same power that rose Jesus from the dead. Ephesians 1 says that power is

over principalities and powers and dominions. It is over all those things because Christ dwells in His Body on planet Earth. The Kingdom of God has come, and now the heavenly realms have descended and now have been reconciled back with the physical realm that was once an enemy, an alien, a foreigner. Now we're becoming the habitation of God through the Spirit. Heavenly realms. We've penetrated through Jesus back into what God always intended. That's the definition of salvation.

## More Thoughts About the Heavenly Realms

**Angels.** How about angels? What are angels for, according to the last verse of Hebrews 1? *“Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?”* Ministering spirits to those who are elect, those who are receiving eternal life...those who are seated in heavenly realms. Now the angels can interact with us because we are in heavenly realms where they are. What are angels for? They are ministering servants for those that will inherit eternal life. That's their purpose: to serve those that are inheriting eternal life, those that are in the image of God, those who are part man and part God. They have dominion, and the angels are sent to be our ministers or our servants.

**Prayer.** Prayer is called incense. “And the angels opened the bowl of incense which was the prayer of the saints.” Our prayer, the prayer of a saint, penetrates through the physical realm. We think, “These are just words. They fall to the ground. They bounce off the ceiling.” Uh-uh. No. God sees them in His realm. We hear them in our world, but God hears them in His world. He hears them in heavenly realms as a tangible being. Our prayers are a shadow of the reality in heaven. The reality in heaven of our prayers is **incense** to God. It is a sweet aroma to Him. Don't think when you are spending a lot of time in prayer that you are wasting your time because you are interjecting yourself, your life, into heavenly realms. “Come into my gates with thanksgiving, and into my courts with praise.” We are coming into heavenly realms where Jesus is seated. When we praise and when we have thanksgiving it is a tangible thing in heavenly realms.

**Evangelism.** This thing we call “evangelism.” Paul told Philemon, *“I pray that you will be active in sharing your faith so that you will have an understanding of all the good things that we have in Christ Jesus”* (Phm. 1:6). In sharing the Kingdom of God with someone, you'll begin to experience more and more of the good things that we have in heavenly realms, the spiritual blessings in Christ. When we start to knock on satan's door,

when we start to kick down the gates of hell, we are moving ourselves and bringing others into heavenly realms, and now **we** can begin to see the spiritual blessings that are in Christ Jesus.

Therefore, I encourage you to “be active in sharing your faith.” Not just because God said so, but so that you will have an “understanding”...so that the eyes of your heart will be enlightened to understand all the awesome blessings that we have in Christ Jesus. See that? I know from experience that’s true. I never “knew it” on paper. I found it out in reality long before I ever knew that verse was in the Bible! That’s absolutely true. Start sharing your faith and see if you don’t understand the blessings of the riches. If you are not reaching into the realities of heavenly realms and spiritual blessings, you might check that part of your life *because God made that a highway into His presence*. Use it. Bring somebody with you.

**Rainbows.** There is a rainbow around the throne of God in heaven. Rainbows have been in the Heavens long before the earth was. God said to the human race, “I’m going to give you a rainbow and whenever I see this rainbow I will be reminded of the covenant that I made with you.” So God took something from the heavenly realms and threw it down to planet Earth and said, “Hmmm, I like this up here. I’ll let you guys enjoy that too, and when I see that shadow I will be reminded of the reality of my faithfulness to you and my covenant that I have made with you.”

## Initiation

*“Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life” (Rom. 6:3-4).* We, too, might step back into the reality of heavenly realms in our life. In Colossians 2 it says that because of Christ’s death He became the *firstborn* from the dead. The stone was rolled back and now He’s sharing the glories of a **heavenly body**, one that can walk through walls, etc. Even more glorious is what He did *before* He died: He made an open show, a public spectacle of satan, triumphing over satan in the cross, in His **willing death**, in His willing surrender for other people. He died to Himself and His own rights. He died for other people. He made himself nothing and took on the form of a servant, and in that death to sin and selfishness and self-centeredness, He conquered satan. If you too will die, as He died, then you will deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Him. That’s why it says, “You cannot be my disciple unless you have forsaken your very life.” That’s **why**...because it

can only happen through death. “Unless a seed falls to the ground and dies, it abides alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit. Therefore, whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” You’ll *find* your life if you will die to sin and selfishness. If you’ll die to your rights and to your old way of thinking and start exchanging your thoughts for the thoughts of God, you’ll *find* your life. When you start exchanging everything for the realities of God (renewing your mind, not conforming any longer to the patterns of this world, but offering your body as a living sacrifice and renewing your mind in the image of God, the thoughts of God, the will of God, the ways of God, and the word of God)... when you die to yourself and you take that death and you bury it under the water in the initial stages in baptism, then “just as he was raised in the glory of the Father **you too** can be raised in the glory of the Father.”

“We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory.” And that glory was in heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. How do you restore that glory? How do you have a new life? The death in sin and transgressions—how do we walk back into the fullness of what God intended for us to have from the beginning? There is a death, a calling on the name of the Lord, which is what baptism is. *“This water symbolizes baptism which saves you also” (1Pet 3:21). Not by taking a bath, but by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. “Arise and be baptized, washing away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).* 1 Peter 3:21 says that baptism is a “pledge” or an “appeal” of a good conscience towards God. It is calling on the name of the Lord. That’s what it’s all about. You die to your own rights and selfishness as Jesus did, and just as Jesus was buried and came out into a brand new life, so do we. And now, as we understand the reality of that, we realize that what we’re doing is restoring ourselves to heavenly realms. New life, it says. “Behold, all things are new.” The old is passed away. We’re new creations in Christ Jesus. With unveiled faces we are being transformed with ever-increasing glory back into the spiritual blessings of heavenly realms which we lost when sin came over the top of us. All that remains is to renew our minds. I pray that the eyes of your heart will be enlightened to all the power that raised Jesus from the dead.

## Renew Your Minds!

Establish your thoughts as “dung” and His thoughts as reality. Throw away the shadows and grab hold of the realities of heaven. Someone says, “What difference does ‘doctrine’ make?” It makes all the difference in the world! Because all the commands are a shadow of the realities in heaven. You cannot keep your own ways and your own rights and your own way of

thinking and say, “Well, I always grew up this way” and I think that it’s okay. It is *not* okay. When you do that you’re missing the **glory of God** and the reality of heavenly realms. Our job is to continually exchange our thoughts for God’s thoughts. Think on these things...whatever is pure and loving and praise-worthy.

Renew your mind in the thoughts of God. Any thought that you happen to have about any subject in the universe, forget it! Find out what God’s thought is. **Renew your mind** in the thoughts of God. That is all that remains—that the eyes of your heart and your mind be enlightened. Before, the problem was futility of thinking. There was a mind problem. Now, with ever-increasing glory, we are throwing off *our* thoughts, and grabbing hold of God’s thoughts and making them ours. As we do that, with ever-increasing glory, we move into the promises of God and the power of God and the reality of heavenly realms that are in Christ Jesus. “I am the truth.” “You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.” Those things are vital to moving ahead in the power and the authority and the love of Jesus.

So, there’s the “initiation”...that the seed falls to the ground and dies. We *die* to our rights to have our own opinions. Now, all that matters is Truth. God’s thoughts. That’s what Jesus did...“I say nothing on my own. I do nothing on my own. I am in fellowship with the Father, and, Father, I pray that Your Glory will be on them and that they will be one as You and I are one, in mind and in thought.”

That’s God’s intention for us. And in the Body being one in thought and unity, it is also one in the glory of heavenly realms because **the Church** is the fullness of deity. We’ve got to be together on this. There is no way to pull apart from it. There is an initiation individually of death to rights, and as we die to ourselves, we are fellowshiping with Christ Jesus and with each other. Our fellowship with each other is dependent on our fellowship with Christ, and our fellowship with Christ is dependent on our fellowship with each other, says the apostle John in 1 John 1. It is the Body, the Church, that together will restore the glory of God to planet Earth...that will make His enemies His footstool...that will destroy the gates of hell, *together*. It’s His Body as a unit—The Christ, The Body, One in *Spirit*—that will do *all* of that.

## The Kingdoms Merge

Here we will see the end of the story: “*But someone may ask, ‘How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?’ How foolish! What*

you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat, or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives it its own body. All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals another, birds another and fish another. There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another; and star differs from star in splendor. So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. **So it is written: ‘The first man Adam became a living being’; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit.** The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven” (1 Corinthians 15:35-49).

Then Paul goes on to talk about the perishable and the imperishable: “...Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:54-58).

The fulfillment of all these things is when we see Him face to face, and finally the completed process. “Now we see in the mirror dimly, but then we shall see him face to face.” The completed process of “ever-increasing glory” will come at that point when the Judgment Day comes and He returns for us in the clouds; and now we are seeing Him dimly, and as we are seeing Him with unveiled faces, we become more and more like Him. No one can see God except they die. Anyone who sees God dies. And as we see more and more of God, more and more of the flesh dies, and more and more of the Spirit is released in us. It’s a really powerful thing!

We can see in Revelation 21 that finally the kingdoms merge: “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a

*bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them'" (Revelation 21:1-3).*

In Ephesians it says we are *becoming* the habitation. It does not happen on Judgment Day. It is already happening. We **are becoming** the habitation of God. *"Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away"* (Rev. 21:3-4). The physical realm has been dissolved, and now the reality of heavenly realms becomes all that we are doing, all that we are.

*"He who was seated on the throne [in heavenly realms] said, 'I am making everything new!' Then he said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.' He said to me, 'It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End..."* (Rev. 21:5-6). I was before creation and I am going to see the end of things, too. I AM WHO AM. Before Abraham was, I was. I AM. The beginning and the end. *"...To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death"* (Rev. 21:6-8). Those were all things that were consumed with the physical nature, conforming to the patterns of this world. Not a renewing, but a conforming to the ways of the prince of the power of the air. The wrong side of heavenly realms.

If we live for all those things in the physical realm, if we choose to live for that house with the white picket fence, if we choose to live for families or jobs or our pride or our selfishness, if we make that choice to follow the natural realm, the physical earth...then we will burn as the physical realm will burn. But *if* we renew our minds in the thoughts of God, call on the name of the Lord with unveiled faces and look into the face of Jesus, into the image of the invisible God and the radiance of God...*if* we look to Him and draw on Him and call out an appeal with a good conscience towards Him...*if* we die to our sin, ourselves, our rights, our thoughts, our plans, and our desires...*if* we die to those things and we bury it...**THEN, we'll rise to walk in a new Life that's full of glory, and the glory of the Father is restored to planet Earth.**

*"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."* The heavenly realm and the earthly realm merge in the Kingdom of God, called

the Church, and called a Christian, a disciple. The two realms merge and end up being a partaker of the divine nature. That's the inheritance, that as we renew our minds we move further into the spiritual blessings that are in Christ Jesus. Everybody for doing that? ☺

## Incense

*Holy Father, these are just words, and we know that You are an infinite God in a realm that we can't imagine or understand. It is more than we can ask or imagine. Glorious Father, we pray that You will continue to open the eyes of our hearts, to enlighten us to the riches that are one place and one place alone—In Christ Jesus. We pray that we'll look deeply into His eyes and walk in His steps, longing to pass out of the natural realm and longing to continually renew ourselves, no longer in futility of thinking and foolishness of darkened hearts, but in eyes that have had a light to shine upon us in the face of Jesus.*

*Our Father, we ask You that You would not "give" us spiritual blessings, but that You would allow us to move deeper into a **love relationship** with Jesus Christ where those spiritual blessings are. We pray that we will leave behind the patterns of this world and renew our lives and our thinking continually in You. Father, we pray that every person that claims to walk in You has in fact died to self and selfishness and goals and plans and has died to everything in the physical realm that will be burnt up. We pray that every person claiming to wear your name is investing and storing up treasures in heavenly realms, a life that is waiting for us in the imperishable realm.*

*Father, Your Son said that He went to prepare a place for us, and if it were not so He would have told us. He has prepared a mansion for us; He has prepared a glorious inheritance. Father, we ask that You'd teach us right now in this life to share in the realities—while in the mortal body—of the riches that You have given us in Jesus. Father, help us to shed the old skin, the old man, and to live for and to long for the fullness of Jesus Christ and be that new creation that You meant for us to be. Help us to kick down the gates of hell as one man, as a Body joined, as a Church joined in Your name, loving each other, laying down our lives for each other, tossing aside our differences, tossing aside the personality quirks, and penetrating into the fullness of deity through that agape love that pours out of Your Kingdom into our lives. Our Father, make it a reality. We pray that these things will not go unattended in our lives. Amen.*

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# Quantum Life

*Thursday Afternoon, October 24, 2002*

**A**n interesting discovery amongst scientists once again demonstrates a Spiritual reality, at the expense of conventional scientific thought. I love it when that happens. ☺

While Einstein and his counterparts taught “the speed of light” is a limiter of any activity, some recent experiments (and now explanations of past experiments that “made no sense” at the time) have led to an interesting discovery. Notice the Spiritual application as you read. Science, math, music...are all “shadows of the Reality that is in Christ!” And it seems that the more that is “discovered” (such as the “Bose-Einstein Condensate”—a newly discovered state of matter that has MUCH to say about the Nature of the Body of Christ!), the more it all points towards Spiritual Principles.

This latest discovery in the field of Quantum Physics has blown the minds of many scientists. It is related to a state of affairs amongst subatomic particles, when two particles become “entangled” with one another. It is known amongst scientists, clever guys that they are, as “Entanglement.”

As you read this excerpt below, enjoy the fact that GOD, and often HIS PEOPLE, have always violated the “laws” of the physical world. Not a big deal, when you’re “seated with Christ in *heavenly realms*.” You can think of many examples. Jesus walking through locked doors, Peter walking on water, men and women of God knowing things they couldn’t know, Philip’s “beaming away” (Acts 8:39) from the Ethiopian, axe heads floating, and ten thousand other such instances. And, it’s just entertaining to see scientists scratching their heads when things “can’t happen”—but they themselves have proven that they *CAN* and *DO* happen. ☺ Even in their boring worlds where souls are not at issue, dust to dust.

Notice in this excerpt about subatomic particle “Entanglement”... that solid Disciples of Jesus do this “Entanglement” stuff all the time! When we live as the daily Body of Christ, it makes perfect sense that it *would* be this way! “We being many are ONE.” “When one part suffers, the whole Body suffers.” “Contending as One Man for the Faith.” Just normal Connected Life!

“Entanglement” occurs when two subatomic particles are somehow connected or “entangled” with one another, so that when something happens to one particle, the same thing simultaneously happens to the other

particle, even if it's miles away. However, this concept violates the theory of special relativity, since communication between two places cannot occur faster than the speed of light. In the last decade, researchers have shown in laboratory experiments that entanglement does indeed happen, and in one case it occurred over a distance of almost 10 miles.

(By the way, you really *ought* to check into the Bose-Einstein Condensate while you're at it! It is an amazing visual aid gift from Father to describe what He Desires in His People.)

## Implosion and Explosion of a Bose-Einstein Condensate “Bosenova”

“In a Bose-Einstein condensate, virtually all the atoms in the ultra-cold gas fall into the lowest-energy quantum mechanical state. Spread out in space, they become superimposed on one another, each indistinguishable from the other, creating what has been called a ‘superatom.’ In quantum-dynamic terms, the same “wave function” describes them all.

“By making a Bose-Einstein condensate in a particular isotope—rubidium-85—and then changing the magnetic field in which the BEC is sitting, researchers can adjust the wavefunction's self-interaction between repulsion and attraction. If the self-interaction is repulsive, all the parts of the wavefunction push each other away. If it is attractive, they all pull towards each other, like gravity. Achieving a pure BEC in rubidium-85 required the cloud of atoms to be cooled to about 3 billionths of a degree above absolute zero, the lowest temperature ever achieved.

“Making the self-interaction mildly repulsive causes the condensate to swell up in a controlled manner, as predicted by theory. However, when the magnetic field is adjusted to make the interaction attractive, dramatic and very unexpected effects are observed.

“The condensate first shrinks as expected, but rather than gradually clumping together in a mass, there is instead a sudden explosion of atoms outward. This ‘explosion,’ which actually corresponds to a tiny amount of energy by normal standards, continues for a few thousandths of a second. Left behind is a small cold remnant condensate surrounded by the expanding gas of the explosion. About half the original atoms in the condensate seem to have vanished in that they are not seen in either the remnant or the expanding gas cloud.

“Since the phenomenon looks very much like a tiny supernova, or exploding star, the JILA team dubbed it a ‘Bosenova.’ The most surprising thing about the Bosenova is that the fundamental physical process behind the explosion is still a mystery.”

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# Tasting the Powers of the Coming Age

*Some Practical Applications (Part 1)*

*April 1999*

## A Christian: Taster of Heaven

Ephesians 1 says that a person who believes the Good News of Jesus becomes a sharer of the Holy Spirit. There are numerous other places (Galatians 3, etc.) where the assumption is made that if you have really given your life to Jesus, you are now automatically, by definition, sharing the Good things of the Holy Spirit. That's the gift. That's the deposit that guarantees the inheritance. In Hebrews 6 we find a whole list of some very basic descriptions of a Christian. "...*who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God* (like newborn babes, every Christian craves the pure spiritual milk of the word) *and the powers of the coming age...*" They have tasted the goodness of the Word of God, and they have tasted the power of the age to come. That expression is listed amongst a whole list of expressions that are just very basic, common descriptive words of a Christian. A Christian is a person who has tasted the word of God and found it to be good. A person that is a Christian is a person who is enlightened. Jesus said that *His* church would be built out of people who have a revelation that flesh and blood did not reveal to them, but the Father from heaven revealed. So, obviously, a Christian, a person who is part of Jesus' church, is someone who is enlightened, and who has come to share in the Holy Spirit because they believe God. They love God; they love the Word of God; they have the Holy Spirit living inside of them, and they have tasted the powers of the coming age. Tasting the powers of the coming age is just one of many things that describes what a Christian is experiencing.

So, the assumption is that when this expression is used in the Bible, it is used to describe the common experience of every believer. That's the assumption the Hebrews writer makes: tasting the powers of the coming

age is for every believer. It's just as common as sharing in the Holy Spirit. And anyone who doesn't share in the Holy Spirit, it says in Romans 8, isn't even part of Him. Sharing in the Holy Spirit, loving God, loving the Word of God, tasting the powers of the coming age—these are just basic, fundamental things that the Hebrews writer assumed they would understand and experience.

## A Gift: Entrance Into the Eternal

Titus 1 talks about the eternal life, and “before there was time, God created...” When you think of eternal life you normally think of salvation—a person who is saved receives the gift of eternal life. “Whoever believes in Him shall not perish but shall receive everlasting life.” You normally think of eternal life as being salvation. But there is a broader way to look at that. A person who is saved (who is washed in the blood of Jesus) receives a gift of entrance into the eternal realm—seated with Christ in heavenly realms. It's an invitation into the *Real* world where everything is eternal. “Everything that can be shaken will be shaken.” “What is seen is temporary, what is unseen is eternal.” Eternal Life. The Unseen. You are being invited into the unseen world that is eternal when you receive eternal life. Now, something inside of you *always was* and *always will be*, and now you can *relate* to the unseen realm.

I was thinking about the video *In Remembrance* when Judas was reflecting about why he made the choice he did. He said, “This is the only world I know. I want something I can touch, something I can taste. This is the only reality I know, the only world I can prove and grab onto.” You can see what happens when you decide to live for the seen world. You begin to invest your priorities in what can be seen and touched and tasted. You want to hedge your bet on the seen world with your comfort, reputation, friendships in the world, possessions, man-pleasing, and making sure everyone likes you. We certainly don't want to rock any boats too much. We don't want to lose our jobs because we stand for something, so we milk toast our convictions; we water life down. That's what Judas did. That's how Judas ended up hanging himself and spending eternity in the abyss—because he chose to live in the seen realm.

## A Choice: Priorities

Eternal life is to choose to live in what can't be seen. What is seen is temporary; what is unseen is eternal—whoever believes in Him shall receive eternal life. *The process of salvation itself is to live in the unseen*

*world with a priority system that reflects the fact that we know this is temporary.* This seen world is a mirage, a shadow. This is not where my allegiance is going. It's not where my heart is going, and it's not where my loyalties are. I fear nothing here. I embrace nothing here. I'm obsessed with nothing here. I use the things in the seen realm, but I'm not used by them, as Paul said. He went through this list to the Corinthians saying, "We are here, but so what?" They are only tools, temporary tools. We have possessions, but we will not be possessed by them. They will not influence our decisions, decide what we say, decide what we do, or decide who we will confront or challenge. The seen realm won't decide anything about our decisions because what is seen is temporary, and what is unseen is eternal. Whoever believes in Him shall receive and live in the eternal, the unseen, and that's where his priority system is.

All of this is really as basic as salvation itself. It's a different priority system because it is based on the real and not the temporal. It's based on the reality and not the shadow. It's a fool who tries to eat a shadow. It's a fool who tries to buy a shadow; it's a fool who falls in love with a shadow. It's a fool who decides to befriend a shadow and have a relationship with a shadow. You are just not going to do that if you are wise, if you understand what all this really is. Your priority system is not going to be in any way controlled by, or influenced by, whether or not your boss is mad at you because you decided to stand for something. You're not going to be controlled by whether or not you have to say something to a co-worker, or someone in line at the grocery store, or at a restaurant, or at a religious facility or etc. Those things are just not issues because there is nothing of this realm that is going to control or influence our decisions. What is seen is temporary; what is unseen is eternal. *And the gift of God is eternal life.* That's where we live now, and those are the choices we make. Our choices are reflected not by the shadows that control everyone who lives in the "Matrix," but by the reality of what's really true: who Jesus really is, and what He really stands for.



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# Tasting the Powers of the Coming Age

*Some Practical Applications (Part 2)*

*April 1999*

## The Real World is Unseen

It ought to be very clearly on your mind that it is incumbent upon you to make sure that every one of the children understands that this world we are living in is not the real world. It's not the real thing. It's not what we live for, it's not what we put our energy in, and it's not what we care about. ***The REAL world is a world that is UNSEEN.*** All the unseen issues of Authority, Love, Grace, Prayer, Worship, Forgiveness, Angels, Freedom, Wisdom, True Relationship, Light—***THESE*** things are the REAL and tangible things from God's View of planet Earth. And the reality of all of those things is in the unseen world—***NOT*** the seen world.

“Mere humans” (as God called those who can ONLY see temporary and three-dimensional objects) are BLIND to the only things that are REAL, and controlled by things that are only “shadows” and “object lessons” in the visible world. I think it is so important to see that our job is to raise up a generation that can see these things and comprehend what this planet is for. ***They need to see their place in the world, and need to learn how to see through the image into the reality.*** We want them to see through the shadow to find what the shadow points to. They need to run with all their might after the real things and not after the shadows.

## Show Them

Take this seriously. These things have to be so much a part of you that you could actually, in turn, help others to see something in this present age that is beyond the end of their nose. Teaching others to taste the powers of the coming age is a responsibility ***you can't neglect.*** “I'm going to show these people something that you, satan, don't want them to see.” That's

your job with co-workers, neighbors, relatives, and your children. Show them something the enemy does not want them to see. Show them that the world has been pulled over their eyes to blind them to the truth. Teach them to see what is real—that *they are prisoners, slaves in this present dying, decaying age.*

YET, they were born to live and to have *abundant life*. They were born to have true life—to taste the powers of the coming age and to be seated with Christ in heavenly realms. They are not meant to be slaves bound to this decaying, fallen world. They are not meant to be slaves to their lustful pursuits and the futility of their thinking. They are not to be bound by the empty darkness of their hearts and understanding—being slaves *pushed around by hormones and moods and selfish desires* that have enslaved the present age and those who have lived for pleasure.

