

The Anvil

Forging Out a Life

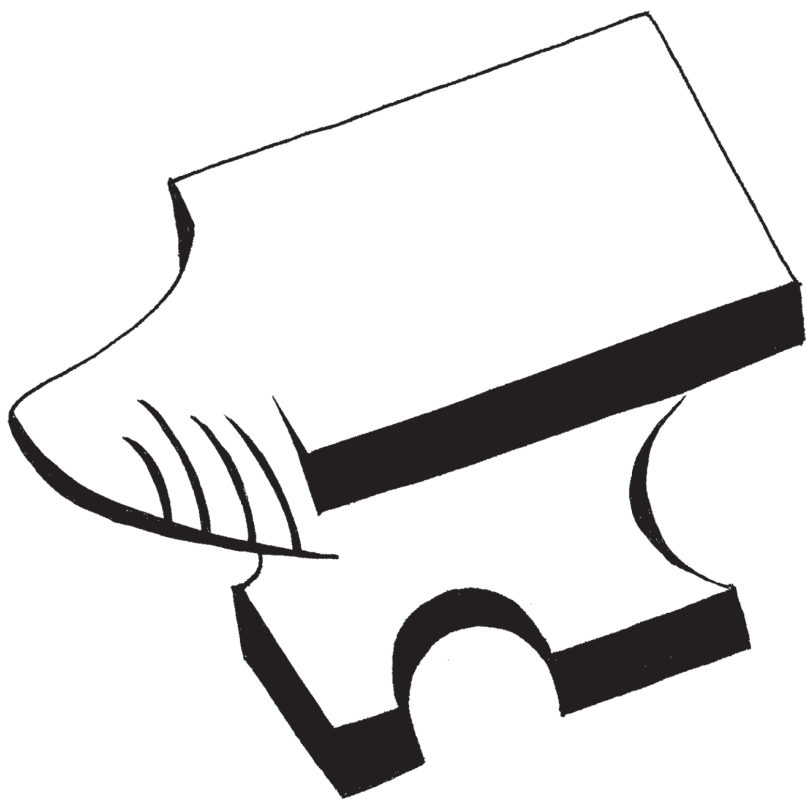


*“See, it is I who created the blacksmith
who fans the coals into flame
and forges a weapon fit for its work.”*

Isaiah 54:16

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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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Forging Out a Life

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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/

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

How to Eat From the Tree of Life

Dallas, Texas 1986

I believe that although these things are more than likely foreign to you, if you will listen and pray through them, they will change the course of your life. They will allow you to line your life up more fully with the purposes of God, that the gates of hell might truly be destroyed and the Bride might be prepared for the return of the Groom.

Before you start reading this, I want you to know that this is going to be challenging for you. If you read with a skeptical heart rather than a prayerful heart, then it will really be of no value to you at all and you might as well not even start reading. But if you will be open and pray through these things as you read, then I believe that you will find that your life will not be the same. I say that because my life certainly has not been the same as I have learned to walk in them. My life will never be the same. Please take a couple of minutes to pray before you begin reading.

The World Will See Jesus Again!

The purposes of God for an individual and the corporate body of Christ are that the Agape Kingdom of God would be spread to every nation and then the end would come. The agape of many would wax cold because of the increase of wickedness. But some *despise the increase of wickedness* and have made God's enemies their enemies and God's passionate love their passionate love (they can't tolerate it in their bones as it says in Peter's epistle about Lot). For those people who despise that wickedness, God's kingdom is going to spread over all the earth and then the end will come. Something I would love to expand on is that it is fully God's purpose to show the world Jesus Christ again.

Before the end shall come, the world will see Jesus Christ again, but in the body of Christ. It is going to happen; His CHURCH is going to be the precious, blameless, spotless Bride of Christ without any wrinkle. The

Bride of Christ in all of her Glory is going to be a people that are living out the purposes of God just as Jesus did. The kingdom of this world is going to see the King lived out in the body of Christ. They are going to be accountable to that—they are going to have to answer to that. They are going to be in the valley of decision where they are going to have to decide what they are going to do with Jesus Christ. Are they going to crucify Him again? And in fact, as we know from reading Revelation, they will. Many will desire to crucify Him again.

Some will yawn and walk away apathetically, and others, because they have seen Jesus Christ again in the full expression of His character in the Body of Christ, will respond to that as they did in the first century. The way is still narrow, but the bushel basket will not hide the Light of the Glory of God. The city will be set on a hill where it cannot be hidden. That is God's purpose. The mount of the Lord's temple will be established as chief among the mountains. The glory of this house will exceed the glory of the former house. The ever-increasing government of God—that was the purpose of Jesus Christ establishing His reign. It says, "The zeal of the Lord God