Those people are dead even while they live. No matter how nice they are, no matter how talented they are, no matter how intelligent they are, no matter how accomplished they are in a fallen world—what difference does it make? “I’m an expert shadow maker.” So what? “I’m an expert at manipulating shadows.” So what? The real issue is what are you going to do in the real world, in the unseen world, which is eternal? Is that where you will live and will that be where you make your mark? Will you just push around little piles of sand your whole life and allow everyone else around you to do the same? Are you going to pat them on the back? “Oh, you did such a good job when you did basketball, or soccer, or your job so well. You pushed that pile of sand from here to there. Congratulations! You should feel really good about that. You should just drool all over yourself about how wonderful it is to push a pile of sand from point A to point B.”

## See Through the Mirage

We can’t let our children grow up thinking that this present age has any meaning in and of itself. This life is an opportunity to stand tall and say, “I’m going to show everyone around me what you don’t want them to see, satan. I’m going to show them that this world has been pulled over the eyes of the whole population. Satan wants us to be a whole race of slaves that think we are having fun, that think we are free, that think our lives have meaning. Then, “Poof! Flush!” down into the abyss goes everyone who lived for themselves, religious or not, with nothing left to show for it all. Let’s make sure there is a *clear focus* in our own hearts day-to-day and with any job that we have. The vendors, the employees, the co-workers—whoever they are; it’s just an opportunity to say, “You’ve

had a world pulled over your eyes to blind you to the truth. And I want to tell you about something that the enemy doesn't want you to know. This world is a *mirage*. That's a sandcastle that you have just spent your life building, and it's going to blow away! It's going to dry up and blow away. It doesn't mean a thing. You need to understand that there are heavenly realms. There is a whole unseen universe that you can't see because you are dead in your transgressions and sins. You are darkened in your heart and mind in the futility of your thinking. You are darkened because you have decided to worship the created thing rather than the Creator, who is ever to be praised. You've been given over to a depraved mind, and yet Jesus is extending His hand to pull you into the *real world*. THE ONE raised from the dead, can see things as they really are and can pull you into the real world where you are not a slave anymore."

## Time is Short: Use it Wisely

That is the opportunity that lies in front of us with these children who live among us as students. They are here to be *raised as a tribe*, as a race. They are not here so that we can simply feed them and educate them in math, science and handwriting. This is not just another one of our jobs. We do the laundry, we go to work, we mow the lawn, we piddle in the yard, we paint the walls (and paint them again and then we paint them again), and we also educate our children. That's not really what children are for. Our responsibility is to take our live-in students and *show them what life really is*. Not what everybody else *thinks* it is, but what it really is. They are *live-in students*. We want to use our opportunities wisely. The days are both short and evil.

The phrase, "Say a little prayer for me" made me sick to my stomach long before I was a Christian, except back then I didn't know why. "Say a little prayer for me." What does that mean? That is so pathetic! That is so sickening—so much of a fallen world and superstition. It's disgusting. We don't teach our children to "pray," we teach our children to commune with the Godhead. That is *very different*. We don't teach them to say "little prayers." We teach them that this world means *nothing*. We teach them that this world is *an illusion*. And we teach them to speak to the author of the unseen realm and the conqueror of everything that is in the seen world. This little papier-mâché world that you can stick your hand right through is so meaningless, so trivial. We teach our children to go past that. We teach them to see past that and to talk to the God who created all of this illusion, this cardboard world that we live in. We teach them to talk to, communicate with, and present requests before the One who made all of

this—the One who lives in the unseen realm. We don't teach them to say their "prayers." We teach them to look past the seen world—and THAT is what this thing called "prayer" is!

## A "Good" Mother or Father

What is the definition of a "good" mother or a "good" father? It's not about simply providing the children with food, clothing, and shelter, or taking them to the zoo, golfing, flying kites, riding bicycles, family dinners and "devotionals," growing gardens, passing or dribbling a ball with them, painting pictures, and educating them. A "good" mother or father is one who leads the children to the REAL Jesus, in intimacy, and zeal, and love, and total abandonment—and demonstrates all of that daily, amongst the Saints themselves. Anything less is subtly but surely DESTROYING our children (as nice and warm and fuzzy as it may seem), by teaching them a value system that will lead them towards dullness, deception, and death. Let's do it Right, in Him and through Him, for His Glory!

That is to say, imagine I lived in a third world country such as Mozambique. Trees are rare there, as you know. Now, what IF (hypothetical illustration) generations have been taught that feeding children sawdust was what made and kept children healthy? I might fight and kick and scratch, and travel extensively and work sacrificially, to find a way to "*Get sawdust for my dear children!*" If I *thought* sawdust was extremely nutritious, and my children's illnesses were caused by sawdust deficiency, I would pour great energy into acquiring sawdust, at the expense of other personal goals and desires.

You are viewing the temporal as nutritious and essential for your "family's" well-being. You are convinced of it, based on your upbringing and your inherited value system, and lack of clear vision of the UnSeen Realm. In the scenario represented of your daily functioning, you feed your children that which will *kill* them, thinking that it is life-sustaining. Sawdust or methanol in the bloodstream is *toxic* and *accumulates into death*. It is not nutritious. We serve a myth when we do that! Your efforts are misguided, if you are seeking primarily to provide that which cannot bring or protect life (education, emotional bonding, food and shelter, fun, etc) at the expense of the *only* things that *can* sustain and protect. Only focus and sacrifice and passion (and decisions and time which reflect "seeking FIRST the Kingdom" as Priority ONE,) for Jesus of Nazareth and that which are His—are *alive* with Possibility and Miracles and Meaning. We find our lives...by *losing* them. Ouch. The other stuff takes care of itself, as Jesus said. And it truly does, at a level

FAR beyond what we could achieve on our own efforts and skills and meager individual gifts and time.

You *do* need to ACT in your daily life as if the UnSeen is the passion of your life. You must, of course, stop feeding your biological family sawdust on the myth that it is nutritious and essential! You're not doing them any favors by demonstrating a faulty priority system. As in the note about "good" fathering or mothering in the beginning, we are *harming*—not loving—our children if they don't See our priority system as serving Heaven. This is to be distinguished, as far as the east is from the west, from "christian culture" and "christian philosophy" added to an otherwise purposeless and shallow life and self-serving worldly (or even "my ministry" foolish religious) affections.

Make the UnSeen the primary objective you have for your biological family by *losing yourself and them into Jesus and what is His and in His Body*. In so doing, you are giving them MORE, not less! It "feels" risky maybe, but both the Scriptures and more than fifteen years of watching it happen with triple digit numbers of children locally, including my own, give me the idea that God is right, after all! Duh! And so... blindness, not "discerning the Body," continuing in our own ways—always having to be in the driver's seat ourselves—is sickening or even lethal, according to God (1Cor. 11, 12; Heb. 3, 10, 12; Rev. 2-3; Lk. 9:57-62).

Here's a BIGGIE. You need to know that all of this is what the planet is even here for: *to separate the blind and self-centered from the Genuine*. And the planet's systems and pressures, having separated and purged, will then continue by the Holy Spirit's Guidance to test and equip and prepare for the Glorious Assignment those for whom Destiny is rapidly approaching—the Offspring and co-Workers of God. Who are these that will be shown to be of a different Breed, breathing different Life? Not the "good person" versus the "bad person"—but Those who can See and will Respond, versus those who FAKE IT. Some are merely trying to get along with the "christian" culture and not stir up any trouble that will upset anyone, but are still blind and self-centered and self-willed. Some want to be somebody within religion ("house church" or within "institutional christianity," or by themselves) with borrowed revelations, human adrenaline and pride. Some hide behind fear or "hurt" as their reason for not responding to the Shepherd's Voice. Everyone will be shown for what they are, and receive appropriate compensation, according to Jesus and those whom He Instructed. The planet and this present age *exist* to apply the pressures that will separate and then equip.

In the (edited) *Matrix* movie, the weasel-of-a-man eating the steak with the enemy in the restaurant (What was his name? “Zilch”?) was willing to live for what wasn’t real. Why? Because, in his selfishness and lack of comprehension, he was *willing* to be deceived by illusions, and eventually even *oppose* what was True—in order to be comfortable. Physical comfort, religious comfort, “family” comfort, social comfort, occupational comfort, leisure time comfort, ego or financial comfort, religious ambition comfort... it’s all the same. Your heart wouldn’t be stretching towards these things if Father didn’t mean to bring it to pass in your life and family!

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# Tasting the Powers of the Coming Age

*Some Practical Applications (Part 3)*

*April 1999*

*Question: When you see weaknesses in your life and you want to live in that unseen realm, is it a thing that will come as you have faith in Jesus and grow in your relationship with Him? How do you position yourself, other than begging God to free you from those weaknesses?*

## Abandonment: Letting Go

There are a couple of primary issues. First of all, unless you forsake your life, you can't find it. One of the things that holds people back is that there are things they still want. They don't renounce their right to A, B, C or D. They think they have the right to A, B, C or D. "I expect and demand and have a right to be happy." "I expect and demand a right to be successful, or my right to provide a good living for my family. I will not be poor. I refuse to be poor." A very prominent thing on the mind of someone I know who has gone the way of the abyss was always, "I WILL provide for my family... I will be successful in business... I will. I will." He didn't abandon that, and it rotted him like a cancer. Then other things began to show up later on, but it was an incredibly excessive thing. You could see a grain of insanity in him come through whenever that area came to the forefront. There was a kind of insanity. He would not let go of his right to be successful. Maybe when he was a little boy his daddy didn't do very well in business and he was so ashamed that he didn't have everything all the other little boys in school had. I don't know what the history was, but I know that it was an obsession for him. Being successful and demanding the right to provide a good living was something he would not let go of based, perhaps, on something he grew up in, and he wouldn't repent of it.

Here is another example. Let's say my favorite relative died young when I was five years old. She was my favorite auntie and I just loved to go to

her house every summer—and then she died at age 45 of a heart attack because she was obese. So, from that point on, I'm obsessed with health food, or obsessed with exercise because I was hurt and I had a priority system that I refused to repent of. So now, I am grabbing onto this thing, hedging my bet, and making my world the way I want it to be. I pray about *other* things, I ask God, beg God about *other* things, but there is something I want that I won't forsake. I won't die to it. There is some right that I have, some area of my life that I have to protect myself in. I have to "be god" and know good and evil and control my destiny.

Maybe there is one seemingly small area—"I always wanted to have five children, and I *will* have five children," or "I never wanted to have very many children. I will not have very many children because I grew up in a big family and it was a mess. I will not do that." "I don't want to be a blue-collar worker. I will be a white-collar worker because my dad embarrassed me. He was a blue-collar worker. I'm going to be a white-collar worker. I will not quit this job because then that will mean..." If you are *obsessed* with any area of your life, no matter what it is, it will rise up to kill you.

There was a sister who was so afraid to take her baby to watch the brothers play basketball because a ball might hit the baby or something "could" happen. That's a kind of obsession that will rob a person of their inheritance. That's why it was so important that she go and take the baby to the basketball game. Guess what happened the first time she took the baby? Her baby got hit with a ball, but she was okay. Everyone lived. The point is: God has this sense of humor in it all, but He is also *absolutely totally committed to us* that if we hold on to things and demand our right to anything, then all the other areas of our life will lie in ruin. We will be corrupted, decayed, and unfulfilled because He will only give us little glimpses of His blessing. It won't be the supernatural highway He longs to give, but only little glimpses of His blessing.

There are a lot of people who defy God in this. "I will too find God's blessing because I will try so hard, and I will do so many good deeds, and I will learn so much, and I will do this and that. I will defy You, God. I won't forsake this one thing, but I will do so many other things that You will have to receive me. You will have to bless me. You will have to give me a highway into the realm of eternity and reality. You will have to receive me because I won't forsake it. I have the right to this. I can expect this. I can demand this. I'm too afraid to give this up. I want this too bad, and You ought to understand that I can't give this up. I won't let go of that. You need to understand that about me, because after all, you know about my hurts and fears. But meanwhile, I will not forsake this thing, but You have

to give me life. You have to free me from bondage and slavery and fear and emotion, etc. But, no, I'm not going to trust You enough to let go."

*Abandonment is essential in order to see supernatural realms and in order to experience supernatural freedoms in these other areas of your life.*

Abandonment is an incredibly important part. I've seen again and again how a lack of abandonment has kept people earth-bound and limited and shallow. *The futility of back and forth, in the storm, out of the storm, unstable living comes oftentimes from this refusal to abandon some thread of life that is almost unspeakably small, and indescribably subtle.* But they know in their heart that they are too afraid or unwilling or untrusting, and that they won't let go of this one thing. Like the rich young ruler, "one thing you lack." They are hamstrung.

If you want to defeat a cavalry, just cut the hamstring on the horses, because then they can't do anything. They are still alive, but they can't do anything anymore. They have no energy, no power, and no thrust left. That's how a lot of people live their whole lives. They are hamstrung. They are alive and breathing, but there is no thrust, no power. They can't gallop through the meadow. They can't jump over the creek. They can't live the kind of life God intended them to. They're hamstrung. They are breathing, their brainwaves are still there, but they can't be all that God wants them to be because "one thing they lack." They will not forsake their life. They have to hold onto it and protect themselves in one area or another.

## Faith: Fixing Your Eyes

There is another issue here that is very dependent upon this heavenly seeing and living: *all things are possible to those who believe.* You have to believe in the other realm. You have to have your eyes fixed on things that are eternal and not temporary. Your eyes have to be fixed there. *Seeing Him who is invisible,* Moses forsook the riches of Pharaoh. He saw into the other realm and believed that was reality and therefore could let the other stuff pass by without taking his attention, or controlling his emotions, his feelings or his thoughts. A lot of this, as it says in Romans 6, is reckoning yourself dead to sin but alive to Christ. Why? Because the nature is that the Son of God was manifest to destroy the works of the devil. I feel tempted, but am I really obsessed with it? Do I have to be controlled by this? Or can I have weapons of righteousness in my left hand and my right, supernatural weapons for the tearing down of strongholds? Not that we won't be opposed by the enemy, but we have to believe with all of our heart that the prince of this world has come, but *he has nothing in me.*

We should be able to drive right past that temptation and say, “That is not me. I don’t need that. That is not who I am. I am not a slave to food. I am not a slave to fear or paranoia. I am not a slave to my children or being afraid for their health or afraid for my health. I am not a slave to those things. Nothing is impossible for those who believe. *Nothing is impossible for those who believe.*”

The people who believe are the people who are so connected with the unseen realm that they don’t do anything apart from God. They are so dependent upon the things the Father says and the things the Father does, that they don’t do or say anything that HE is not doing and saying. As they live *watching Him*, they bind on earth what has been bound in heaven. Those who believe are watching what is happening in heaven. They are binding on earth what *has been bound* in heaven. When people live truly believing that heaven reigns and that the unseen world dominates the seen world, then they are able to believe that “all things work together for the good to those who love Him and are called according to His Purposes.” They are able to live without being tossed to and fro by every wind because they believe, and live in, and see, and are dependent upon, and totally confident in, *the unseen realm*. We are to live by faith and not by sight. To really, honestly, with every fiber of our being *believe that we are not limited*. Walking on water is not impossible for you any more than it was for Peter. Okay?

The things that we are seeing and experiencing? God can infiltrate the seen world and manipulate what we call “reality” in the human existence because it is truly just a shadow. He can manipulate the seen world for His purposes. He rules everything, the Scriptures say, *for the Church*. He rules *everything* for His Church. So part of being able to see the miracles of God and to overcome temptations is to absolutely, *totally*, be convinced of God’s Sovereignty over these things. In other words...Faith.

Faith is what allows us to overcome the world. This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. Not “even our willpower,” but *even our faith*. It’s believing that He is and that He rewards those who diligently seek Him. “The work of God is this: to believe on the One He has sent.” This whole thing isn’t about the battle of willpower and fleshly substance and hormones. This is a battle of truth and light. “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life, no man comes to the Father but by Me.” There is but one way to overcome the shadow world: to believe what is really Real. Abandoning ourselves to the Truths of God in the unseen realm—therein lies the power to experience what mortal man cannot. “Reckon yourselves dead to sin.” That is believing that just as He died to sin, and as we submerge ourselves

in Him, we too then are dead to sin. The temptations? The prince of this world has *nothing* in us.

So, part one of the answer to your question is abandonment. Part two is absolute total faith and confidence in God and living in that confidence that says, “I know it seems this way, but that can’t be right. That can’t be so. I refuse to accept that.” You must believe truth rather than believe the lie. We have these supernatural weapons to tear down strongholds. What strongholds are we tearing down? Those things that exalt themselves against the Truth. The things that exalt themselves against Jesus and against His authority. That’s what the supernatural weapons are for—the tearing down of strongholds. The strongholds are built by lies. They are built by things that aren’t true. They are built by what seem to be natural laws, habits, past histories and weaknesses we have, but in Reality we don’t have those weaknesses. We don’t have those limitations. We don’t have that frailty. Those things are lies based on the shadow world. The reality is in Christ, Christ in you.

What is “Christ in you”? What is that? *That’s the hope of Glory!* That’s not the hope of weakness and failure. *Christ in you is the exploration of a world that is without fear, that is without sin, that is without weakness, and that is without failure.* It is *without* selfishness, *without* pride and loneliness and all that other junk. We are not afraid anymore of giving *everything* to God. We believe that every spiritual blessing, everything that ever could be and ever will be, is in fact *in Christ Jesus*. And we are *in Him*, if we’ve abandoned ourselves. Those are the two things: abandonment and faith. The prince of this world has nothing in us with those two things lying there at the altar in front of us.

Can we fail in spite of those? Yes, but only when we lose sight of those things. Will we fail? Probably. Why? Because we probably will take our eyes off of those things for any number of reasons. Do we have to fail? *Absolutely not.* Have I? Have you? *Absolutely.* Do we “have to” anymore? It’s not possible that we “have to.” Expecting to fail defies everything in the Scriptures. You can go back and look at testimony after testimony in the written record of the Scriptures and see the men like Moses and Elijah and David and Paul. Go right down the list and you will see those two things in their lives—abandonment and seeing the unseen world and putting all of their confidence there. Those two things are what sustained them. Those two things are what catapulted and propelled them, not the fact that they never failed or never had temptations. Those two things are beyond question. You can’t look at those men and say they never sinned, never made any mistakes, and at every point in time were pillars of strength and

perfect execution. You can't say that. But you can say the substance and essence of their lives were those two things—*Abandonment to God and Absolute Confidence in Faith*.

You see the substance that was in David's heart when he said, "Give me a sling shot. That's all I need. You will die, big guy." That wasn't something he mustered up reading a few bible verses, and then stammering out there to see if he could maybe pull it off. There wasn't any doubt in his mind. Because he was abandoned, and because he saw into the unseen realm and trusted, he went right into it. That's what created David. That's what formed Moses. That's what gave substance to Abraham. An abandonment and total trust in the unseen and not the seen. What was seen wasn't important to them. What was unseen was what they were about. That was God's measuring rod of those men, and that will be God's measuring rod for us, too. The things men judge by—even as Samuel was selecting David—are not how God makes these decisions. God makes His decisions by abandonment and faith.

*Question: If you want to know what you have not yet abandoned to God, He will show you if you truly want to know, won't He? If there are things left in your life and you are honest with God that you want Him to tell you, there is no way that you will be deceived, right?*

Yes, but you definitely won't like what He shows you or else it wouldn't be an issue. You will not like what He shows you, and you probably won't like how He brings it about either. But anytime you want to know, anytime you want to be tested to the limit so that you can explore the depths of the riches, He will take you there. In the meantime, you don't have to sweat it. The abandonment isn't that you have already faced everything you could ever face. Abandonment is that you are willing to face anything that would ever come up...whenever, if ever. So, you don't have to sweat the now, just because the new thing, whatever it is, hasn't come up yet. I don't know what the next thing is that God is going to test me in, but I have to lay it all at His feet in trust and abandonment. Whatever that may be, I must face it when the day comes. I'm not waiting for some big new test and some big new event. Things will come as they come, but I need to be postured as abandoned. In the meantime, everything that I do know about I have to lay at His feet. I'm not sweating it...because in the meantime, I'm His child. It's not a game; it's a relationship. I'm forever His, and He loves me.

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# Drawing Near

*Monday Morning, April 19, 2002*

*from an eleven-year-old youngster, to a few, trusted, older friends.... ☺*

*Who is this Jesus I see others love so much?????*

I want to know Him, too. Help me, Father!!! Do you see me? I'm desperate. I don't want anything else, anyone else. How much more pain?? How much more pounding??? How many more tears? How much more longing does it take for you to reach out and rescue me from my self? I'm dead, please rescue me. I want YOU!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I really do. I DO!!! I know you're watching me. Please, I'm going to wrestle with You until You answer, just to let You know I'm desperate. I will knock and keep on knocking, and I know You're at the door watching and waiting for that moment when we can touch.

But, I know even though I want and ask, I still don't *deserve* to be saved. I don't deserve anything. But, I just want to let you know I love You and want to get to know You better. I see your arm is stretched out to me. I'm stretching out too, can't You see!?! I can't seem to get my hand right into Yours. I'm reaching but I can't quite grab You, because my feet are being pulled down by my own selfish desires and sins. I'm being swallowed up. But please if You see me reaching, just reach an inch further and grab me. RESCUE ME!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Every day I wake up thinking is today the day!!! Is today the day You will reach out and rescue me? I believe the Day of Salvation is coming, because I am searching for you "with all my heart." Because I don't want a fake "conversion" based on emotion, but only on abandoning my life to You in total trust, I will be patient, I promise!!! I don't want anything less than a real and true miracle and second birth! I really want You. I know You love me!! I know what I've heard is true. Even if I were the only person living here You would have died just for me, because You love me soooooo much.

Now here's what I think! With this promise I'm going to get You no matter what it takes!!!!!!!!!!!!!! *I'm not gonna be discouraged. I know it's a free gift to be found by You and to know You, so I know this is a season for discovery*

*and courting, not discouragement. I'll search until I find you and we have an encounter that flesh and blood didn't reveal, not of natural descent, or human will power, as your Son said!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I'll search until I find you and you grab a hold of me and touch me, yes I will!!!!!!*

*I'm coming after you!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Watch out!!!!!!!*

*My heart's desire!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!*

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# Young Ones, or Older ☺

*Tuesday Night, April 20, 2002*

*Greetings in Yahweh! ☺ We received quite a few letters regarding the “inspirational” value of a recent letter from a young one wrestling to get past his fleshly motives to find the Lamb of God. Four letters I thought had good and fair questions, “wondering about what it all means” in their content. The four are merged together below, along with the answer...*

*When combined with a discussion of Ephesians 4 Gifts, the answer below (to their question, “What was that little guy’s letter all about?!”) ALSO happens to be the answer to: “How can we experience a dynamic, powerful, intimate Body of Believers, a ‘Kingdom of Priests,’ ‘from the least to the greatest’ in the city where WE live?” Does THAT sound Important? ☺*

*For His Sake,*

*Hey, brother,*

*I had to think long and hard about that e-mail you sent with the young one pouring out his heart to the Lord. I’m not familiar at all with that kind of depth in a young one, NOR am I familiar with the way he is pouring his heart out. It kind of troubles me, since I have never personally witnessed much more from a young one beyond the “This little light of mine” song, a flannel graph, a memory verse or two, and a camp altar call where a bunch of young ones are giggling amongst themselves as they “go forward” or “ask Jesus into their hearts.” Not that I think everyone in the religious world insincere, of course. It’s just that my expectations are obviously WAY too low for what it means to come to Jesus, if I’m reading this right. Isn’t “saying a prayer” (what I was taught and have always taught others) to invite Jesus in—the “real deal”?*

*I know all of the churches and people in the Christian world have been a mess, or very shallow at best, for a LONG time, and I'm thinking there is something here in all of this that can help. Help me with a perspective of some sort here! This is shaking me up a bit! Come to think of it, as I read the biographies of men who we KNOW met God, it DOES seem that their conversions were not so domesticated and tame and predictable as what I'm normally familiar with. And I know you guys have been living in these Truths for these two decades, and have watched a lot of children and adults "grow up" this way. You have seen the fruit of it all, so... Hmmmm. Maybe I answered my own question. Never mind.*

*Love,*

Hey. Glad that this whole process has troubled you! I was very "careful" as I read the "young guy's" letter, too. It's a delicate matter. The process of coming face-to-face with the Crucified and Risen Son of God, with "white hair as wool, and voice of a thundering waterfall" is obviously troubling the young man, too, judging from his letter. But that's all better than one might think, at first glance. Too many think that being "poor in Spirit" is non-essential in coming to God. Too many have been taught, or have taught others, that it's possible to be Saved at age 5 by "asking Jesus into their hearts"—when the child has done no more than parrot what they've been told in "bible hour" by a teacher. And frankly, many such teachers have later admitted that they pressed these "salvations" in order to tell others about x-number of salvations they had in their class, or pure naiveté. They didn't even see their own errors in their hearts and ways until they were out of the hypnosis of the system and traditions of men.

Here's one reason why these things matter, and the subject is as Fundamental as it gets: *What a crime* to teach that one can be born a second time—when they have *NEVER DIED TO THE FIRST BIRTH!!!* ☹

There can be NO Romans 8 without some form of Romans 7. GOD said that it is the *Righteousness* of God that is the Schoolmaster that leads us to the *REAL* Jesus. Too many are "led" to the false Jesus of wishful thinking and magic words with no substance in many cases. But can't people just say, "Jesus is Lord" and be saved? NO. "MANY will say to Me on that day, 'LORD, LORD!' But I will say to them, 'I never knew you.'" NO ONE can say "Jesus is Lord," except by the Spirit. It takes a *True Encounter with God* for the Real thing to take place in Salvation:

SuperNatural regeneration, “Transfigured from the kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of the Beloved Son.” That’s how the Bible reads. In many cases, the alleged “salvations” are the product, not of *God* revealing what “flesh and blood have not revealed,” but they are the product of grade school peer pressure, cutesy sentimentalism, parental egos and the like. Most, whether young or old, are tragically never taught that they must DIE in order that they might Live. “*Unless the seed falls to the ground and DIES, it abides alone.*” There can be no second Birth if there is no death to the first. Period.

SO! According to the very special Saints who are spending time with this young’n—he is like a Cornelius of Acts 10. Cornelius was a good guy, searching out many things of God, “courting Jesus” (by proxy, by seeking His Father), but not yet *married* to Jesus! Cornelius, even with an *angelic visitation*, was not yet saved. God heard his prayers and saw his gifts to the poor, and yet he was not saved, according to the Angel and the Scriptures. In a similar way, this young one desires to know God, is wrestling externally to be responsive to Him, but is *not yet saved*. The Road is very good—made straight for the Coming of the Lord. And yet, the Salvation that comes from GOD is a *supernatural* (Mat.16:18) touch from Father that brings the Testimony of “ABBA!” and “our hearts do not condemn us.”

There is *no such thing* as a legitimate *Biblical* conversion that does not involve the Touch of Messiah, as surely as the woman with the issue of blood, or Bartimaeus. And *that* does not happen on wishful thinking or “belief system” or at a sentimental moment. It *only* happens with *Biblical* Faith, which is to “lean back in the chair past the point of no return.”

Practically speaking? While no one may know for certain what the young man is hanging on to secretly (pride? self-indulgent behavior? lust? worldly loves and dreams that make him an “enemy of God?”), there is something undealt with there, yet. And what a *crime* it would be to shortchange a *true* conversion by not allowing him to die to his first birth that he would *Truly* See the Messiah!

Jesus said to Peter, and any other such sentimental Cross-Robber, “*GET BEHIND ME, SATAN!*” It is a far-too-frequent crime in the nominal Christian world to pad the cross with religious jargon and form that “deny the Power.” And *that* sloppiness, often by those who are yet unconverted themselves, is a huge part of the explanation of the *impotence* of 98% of the Christian world. The “Now I lay me down to sleep” unBiblical sinners’ prayer—“preemie” or “still-born conversions” are also largely responsible for (as *they* themselves report of themselves) the “falling

away” of *seventy-five percent* of the “christian” youth group members after they leave high school, or before.

Now, I admit... Yeah, I had some wrestling over his note, too! Why? Because I don't want to see him confuse Law and Grace—or his own strivings—for a means to Righteousness. It bugged me a bit, BUT I know the Saints involved with him are uncanny in their Knowledge of Father and His Son, and they are simply letting him run a bit with the Romans 7: “Who will *free* me from this body of death?!!” They want him to have a SUPERNatural Second Birth, not a lukewarm, sentimental, unBiblical “Ask Him into your heart” so-called conversion. “*Unless* the seed falls to the ground and dies...” The *rock* that makes men stumble and fall—the *skandalon* is for all!! Why do we rip out the *heart* of the Message of the Great Apostle and High Priest of our Faith, to our *own* demise?! “*Unless* you take up *your* cross... you *cannot* be a Christian.” There is a cross. For all of us. And it's not just, “The bills are hard to pay” and, “Aunt Edith broke her hip.” Those are not “crosses to bear.” It is a *spiritual* issue to come after Jesus. As the prophet Simeon said, “A sword will pierce even your heart, Mary, as this boy becomes a Man—and causes the *falling* and the *rising again* of many.” Skandalon is part of true Conversion.

Well, that's enough. Nothing new. ☺ As you can see, finding Reality in the Body of Christ is *not* about “a new and improved way to *do* things” at “meetings” or in “house church” neighborhoods. True ZOE LIFE is far more fundamentally about “*What is a Christian? Is a person who has never died to their first life, and become doulos a Christian? If they have never had a revelation of ‘The God, The Living’ that ‘flesh and blood did not reveal’—dare we call them Christians, and a part of ‘the Church’?*” And, “*what really is a Church, a Lampstand??!!*” And, “*what really is a ‘Leader’??!!*” These are the REAL questions. It's not about, “Everyone should get a chance to talk in our *new* way to ‘have church’”... YUCKO!! While doing things *God's way* rather than man's has always been important to God, that is not fundamentally the Beginning Place, the Genesis of Life in the Body of Christ. Since men accommodate their flesh in their foolish traditions and gimmicks, and God's Ways do not, “how we do things” does come into play, of course. God said so. But, unless we get these more fundamental Issues resolved in our midst, the other is meaningless! It is like putting chocolate icing on a mud pie. It is a deception to try to “do things God's way” when the batch is filled with leaven and contradiction and hypocrisy and lukewarmness. And we know how Jesus feels about those. Nothing corporate can “work” for very long (by God's MERCY!) when we are building with unregenerate building materials and in the flesh. Praise God for that! “The child born

in the logical and natural way always rises up to persecute the Child born of the Spirit. It is the same now” (Gal. 4:29).

Okay! Hope you understand now why it was fine that you were frustrated by the letter, as I was, too. It scared me a little bit *at first*. Surely, it is a Good News of Grace, not striving or Law. But, there IS something Essential that is missed in most cities and countries we’ve spent time in, in the world, and in most every religious background imaginable that we have enjoyed relationships with. The *process* and the *people involved* with this young one, those who *know him* and despise legalism or law or guilt or fear are involved EVERY DAY with this young one. That brings great comfort and confidence to what I, too, would be concerned about, IF it was in a normal, nominal environment where the child “attends” something and otherwise lives life separate from the “joined and knittedness” of “the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way.”



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# The Virus of 1918, and Beyond

*Monday Night, November 22, 1999*

*A question, during a spontaneous time with Saints in South Carolina. The question came from a businessman with some serious international “responsibilities.” You’ll recognize the question, since I think we’ve all asked it...*

*“How can I stay focused in the midst of hectic everyday life in the workplace? There seem to be a lot of energy leaks and distractions for me. I know it can’t be right that I spend so much energy on my job and responsibilities and so little that is measurably productive for Jesus. I know I’m doing something wrong if my energy is used so completely on temporary things, and all I feel like doing when I get home at night is collapsing and going to bed early. Surely something needs to change radically in how I function. I truly want to change. What should I do differently?”*

There are many ways to answer a question like that, I suppose. I could tell you something that would justify the sin of disconnectedness from the Father, such as, “Oh, it’s okay. As long as you do a good job with your work, and are not lying or stealing or cursing—then you are glorifying God by doing a good job, so everything’s fine. So, don’t worry about it. Just do an honest day’s work, and that will be ‘your ministry.’” I could tell you that, and such reason is so commonplace it almost sounds honorable, but God would be sickened by settling for that sort of reasoning, so I won’t.

I could also tell you, “Well, you just need to pray and read your Bible more, before you go into work. Then it’ll all be fine.” But, you must surely know from experience, that would be a shallow, religious, and unfruitful answer—even if there may be some truth to it. Somehow, it doesn’t get at the root of the issue, does it?

May I give you an example that might clarify the root of the problem that you and so many others face, and that might point us in the Right direction? Here goes:

## Some Little-Known History

In 1918, a deadly influenza epidemic swept the planet. Soldiers returning from World War I brought the flu virus home with them—though it is thought to have started two years earlier in Kansas, during the burning of some manure. Seemingly, it then spread to Europe and back again, via soldiers coming and going. In less than two years, as many as 30 million people died, over 600,000 in the United States alone. Over half of the inhabitants of the planet were infected by this strange virus. Strangely, most of the victims were active, healthy teens and young adults, often in their 20's (though millions of children and older adults died as well). In the morning, a person would have a bit of a cough and a fever. By afternoon they were bedridden. By nightfall or lunchtime the next day, almost everyone that inhaled the virus would drown on the eerie blue fluid in their lungs. Supplies of caskets were guarded by armed watchmen, toe tags, used to identify the dead, were placed on those infected when they checked into the hospitals (if they made it that far), open carts roamed the streets picking up bodies off of the front porches and sidewalks of cities and towns, and mass graves were dug with construction equipment.

This is only the story of the experience in the United States with this mysterious, incurable disease. This mutant virus ravaged the world with fury and an insatiable appetite for human life—particularly the strong and robust of every nation. Its origin was unknown, its cure never found, and its return cannot be ruled out. The virus eventually vanished, not because man had found any antidote or even slowed its advance. The virus sleeps only because it ran out of food. It had ravished every human on the planet that did not have whatever mysterious immunity was required to abate its death grip. The virus was not cured. It killed everyone it could kill, and simply ran out of human fuel on the planet. It starved itself into remission.

## Why Did So MANY Lose Their Lives?

Now here is a very important question. Why did so many people allow this virus to spread to infect themselves, their family, and their friends, when its effects were obviously so lethal? This will lead us into the answer to your very serious and important—and common—question. How we can stay close to Jesus in a world living on the adrenaline of greed, fear,

lust, ambition, guilt, and pride? It's about the Virus. Stay with me. There were three primary reasons that there was such a broad road leading to death, and that so many were on that road.

## Denial

Much of what led to millions of fatalities during the 1918 virus epidemic was due to *denial*. No one wanted to believe that anything was wrong. They were living in a prosperous age, and enjoying the fruits of the new technologies of air transportation and many other breakthroughs. Mail could be delivered from New York to Chicago in a mere ten hours! Babe Ruth had just led the Red Sox\* (\*not a typo!) to the World Series championship. Times were good, and no one wanted to think about “bad” things. Denial is a common response amongst the human race when tragedy is near. It's in the nature of fallen man to “avoid confrontation at all costs” and to close our eyes and hope all the problems go away. We deeply desire to make excuses for our failures and others', and to imagine that all is not so bad. Just a few years later, when Hitler was beginning his massacre, the leaders of the western world tried to play “make-believe it's all not so bad...” until it was far, far too late and unimaginably horrible, and now undeniable things had taken place. When it was time to take a stand, cowardice and addiction to the status quo made treaties with the animal that was killing innocents. It was no different twenty years earlier when mankind was faced with this mortal virus. And it is no different today. We would generally rather deny the painful issues of life, “hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil,” than to take them head-on. Such denial allowed the virus of 1918 to kill additional millions...millions who would have lived, if it had been dealt with honestly in the early stages. Denial. Even leaders at every level, in order to keep the masses calm, denied that THEIR jurisdiction had a problem until it was too large to deny any longer, and orphans filled the alleys of life.

## Lack of Understanding

Another part of the equation that led to the death of millions—a huge percentage of the human race—in just eighteen months, was just plain ol' *lack of understanding*. In general, people had no idea what the problem was, or what any solutions might be. Photographs and film taken from this period show children wearing little gauze masks when they were playing outside, rolling wheels with sticks. Policeman and factory workers, at the height of the epidemic, finally took the radical step of wearing cotton masks and bandanas over their faces. Most were convinced that this was

an “extreme measure” to stop the spread of disease, and were pleased with their efforts. They were wrong. Masks are futile in stopping the spread of a virus. There was no real protection in this. It was only good to make their fears go away, but it was no *real* solution. The influenza could only be seen with an electron microscope, which would not be invented until years later. The masks were no more effective in straining out the germs “than catching dust with chicken wire.” People would hang camphor bags around their necks, and drink sugar and turpentine as home-made “remedies.” Religious speakers made a fortune in both money and popularity by their dramatic appeals, and prophecies of the end of the world. Superstitious religious or medical activity was the most common response of those that were even willing to consider the perils of their day. The dangers of the invisible disease were far beyond their understanding, and the measures taken against it were little more than placebos. The facts and history bear this out.

## Misplaced Priorities

Another huge factor in the spread of this fatal disease, however, was the *misplaced priorities* of so many. Parents continued to send their children to schools, parties, and ball games—into crowds teeming with the infection. “Education is important,” the reasoning went. “Recreation and a social life are essential to the well being of young people. We don’t want them to miss out on life. Everything will be all right. I love my child *too much* to deprive them of these life experiences and fun.” Does this sound familiar *at all*? Yet what good are education and social events when a child dies a hideous and gruesome death? And multiplied thousands did die, in great pain, coughing up blood. All within 36 hours of getting sick from the invisible fiendish disease, *carried by infected friends*. False priorities had exposed them to an invisible danger they shouldn’t have had to face.

## The Plague is REAL, and is NOW!

The point? Remember our question: “How can I stay close to Jesus when my job is so demanding in this high-tech info age? How can I be at the top of my profession, and still have enough energy to serve God well at the end of a day?”

This deadly flu epidemic is very much a picture of how God views our planet and its treasured inhabitants. There is another, even more deadly, invisible plague going on, RIGHT NOW. This one actually kills 100% of those that it touches, that don’t have the Cure. The virus of sin has infected

every last member of the human race. This contagion absolutely saturates our environment in this world. And, although Jesus paid the highest price imaginable to free us from this fatal illness, to deliver us from this virus of sin, few will receive His cure. “Few will be those who find it,” according to Jesus Himself. He has laid down the odds. HE said that MOST will perish. Most will choose to die, coughing up blood, and be buried in a grave where “the fire is not quenched.”

Do you see this world clearly? Are you willing to believe Jesus when He says there is an unseen realm? Do you accept His diagnosis that sin has doomed men and women to destruction? Do you realize what’s really at stake in our present daily lives? *Do you believe in a VIRUS that you can’t see with your naked eye?*

## Denial

Most folk, throughout history, live in denial, unfortunately. It’s always struck me that Jesus spoke more of the hideous death of the Virus, hell, than all of the prophets and apostles put together. No one could have understood it as well as He, as our Creator and Messiah. And He was incredibly serious in His short time here, about letting us know of the very real existence of a very real devil (along with an army of demons), and a very real hell. He also went to great lengths to tell us how to conquer these foes, as well as equipping the Apostles and giving His People a Weapon, His Church, against which the gates of hell could not prevail. And yet man has lived in denial and revised Jesus’ goals. Now christianity and church are primarily about going to Heaven, and having nice friendly relationships a couple of times each week, staying out of trouble, and studying the Bible essentially (though unspoken) as an end in itself.

The real thing, that which Jesus brought to earth to “destroy the devil’s works,” involves some pain and courage. It comes “with much tribulation.” If we don’t want to face up to what Jesus said life and death and LIFE (“with a capital L”) are all about, then we’re going to make many wrong decisions, as our friends in 1918 did. We can’t avoid the conflict and making changes and self-sacrifice—and still avoid the plague. Instead of taking action, we’ll have the anguish of seeing many that we care about learn to “love the world, and become enemies of God.” If we fail our brothers and our parents and our friends by blindly allowing the weeds of “the cares and worries of this world, and the deceitfulness of materialism” to kill them, we are in denial of the realities Jesus spoke of.

The Master said MANY would say, “Lord, Lord” and do works in fine, christian fashion, and still be on the broad road to destruction. Why? Because they “didn’t DO the Will of My Father.” They knew stuff, were religious enough, but still maintained control of their own lives. And catch this: Even if a person is somewhat interested in going all the way with Jesus, they will become “hardened and deceived by sin” (Heb. 3:12-14) because of poor daily building practices. If the denominational and house church worlds won’t get out and deal with human lives one on one for Jesus (as in the Scripture just mentioned), the massacre will continue. It doesn’t take a Ph.D. statistician to go through these groups (whether in religious facilities or homes) and demonstrate that the problem is very serious. The singing and clapping and creative programming and “children’s church” and “youth groups” and “marriage counseling” and new buildings, or new carpeting and a new guitar in a living room...aren’t going to solve the dilemma of the Virus that is destroying lives. That will take personal involvement, on a daily basis, of a “Kingdom of Priests” representing Jesus and His Word personally to one another and those around them, “as if God were making His Appeal through you.” “In the race ALL the runners run.” No spectators or cheerleaders. This will take courage for you, at 5 o’clock in the evening. You’ll have to see the Virus for what it is, and rise to the call to “admonish one another daily, so that NONE are hardened and deceived!” “See to it, brothers!”

Avoiding conflict may pad pockets and egos, and fill the pews, and make many unsaved feel content and saved, but it will not deliver us from the Virus. The Teaching of Jesus, the Master, and the Apostles is very clear. It is also very different from 50% of what is **taught** today—and 98% of what is **practiced** in Christendom today. We really need Understanding of *what GOD says a Christian is, what GOD says a Church is, and what GOD says a leader is*. Or we shall feel destruction “in every home,” as our relatives in 1918 felt. Lack of Understanding and lack of Seeing (revelation) cause God’s People to perish, according to the Scriptures. Needless deaths of multitudes of teens, and marriages, and regular churchgoers *that never gave their lives to Jesus* are occurring at a massive rate in christendom. This is NOT what Jesus said, when He promised that His Church would not allow the Gates of hell to prevail.

Will this cost you? As Jesus said, DO “count the cost” of building His Way. Of course, any direction other than the cookie cutter version of today’s state-approved religion will be met with opposition—primarily by dear religious folks that are lukewarm, and love the world, and their sins. Jesus said it would be so. He promised that no one could ever be good enough, or loving enough, or wise enough to not be hated and lied about,

and ultimately framed and murdered in one way or another. “NO one,” He promised, “is above their Master. If they did it to Me, (and *if* you are representing Me well), they WILL do it to you, too.” Avoiding conflict isn’t part of the Plan, while the dragon is seeking to kill the Woman and her Offspring. Only be concerned if you are NOT facing the cost of rejection and high-tech lies and slander and threats. Jesus said it would be so, IF we are representing Him accurately. It’s a supernatural issue, and inescapable for true disciples, according to Jesus.

## Understanding

Jesus and the Apostles wanted so desperately to give us Understanding, so that we wouldn’t go on blindly not believing in what we can’t see—even with an electron microscope. They knew that we could never avoid the virus’ ugly death if we continue in denial, and in lack of understanding with all of its superstitious religiously programmatic placebo solutions. If we cling to the traditions and hierarchies and gimmicks of men, and peer pressure of religious culture’s “only way to do it”.. we’ll continue to yield their results. “Cotton masks” of cell groups and other programs and non-programs don’t save men from a microscopic virus. Clearly, we’re in dire need of a cure that institutional religion, and make-believe dress-up, and flesh-catering to build “churches” will never provide.

The Way Jesus lived, and taught the disciples to live, and then the entire Church of several THOUSAND lived (“ALL” of them! (Acts 2:42-47, etc., etc.), is the Way from Heaven that not only cleanses the Virus, but also inoculates and protects us from most future exposure, or death! God laid out the Blueprints for His House, “the Pillar and Foundation of Truth,” the Church that “makes known the manifold Wisdom of God to the principalities and powers” and overcomes the very gates of hell. But we have continued over generations to build out of faulty materials, using man-made plans, borrowed from the world system.

God’s Word and Spirit “are not far from you”! We can correct our course in these days. And I am convinced that there is that cry, “The Emperor has no clothes!” worldwide, right now—in many languages and cultures. Many are looking for Understanding of *how to build God’s way*, so that we can see God’s Results of “from the least to the greatest, they *all* know Him!” in a “batch without leaven.” Sound impossible? It is, the way men build. But He came to bring us Understanding. ☺

## Priorities: SEEING IT RIGHT

So, *“How do I have energy left over from my busy days with work—or with children and home-school and housekeeping? How can I ‘seek first the Kingdom’ when my life is tied in a Gordian knot of occupation, and obligations and debts and hobbies and relationships?”*

If we see reality clearly, we’ll *definitely* keep our priorities straight. *You’ll find a way to make the right decisions about what kind of job you’ll take, where you’ll live, and a thousand other subjects.* You WILL find a way, IF you See Life clearly!

If someone asked you to stack twenty-five coins, alternating heads and tails in chronological order by the year minted on them, and offered to pay you for it, you might do it. But, if you heard your 9 year-old daughter outside the window screaming in agonized pain, I dare say you would forget the coin stacking! It wouldn’t be important, and you wouldn’t say, “Well, just let me finish this task first. I’m almost done stacking these coins. I’ll go take care of her in just a minute.” What a ridiculous thought! But why is that ridiculous? *Because you know the Reality of Life to that extent, and would never have your priorities that far out of focus!*

To solve the problem of too little energy for Jesus, should you set a time to get up early and read more and pray more? Oh, I don’t know. Maybe. That is not the real problem though. If you don’t do that a lot anyway, you just don’t really believe in the virus! You’re not seeing the world as it really is, if you’re not *passionate* about serving Jesus in your workplace, your neighborhood, and amongst the Saints on a DEEP DAILY basis. If we’re not about the Father’s Business, we’re just not seeing life as it really is! (Gal. 4:19; Col. 1:28-29; 1Cor. 15:10; Heb. 3:12-14; Jas. 5:20; Jude 21-23).

We’ll focus our energies and passions on what really matters to us. If your main focus right now is on your work, or entertainment, or social life—if you are allowing those things to drain away your Life and Love and time and energy and money—then you are not seeing the world from God’s perspective.

Misplaced priorities cause millions to find themselves “stuck” in so-called commitments. These “commitments” then take on a life of their own—eliminating the ability to choose something better because we are already “committed.” “I’d love to, but we’ve got to go here,” or “I know I should, but I already committed to...” So, we march ourselves and those we love diligently, year by year, into death camps because we chose “good” over God. “Education”... “social graces”... “making good money”... “advancing

and achieving in the work place”... “living in the right neighborhood, near the right school district”... “playing sports well to expand the character”... “experiencing life in a college dorm”... “traveling the world to see the sights”... “eating health food and cloistering with your physical family”... and the like: if you consider these to be of much TRUE value, and make your decisions and practices out of these with no consideration of the fatal Virus, then you suffer from one or all three of the problems listed above. Either denial, or lack of understanding, or misplaced priorities have you disoriented and headed for trouble. These blinding errors will expose you, your children and loved ones to the lethal plague! It’s REAL. Don’t wait until it’s too late to wake up to the reality of what the world is, where the Answer lies, and the holy abandonment He calls you to, okay?

Of course there are practical things we can do to keep our focus straight. We can make time for concentrated conversation with God. We can read the Scriptures often. We can spend much time with people who love God and genuinely care about what He cares about. But the most important single thing we can do for starters is to *adopt God’s point of view about this world*—which will set our priorities accordingly. If your priorities are straight, you’ll be able to put in a good day’s work without letting it drain all of your energy and passion *for the real reason you’re alive*. And you’ll be willing to come home from work early to spend time with Jesus and His People—even if that project isn’t done. You’ll put in the effort and take the risks to offer the Cure to others, too. You’ll do what it takes, very naturally, as Jesus did.

Will you have the courage to see the world as it is? Will you do whatever it takes to respond to the certainty of the death plague that closes in daily on you, the world around you, and those you love? By His Grace and Spirit, for the Lamb and His Chosen? For real?



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# All Affection Belongs to JESUS (Part I)

*Sunday Afternoon, September 26, 1999*

*(excerpt, from a time in Australia, in answer to a question)*

If a person loves the world, they're an enemy of God. Plain fact. No way to dispute it, nor any desire to do so. God said it, so 'tis. Now, carry this to the reasonable application? If we befriend the world and give our affections away to those who love the world, what have we done? We've made friends with those who are enemies of God. Whether they are a physical relative, a co-worker, or a neighbor, if someone is part of the world and we give away our affections to them, then we've really made a serious blunder that has substantial consequences. "Bad company corrupts good character." "A little leaven leavens the whole batch." If we make friends with the world—if we walk, laugh, and talk with them just as if they were born a second time—then we befriend enemies of God. How could it ever be?!!! These are important issues because they are tied into how we live for one another. They are also tied into our value system, and our perspective of what it means to be born a second time.

Isn't there a difference between a person who is born a second time and a person who is *not* born a second time? Is it just that "I'm going to heaven, and they're not"? Or is there something else going on? The Scriptures say that a person who is born a second time has been called *out* of darkness *into* His marvelous light. Out of the "flames." Out of the "corrupted flesh." Out of "depravity" and "filth." They are now born of water and the Spirit. They're now a child of God Himself. And let's not overlook this: John, the Apostle, said that all people who are not children of God...*are children of the devil.*

Now, if we look at a person and we see them only after the flesh, we're going to see their size and shape and education and color. We are going to see how witty they are, how attractive they are, their personality, their interest level, how old their children are, or how close they live to me. We are going to see all these nonsensical, irrelevant issues of wealth and "interests" and education and age and race. However, if we "see no man

after the flesh,” then we will see one person as a child of God—and another as a child of the enemy, the devil. There is no middle ground, according to Scriptures.

## The Truly Converted

A lot of things start making sense if we can see people the way God sees them. If we will refuse to see men after the flesh, then we will treat people differently. We are going to treat people who are truly converted differently *because we see Jesus in them*. I am speaking of the *truly converted*, not just everybody who *says* they are a Christian. Jesus said “MANY” will claim to be Christians who are not. Yet, if folks are living heart, soul, mind and strength for Jesus (rather than just dabbling around in that lukewarmness that makes Jesus sick), then that will affect how we see them and how we talk to them. The truly converted people have “put on Christ” and that’s going to affect our respect for them. It’s going to be quite difficult to NOT “consider others better than ourselves” if we see Jesus in them!

If we see a person who has Jesus in him, who is “clothed with Christ” according to Scripture, then we see him seated with Christ in Heavenly Realms! If we really see no man after the flesh, then we’re seeing the spiritual life of that person. We’re seeing Jesus. We’re seeing the transfigured inner man. Stephen’s face shone like that of an angel. And Jesus, on the Mount of Transfiguration, shone like the noonday sun!

## The Flip Side

All right, perhaps we see that a true believer is one who has put on Christ. The flip side, according to the Scriptures, is that an unsaved person is a child of the devil. The very *offspring of the devil!* You may think, “Oh, no, no, they have a good heart.” Come on. Enough psychology, please. Enough humanism, please. That doesn’t mean that Jesus doesn’t love them and want to redeem them. But, He *is* buying them back from something, isn’t He? Yes! He’s buying them back from slavery. He’s buying them back from darkness and depravity. Paul said, “I was all those things...I was depraved. I was unrighteous.” Paul was a lunatic and a murderer and he didn’t even know it at the time. He was dead in his transgressions and sins. He was a walking corpse, spiritually speaking, and *then he was raised to life*.

There’s no way around it. There’s no middle ground. There’s no “mild case” of being a corpse. You either are or you’re not. You’re either born a second time or you’re not. Jesus said, “*Few* will be those who find it.” *Few* will be

born a second time. Those who *are* born a second time *have put on Christ*. They are clothed with Christ. Christ lives in them and they in Him. It's a beautiful thing. And we need to make our eyes see that beauty. But the flip side of that coin is that we've got to make our eyes see that people who are not born a second time and genuinely converted, are offspring of the devil. They need to be redeemed and bought back.

I remember one time there was a sister whose job had her involved with doctors and other medical staff. (Since then she has changed careers because of things related to her faith.) In the process of doing her job she developed this tremendous admiration for a young doctor. He was handsome, intelligent, witty, and financially secure. She found herself beginning to give a little bit of her heart away to him, and even though she knew there was something wrong with it, she couldn't quite put her finger on it. She had tried at different times to talk to him about Real things, but he didn't show any interest at all in Jesus. As conversations with other brothers and sisters unfolded, there was one picture that emerged that was very helpful to her.

What this sister began to see was this...“Well, I don't always know for sure who is saved and who is not saved. But, if a person tells me they don't want to follow Jesus, or if they act in such a way that is inconsistent with the teachings of Jesus and they really don't care, then I have an idea that according to the Scriptures *they are not saved*. And if a person is not saved, I picture them now as if they have tarantulas coming out of their eyeballs, scorpions coming out of their ears, and slugs coming out of their mouth. *And I know that person needs help*. I know they need to be redeemed and bought back, and they need to be washed and cleaned and brought into the House of God! I'm *repulsed* by the fact that they're an offspring of the devil himself. And *at the same time*, I'm *compassionate* because I, too, used to be that way. The externals of appearance (which quickly change with age, anyway) and money and sense of humor and skill in some human field—mean less than nothing!”

Seeing no man after the flesh means that we have to see the difference between a believer and an unbeliever as clearly as God sees the difference between the two. Now, we may not always be able to know, but you've got to at least admit that a person who is saved shines like the stars of the universe, and a person who is unsaved has scorpions coming out of their eye sockets because they are offspring of the devil. *They need to be redeemed*.

That need for redemption is not the point of rejection though. “Zacchaeus, I'm coming to your house” is not a point of rejection at all. It's a point of compassion! But, you've got to see it clearly. And when you see it clearly, you are not going to give your heart away to something of a different species. That

sister ceased to have affection and admiration for the things of this world when she began to see. “I guess I don’t need to admire Michael Jordan quite so much, do I? I guess I don’t need to be so impressed with Albert Einstein, do I? I guess I don’t need to be mesmerized by whoever that guy was driving around in the fancy car yesterday. He’s not my hero. He’s just a man. I don’t have to be impressed with somebody who has scorpions coming out of his eyes.” I’m not going to pour my admiration out, I don’t want his autograph, and his picture’s not going up on my wall. I don’t want all that because I don’t admire a man with scorpions coming out of his eye sockets!

Seeing no man after the flesh means we have to view the world very differently. *Seeing not with the seeing of the eyes, and hearing not with the hearing of the ears is our inheritance in Christ.* To discern all things, and see the way God sees rather than as mere men see, is our inheritance if we have enough spiritual faith and passion to live the way God called us to live. We will be compassionate and we will extend a hand of mercy, love and kindness to those who are unsaved—but we cannot give our hearts away to them.

The Scriptures say that very early in Jesus’ life, He gave His heart to no man because He knew men’s hearts. This is very essential to our ability to go forward because a little leaven leavens the whole batch. And if you’re a friend of the world, you’re an enemy of God. And if you’re an enemy of God and I give my heart away to you, then there’s a little leaven beginning to leaven the whole batch. There’s a ripple effect in the spiritual realm if any of the body of believers gives their heart away to the world, the love of the world, the things of the world, or those who are children of the devil. To give your heart away is a very, very dramatic error that will affect your whole life. It will affect your family, and it’ll affect everyone you know. So be very careful about schoolmates, roommates, family members, and co-workers. I know they’re “nice guys.” Sure, they’re “wonderful people.” And they’re witty, intelligent, handsome, and successful, too...But, come on, guys—“*SEE NO MAN AFTER THE FLESH!*”

Think about it...? Examine very carefully your affections, friendships, relationships with unBelieving “family” members, as well as your telephone and business and recreation companionships? If your affections and trust, your laughter and warmth and confidences and time belong to anyone other than those who are clothed with Christ, you are violating Jesus—as surely as offering a soft drink to the sweaty soldier pounding nails into our Jesus on that most hideous of days. He is our “all in all” and we are “one with Him in Spirit.” No other suitors! Compassionately reaching across the Divide, grasping for their hands to pull them towards Messiah—*YES!* Affection and admiration and camaraderie? *No way!*

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# All Affection Belongs to JESUS (Part 2)

*Sunday Afternoon, September 26, 1999*

## Relatives?

I'll guarantee you that physical flesh and blood is INSUFFICIENT reason to give your affection away to someone who is not *truly converted*. The fact that you are "genetically similar" in some ways to your mother and father, children, brothers and sisters, and aunts and uncles is INSUFFICIENT reason to give your heart away to a child of the devil. You cannot do it. You must not do it.

Here is one clear example. When Jesus was twelve, He disappeared for three days. His parents had no idea where he was. When his mom and dad found Him, was Jesus' response, "Sorry, Mom. Sorry, Dad"? No. Maybe He expressed that somewhere along the line, too, because He didn't want to be disobedient to his parents, of course. Because He knew all things, He knew that they would be concerned. But, the issue in His heart that drove Him to do what He did was, "Didn't you know I had to be about my Father's business?" And Joseph said, "Excuse me. What am I? An opossum along the road? I thought I was your Father, I thought I was your dad. Haven't I been supporting you all this time? Haven't I been teaching you how to be a carpenter, boy?" No, that is not what Joseph said. Joseph knew better. Mary knew better. To say, "I must be about my Father's business," sounds rude though, doesn't it? How could Jesus say that to Mary, who was precious and "blessed among women"? An angel thought she was "highly favored"! She was a great lady, BUT that wasn't good enough because Jesus saw something in the spiritual realm. He saw that His True Father was in Heaven...and *ours is as well*. He saw past the physical realm. He didn't want to be disrespectful, but it did seem to sound a little rude, didn't it? Just a little rude??

Or how about when Mary and Jesus' brothers and sisters went to take possession of Him because they thought He was mad? Read in Mark 3-4 how this story unfolds. Do you remember that Mary was called the *virgin*

Mary? How could it be that Mary would want to take possession of Him because she thought He was out of His mind? She knew good and well that she was a virgin when He was conceived, *and* that she had an angelic visitation explaining that He is the Son of God! How could she have forgotten so much that she would go to the place where He was teaching in order to “take possession of Him” because she thought He was getting a little out of control? Jesus is teaching people, and coming and going. Rumors are starting to spread and Mary is getting a little bit out of sorts with her son. She’s already seen Him as an incredible young man. She has already seen some special things, but she is very frustrated with how He’s carrying Himself.

So, she comes to the door with James and Jude, Jesus’ half-brothers, and Jesus’ sisters to “take possession of Him.” Someone tells Jesus, “Your mother and brothers are outside.” And what did Jesus say? Did he say, “Oh, good! Mom! I want to honor you, Mom. Come in, please! Everyone, I want you all to meet my mom. I want to honor my mom.” That would have been a good thing to do, huh? “I want you all to meet my half-brothers. Everyone, here are two guys who are going to write books in the Bible later. Come on in, James. Come in, Jude.” Well, nothing like that happened at all. They really weren’t that fond of Jesus at that time, as you can tell if you read it in the book of Mark. And that isn’t how Jesus responded in that moment. He said, very “rudely,” “Who are my mother and brothers?” And to those seated in the circle around Him, He said, “*These* are my mother, brothers, and sisters—those who do the will of God.” Period. That’s it. That’s the end of the story. Don’t try adding to what Jesus said. “Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”

## A Hundred Times

And He also said, “If you lose your life, I’ll give you a *hundred* times as much—mothers, brothers, sisters, lands, possessions, and with them persecutions—now and in the life to come.” I’ll multiply that for you, if you will give up your grasp, your greedy, foolish, selfish, fearful grasp, on what you know and what you want from life. I’ll give you a hundred times the blessing in return.” Pretty good investment, huh?! “Not only will I bless you with a hundred times as much of whatever you leave behind, but I will give you part of Myself and I’ll collect for you all the treasure that I have and I’ll pour it into your life. Test Me and see if the portals of heaven don’t open up and flood you with my goodness. If you would just *let go* of what you’re so afraid of, if you would *let go* of what’s so comfortable for you, seeing men after the flesh with carnal, logical thinking, *then you would See!* Allow ME to give you True blessing and Life that is truly Life!”

Picture these attitudes and you can see how foolish they are: “Well, I’m an African-American person and I really only like to be with black people.” How foolish! “Well, I’m a young person. I’m 15 years old and I really only like being around people my age. I don’t like being with 70-year-olds and 4-year-olds.” How foolish! How dare we see men after the flesh like that! “Well, my background is the Baptist denomination, and I feel pretty comfortable with Baptists, and I don’t know if I feel comfortable with anything else.” That’s foolish! To see men after the flesh is very foolish. If it was just about wanting to be with only black people, or wanting to be with only Chinese people, you’d see the problem more easily. If your “standard” was redheads, you would have a pretty small church, wouldn’t you?! The fact is that we know better than to build relationships around skin or hair color! But somehow, we easily embrace gene structure and a similar last name, and make a child of the devil our closest friend! We can talk for hours on the phone, give our heart away, give our life away, chatter endlessly, celebrate things, and just go off with them and have fun. We can do all that stuff with children of the devil just because they have the same last name that we do! We are somehow blind to the fact that THAT is seeing men after the flesh.

Who ARE your mothers, brothers, and sisters? Well, if you’re unsaved, and you don’t care about the Word of God, and you’re going to do it your own way anyway, then all the children of the devil in the world are your family! Do whatever you want! *BUT, if you are a follower of Jesus*, and you have really been born a second time rather than just having become religious some place along the line, then things must be different for you. If you have really been transformed with a word from Heaven that has genetically changed your structure, and you are born of water and the Spirit, then *your family are those who do the will of your Father!* Everyone born of the Spirit is like the wind. It’s a whole different world out there when you’re like the wind. It’s a whole different universe when you’ve been genetically altered to become a different species. You are not like those who are living in darkness and love the darkness. They are living, as Paul said, in the futility of their thinking and in their darkened understanding.

Those who are living in darkness are not our species! Picture it this way: you don’t see a lot of kangaroos having a love affair with a corn crop. You don’t see a lot of armadillos having a love affair with a radish. Why? Because they are different. They are different species! They can’t connect. And what has happened to those who have been born again is just as radical as that! A child of God and a child of the devil, according to the Scriptures, are radically different. We won’t give away our hearts and affections to a

radish, or a kangaroo, or an armadillo. It's just not going to happen. Our affections belong to Jesus alone.

All Authority in Heaven and on earth belongs to Jesus, and all affection in Heaven and on earth belongs to Jesus. He who has Jesus belongs to Jesus, and participates in Jesus, and emanates Jesus. The extent to which you love Jesus is the extent to which I can give away my affections to you. If you're saved, but living selfishly, I'm going to have to guard my heart just like Jesus said He had to guard His heart. I'm not going to be able to give you everything that I want to give you, as long as you decide to continue to dabble in the world. I'm going to have to wrestle with you. I'm going to have to sit down and talk with you, "Brother, please, come on, come on. Let's go home together. Quit dabbling in the prodigal's pigpen. Come on, man. That's not where the party is. It seems like a party to you, but you're going to end up eating corn husks. It's not worth it. Come on home." I'm going to have to talk with you that way. While with somebody else I am going to be able to hug them, laugh with them, and be at ease with them. I can just pour my heart out like Jesus did in Bethany. He kicked back and He enjoyed the time there. That was His refuge, His solace. Mary was there. Lazarus was there. He's loving it! We can only be that way with those who are emanating the Life and the Spirit of Christ. Anything less than that is a serious mistake. So what will it be? "Blessed is the womb that bore you" ...OR... "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of my Father and obey it."

## No Contradiction!

Jesus taught us to honor our parents (Mat. 15:4). But Jesus also said you have to hate your parents and your children (Lk. 14:26). When He said these things, He was certainly not contradicting Himself. So maybe we just need to understand a little better what it *means* to honor others. Jesus couldn't contradict Himself. He did not disobey His own command about honoring His parents. Apparently, there's an understanding that we must have of how to honor someone, yet not give away our hearts. This must be possible to achieve. These are not contradictions. You can honor and love *without* giving away your heart and your affections to someone who Jesus doesn't want you to give your heart away to. That goes for co-workers, schoolmates, neighbors, and most of all, "family" members—*because that's where our biggest blind spots are.*

So, *WHO is my Family?* As I look around this room at all of YOU, my heart leaps because **THIS is my FAMILY!** Hundreds and hundreds of

fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters—for real! Intimate relationships. Hundreds of intimate relationships—THIS is my FAMILY! You’ve got to view it that way if, in fact, you’re born a second time. If you’re not born a second time and you’re just playing religion, then view it any way you want. Live any way you want and do anything you want. *But if you love Him*, you will keep His commandments and you will try to find a way to make these two tensions work together. I want to show love, honor, and respect. I want to care for and reach out in compassion and not exclude, insult, or harden myself to others. I want to be merciful like Jesus was with Zacchaeus. But I must learn how to do that *without* chumming, funning, howling, or playing around as if genetics make someone truly a part of me, and part of my Family, when in reality we’re different species. It doesn’t work that way anymore if we “see no man after the flesh.” It’s very different than that. *“For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation...”* (1Pet 4:3,4).

Think about it. Pray about it. This might be the hardest thing you ever hear. Keep praying, and keep thinking. If you’re honest and sincere and you seek God on these things, He’ll show you how to work out the tension between them, so that He’s honored, and so that there’s no lukewarmness or compromise. He’ll show you how to work those two things together if you really beg Him to show you. Help each other through all of this, too. It can work out really well. These are things from the Scriptures. This is part of God’s heart and mind, and it’s very important that you *do* make an effort to move down this road for Jesus’ sake. Do it right. Don’t overreact, but don’t ignore these things either. It’s very, very important. Shalom...



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# Physical Phamily

*Friday Night, September 19, 2003 and earlier ☺*

**B**elow is every single verse in the Bible where Jesus Himself tells us how HE views, and expects us to view, biological family. No verses are left out, as far as anyone can tell, where He Teaches about, or speaks directly to, biological family. It is all here. It is what He desired Recorded of His very own Words while He was here on this planet physically, on the matter of biological family relationships. These are His exact Thoughts and Words.

This, below—every Word He personally spoke on the matter, is for us to embrace, if we are truly His. Of course there are PLENTY of “fine sounding” sentimental alternatives to Jesus’ Teaching on the subject. The pens of pagans, unSaved psychologists, and compromising religionists are replete with sonnets of self-serving thoughts which un-do the Plan of God for “a HUNDRED mothers, brothers, sisters” that “the gates of Hell cannot prevail against.” Now “who” do you think would “inspire” such a thing? (Eph.3:10) Know that a Follower of Jesus, with HIS Spirit within, will follow JESUS’ Teaching and Example, regardless of personal cost or abuse or popular pagan “opinions” - made to sound “spiritual” to the undiscerning or the addicted or the fearful.

Are there wonderful “Shadows” in first birth “families” and the like? Of course! Anyone with children or grandchildren and a shred of decency in them knows the pleasure and joy and jubilation of watching a child take their first steps, and hear them mispronounce their earliest words! Fun stuff! No wonder the temptation to whip out the photographs! AND YET... biological family is meant only to POINT at the Reality and train His People in warfare and character and wisdom and responsibility—not ever to substitute for Reality. SPIRITUAL relationships are, according to God, to be “our joy and our crown!” A “full quiver” of physical offspring is “a blessing” and not to be diminished. But, as you’ll see below, physical family is NOT the “end all” that man’s sentiment and culture’s brainwashing and satan’s lies have made it. It is a “full-quiver” SPIRITUALLY that Father always Intended those whom He has Chosen to be able to See. The “shadow” of physical marriage and bio-logical family are NEVER to be accepted by man’s teaching as a REPLACEMENT for God’s Intention: “a hundred mothers, brothers, sisters”—the Spiritual “Zoe-ology” of Jesus Christ, the Seed of Second-Birth. “God’s Intent is NOW,

through the Church, to make known His many-faceted Wisdom, even to the principalities and powers!” (Eph.3:10)

Jesus CLEARLY saw and taught that the **Second Birth** is our primary identifier, not our last name or skin color, or our language or education or common age or financial portfolio! The first birth, or any external whatsoever, does not control our decisions or affections. Those things provide opportunity to serve Him, but may NEVER have our affections or sway our words or decisions.

It is interesting to note that many, many thousands of Saints worldwide have contacted us over the last 18 years. They say they PLEAD with God that they would experience TRUE Church, rather than the thing not authored by God: the “attend-me” living room, or “attendance-based” Building-Appropriated-for-Religious-Functions. The “aleness” so many face is not all based on their circumstances in so many cases. Often, the “aleness” is the fruit of SIN. The refusal to build as GOD says to build, ignoring and rationalizing away God’s Word on subjects such as “leaven in the batch” and biological family perspective, has created the tragic and dangerous plight that most people face.

The “debate” is over about “what is family?” and “how should I think about biological ties and common last name and facial features?” There can be no other “options” for those who claim to follow Jesus than what JESUS Himself said. “Seek first His KINGDOM” is a Command with great and precious Promises, for those “few” who will obey Him!

Below you will find EXACTLY how Jesus feels about biological family, and every word anyone could find that He spoke while here on the topic. Do you have the courage to BELIEVE that, without the popularized, convenient, and addictive vices and teachings of men added? How He calls a truly Saved person to respond to biological family is both modeled by the Savior and Taught from His lips. EVERY SINGLE WORD He wanted us to have from His mouth regarding the topic is found below. Is it enough for you, or do you require more to make your life a more pleasant place?

To demonstrate that He lived what He Commands us to live, every single interaction in the Scriptures that He had with His OWN biological family is also below.

One would have to make up their own “Christianity” to embrace a Way different than what Jesus Commands and lived, wouldn’t they? And such a sentimental concoction could hardly then be rightfully called Christianity, could it?

Enjoy Jesus' clarity, His passion, and the Way He lived in a Realm outside of personal fears or selfish pleasures, purely for the Father's Glory and Kingdom and Purposes. Even recorded in His own Words at age TWELVE. This is our Jesus—and this is for all who have HIM, the Great I AM, living inside of them!

(Eph.1:13-14; Rom.8:9-11; Col.1:26)

*Every single Recorded  
time Jesus Himself  
Commanded or  
Taught regarding  
biological family, or  
He Himself spoke to  
His own biological  
family:*

<sup>21</sup>Another disciple said to him, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” <sup>22</sup>But Jesus told him, “Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.”

MATTHEW 8:21-22

Would you, will you, willingly obey Jesus and do what He said here? If such a thing as “letting the dead (unSaved - including “religious” but not sold-out for Jesus) bury their own dead” is not even an option because your mom and brothers and sisters would be angry, you have “another God before Him.” Of COURSE this (not going to bury a biological relative, even a father) doesn’t apply to every single biological family funeral. But, do you drop to your knees, knowing it could apply to you, in the event of a death of unSaved, unRegenerate (religious or not) biological family member? If skipping the “funeral” is not an option for you, you are an idolater, of course. Jesus was pretty clear that it is required of a man to have such a heart, if he wants to be a Christian. It’s simple, really. Let go, and be Jesus’ Disciple so you can HEAR and let HIM decide, when the time comes. It’s HIS decision case by case -- not a decision to be made by emotion, or the decision of pagan peer pressure. Read what JESUS said again. It’s not poetry. It is GOD speaking to you, and to me, about what He wants of our hearts if we are to be part of HIS Family. “The disciples were called christians first at Antioch.” Every Christian must be a disciple. There is no “third Covenant” or “other plan”!

<sup>57</sup>As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go."

<sup>58</sup>Jesus replied, "*Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.*" <sup>59</sup>He said to another man, "Follow me." But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." <sup>60</sup>Jesus said to him, "*Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.*" <sup>61</sup>Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family." <sup>62</sup>Jesus replied, "*No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.*"

LUKE 9:57-62

How are YOU with "not even saying good-bye" to your siblings and parents? How would you do with leaving your dear dad with fish in the net, and walking away from family and job with no notice, as James and John did? It is the SAME Jesus we follow, alive and real and discernable — not some historical figment to be pondered and sung at in the sky, on some holy day. There is no other true Christianity than this willingness to walk away from everyone, at His call. Ask the "rich young ruler" how far you get with Jesus when you try to "add" Him to what you're already doing. If you haven't truly abandoned yourself to Him before, NOW, come follow Him. Let HIM decide whether you say "good-bye" or "sell all of your possessions and give to the poor," or something else of His choosing. Do that. Every day, the rest of your earthly existence. THAT is Christianity, and "attending" something in a façade or living room has nothing to do with making you a True Christian. "To find your life, you MUST lose it."

<sup>21</sup>"*Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death.*

<sup>22</sup>*All men will hate you because of Me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.*"

MATTHEW 10:21-22

If you are TRULY Saved, with HIS Spirit inside of you, "Woe to you, if all men speak well of you." If there is nothing "at stake" between you and the unSaved, all is rosy and cuddly, you must question your own Salvation. It is not possible, Biblically, to "have your cake and eat it too." "Choose you this day whom YOU will serve."

<sup>34</sup>“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. <sup>35</sup>For I have come to turn ‘a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law <sup>36</sup>a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’ <sup>37</sup>Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; <sup>38</sup>and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. <sup>39</sup>Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

MATTHEW 10:34-39

<sup>46</sup>While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. <sup>47</sup>Someone told him, “Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.” <sup>48</sup>He replied to him, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers? <sup>50</sup>For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”

MATTHEW 12:46-50

Oh, man! Why did He have to go and say this?! Hasn't He heard the slogan "Focus on the family"? And how about "God first, family second, job third, climate fourth, church fifth" (or something like that)? Hasn't Jesus heard that? So why then did He say what HE said here in Matthew, completely Other than these humanistic slogans? Because He is Right. It's HIS Kingdom, and HE knows.

Do you willingly surrender this into His arms, for His care and personal direction? It is a fearful and rare choice. Almost no one you have ever known, regardless of the magic religious words they have crafted and memorized to dazzle others with (from a pulpit or in a clever book), have chosen Jesus as JESUS said He must be chosen. But you can submit your heart to Jesus' Words here, just as He said them without excuse-making and rationalization, if you will trust Him that His Ways are Right and Good, and that "He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" HIS Way! (Heb.11:6)

If this was the ONLY time Jesus spoke to, or spoke about physical family, you would now know just about everything you need to know to please Him, and to "walk as He walked" to be "in Him." (1Jn.1) Could YOU honestly say what Jesus said? If not, if that is not your perspective of life and Life, you are way out of the Spirit, no matter how sentimental you may feel about unconverted family members that GOD calls

“children of the devil” (if they are not truly Saved by abandoning their lives into Him). See it as HE sees it, or you cannot have Him. “How can two walk together...?”

<sup>20</sup>Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. <sup>21</sup>When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, “He is out of his mind.”

MARK 3:20-21

You see, there is no commitment by physical family to even Jesus Himself... if He (or you) don't do what you're expected to do. Jesus prophesied to us, and experienced Himself, how easily the carnal man (biological relative or not) will turn on you if you do not play the game their way. As Jesus said, He could “entrust Himself to no man” for it is plain to see “what is in the heart of man.” “What's born of flesh, is flesh.” “See no man after the flesh.” “The child born in the ordinary way ALWAYS rises up to persecute the child born of the Spirit. It is the same now.”

<sup>31</sup>Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. <sup>32</sup>A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, “Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.”

<sup>33</sup>“*Who are my mother and my brothers?*” he asked. <sup>34</sup>*Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, “Here are my mother and my brothers!*” <sup>35</sup>*Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother.”*

MARK 3:31-35

Is this how YOU define YOUR “family”? Now don't hyper-spiritualize it into meaning, “Yea, yea. we need to be committed to our ‘church family’ AFTER we are totally committed to our physical family, Saved or not.” THAT is dishonest. JESUS didn't say “after.” He said “Seek FIRST the KingDOM.” He, Himself, demonstrates in this verse EXACTLY where our commitment must lie, if we are to wear HIS Name, rather than to “play church” in some way He will NOT honor. It is SO tempting in our flesh to define family by our comfort zones, what we can control, and what we take pride

<sup>31</sup>Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. <sup>32</sup>A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you."

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MARK 3:31-35

in. Physical phamily idolatry, giving affection or preferential treatment to mere first-birth ties and prejudices, is one of the most powerfully addictive drugs in the universe.

In returning from Romania, Poland, and Europe, we have always found it "refreshing" to enter into England or other English-speaking nations. After a stay in the villages of India, it was tempting to be sinfully "refreshed" by encountering others of a common skin color or language in a restaurant in Bombay. It is always a sinful temptation of the flesh to gravitate towards common culture, or common age (teens "hanging out" or young marrieds "hanging out" or \_\_\_). It is sinful (unChristlike) to give in to this "comfort zone", or to gravitate towards, show preference to, or give affection or comfort to common language or skin color... or biological relatives, regardless of their Spiritual state. It is evil to see men or women "after the flesh" rather than defining all humans by whether they are "children of the devil" or have had a "Second Birth" — indwelt by Christ Himself, based on a life abandoned to Him. THIS is the ONLY way a converted follower of Jesus can allow themselves to think: <sup>33</sup>"Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked. <sup>34</sup>Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers!" <sup>35</sup>Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother." Mark 3:33-35

<sup>19</sup>Now Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get near him because of the crowd. <sup>20</sup>Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you."

<sup>21</sup>He replied, "*My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice.*"

LUKE 8:19-21

Who is YOUR family? Really? IN YOUR HEART: Who IS your family? Yes, we are "worse than infidels" if we don't care for biological family. YES, we are disqualified from being overseers in God's House, His Church, His family... if we don't lead our own homes well. YES, our homes are where we MODEL God's love and Truths to one another in "close proximity". And yet, all of that said, VERY FEW actually LIVE like Jesus said is the ONLY way He endorses, in these verses. There are no "CHRISTIAN" options to ignore Jesus' Teachings. He is either the Head, and HE does the "thinking" — or you are involved in false religion.

<sup>55</sup>"Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? <sup>56</sup>Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" <sup>57</sup>And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "*Only in his hometown and in his own house is a prophet without honor.*" <sup>58</sup>And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.

MATTHEW 13:55-58

"He left you an example that you should follow in His steps" — said His friend, Peter.

"No man is greater than His Teacher. If they hated Me, they WILL hate you as well."

"Curses on you, if all men speak well of you."

<sup>3</sup>“Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him. <sup>4</sup>Jesus said to them, *“Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor.”* <sup>5</sup>He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. <sup>6</sup>And he was amazed at their lack of faith.

MARK 6:3-6

<sup>42</sup>They said, “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I came down from heaven?’”

JOHN 6:42

<sup>1</sup>Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, <sup>2</sup>“Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don’t wash their hands before they eat!” <sup>3</sup>Jesus replied, *“And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? <sup>4</sup>For God said, ‘Honor your father and mother’ and ‘Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.’ <sup>5</sup>But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, ‘Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God,’ <sup>6</sup>he is not to ‘honor his father’ with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. <sup>7</sup>You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: <sup>8</sup>“These*

You see, if folks grow up with you, they think they have every right to judge you incompetent and ridicule you in their familiarity. IF you have unBelieving relatives who will not live for, nor die for Jesus (it’s only cultural religion, or superstitious candle-burning, or business contacts, or buddies)... and they have no grievance with you, because nothing is at stake... you cannot be walking with Jesus.

Same point. To those who have your affections and esteem to lose, “Everyone has the right to their own opinions” and “Truth is relative” (pun intended).

While obviously Jesus was addressing religious hypocrisy, to those who were loveless religionists, there is a point made here that mustn’t be missed. Certainly God does recognize the need to respect biological parents, and heads of households (as well as earthly pagan leaders, bosses at work, at all sorts of authorities — as long as they don’t ask you to violate your conscience or disobey the Higher Authority, Jesus). At the same time, for someone to say “honor your father and mother” means you should allow any human to “steal your crown”... “Judge for yourselves whether it’s better to obey God or man.” We cannot, even if it costs us our very physical life, allow ANY human to bully us or

*people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. <sup>9</sup>They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.”*

MATTHEW 15:1-9

sway us or emotionally blackmail us into compromise or into their lukewarmness. “Honoring” them means, as it would with a judge of a human court (titled “Your Honor”) that we are not disrespectful or insulting or cruel or less than sacrificial. Yet, “honoring” does not mean that we have to allow the “judge” that we “honor” to take our children away for the weekend on a fishing trip, to impart his morals and evils upon them. “Honoring” does NOT mean “fellowship” or even “trust” —regardless of their Spiritual state.

<sup>10</sup> *“For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.’ <sup>11</sup>But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: ‘Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban’ (that is, a gift devoted to God), <sup>12</sup>then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. <sup>13</sup>Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.”*

MARK 7:10-13

When your parents “put their hope in God, and continually pray night and day” —rather than “live for pleasure and are dead even while they live” (1Tim.5), it certainly makes the ability to have true relationship with them MUCH easier. Regardless, respecting and “honoring” with flowers and continual pleas for them to turn to Jesus rather than empty religion or the world is very appropriate. Not “fellowship” (“merging life with them”), which is reserved for Jesus and His Body ALONE, but “honoring” them by kind acts and relentless pleading - rather than giving up. Hard-core loveless religion will either compromise everything important to Jesus in order to please men and have an emotional drug fix of physical family, OR it will make no effort to “seek and save that which is lost.” Both are equally wrong.

<sup>31</sup>“You have heard that the law of Moses says, ‘A man can divorce his wife by merely giving her a letter of divorce.’ <sup>32</sup>But I say that a man who divorces his wife, unless she has been unfaithful, causes her to commit adultery. And anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”

MATTHEW 5:31-32

Odd that so many who PROFESS Jesus have no conscience about blatantly disobeying Him? Fifty percent divorce rate in the so-called churches, amongst those who claim to cherish “family”? They can’t even protect what they claim to focus on! You see, when we FOCUS on things that are not JESUS, our flesh screams when we do not get what “we want”. Then there is no “glue” to hold a “relationship” together, when it is built of self-serving motives, rather than “seek first the Kingdom.” Those who claim to be “leaders” of God’s Flock are often so devoid of Truth themselves that they allow relationships to tumble into the Abyss without lifting a finger, and then further do nothing to prevent the rebellion of divorce. These are the very ones “focused on the FAMILY” -and they resent the Teachings of Jesus about who Family REALLY is, while they watch 50% (this IS the average number of divorces within religious establishments) of their physical families trashed right before their eyes? There ARE Answers, but most are afraid to look in the Right place — the Teachings of Jesus. No QUESTION! Try Him. He’s not a “family hater” — He’s RIGHT! :)

<sup>2</sup>Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" <sup>3</sup>*"What did Moses command you?"* he replied. <sup>4</sup>They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away." <sup>5</sup>*"It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law,"* Jesus replied. <sup>6</sup>*"But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' <sup>7</sup>'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, <sup>8</sup>and the two will become one flesh.' <sup>9</sup>So they are no longer two, but one. <sup>9</sup>Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."*

MARK 10:2-9

"FROM THE BEGINNING IT WAS NOT SO." "What God has joined together, let man not separate" is a PART of God's Intention of total abandonment to Him: "seeking FIRST His Kingdom"... and "all these things shall be added to you as well." If we invest in HIS Together-Life, and put ourselves DEEP into His un-Created Life in the Second Birth Family, HE HIMSELF will guard our hearts and minds and marriages and children in Christ Jesus. HE will direct our steps to who HE wants us to be with, based on Truth and regeneracy rather than fleshly appearance and personality. But, the drug-fix of emotion associated with undiscerning granting of affection and relationship to unSaved and lukewarm biological family members DESTROYS families, as proven by the religious world's track record. Ahhh - when it's done RIGHT ("Man is God's glory, made in God's own image, and the woman is the glory of man. For the first man did not come from woman, but the first woman came from man. Man was not made for the woman's benefit, but the woman was made for man."), in the context of His daily Church Acts 2:42-47, Eph.5, 1Cor.12, Heb.3 Together-Life, "marriage" and "family" are Awesome things to behold! However, the man-centered hierarchy, separation, segregation, "my castle" "my property" "my affections" unBiblical relationship definitions are "far from Him" and never His Intention. The "us four and no more" biological

<sup>2</sup>Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” <sup>3</sup>“*What did Moses command you?*” he replied. <sup>4</sup>They said, “Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away.” <sup>5</sup>“*It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law,*” Jesus replied. <sup>6</sup>“*But at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female.’<sup>7</sup>For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife,<sup>8</sup>and the two will become one flesh.<sup>9</sup>So they are no longer two, but one.<sup>9</sup>Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.*”

MARK 10:2-9

family bigotry and separation and ownership yields only a playground for satan, as the Church can then only be an “attend-me” ceremony or leaven-filled meeting — a joke to satan.

It has ALWAYS been God’s Heart to view “family” based on Spiritual Life, and nothing less:

God proclaims His Blessing on all with this heart, Old Testament and New Testament:

“He said of his father and mother, ‘I have no regard for them.’ He did not recognize his brothers or acknowledge his own children, but he watched over Your word and guarded Your covenant.”

DEUT.33:8

Sounds just like Jesus, does it not? Interesting. But since He IS the Word, it makes perfect sense. He was not rude and unloving then by saying these things, and is not rude and unloving now, either. It is just plain the heart God blesses!

<sup>27</sup>Peter answered him, “We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?” Jesus said to them, “*I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*” <sup>29</sup>“*And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my*

Ahhhh. WHAT A PROMISE! This is what it’s all about!! Read it again. TRUE RELATIONSHIPS (of the most intimate kind) are granted by God, to those who have LOST THEIR LIVES for Jesus. There is NO other kind of “Church” Biblically speaking, than the DAILY life of those “from the least to the greatest” totally intertwined in “I have need of you!” (1Cor.12) quality of Life. That ALONE

sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.  
<sup>30</sup>But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.”

MATTHEW 19:27-30

<sup>28</sup>Peter said to him, “We have left everything to follow you!” <sup>29</sup>“I tell you the truth,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel <sup>30</sup>will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life.”

MARK 10:28-30

is “Church” and “the Body of Christ” as God intends and Jesus established.

Jesus is even more specific here. This is NOT poetry — but REALITY for those who have ever dared to live this way. And there aren’t many. “In this present age”... REAL FAMILY, based on the SECOND Birth. Children of Abraham “according to the PROMISE” rather than DNA: That is FAMILY! And God’s full Intention from the Beginning. Not “attend me” and then go back to our own carnal biological lives. ☺

The “context” and “Root” of Genuine Pentecostal Christianity (Acts 2) is ALWAYS (Joel 2) “Let the bride and the bridegroom come OUT of their chambers!” Do we REALLY want to see True Christianity, empowered by the Holy Spirit? I hope so. I know many do, worldwide. And because “time is short” we TOTALLY reevaluate what we “seek first”. “What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none; those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.” 1Cor.7:29-31

<sup>28</sup>Peter said to him, “We have left everything to follow you!” <sup>29</sup>“I tell you the truth,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel<sup>30</sup> will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life.”

MARK 10:28-30

Jesus sounds so “rude” to the unregenerate mind that does not truly Know Him, doesn’t He? His Ways “sound” so “unchristian” to the cultural ear. We would not tolerate such talk of “leaving” biological family members today, in most religious circles. (Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel...”)

Now, and in the end-times, drunken addiction to nationality, biological family ties, color and race and language, will create war after war. Jesus prophesied the battles would come down to race and color hating other races and colors, and separating on that ridiculous basis. Ethnos versus ethnus. Divisions over family names, languages, nationalities, and the like. This is commonplace to fallen man — finding identity in externals, and segregating or preferring, in shallowness of heart. And yet, to those who cherish Him and hang on His every word, and trust HIS Ways, we See the majestic wisdom and marvel at how “we must lose our lives to truly save them.”

<sup>28</sup>Peter said to him, “We have left all we had to follow you!” <sup>29</sup>“I tell you the truth,” Jesus said to them, “no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God<sup>30</sup> will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life.”

LUKE 18:28-30

What? Leave WHAT for HIM and His KINGDOM? Can you read that list to me again, one by one? WOW. No WAY will you hear a modern “preacher” with dishonest man-pleasing, ego-building, numbers-increasing (“nickels and noses”) agendas EVER read and apply such a Word from Jesus. In a congregation built upon programs

and leaven, such a man would be terminating his salary and ruining his radio program ratings. But, the fact is, this is a PROMISE — a really GOOD thing — for those who are already “bought for a price” and “not their own” any longer. “For you who revere My name, the sun of Righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall.” :)

<sup>8</sup>“But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. <sup>9</sup>And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. <sup>10</sup>Nor are you to be called ‘teacher,’ for you have one Teacher, the Christ.”

MATTHEW 23:8-10

Just a small “aside”: One revealing “test” for your religious establishment, those to whom you have entrusted your life and your physical family for true Food, the Word of God? IF the “CEO” and others at your “church” don’t mind being called “Reverend Bill” or “Father Jose” or “Elder Marcus” or “Pastor Bob” or “Brother Jim”... then they are disobeying Jesus, and they can’t be trusted very far with other matters, either.

<sup>12</sup>“Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death.

<sup>13</sup>All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.”

MARK 13:12-13

How many people do YOU know who are “HATED” because of Jesus”? Are you “hated because of Jesus”? Can you REALLY say that you know Him or are allowing Him to live in you and through you, if these simple words are not true of you? Your children or parents and co-workers don’t want to kill you, because of your uncompromising stand for Jesus (with love and patience, of course)? If you are not hated and lied about and betrayed by family members and “all men”

<sup>12</sup>“Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. <sup>13</sup>All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.”

MARK 13:12-13

<sup>16</sup>“You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. <sup>17</sup>All men will hate you because of me.”

LUKE 21:16-17

<sup>33</sup>The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about him. <sup>34</sup>Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, <sup>35</sup>so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

LUKE 2:33-35

— then you must be compromising Him for reasons of your own? Comfort? Fear? Family idolatry? Greed? Laziness? Something! So cut it out already! “Today is the day of Salvation!” :)

Whoops. This is still True of all who are walking with Him, rather than false religion or compromise. And, it will not be true in the false cultural “christian” world. Though rudeness or “Corban” or foolish radicalism must not be our way, Jesus Himself often speaks of this “division” amongst “biological family” as a mark that you may be on the Right course! It’s scary. The Real thing always is. “Unless the seed falls to the ground and dies, it abides alone. But IF it dies, it bears much fruit!” Call on His Name!

Even Mary, the precious teenager chosen by the Father to birth and raise His Only Son... even MARY would have to deal with the “skandalon” — the stumbling stone of offense in Jesus. She was not exempt from having to pay the price of repenting of self-life and falling on the Rock, just because she was His mother. All must fall, that they may rise again, and nothing or no one is permitted by God to “pad the cross” and rob any person of the “sword that will pierce their own soul, too.” Giving away affection to those who have not bowed their knee to their

Maker in abandon is to oppose God and cheapen the Blood of Jesus. It is treason. All must face the cross, without the morphine of human affection that will take their eyes off of Him.

*<sup>11</sup>“Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? <sup>12</sup>Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? <sup>13</sup>If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”*

LUKE 11:11-13

Beyond question, if there is human decency and love in our bones at all, we instinctively love and care for our offspring. There's nothing wrong with that! AS LONG AS we recognize that the SECOND BIRTH dominates and defines TRULY who our highest and most essential offspring and Family are. There is nothing wrong with physical food, and it's important. But “man cannot live by bread alone.” The HIGHEST form of “bread” is “every Word the continually proceeds from the Father's mouth.” Without THAT, we are “dead even while we live”. The same is true of “physical family.” It is NOT to be run after, as if “our god is our belly.” Nor can we view Spiritual Family as inferior, or “extra” or someone secondary. It is FIRST, “and all these things shall be added to you as well.” Remember, those who give away affections based on biology and physical preference are the ones with the 50% divorce rate and immoral, deceitful teens. ☹

<sup>52</sup>“From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. <sup>53</sup>They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”

LUKE 12:52-53

Ahhh... THIS could never happen in a Loadicean “focus on the family” church world, could it? Pop-”christian”-psychology today says, “The man is the head and the physical family is the most important thing! Judge for yourselves - obey man, rather than God” they say. Pagan or carnal parents or husbands or wives should dominate and control, because “family is god” to them, and nothing should “interfere” with that. And, they find God’s Judgment with 75% teen apostasy and 50% divorce rate — THINKING they are “protecting the family” by “focusing” on it and its “patriarchal” unBiblical ego-centric structures. Quite the contrary is true. God finds no pleasure in either “being worse than an infidel” by misrepresenting His care for those entrusted to a man — nor does He find pleasure in placing the first birth as equal or superior in energy and affection and responsibility for the Second Born Ones.

<sup>27</sup>“He answered, ‘Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father’s house, <sup>28</sup>for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’ <sup>29</sup>“Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.’ <sup>30</sup>“No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’ <sup>31</sup>“He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’”

LUKE 16:27-31

Human affection and genetic ties are insufficient to win a soul who is determined to gratify the flesh, rather than abandon self to God. The Word of God and Second Birth Daily Life are truly, by the Words of Jesus, elevated above biological connections — in EVERY SINGLE QUOTATION from the Messiah Himself.

## Speaking about SPIRITUAL Family

<sup>23</sup>“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, <sup>24</sup>leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.”

MATTHEW 5:23-24

<sup>4</sup>How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? <sup>5</sup>You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”

MATTHEW 7:4-5

<sup>15</sup>“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. <sup>16</sup>But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ <sup>17</sup>If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.”

MATTHEW 18:15-17

<sup>21</sup>Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” <sup>22</sup>Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.”

MATTHEW 18:21-22

<sup>35</sup>“This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.”

MATTHEW 18:35

<sup>8</sup>“But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. <sup>9</sup>And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. <sup>10</sup>Nor are you to be called ‘teacher,’ for you have one Teacher, the Christ.”

MATTHEW 23:8-10

<sup>40</sup>“The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’”

MATTHEW 25:40

<sup>46</sup>While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. <sup>47</sup>Someone told him, “Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.” <sup>48</sup>He replied to him, “*Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?*” <sup>50</sup>*For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.*”

MATTHEW 12:46-50

<sup>31</sup>Then Jesus’ mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. <sup>32</sup>A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, “Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.” <sup>33</sup>“*Who are my mother and my brothers?*” he asked. <sup>34</sup>Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, “*Here are my mother and my brothers!*” <sup>35</sup>*Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.*”

MARK 3:31-35

<sup>19</sup>Now Jesus’ mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get near him because of the crowd. <sup>20</sup>Someone told him, “Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you.” <sup>21</sup>He replied, “*My mother and brothers are those who hear God’s word and put it into practice.*”

LUKE 8:19-21

<sup>11</sup>“*Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? <sup>12</sup>Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? <sup>13</sup>If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!*”

LUKE 11:11-13

<sup>3</sup>So watch yourselves. “*If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him.*”

LUKE 17:3

<sup>32</sup>“*But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.*”

LUKE 22:32

<sup>31</sup>To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “*If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. <sup>32</sup>Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*” <sup>33</sup>They answered him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?” <sup>34</sup>Jesus replied, “*I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. <sup>35</sup>Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to*

it forever. <sup>36</sup>So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. <sup>37</sup>I know you are Abraham's descendants. Yet you are ready to kill me, because you have no room for my word. <sup>38</sup>I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you do what you have heard from your father." <sup>39</sup>"Abraham is our father," they answered. "If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would do the things Abraham did. <sup>40</sup>As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. <sup>41</sup>You are doing the things your own father does." "We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is God himself." <sup>42</sup>Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. <sup>43</sup>Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. <sup>44</sup>You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. <sup>45</sup>Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! <sup>46</sup>Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me? <sup>47</sup>He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God."

JOHN 8:31-47

## Speaking to PHYSICAL Phamily

<sup>48</sup>So when they saw him, they were amazed; and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Look, your father and I have sought you anxiously." <sup>49</sup>And he said to them, "Why did you seek me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?"

LUKE 2:48-49 NKJV

Is Jesus rude? Does He not love His physical parents? How could He answer so callously after disappearing without permission or communication for three days? At age TWELVE! To be "Christlike" is VERY unlike what cultural christianity would teach you to be, or allow you to be. They cannot even explain such things as these dozens of exact quotes and examples from the One they would still call "Head" and "Master" and "Lord, Lord." Jesus is not "rude" — nor is one who views life exactly like Jesus does and did, because Jesus lives inside of them now! Hallelujah! And such a person will likely get murdered verbally or

<sup>48</sup>So when they saw him, they were amazed; and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Look, your father and I have sought you anxiously." <sup>49</sup>And he said to them, "*Why did you seek me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?*"

LUKE 2:48-49 NKJV

physically in less than four years of living and acting and speaking as Jesus did. "No man is greater than His Teacher. If they hated Me, they will hate you also." Unless, of course, one changes Jesus to accommodate their culture and preferences. Then one can do good deeds, attend things, sing songs... and still curry the favor of the world and "children of the devil" as the Apostle called the unSaved.

<sup>25</sup>Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. <sup>26</sup>When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "*Dear woman, here is your son,*" <sup>27</sup>and to the disciple, "*Here is your mother.*" From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

JOHN 19:25-27

To most who don't know Jesus and would not accept or do these many things He has said and done regarding physical family, this is REALLY weird. After all, Jesus had physical brothers (James, Joseph, Simon and Judas, and sisters) that He TOTALLY usurped, taking away their physical mother! Jesus gave his mother Mary to a NON-relative, while his biological siblings and her very children were still alive and in their twenties and thirties! Jesus did the unthinkable, and Mary agreed and went! JESUS ONLY SAW SPIRITUAL FAMILY, just as He said again and again and again.

<sup>3</sup>And when the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine." <sup>4</sup>And Jesus said to her, "*Woman, what do I have to do with you? My hour has not yet come.*"

JOHN 2:3-4 NAS

Wow! How can He DO that?! Wasn't Jesus being "unChristlike" in His response? And yet, that IS "Christlike" when it is about the Father's Business!

<sup>3</sup>Jesus' (unBelieving) brothers said to him, "You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that your disciples may see the miracles you do. <sup>4</sup>No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world." <sup>5</sup>For even his own brothers did not believe in him. <sup>6</sup>Therefore Jesus told them, *"The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right. <sup>7</sup>The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that what it does is evil."* <sup>9</sup>Having said this, he stayed in Galilee.

JOHN 7:3-9

Wow. So true. That's kinda what all of the rest of this is about, isn't it? When we love the world and the things of the world, ANYTHING is okay. But, for those who are of the Tribe of Jesus, the SECOND Adam, everything is different — and makes very little sense (1Cor.2) to those without the Spirit.

Okay. Let's summarize a bit. Are there WONDERFUL "shadows" in the physical family and in the world around us (Col.2, Heb.5-10, Eph.5), that CAN point towards "the Reality that is in Christ"? Of course!

But, if you ask the average Christian who has been brainwashed by cultural religion what Jesus had to say about biological family, they would say, "Well, He taught maybe 80% about how important biological family love and affection and loyalty are, and maybe 20% He said some weird hyper-spiritual things (that He didn't really mean the way they sound) about 'hating family' and stuff."

But, now that you have seen EVERYTHING Jesus said on the topic, isn't it shocking that 100% of everything He said and did was RADICALLY against "focus on the family"?! Find me ANYTHING sentimental and culturally acceptable that He said or did related to biological family. It's not there.

Modern cultural christianity has really sold God's People a counterfeit, to their detriment and Father's broken heart. And frankly, it's what most people's "itching ears want to hear" so it works out fine. But, it's not Christianity unless it's what JESUS taught and what Jesus did. Man's natural sentiment (common to many species in the animal kingdom) is to a lower life-form of biology, while Jesus taught and did the exact opposite. Culture's brainwashing and satan's lies have made biological ties into something JESUS never practiced or authorized. Spiritual Life and the RE-birth "from the Kingdom of Darkness to the Kingdom of the Beloved Son" are what it's REALLY all about—though most have never heard these teachings of Jesus, as consistent as they are.

Ponder this one. Create a hardback book of "All the Sayings of Jesus about the Family" as above, even without comment. Then put it up for sale at a christian bookstore. Put it alongside "All the Women of the Bible" and "The Culture of the Days of Jesus". What would happen? Would you sell millions of copies, like the pop-psychology and other "happy books" do? You know the answer. A book on "All the Sayings of Jesus about the Family" would hardly sell a copy. And, if someone did read it, as most are drunk on cultural christianity, man's psycho-babble comfort and ego-centric teaching on the topic of family, and fear of man... how many are true Christians and would change their lives to live JUST like Jesus said and did?

Do you have the courage and faith to be HIS disciple, rather than being drugged into something less than Jesus by the Compromiser, who fills the radio and television waves and shamelessly peddles his wares to you at christian bookstores?

The "shadow" of physical marriage and biological family, as wonderful as they are when built around Jesus (a true rarity, even when there is a fish bumper sticker on the family car) have become to most (in a faulty christendom) a REPLACEMENT for God's Intention: "a hundred mothers, brothers, sisters." The age old battle is still raging, between the Spirit and the flesh: "The child born in the ordinary way... always persecutes the child born of the Spirit. It is the same now." (Gal.4). If we could encourage you in any way, we would want you to see THIS, as a proven fact in our seeing real Life over the last 20 years: you will have infinitely FEWER divorces and wild teens and business man evils in your "churches" IF YOU OBEY JESUS and embrace the Right perspective of "Family" instead of "Focus on the (biological) Family" against Jesus' strict warnings! Ironic, isn't it? You must LOSE your life, in order to FIND it! That's the only kind of "Christianity" that there is. The Life of Jesus.

May Father direct your steps as you embrace His heart and walk these things out, without regard to the persecution you shall certainly face for refusing to love the world and conform to the patterns of this Life-less mediocre world. He "thinks better things in your case."

Let's live for HIM who died for us. Time is short and Life is Good.

Grace to you as you walk in His Provision.....

## Remember the Chains

*(by Seeds)*

A lone man is thrown into the darkness  
His hands and feet shackled to a wall  
It's the penalty of voicing his confession  
And the weight of it begins to fall  
As he remembers his family  
Left behind with pain now to endure  
Within his darkened isolation  
To his Lord he does cry

Oh Lord, ease this pain  
Take any Truth I might have  
Take it and give it to them, please, Lord

A woman rejected and forsaken  
By the ones she has always known  
The family she has belonged to  
Now call her dead, leaving her alone  
But the Truth that she now firmly holds to  
Brings her life she just can't deny  
Yet from her lonely isolation  
To her Lord she does cry

Oh Lord, ease this pain  
Soften through their fearful hearts  
That my family might be saved, please, Lord

These are the prayers of our brothers and sisters  
Enduring persecution for the call  
Their cries must not be in silence  
It must be shattered by our prayers

A gathering of adoration  
In His Life they've come to pray  
Fearing they have been reported  
Yet determined they must stay  
And intercede on behalf of the Body  
To endure and make it to the end  
Together in their common isolation  
To their Lord they do cry

Oh Lord, ease this pain  
Give to us Your Holy Strength to stand up  
And confess Your name, please, Lord

These are the prayers of our brothers and sisters  
Enduring persecution for the call  
Their cries must not be in silence  
It must be shattered by our prayers

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# All Affection Belongs to JESUS (Part 3)

*Sunday Afternoon, September 26, 1999*

*Question: Wasn't it said of Jesus that He ate and drank with sinners and tax collectors? Obviously, Jesus didn't just disassociate himself from everyone who was a sinner.*

**W**ell, let's back up just a little bit. First of all, it was an *accuser* who said that about Jesus. Jesus didn't say that about Himself. He didn't say, "I'm a friend of sinners and tax collectors." He was *accused* of that by those who wanted to kill Him. Secondly, He did "eat and drink" with them, but there's no evidence that He gave away His affections to them. There's a difference between getting on common ground with people and giving affections away to them.

In the process of bringing others to Christ, I have done a lot of things. I have been to baseball games, football games and soccer games. I swam eight miles across a lake with one guy, and I did a triathlon with another. I met one of the brothers while I was on a very long bicycle ride. But guess what? There were other brothers with me in those situations. When we swam across the lake, there were brothers in a boat 100 meters in front of us just making sure we didn't get hit by the ferry or any speed boats. ***When you build in the Kingdom of God, you use tools, like those mentioned above, to help others reach God.*** And you can use these tools—eating in a restaurant, swimming across a lake, or participating in a triathlon—without giving away your affections. You do it as one extending mercy and kindness.

A good example of this is how I met the man with whom I swam across the lake. I met Jim when he came to a "Sunday morning service" of which I was "pastor" at that time. I practically had to tackle him afterwards because he was taking off so quickly. I said to him, "What's your hurry? I want to talk to you a little bit." He explained to me his big plans for the day, "I'm going skiing in the mountains, and when I get done with that, this other guy and I are going to go windsurfing on the lake. By the time we do all that stuff, it's going to be dark. If we don't get started now, we're not going to get it all done today."

Later on, I called the man who had brought Jim to the “service.” The man who he came with was supposed to have been a believer, but that could have been disputed by the quality of his life and the lack of testimony of his faith. In any event, he considered himself a “member” of this place. I called him and said, “Can I get that man’s phone number?”

And he said, “Ah, Jim’s just a play baby; he won’t want to talk to you. All he does is ride motor cross bikes and go windsurfing and scuba diving all the time. He doesn’t care about anything else.”

But I said, “Well, just give me his phone number anyway.”

I got Jim on the phone and he agreed to get together with me. We talked, and other brothers became involved in the process. Once again, it’s a Kingdom thing. It’s not my “ministry.” *It’s Jesus’ life being expressed!* And I can’t do that by myself. I don’t have all the gifts. I don’t have the full measure of the character, personality, and qualities of Jesus.

Well, I got to know this guy a little bit better, and he invited me to his house. I rode my bicycle about 35 kilometers out to his house. When I got there, six or eight guys were standing in his front yard. Now Jim is about 5’10” with long curly hair. And everybody around him was about 6’3”, muscular with blonde hair. All of his friends were these big, tough California beach boys with blonde hair and muscles! And Jim, right in the middle of these guys, was the ring leader! I was amazed at this situation. All these guys were saying, “What should we do now, Jim? Where do you want to go now, Jim?” You have to know Jim. He’s an intelligent IBM engineer and very, very quiet and these big, tough guys are all staring down at him, eagerly awaiting his reply. So, all these guys were surrounding Jim, smoking pot, and Jim was right there in the middle of them smoking pot, too! I walked up and put my bike down on the ground. They offered me a toke, and I said, “No, thanks.”

You see, we’re not talking about being some sort of “holy” club or anything like that. We’re talking about getting right in the middle of hearts and minds in this fallen world, *but doing it God’s way*. Three weeks later, we were training to do this eight-mile swim because I was trying to find some way to get into his world, to “eat and drink.” He didn’t have my affections in the sense that I gave myself away to him though. I didn’t say, “Oh, it’s my chum. It’s my pal, Jim.” NO, my friendship is with Jesus, not someone in the world! But I cared about Jim. I loved him.

No more than three weeks had passed when Jim came to me and said, “You are the best friend I have ever had in my life.”

And I thought, “How could this be? In three weeks time, I’m the best friend he had ever had?” This man appeared to be the most “popular” man on the planet in some strange way. He had tried every sport anyone had ever put their hand to, and he had every “toy” imaginable. He was an IBM hot shot guy with all the friends anybody could ever want. How could it be that I am the “best friend he ever had” in three weeks time?

I cite that as an example because caring about people the way Jesus did is incredibly attractive! People can see His life, and they want that desperately. But I didn’t give my heart away, and I compromised *nothing* in the process. Being a friend of the world *does make you an enemy of God*. I didn’t love what he did. I didn’t love where he went. I didn’t dress like he dressed. I didn’t talk like he talked. I didn’t run around with him or pal around with him. It was just like Zacchaeus, which was who Jesus was *accused* of being a friend with. Zacchaeus repented and repaid four times as much money as he took. Jim literally did that, too. He had all kinds of equipment from IBM that he had “taken out” over time. Equipment he had checked out, but never had checked back in. He had voltage regulators, meters, circuit boards, and other stuff he liked to play with while he was trying to blow up the neighborhood! Jim returned all that stuff. They wouldn’t have known the difference if he hadn’t returned it; the equipment was off the books. It wasn’t easy. He had to drop it off in front of their door and drive away because there was no way to check it all back in. And that is the story about Jim, who was a heathen, but is now a brother.

Whether it is with family, or with Jim, or anybody else we’re reaching out to, there’s a way to walk with integrity and peace. There is a way to walk with others and compromise nothing...and still you could be their best friend in three weeks! But it is JESUS and HIS LIFE that they are attracted to! “This is how all men will know you are my disciples...by the love you have for each other.” As they see us loving each other, they know it’s from Heaven. They know it’s not just some story line that we made up, and it’s not just one of the many world religions that they could choose from. They know it’s from Heaven when they see us loving each other.

So, we do love unregenerate people in the sense that we extend all the mercy and compassion in the world to them. But, when I saw those guys standing around smoking marijuana, did I say, “Ooh, scorpions and spiders, ooh, get away from me”? No, and because of that, I extended myself. Who am I to treat them that way? I used to be disobedient and arrogant. I used to be a heathen swine, futile in my thinking and darkened in my understanding. I should be dead in my transgressions and sin! The only reason I’m over “here” instead of over “there” is because of mercy...*God’s unmerited favor*.

I never intend to live in such a way as to cause myself or others to be repulsed at people because they don't yet know Christ. But on the other hand, I *do* guard my heart. My affections are for Jesus *alone*. I don't speak in glowing terms of Michael Jordan. I speak in glowing terms of Elijah! I don't speak in glowing terms of Michael Jordan because he is a child of the devil and a lover of the world. And I know that's true because I've heard him say things that prove it. So, I can appreciate the athletic skills that he has, but he is not my hero. He doesn't have any of my heart and he never will, unless he becomes a brother, in which case he will have my whole heart!

Please have a lot of gratitude toward people who are willing to be faithful and not compromise. Be willing to be tough, but also to extend yourselves into situations that aren't comfortable. Encourage each other in these things, not because it's "our ministry," but because it's the overflow of our love affair with Jesus...pure and simple.

What we've been talking about doesn't mean separation or isolation. It doesn't mean being in some "holy club" that shirks responsibility and pulls off into the wilderness to pat each other on the back. The Kingdom of God is meant to be right in the middle of a fallen generation, extending our love for each other to the world. *It is in this way that people can see how much we love each other. It is not separation from them—it's in the middle of them! BUT, we are not of them and they are not of us.*

*Question: How do you reach out to people? How do they see this "love that you have for one another"?*

Well, I'll tell you another story. I met a man in a park, right in the middle of an ugly, urban, drug-infested area of the city. About twelve families had moved into the ghetto to extend Christ's love into that area. One day, I was in a park and saw a guy there playing basketball. I started talking to him and I began to play basketball with him. He said he was a "superstar" basketball player. So we began playing a little one-on-one. After a while I said, "You hungry?"

He said, "Yeah, I'm hungry."

I said, "Climb in my car."

I drove him right up to an apartment complex where a bunch of Christians lived, and dragged him into where one of the families lived. I asked if they would be kind enough to fix us some bologna sandwiches and I introduced

him to my friends. Within a matter of hours, he had met at least a dozen believers—some there and some in other places where I took him. Over the course of probably a month, he had met over a hundred people and had gotten to know them a little bit. He had the chance to feel the love of God in his life all because of a little game of basketball.

Now, if we had brought him to some sort of ceremony, we would be in a lot of trouble, because nobody sees anybody love one another at a ceremony! They've got to see it in our living conditions and our daily life together. For instance, it's common to have six or eight guys meet in several different places for lunch during a workday. One of the brothers owns a restaurant in the heart of the city. We meet there for lunch and there are a lot of businessmen and street people all over that area. These people see how we love one another! It is "different" to them. They have never seen anything like this, twelve to fifteen brothers, having a blast, partying in this restaurant! We know the owner, and he comes out to talk to us, and brings us free food. People are praying, and talking, and caring and eating. As all this stuff is going on, the people "of the world" are seeing something that they are just not used to seeing. They just don't see that type of dynamic among people! When they see God's people together they don't see empty, lonely people who can only talk about the stock exchange or the changing seasons. In the world, people sit down at a table to make small talk because that's all they know how to do—that's all they have. There is just nothing much in their lives. So when we are loving one another, people will notice the difference. If 200 people are having a barbecue in a neighborhood that is right in the middle of the city, people *will notice* when they drive down the street! They are seeing us live our lives, *together*.

My son is nineteen, going on twenty. He shovels our sidewalk, our driveway, and two or three others while he's at it. He'll also shovel unbelieving neighbors' sidewalks. People are not familiar with that kind of life. It's very mind boggling to them! God's love and our love for one another are *impossible* to hide. We are meant to be a city set on a hill that can't be hidden.

*Question: If we are not in a situation where that kind of LIVING is our experience, then how do we get there from here?*

Well, God didn't change us in order to create a universe of utopian glory and comfort. What He called us to do is to be obedient every day. I must be obedient in the little things. SO, I take out my garbage and the Holy Spirit inside of me says, "There's some other trash cans that need to be

taken out. The garbage man is only an hour away. Maybe you ought to run over to your neighbor's yard and pull out their trash cans." If you live that way, it is very noticeable! All of a sudden, you have dozens and then hundreds of people living that way. But where does it begin? Obedience. You must be obedient to the small things every single day. If you really want to experience the life and the Glory of God, but you don't understand everything thoroughly, remember—it doesn't have to be complicated! *It's just obeying what you do know so that the light keeps shining brighter and brighter.*

No one can build these things we are talking about except Jesus! The only way Jesus can build His Church, which the gates of hell can no longer prevail against, is for everybody to love Him and obey Him every day with the little things. If everybody will do this, then changes will happen. We're talking about helping each other obey Jesus. We're talking about helping each other know and listen to Jesus. We can help each other pull the weeds that block our ability to know Him. As we help each other pull the weeds, we can help each other hear the Shepherd's voice by saying, "Are you listening for Him?"... "Oh, yeah, you're right. I was spacing it a little bit. I got a little too busy with my job." You see, we're helping each other hear God. And as we help each other hear God, we mature. Then we begin to do the little things better and better. We become the city set on a hill where Jesus said He will build His church that the gates of hell cannot prevail against. We can't instantly get there from here. But we can obey Him in the little things and let Him do what He wants to do. This Glory isn't something you go out and "get" and "do." It's comes by obeying the little things, which you know you can do. And when everybody does that, and everybody *helps each other* do that, then all of a sudden we end up with something that looks a lot like Jesus. We end up with something we could never have done in a trillion years of administration, effort, and sermon preaching. So, frankly, it's easy. It's not hard.

Some people try to *use* the scriptures, and the things Jesus did, to justify giving their affections away. There was a guy we met one time who tried to play that "I'm a friend of sinners" game. He regularly went to amusement parks and did other fun things with his old high school buddies. Here's what he said when someone asked him about it...

"Did you talk to them about Jesus? About your faith? About the gospel?"

"Well, no."

"Have you ever?"

"No."

“Is this some kind of twenty-year friendship evangelism thing? Someday, somewhere, sometime you’re going to mention something to them?”

This man was pretending that he was doing some sort of spiritual thing, to be a “friend of sinners,” but it was really a smoke screen to hide behind. He had, in actuality, given his heart away to them. They were his buddies. He *liked* to go to amusement parks, and he tried to play some game with it as if he was building towards “evangelizing” them some day. This is very different from a situation where there is investment in lives with purpose and reason. The foundation of our time with unbelievers needs to be composed and caring, without yukking it up in some carnal, buddy-buddy way.

## See No Man After the Flesh

David said, “I’ll slash the fangs of the wicked.” Now, he’s got to be talking about people, but people don’t have fangs. They have teeth. Yet, from David’s perspective, evil people have fangs! If we don’t have that clarity inside of us anywhere, then we’re not really going to be able to care for them and be redemptive like we should. There is some other game we’re playing. Perhaps inside of ourselves, we’re afraid of how they might view us. In order to really love our relatives, our wife, our children, or whomever properly, we have got to stop seeing people after the flesh. Yes, Jesus loves the whole world! He is extremely redemptive and it is our call to be redemptive, too. But if we haven’t crossed that line inside of us where we “hate” our father, mother, wife, son, daughter, brother, sister, OURSELVES...then we can’t be His disciple. We’ve got to cross that line first in order to be a candidate for being redemptive. Otherwise, some mixture will creep in and we will find ourselves hiding behind the “compassionate” Jesus when it’s really the cowardly us.

Jesus loved people enough to die for them, and the Father loved people enough to sacrifice His Son. Yet, He doesn’t love them so much that the bulk of them won’t spend eternity tortured and separated from Him forever! The most Loving Being in the Universe isn’t so “loving” that people are going to escape damnation if they don’t bow their knee, soften their heart and surrender to Him. If we don’t see people as having a wisp of a life span that is about to end, where they will face a much-deserved fate, then we are not going to respond to them appropriately in the meantime.

We’ve got to view “grandma” properly. If she doesn’t believe in God at all, then it doesn’t matter how nice she is or how well she cooks. When she passes from life to death and God sums up her life, if she hasn’t bowed her

knee, it is not going to matter how good her cookies tasted, or how sweet she was, or what “good” things she did. From God’s vantage point, she is an evil person. She is a child of the devil and will go to hell for eternity.

Realizing that, Paul said, “Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.” I know their final destiny, if they don’t turn things around, and that gives me the energy to CARE! How can I be comfortable, friendly, and chummy with someone whose presence God will refuse to endure for forever. Is my heart more loving than His, or have I misdefined love? If God can banish forever the person that I can pal around with for twenty years, then I have a problem. Again, *it’s not His goal to banish forever*. He takes *no pleasure* in the death of the wicked. He longs for all men to come to repentance. But if they don’t, then He does not enjoy their company. And neither should we.

## A Tool in the Toolbox

I want to encourage you to understand that withholding your affection is actually a tool in God’s toolbox. It’s not a judgment or some form of hostility. In 1 Corinthians 5, God said that if a person calls himself a brother and is in sin, and continues in these sins, then expel him from your midst. Don’t eat with him and don’t associate with him. Why did God say this? He said this *so that* this man’s soul could be redeemed. He said this *so that* something inside of him would see his lack and his need for Jesus. Paul said, “Your boasting is not good. Your callousness to this sin is not good. Remove the leaven from the batch and be a batch without leaven.” If this brother *continued* to sin, whether in slander, gossip, immorality, or something else, he was not to be associated with. You must not give away your affectionate friendship to him. Paul said, “Don’t eat with them or associate with them, and expel them from your midst.”

For many of us this is frightful. We have grown up in religious situations where “the working out of this” was some sort of religious decree. “Excommunication” was this big hammer that was meant to break our neck, crush us and separate us forever from anybody and anything. If you read the scriptures carefully, you will see clearly that was not God’s intention. In fact, the whole thing was for deliverance! It was not unto “discipline.” This is a tool in God’s toolbox in order to wake someone up. It is smelling salts. It is ammonia in the nostrils in order to say, “You can’t keep doing this. You’re going to have to turn this thing around.”

In Acts 3, it was prophesied that everyone who won’t listen to Jesus will be completely cut off from amongst the people. That is an Old Testament

prophecy about a New Testament issue. First Corinthians 5 is one of the executions of that. Because of the way they built every day, because the people had such close relationship with that man, when they stopped eating and associating with him, *IT MATTERED!* (2Cor. 2 and 7). There was a passion there to have this fellowship recovered. He had to make it right. He was desperate. It was like he was curling up and dying because they wouldn't associate with him anymore. If you know a person really well because they are so close to you in the Body of Christ, it is going to hurt them deeply if you stop eating with them. It is going to *MATTER* to them!

But if we build relationships the way they are typically built in religion, where no one really knows each other, then this tool is unavailable to us. The typical religious setting has a 10% nucleus of commitment and everybody just does what they want all the time. They are not connected in such a way that the hand cannot say to the eye, "I have no need of you." They are not joined and knitted together. They are not devoted daily to admonishing one another and confessing sins one to another. Do you see the problem? If we don't live the way God says the Church is supposed to live, then that tool is unavailable to us. A lot of people will end up burying themselves in sin and cutting themselves off from a life with God, and we can't stop it because we don't have the tool of right relationship available to us! God said this is a *tool*. What we see in 1 Corinthians 5 is not some sort of legal judgment or "excommunicating." It is a tool to get someone's attention so they can see we don't extend love and fellowship to people that live as enemies of God.

Jesus said the same thing in Matthew 18. "Go to him and him alone. If he won't hear you (God forbid that he wouldn't love the light enough to hear you), then bring in two or three witness and I'll be there with you. If he still won't hear you, tell it to the whole church. And if he still won't hear you, treat him differently than a brother. Treat him as a tax collector or a sinner." Jesus was very clear that there is a difference between the Church and the way the tax collectors and sinners were treated. "You've got to treat them like a tax collector, if they won't act like they are part of the Church." Jesus drew that line Himself in Matthew 18.

And, we must obey the beautiful and very clear example in 1 Corinthians 5. If a person calls himself a brother and lives in sin (and it lists several) do not eat or associate with him. Expel him from your midst! If you won't do that, then you don't love Me very much. Because if you love Me, you'll obey My commandments. And I command you to do this. I'm not giving you a choice. You must do this. You cannot do it if you don't have deep relationships, though, because you won't have the tool available to you.

It won't hurt them, it will just make them angry or embitter them. If you don't have relationship with them the way the Bible says the Church is supposed to, then all it does is make them angry. It's not going to help deliver them from sin. They will just think you are a bunch of foolish, self-centered, self-righteous people. But they wouldn't feel that way if you desperately loved them and they knew it. If you have "admonished one another daily" and "been called alongside one another daily," it will make the tools in God's house EFFECTIVE. *Building the New Testament way instead of the religious way gives us tools to deliver even an almost undeliverable situation.*

## Time to Walk it Out

My parents are unbelievers, and even though I have other family members who are believers, my parents have remained unbelievers. I can't let them bounce their grandchildren on their knee in some sort of love affair, as grandparents love to do. I can't give that much affection away to them. Also, I can't allow my children to have that much respect, enjoyment and fellowship with them, as long as my parents are renouncing the Blood of Jesus. Trampling the blood of Jesus underfoot is an unholy thing. Yes, my children are going to honor them and care about them, but they *WILL NOT* have some lovey-dovey kind of relationship. It is illegal in the Heavenlies to give away affection to those who have dishonored Jesus and trampled the Blood of Jesus underfoot as an unholy thing.

So, there are these tensions that I must find a way to walk in—to provide leadership where I'm obedient to God on this matter of not giving away my affections, and yet not dishonoring or isolating anyone in some form of hatred. The kindness, mercy, and attractiveness of Jesus and His Love needs to be extended in these relationships. If they can't experience that, then taking away the affection they want in order to stroke family idolatry won't have any impact on them! If they don't see me as a loving and special person who is a lot like Jesus, then it is not a tool. If they don't want to have anything to do with me anyway, then withholding relationship is not an effective tool. So there has to be enough interaction so they see the character and love of Jesus, but enough withholding of affection that it's a tool that helps them see their need for Jesus.

The point is that putting these things into practice is a tool that God gives us. If we mess it all up by giving our affections away aimlessly based on flesh and blood issues, we're squandering the Master's treasure and misusing His tools. We're also harming their chance to not be in hell for

eternity. It's not an act of cruelty when you do it God's way. It's an act of love and it is attractive.

*"This is how all men will know you are my disciples, by the love you have for one another."*

The thing they are missing is the thing that gets their attention. If you throw them all this love, compassion and sympathy, you're giving them drugs and you're blinding them to what they really need. You might cost them their soul! We're not talking about a cruel judgment and isolation. We're talking about a wonderful opportunity to use a tool that Jesus ordained and Paul, by the Holy Spirit, ordained as being active tools to help change people's hearts.

This is not a sermon. We are brothers and sisters trying to wrestle through issues that will affect the rest of our lives, and the work of God in the community we live in. I know this is incredibly hard to understand. It's going to be a thousand times more difficult to implement. But, please, at least sow the seeds and ask God about these things that Jesus and Paul said. It's important. As a whole, we have not applied these things very well, and it's time to walk it out. 😊



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# Evangelism Jesus' Style

*Friday Evening, May 3, 2002*

## No “Techniques”

Jesus' style of evangelism is not about wording everything perfectly so you come across like an intelligent man. That's what Jesus meant when he said, “Don't consider what to say or how to say it because My Father will speak through you.” You can really trust in the One that's real and not counterfeit. You don't need any man to teach you how to sell used cars or Christianity or the salvation of somebody. The Anointing that's on you is Real, and you don't need anybody to show you or tell you what you are supposed to say. All the evangelism techniques of these different movements are nonsense. Jesus wasn't like that. It was a different thing every time, every single time “not in Jerusalem or on this mountain.” He was just using against them what He was discerning and feeling at that particular moment.

So, whether it's your boss or a subordinate, just watch for the things you feel, and then have the guts to say them: “I really think I've got something you don't have. I respect you in so many ways. I admire what you've done with your career, and your intelligence level constantly surprises me in meetings and various situations. I may never be like that, but I still know there is something I have that you don't have that is a thousand times more valuable. I think you've probably sensed it, too, if I'm not going too far out on a limb by saying that.” That's one real-life example of something that I said in one situation. However, I would never try to say that again with anybody else unless I truly sensed that same thing again because as soon as you cookie-cutter something and make it a “technique,” then you've grieved the Spirit and *your* words will return void—while *His* won't.

## What You Sense, You Use

Jump on the things that you're thinking and feeling and then use them—“What you just said was...” and project what you're thinking into that situation. “There are some things I really would like to talk to you about,

but it's hard to do that around here. Would you like to golf and maybe talk about it?" You're not being manipulative, coy, or tricky like some salesman asking him to go golfing so that you can bring something up. You're inviting him to golf, and he has full knowledge of exactly what you intend to do and why. And then you can just take your time and see if it comes up and if it does, it does. If it doesn't, you may say, "So, hey, we never got a chance to talk about that; let's golf again."

A brother mentioned that he was invited to go on a golf trip to Myrtle Beach with some co-workers. Instead of going, he ended up inviting the guy to go golfing with him and another brother; he put it on his own ground. That's perfect and it makes a way for opportunities. Anytime you sense yourself saying to yourself: "You know it's just kind of hard to talk about Real things here. I think it might be better to try to talk when we're out somewhere else," don't assume that your talking to yourself is just you talking to yourself. ☺ Assume that God does speak through discernment—an Anointing on you that's Real and not counterfeit. It may not be an audible voice, but your sense is: "This feels awkward. I'm sitting in a lunchroom full of people and one guy has kind of a big mouth, and I don't really trust him at all. And another person doesn't seem to care about anything but himself, but I'd really like to talk to this other person. However, if I say something right now, these guys are probably going to mock and pin him down. Then his pride is going to kick in, and he isn't going to want to talk either. This must not be the best situation to bring this up in. Maybe I could get him alone or with some other brothers sometime."

So, when you're sensing things like that, you need to be responsive. Don't bring it up there, but while you're walking out of the lunchroom and the other guys are walking two steps ahead to pay their bills, you could say, "You know I'd really like to talk to you about something really important. I really couldn't talk about it back there because I didn't think those guys would really care about it, but I think maybe you would. So, maybe you and I could have lunch tomorrow or meet for breakfast at Bob Evans at 7 tomorrow morning."

## An Audible Voice Versus Being Discerning

The way of being led by the Spirit is very seldom through forced circumstances in which God makes things happen some certain way. I mean look at Jesus' life and you'll see that what I'm saying is true. Very seldom does God lead you by an audible voice. Jesus heard very few

audible voices in His lifetime (that we're aware of), and yet, He didn't do anything He didn't see the Father doing. That means there must be some different ways to interface other than hearing an audible voice and being forced to do something by a circumstance that is Sovereign. There must be a different interface in order to be the Ultimate Christian, as Jesus was.

So, what I'm saying is you might think that the interface was simply discerning something and then talking to yourself, yet it might very well be the Spirit saying, "Not this, but that." But if you don't turn it around and use it and say, "You know, I sense that there is an emptiness inside of you. A pretty intelligent guy named Blaise Pascal said that there is a God-shaped vacuum in every man's heart and I think you have that. I would really like to talk to you about that sometime with a couple of friends of mine. Do you have the guts to do that?" Even use their competitive nature against them. "Do you have the *courage* to talk about it? You don't know how long you're going to be around here." If you feel nervous about having that conversation then say that: "Frankly, I'm nervous about having this conversation. You might not want to have this conversation, but I don't really want to either because I don't know what I'm going to say to you exactly." Just use the stuff that you're feeling, and just keep throwing honesty on the table. Keep laying it on—what you're feeling and what you're thinking.

Maybe during a conversation you sense a coldness come over him. Then just say that: "Seems like the temperature at this table dropped two degrees in the last five minutes. You seemed interested, and then for the last five minutes it seemed like you stepped back away from me. Why? What went through your mind five minutes ago to cause you to step away? What were you afraid of? Did I say something wrong, or did you think about the fact that your wife might get mad, or...?" These things will be coming out of your mouth, and although you're making them up as you go, you're going to hit right on top of something that you couldn't possibly have known. *That's called prophetic.* It's an organic, prophetic Life, unlike the, "Thus saith the Lord. Your wife is..." And then they say, "You know what? I'm not married." That nonsensical view of what prophetic is has just butchered people's ability to get a hold of the Real Thing.

We don't trust ourselves. We start believing in the counterfeit, the process and a set of principles. God said to the sons and daughters, the young men, the old men, the maidservants: "I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh. I'll make My people be a prophetic people." Basically what we're talking about here is how to tap what we already are—real time with real situations, whether it's a boss or a subordinate or a waitress. It's not a

gimmick of: “Let’s see if I can fire up and get the courage to say something spiritual to this waitress.” That’s nonsense. That’s not the Real Thing. It doesn’t mean that God can’t use it on occasion. But in terms of being like Jesus, the Ultimate Christian, *it’s far more a walk of listening to the Anointing that’s upon us that’s Real and not counterfeit, and responding out of honesty with discernment.*

In many cases, this is nothing more than just saying, “Well, the temperature dropped two degrees at this table in the last five minutes.” A lot of people will notice that (if they’re not too busy listening to themselves yak), but they won’t have the guts to say it, or they won’t think it’s important. So, they’ll try to overcome the temperature drop by talking louder. They will try to be more impressive, or say something more cutting, all the while trying to overcome the fact that they felt that two-degree drop at the table and a little bit of disinterest which wasn’t there a few minutes earlier. They’ll try to overcome that by pressing harder. They kind of discern it, but they don’t use that prophetic insight appropriately by having enough peace in their heart, enough honesty, sincerity, and trust to say, “Why did you back away from me in the last couple of minutes? Did I just imagine that? I mean, I could be wrong. Did I just imagine that you backed away, and now have a distant look in your eye?” And they say, “Well, you know what? It’s not what you were saying, I was just realizing that my daughter has a doctor’s appointment this afternoon and, I don’t know how that’s going to turn out, maybe we can talk later.”

## Honesty—The Aroma of Jesus

That kind of honest interaction has the aroma of Christ. It is simply being responsive and honest and discerning, rather than pressing harder or coming up with some tricky gimmick to overcome the obstacle, or just backing away and not really dealing with it by thinking, “Oh, the Spirit will take care of it.” That isn’t how it works either. We are His ambassadors as if God were making His appeal through us. We are part of the equation—the Spirit *and* the Bride say come. We are *part* of the equation. To back away and say, “Oh, God will convince them. If God wants to do it, He’ll do it. I just need to love them.” That’s nonsense. It’s not Biblical truth to say, “I’ll just stay back and love them and pray for them, and if God wants to do something He will.” That’s lazy, modern “christianity.”

On the other hand, the aggressive, militant, technique-oriented, pressing, goal setting and hyper type-A personality stuff, also isn’t Jesus. So what is Jesus? *It’s just as simple as trusting that you don’t have to consider what*

*to say or how to say it. You just have to be there before the governors and the kings and the judges and, "My Father will speak through you."* How will He do it? Will He take over your larynx, and it will just come out of your mouth? No, you're just going to say, "I wish you were like me except for these chains." It just comes out of your mouth because you're being honest. That's what Paul felt. It wasn't a technique. It wasn't some gimmicky thing that he said. He was just speaking from the overflow of his discernment of the situation, and just being honest with what was in front of him, and come what may.

Saying something like, "You seem empty to me," is maybe what you are feeling, but you might massage it just the tiniest bit and say, "I want to say, 'You seem empty,' but what I'll say instead is 'I think I have something you don't have.'" So, you went ahead and said it anyway, but now he's laughing at you so he can't be mad at you for intruding into his space because you made something humorous out of something cutting, and that's also Jesus' style. Not to be a comedian, but to be probing in a way that is very attractive. It's courageous, but it's not "in your face," violating the "eighteen inch personal space rule." You are, but you're not. It's attractive.

## Honesty—Stating Your Intentions

If your intention is to invite him to play golf so you can talk with him about Real things, then a lot of times it's best to be honest and say so. Otherwise, it's awkward and then they're feeling a little trapped or a little set up if you spring that on them and they weren't expecting it. They were just looking for a "good old boys' day out" at the golf course, or whatever you are doing with them. If you spring that on them, they can feel trapped, and it also puts the pressure on you to look for opportunities all day long. "Now can I bring something up?" Maybe he'll say something about his wife being sick, and then you could sort of force in some comment about, "Well, do you want us to pray about it with you? I mean after all we're Christians, and you should be too."

You will just find yourself looking for stuff all the time, and there is a lot of stress in that. But if you know that it is your full intention to talk to him about it, then just say that. If you've got to juice up your offer a little bit by taking him to a nice course, just to make sure it is especially attractive and hard to turn down, then do that—that's ok. But be perfectly willing to say on the front end, "You know, I'm glad you golf. That makes you a four-hour captive audience to some things I've been wanting to talk to you about for years now. So, maybe we'll get a chance to do that. I would like

to talk to you about something far more important than business. And by the way, if you don't want to talk about anything spiritual and decide to back out at the last minute, or if you don't have the guts to play golf with my friend and me, just don't give me any song and dance about how you have to mow the lawn or you're sick or any of that kind of stuff. Just come out and say, 'I don't want to talk about my soul.' At least be honest with me if you don't want to talk, otherwise, be there or be square and maybe we'll talk about it if we get the opportunity." Again, you're being honest.

## Honesty—Taking Away satan's Tools

Scott Emmersen is just another example that comes to mind. He was a guy that I chased down on a bicycle out in Vermont, even though he had about a full mile head start on me. I was out riding and I saw a big redheaded guy off in the distance—so I chased him down. ☺ I had a little bit of time to think while I was trying to catch him, going up and down all those hills. I thought, "Well, what am I going to say?" It was like fishing is for me—what am I going to do once I catch it? *I'm* not going to *eat* a fish, so I might as well not go fishing. It was like that with Scott. "Who is this guy? I have no idea. And what am I going to do after I catch him?" But, I caught him and I said, "I tried to catch you because I wanted to talk to you about Jesus." I just told him that. He said, "Oh. Huh. Okay." He was confused, but not angry or hostile. So I said, "I don't have enough breath at the moment to do it, but maybe we can get together soon." Then he said, "Emmersen with three E's, the only one in the phone book. Call me." But I had to decide while I was catching him what I was going to do.

Again, I've found the Spirit to be far more active in honesty than anything manipulative. And if I'm afraid of something, I just tell him. "I'm afraid to talk to you about this. I'm a little nervous about it because I feel that you might be hostile or mock, and I'm not in the mood for that right now. I'm a little fatigued at the moment, and I would rather you not mock me, but I decided to go ahead and ask you anyway." You are just taking all of satan's tools away from him. They might think, "Oh, I would have mocked, but he just said that, and now I can't."

It takes satan's tools away from him when you just throw it out on the table before it could ever happen. If you think he might mock, say, "I'm afraid you might mock. So, if you're going to mock, go ahead and get it out of the way. I wish you wouldn't though because what I want to talk to you about is very important." That sort of honesty just penetrates. Jesus is the Way and the *Truth* and the Life. Satan is the father of lies. *Everything*

*about reality in Christ has to do with Truth.* “You shall know the Truth and the Truth shall set you free.” So, the more honest you can be in identifying your own fears and their potential reactions, and put all those things right out on the table, the less you have to lose.

## Honesty—Refreshing

If you ask a co-worker, neighbor, boss or whomever to talk and they say, “No, I’m really not interested.” Just be honest with them and say, “Well someday you might be, and I want you to talk to me when you are interested. Just remember we had this conversation. We don’t have to talk now, but I think you’ll want to talk at some point, so you know where to get a hold of me, anytime night or day. End of conversation. And don’t even bring it up to me unless you intend to be serious about it. I don’t want to hear it. Until you’re serious, don’t even bring it up.” It’s like, “Huh. You can’t do that to me. Alright, let’s talk now.” But it is so much more refreshing for us and for them.

Again the Spirit of God speaks through the language of honesty and humility. Be as discerning as you can be about how you’re feeling, how they might react, what you want to say and do or what you don’t have words for. You might say, “I don’t have words for this right now, but I really would like to tell you about Jesus. I really don’t know how to start, and I’m not sure how to go about it. Are you interested?” Just being honest is something God can work through. Why? Because Kingdom Principle #1 is: “Lest any man boast.” It just takes all of our ego, shrewd wordsmithing, technique, poise and knowledge away from us, and then God gets the glory. So, the Spirit can afford to invest in a miracle when we’ve taken ourselves out of the equation by being honest. That’s not only true with unbelievers, but that’s true as we relate to each other as well.

Again, back to the situation of being invited to go to Myrtle Beach with co-workers...it might have been honest to say, “There ain’t no way I’m going with seven pagans to Myrtle Beach.” That might have been honest, but it might have been more appropriate to say, “You know I really can’t. It doesn’t seem appropriate for me.” And then when you invite him to go with you and some brothers say, “Hey, to be honest, the reason why I didn’t do that when you asked me, even though I would have enjoyed the Myrtle Beach part, is because all seven of the guys going (as far as I know anyway, and I could be wrong) have a whole priority system that is so radically different than mine. Their value system probably isn’t totally devoted to and saturated with Jesus, and there probably aren’t a lot of barricades in

their lives to self-indulgence, foul language and all those things. You at least know me well enough to know that I don't do those things, but what you probably don't know about me yet is *why* I don't do them. I'm not a nice guy. That's not why. Ask my wife. ☺ I think I would have been a fish out of water, and I would like to invite you into *my* pond."

## Honesty—Bridging the Gap

Humor and honesty bridge the gap between what you sense, what you feel, what you've decided and why you've decided that. Bridging the gap with honesty, and there might be a thousand ways to do it, is just the basic way that we function in order that the Spirit would work in the most thorough fashion. So, by being honest with him about what your life is about and inviting him to step into your world, at least he won't be going into it totally unaware of anything other than golf. That could be okay sometimes, too, but normally that goes nowhere.

Normally, you could invite him to golf ten more times, and all he would think is, "Well, I've got my Saturday and Sunday golf buddies, and then I've got Bob and his golf buddies. These guys are nice, and I really like them. They are a lot of fun, too—a different kind of fun—but you know, I respect these guys." And that is about as far as it ever gets. You could golf with him for five years and it wouldn't ever go past that, normally. It's like living next door to somebody and they say, "Oh, they're fine Christians, a little weird, they don't "go to church," but I think they are Christians." But you can live next door to them for years and never get anywhere if you are not careful. So, at some point, you need to look for opportunities to be honest about things, and hopefully you'll never find a "technique" that works, but honesty is something that will come to us if we're listening. Those opportunities will come.

The president of our homeowners' association lives across the street from me. I've had a couple of short opportunities with him. He hasn't "bitten," but he's also still fairly warm toward me, so I know he's thinking about it. I've said, "How weird do you think we are, Phil? All these dozens of houses all around you, how weird do you really think we are? What thought comes to you? What do you think about when you see all these people everywhere all the time?" But all he could do was smile and look at me. He had no answer for me, but I planted the seed. I wanted him to know that he has a chance to cross that gap, and that I am inviting him to talk about it. I'm not just wondering what he thinks. If I am wondering what he thinks, I am going to ask him, "I wonder what you think, Phil?"

Not that I'm all that concerned about it, but I do wonder." I might say that too, just because that humorous edge is fairly fearless, and it makes a hard thing a little easier. You can smile and add an aroma of attractiveness to it that isn't this combative "us against them" sort of thing, which they'll do all by themselves.

Left alone, with no honesty and love and intrusiveness coming across the barriers to shine a light on those barriers, they'll create those barriers by themselves. They'll have all kinds of imaginations, and they'll talk about it among themselves. You'll have co-workers and other people yakking about you behind your back. Two years later, you'll hear what they've always said about you if you don't ask that question. If you see a smirk on somebody's face sometime when you have said something, go for a little walk with them, and say, "You know I noticed this kind of smirk on your face when I said that while we were talking with those four other guys. What were you thinking? I would honestly like to hear what you are thinking."

"Well, you don't really want to know."

"Yes, I really do. Because if you are *wrong* about what you're thinking, I'm sure *you* would want to know, and if you're *right*, I want to know. So what do you have to lose? Tell me what you are thinking."

See, now all of the sudden his heart has melted toward you. He will probably never do that again. He'll never get involved in a smirky conversation about you with other people because now you're a person rather than a target. You are a human, and you have feelings. All of us are just targets until we cross that line with a little sensitivity, honesty, humility, love, and courage in a humble way. And the next thing you know his four year old is sick with a 104 degree fever and he's calling you to pray for his daughter, not his smirky friends.

## Avoiding the "Nice Guy" Syndrome

If you start by going down the road of just hoping and *wishing* a conversation would happen or an opportunity would arise, then you end up just being the nice guy. It never really goes anywhere. There is a way out of that "nice guy" syndrome. You all probably have neighbors, co-workers, bosses, employees, or whomever who you wish knew more about what you are doing with your life. You've been around them, in some cases for years, and they know you are a little different, but you've never really intruded into their space. Now, so much time has passed that it almost seems like it's impossible to bring it up. You've already got this somewhat cemented-in definition of what your relationship with them is, and anything you

might say almost feels a little cheap. You're afraid they might say, "Well, you've known all this for all these years and never said anything to me, so why are you bringing it up now? Do you feel guilty or something?"

You can get caught in these patterns, but again, the solution is—the honesty. "For years I've known you and I've said almost nothing to you. I suspect you know I'm a little different. If I had to bet, I'd say you probably think that I'm a Christian, and you've never heard me cuss and seldom seen me angry or upset or mistreat anyone or speak badly of anyone. I'm glad for all that, but what I really regret and most everyday come in thinking about, is that I never really have talked to you about *why* that's the case and what that might have to do with you. I'm kind of heavy about it, to tell you the truth. I'm a little ashamed of myself that I never have really said anything, but it just seemed that it never really worked out. Maybe it was my fault. Maybe it just wasn't the right timing, and now it is—I don't know. Maybe I just wasn't paying enough attention to God to really have done it. Or maybe I was just a scaredy-cat. I don't really know why, but every day I feel a little burdened about you. I know all these other people, but your face comes to mind when I wish somebody knew. Your face comes to mind when I wish I could talk to somebody. Out of these hundred people that I have cemented-in relationships with, you're right on top of the list as somebody I genuinely would like to talk to about these things. I know it's going to seem weird because we never really have spoken of these things, and I feel badly about that, too. So, if you don't want to talk about it, or if you don't want to talk about it right now, that's fine. But, I want to at least crack the door open and say that my life is like this because of Jesus. I really want *you* to know for a *fact* that your soul is saved. Just because you're an American and call yourself a Christian, means absolutely nothing. Jesus said that most people who call themselves Christians are going to hell. So, I don't want you to be one of those. I don't really know your situation very well. Would you be willing to meet a couple of my friends and go to Ritter's or Graeter's for some ice cream with the specific purpose of just chatting a little bit? If you are going to buy a car, you check a consumer's guide, don't you? If you are going to buy a house, you have it inspected and you check the prices of the neighborhood. Before anybody makes any intelligent decision, they do a little bit of research. But we're all afraid to talk about the most important decision there is: What is your soul going to be invested in? So, frankly, I'm a little afraid to talk to you about it, but I'll work it out if you will. If you have the guts to try the conversation, then I'll try to muster the courage to do so, too."

You'll find opposition. Maybe even insincere opposition, maybe it's just too much too fast. They may say, "Well, I don't know. I hear ya, but I'm not really very religious." "Well, I'm not very religious either. All right, so if you don't want to talk now, I'm going to ask you again in two weeks, and by then I expect you to have enough courage to be willing to talk about it all, okay? I'll give you two weeks to prepare yourself. ☺ ☺" You can laugh when you say it. It takes the edge off, and then thirteen days pass and you say, "Hey, two weeks up tomorrow, buddy." Then keep right on walking...☺

That kind of light, real, sensitive, fresh, free kind of conversation just takes all the religion out of it. It takes it right down to who *you* are, which is all you can be, and you are addressing who *they* are, and that's all they can be, and there is no pretense in between. There is no religion, no gimmicks; there is nothing to invite them to. It's just about them, and you are passing on a consumer's digest of their life and soul. If they choose to do something with it, then great. And if they choose to do nothing with it, well, at least they are choosing intelligently rather than foolishly.

All of this is a perspective you can have. It works itself out in ten thousand different, very artistic, colorful, and even enjoyable, but certainly peaceful, ways. It takes the pressure off, too—most of it anyway. Once you understand how He does that, it really is a pretty relaxed world.

## Building God's Way

Along with all that, you need to keep in mind that God doesn't violate His own principles very often. So, if it were a female co-worker, I'm going to say, "Would you like to talk to three or four sisters? I'm not sure if I'll be there, but there are going to be three or four sisters there." You are not going to violate God's principles in order to do God a favor. So, some of that is worked into the picture, too. Generally speaking, even if it were a man you would probably work with others as a team—that's just God's way. "Where two or three are gathered, there I am." "Let every matter be established by two or three."

So, by and large, I'm not going to be the Lone Ranger evangelist. I'm going to want to involve other brothers and sisters at the earliest possible time. I'm not just going to ransack the whole thing by not building wisely. I'd be careful whom I'd invite to golf and what the timing of the whole thing is. I wouldn't pick the people that they were most like. They don't have to be the right color, the right age, have the right education, or have the same interests. Those are not the people I'm going to ask to be involved.

Perhaps I'll ask a brother to go golfing with us who doesn't even know how to golf, and he'll just ride in the cart to not embarrass himself. If the other guy values golf, we are not going to drag him down and ruin his day by scoring 150. But on the other hand, I'm going to invite the Right people into the situation so they can do the most good, spiritually. I'm not going to invite the people they are going to be "most comfortable with" or "like the most" or are the "most easy-going." Forget all that. I want to do some damage to satan's kingdom, so my choice of people to involve isn't going to be random, nor is it going to be based on human prejudices and building after the flesh. It's going to be based on building after the Spirit.

The door they go through is the room that they are going to enter in and set up their house in. So, if they come through the door of "golfing buddies," they're not necessarily going to want to talk to people who don't golf. If they are looking for somebody their own age, and who have children the same age as theirs, and who also home-educate—phooey on all of that. I'm going to invite somebody half their age and somebody twice their age into the situation on purpose just to mess with them, *because I don't want them to build after the flesh*. I'm not going to try to attract or lure them after the flesh. It has to be JESUS they are looking for—not "friends" or a "spouse" or "friends for their children"... Because of this, I want people involved in the process in the *right* stages that have the *right* gifts, the *right* focus, and the *right* maturity to take satan's kingdom away from him—*because that's what matters*. I'm not worried about their comfort, but I'm concerned with doing the Work in their life, and everything else will take care of itself. I'm not going to lure them based on fleshly instinct, like waving a piece of meat in front of an animal, and then seeing if he follows you—that's not the Kingdom of God. If they want to follow Jesus, it will be on His terms, in His Way. And Honesty and Wisdom is the road to walk them down...*Evangelism—Jesus' Style*.

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# Jesus: The Sword of Peace

September 1985

*“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace**” (Isaiah 9:6).*

*“Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I **did not come to bring peace, but a sword.**” (Matthew 10:34).*

**A**re these conflicting verses? “Prince of Peace,” and, “not peace but a sword”?

*“Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven. Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household. Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10:32-38).*

Does that sound pretty harsh for the *Prince of Peace*?

Something we need to understand about the Prince of Peace is that there is *no way* you can study His Life and conclude that He came to sing a lullaby to humanity and tell us that, “Sin doesn’t matter.”

Jesus Christ came in the name of God with a sword to *declare war* on all of the things that prevent peace.

He’s drawn His sword against all of the evil in the hearts of men to uproot all of the evil attitudes and habits. He will make *no peace* with any of it. Why not? Why can’t He just “cut the world a break”? He CANNOT... *for the sake of REAL Peace.*

There was a time at the end of the Revolutionary War when the British General came to surrender to General George Washington. The General

began to praise Washington with flowery words about his magnificent military tactics, going on and on. Suddenly, in the midst of the British General's eloquent speech, Washington interrupted him with these words: "Your sword, Sir!"

The Prince of Peace is calling for every sword of rebellion to be handed over, until all things are brought under His feet (Heb. 2:7), then peace will happen. "All enemies are His footstool" (Heb. 1:13).

The WAY Christ makes a *way of peace* is by showing us how wicked sin really is... and destroying it. Adam was thrown out of the Garden for it. Noah's entire earth population was destroyed by God because of it. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because of it. And the Cross of Christ *proves* that God cannot live in peaceful coexistence with sin! Even God's own Son had to die when He took on sin.

Let's read the context together in Matthew 10, and see how Christ can wield a sword AND be a "Prince of Peace."

*"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34).*

But what happened just prior to this?

*Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd (Matthew 9:35-36).*

*"Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8).*

*"Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave. As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town. I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town. I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues" (Matthew 10:11-17).*

*"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground*

*apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:28-31).*

Jesus saw the crowds and was moved with compassion. "Go! Bring peace to the starving multitudes. They're scattered. They're easy prey for the wolves. I must draw my sword to make peace! I love them, the hairs on their heads are numbered! I must give them peace. Peace comes from **Victory**." He took CAPTIVES in His train, and gave THEM gifts!

All of this brings up an important distinction—who are the "enemies" of Christ and who are the "weak"? Christ does have "enemies" or He wouldn't need a sword or need to separate members of a household.

Jesus Christ has "**enemies**" (Lk. 11:23):

- the proud (1Pet. 5:5)
- those that have called a truce with the world—decided to live their way (Jas. 4:4)
- those that teach false doctrine (Rev. 2:6)
- lukewarm (Rev. 3:16)
- lazy, fearful, unproductive (Mat. 25:26-30)

Christ has "**enemies**." So what's the difference between an "enemy" and a "weak Christian"? (Not much in actions.) A weak Christian may act exactly the same as a "religious" enemy of Christ... The difference is the Heart. One **wants** to grow and change, and by the Grace of God, keep moving in the Right direction! The other kicks and fumes and finds excuses whenever challenged... **refusing** to move towards maturity and change. (He tries to find a doctrine that will ease the conscience—2Tim. 4.) For the rebellious, Jesus has a sword. But for the weak (who might have some of the same actions), Jesus, Prince of Peace, has a **hug** and **infinite patience**. (Father loves us as much as Jesus! Prince! Princess!) That's good news!

In Romans 14 and Hebrews 12:12-13, God acknowledges that there will be feeble and weak and lame in the fold, but His every effort is in **Healing them**, not tearing them up! The word "weak" or "weakness" is used eighty-seven or eighty-eight times in the New Testament and never once is "weakness" (feeble; without strength) condemned! Jesus will always lean over and carry the rubbery-legged lamb.

A 3-year-old child is another good example of the difference between enemy (gets sword) and weak (gets hug). A 3-yr-old would just as soon

yell, “No!” into the face of a king as he would his little sister. He has no understanding! No value system—he’s too young. Then consider a grown man yelling, “No!” into the face of the king. Big difference, right? When we are still “babies” in the faith, we’ll make those mistakes because we haven’t understood the awesome nature of our King! But, as time goes on, it’s no longer immaturity, but *treacherous mutiny*. The Prince of Peace has a sword to meet mutiny, but it’s not His desire!

Jesus never tried to minimize sin. He never ignored it. He hates sin with a fury! But by His precious Blood, *He paid the price for sin for those who will accept it!* (Eph. 2:14; 2Cor. 5:19). He wants to bring peace to His friends—even before they even care. Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, became our peace with the Father by giving His life!

In John 8, the woman caught in adultery was told by Jesus, “I will not condemn you. Go, and don’t sin again.” If we had been there, I’m sure we wouldn’t have heard a thing as she walked slowly away. But Jesus did. *He knew the cost of His kindness to her.* As she walked away, I’m sure He heard the whiz of the whip as it came towards His back. He heard the mockery and slander of the soldiers echoing in His mind. He heard the weeping of His mother at the foot of His cross. He heard the dull thud of the hammer driving the spikes through His hands and feet. The woman was set free the same way you and I can be set free, *but someone paid for it*—the Prince of Glory. The Prince came to bring peace to those that will follow Him—the peace of assurance of Life in paradise with Him.

In John 14 and John 16 Jesus said to His disciples, “In this world, you will have trouble, but take heart! *I’m giving you My peace!*” Do you have “trouble” right now? Do you have peace in spite of that? How do you get the peace that Jesus is the Prince of? I’ll just consider one more verse with you and you can judge for yourself.

*“This is what the LORD says—your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: ‘I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go. If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea’” (Isaiah 48: 17-18).*

What is our “peace like a river” dependent on? ***Obeying God!***

*“There is no peace,” says the LORD, “for the wicked” (Isaiah 48:22).*

A trustworthy saying: Peace *with* God brings the Peace *of* God. Our walking with Him, keeping in step with His Spirit (Gal. 5:25) is the only thing that will allow the “peace that passes understanding” to flow

through our hearts and minds even in unbearable circumstances! God is offering you Life and Peace, but many will jump headlong into the Ravine of Destruction. God is offering *Jesus Christ*; some of you may be choosing *Barabbas*. Jesus Christ wants to take your broken pieces (or your family, emotions, failures) and give you *unbroken peace*. Praise God, the Prince of Peace is Reigning! For those who will live for Jesus, there will be “peace like a river.” *Imagine* the Glorious thought of *every sin* of your past washed away... PEACE WITH GOD!



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# Where Dreams Come True

*Sunday Afternoon, September 26, 1999*

*“...there must be a place where dreams come true.”*

**W**here is that place where dreams come true? Where is that place where there is hope? Obviously, the answer on the clearest, largest possible scale is that *Jesus* is that place. He's the only place where there is a place to live, a place to call home, a place where dreams come true. But perhaps you step back and say, “Well, what does that *really* mean, exactly, that *Jesus* is that place?” We can all say that on an external level, and have every good intention of internalizing it and making it true...“Jesus is that place. I'll have no other. My loyalty is fiercely and solely reserved for Jesus.” And that is right! That should be our attitude. There is NO other attitude that will yield the fruit that He is after or that we would desire in our own hearts and lives and families and neighborhoods.

I think about a lot of the things that the apostle Paul and others wrote in trying to make “the place where dreams come true” more alive or more real or more practical. There will be a lot of religious things you can do that won't really satisfy. You could give your body to be burned; and you could have enough faith to cast a mountain into the sea; or you could give all your money to the poor. You could do great religious things of every sort, but all those things won't really satisfy. Those things are passing away! Those things will vanish. They will melt down. Those aren't the things that Life is truly all about. Paul goes on to tell us what WILL last, and Jesus is THIS, personified: “*Faith and hope and love are the places where dreams come true.*” Now Paul could have said that “*Jesus*” is what remains, because those things are personified in Jesus, but that is not what Paul said. He said, “*...these three things remain. The greatest of these is love.*” And *these three things ARE the place that each of us can have individually where dreams come true!*

It isn't going to be about giving all your money to the poor, casting mountains into the sea, and speaking in the tongues of men or of angels. And it isn't going to be about giving your body to be burned as a martyr...

not really. All those things could come out of this, and that's fine, but those are not the goals. The GOAL is the expression of Jesus in this passage, and as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13, of faith, and of hope and of love.

So what is faith? Faith is an implicit and an absolute trust in His character, and His ability to provide, and the Truth of His Word. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the voice of God...it's having a relationship with Him where you can hear Him, see Him, and be directed by Him. "Without holiness no one can see the Lord." There is a process of giving up all the riches of Egypt because we "see" Him who is invisible. So Faith is the evidence of things hoped for, the substance, the Reality of things *unseen* to the naked eye but *seen* with the inner eye. Faith is believing that His character wants to lavish good gifts upon His children, and faith is believing that God IS, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. If we will put our whole heart into seeking Him, and we believe that His character is such that He can and will provide for us, then He will care for us as He does the lilies and the sparrows, and we can trust that! We can *absolutely* trust that! Faith is hearing Him, seeing Him, responding to His promises, and responding to His character...laying it all on the line for Him because He is good and His character is trustworthy and we have nothing to fear.

Some of us recently watched an edited version of a movie called *The Postman*. One of the lines that stood out to me about the main character was that he "handed out HOPE like candy." That's a quality, for example, that Job had. The widows beamed when they saw his face. The children ran to him. And that's also a quality of Jesus! All of these three things are personified in Jesus. Jesus is hope. He is faith. He is love. God is love. He is the Personification of these things. That's why Paul didn't say, "all these things will pass away but all that remains is Jesus." It's true. It's absolutely true that Jesus is all that remains, but Paul wanted to give us something else to hang on to. He wanted to give us the ability to go *into* Jesus a little deeper, the ability to find Jesus and experience Him, and to find that place where dreams come true. OH! To have that hope, to be on fire in the heart, to not be alone and fed up and frustrated and irritated and confused and fatigued and all the other junk out there. He said there IS a place where dreams come true! There is a place where you, as an individual, and you, as a corporate life, a Church, can experience the fullness of Christ.

And all these religious things, as good as they may be, will pass away. Go ahead and give all your money to the poor. Give your body to be burned. Go ahead and do mighty works for God across the nations by casting mountains into the sea, and seeing great miracles...the dead raised and

the lame healed. These are all good things, but Paul said let them flow out of the things that *really* matter—the things that remain, the things that are Complete, the things that are Perfect, the things that are Jesus! And that is Faith: seeing Him who is invisible, trusting Him completely, and laying it all down for Him in spite of what you feel. In spite of what you have experienced...in spite of what you think is logical... instead of trying to get something for yourself...give it all to Him! Trust Him implicitly and completely. Be fiercely and solely loyal to Him, and see that God is good. *His character will stand that test.*

“The Postman gave out hope like it was candy in his pocket.” That’s what Jesus does for us if we will stop and look; and that’s what we can do for one another, too. If we are living in the Spirit, we can give out hope like candy, and we can bring that joy.

Another person in that movie, *Postman*, was a little boy named “Ford-Lincoln-Mercury.” He became a man and was willing to risk his life for what he believed in. The people ran to him, and he led others into that. He began to give out hope like candy and gave courage to people who had no courage. This boy gave a purpose for living to people who had no purpose. All these people were intimidated. City after city, and village after village, people were totally frightened by the enemies on horseback who came riding through with their swords and their big tough talk, making slaves of men. And yet there was this seed of hope, given to a child and spread through multitudes town after town. “Stuff’s gettin’ better. Stuff’s gettin’ better every day.” “It is? Wow!” That hope is a seed of life, a seed of courage, a seed of power, a seed of potential that allows us to become who we CAN become.

So Jesus, by His Spirit, and also those *Living* by His Spirit, give out hope like candy to the masses who live in darkness and to brothers and sisters who are confused and frustrated by their sins and weaknesses. Faith and hope...that ability to inspire courage and to bring forth the fruit of character and potential out of those who are beaten down, lifeless, and fatigued by their circumstances. Great men and great women can be mined out of the dirt—out of the *grave*, literally. People who would have had no hope, and people who could have done nothing, seen nothing and experienced nothing... *These people* can be mined out of the grave, out of the very dirt itself, with a seed of hope deposited in them to see what they can become by the grace of God. To see that if God would give His only Son, how much more all things.

Why would you doubt what He can do for you, what He can do IN you, and what He can do through you? Why would you fear anything? Paul

goes on to say, nothing in heaven or earth, under the earth, the past, the present, or the future...nothing can steal my hope or can steal my dream. There is a place where Hope lives! There is a place where Dreams come true. And that is in the person of Jesus with the promises of God and the hope of the miracles of Life that exist in Him. And that the same power that rose Jesus from the dead is mightily working in you. “Christ in you, the hope of glory. The mystery revealed, hidden for ages and generations, now revealed, not only to you, but IN you, the Christ of God, the Anointed One, living IN you.”

You don't have to be deadpan anymore, and you don't have to be just extra and hanging around anymore. The Son of God, the Creator of the galaxy, now has made His home in you. The Potential that flung the stars into the sky, now has made His home inside of you, if you truly believe. Your potential is now *limitless*. Your fears are now *useless*. Your gifts are now boundless, endless. All that He can be is yours for the taking. If He has really come to make His home in you, you don't just get part of Him, you get ALL of Him. Part of that is around you in the Body of Christ, Biblically speaking, and part of that is expressed and brought to the surface in you by iron sharpening iron. But all in all, as Paul was able to say, even to the weak Corinthians, “*You have every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus!*” Peter said, to people scattered around the world, “You have everything that pertains to life and godliness. It's all here.”

There is a Hope that comes from really understanding all that He has done and all that He wants to do, and the nature of the miracle of Christ in you, the Hope of Glory...Christ in you, plural, and Christ in you individually, the Hope of Glory. And that hope turns cowards, and weak and confused men and women, into heroes. That hope turns them into people who can Live, and who can sow the seed of the Word of God, and can convert the babies by bringing *many* sons into glory in their home, with their own children, with their neighbors, and with their co-workers. The aroma, the scent of Jesus passing by, can happen in your workplace if you have faith and if the seed of hope is alive within you. It will be contagious! Always be ready to give a reason for the HOPE that lies within you. The glory of God and the future and the hope and the optimism and the strength and the gifts and all that is in Christ Jesus—*everything that pertains to life and godliness*—dwells mightily in you... just as it brought a dead body, in the grave for three days, back from the dead into resurrection life, shining like the stars in the universe. That's the Hope.

“*And the greatest of these,*” Paul said, in this place where dreams come true in Jesus personified in faith, in hope, in love, “*the greatest of these is love.*”

The nature of God is that it's a day-by-day, situation-by-situation thing. The reason why the greatest of these is love is because you can have all sorts of lofty thoughts about everything, but until you are offended by someone and go back to them on your knees and kiss their hand, you really won't experience the other things in great measure. Until you are able to apologize...until you are able to make things right...until you are willing to sacrifice for people who don't seem to be grateful...until you are willing to get out of your own shell and do things you wouldn't have done (whether it is in the workplace, in the neighborhood, in the assembly of believers)...until you are willing to lay yourself out there and be at ease with situations that involve other people...until you are willing to get out of yourself and risk for Jesus in whatever form that may be and in whatever cases of personal offense and personal sacrifice—*the other things will just be lofty ideas and concepts to you.*

The greatest of these is Love *because it is so very practical*, and it puts “feet” on the other things. They become Real! They are no longer just religion or pie-in-the-sky ideas, but they affect the people around you because Love is a visible, expressed entity. “*The greatest of these is Love.*” That's the place that Paul described as the place where dreams come true. The place where Hope is, the place where Life is. The place where you don't have to be alone anymore. The place where you don't have to be just a generic black-and-white face: “I am a Christian, I am dying and going to heaven some day.” You don't have to be there anymore. You don't have to just be a “survivor” anymore. No one can take this away from you, no one can rob you of this, and no one can steal your crown—unless you LET them! You can be the “fullness of Christ” as Paul promised in the Scriptures, as a corporate entity AND as an individual in the sense that you can live in the fullness of Hope, Faith, Love, and no one can ever steal that from you.

No matter what your situation is, whether you are in Corrie ten Boom's Nazi concentration camp, or in heartbreaking family situations, or in cities scattered around the world—no one can ever take away the place where Dreams come true. *Because THAT is found in the person of Jesus* in Faith, and in Hope and in Love. And that place belongs to YOU, if you will take it and live in it. Don't let anyone steal your crown. That place BELONGS to you. You can LIVE in it. You don't have to be weak anymore! You don't have to be a victim, and you don't have to be alone...you don't have to be any of that stuff! The qualities of Jesus, the Person of Jesus, can well up within you as rivers of living water, for all who truly believe, and water the barren desert that surrounds you in your workplace or neighborhoods or wherever it may be. That's the Hope. That's the high calling. Shining like stars in the universe. That's God's intention for us.

Individually and corporately. The place where dreams come true. *There is a place where dreams come true*, and maybe God just sows that seed in all of us somehow, someway, so that we can find that place in Jesus and so we can find the expression of it that God speaks of.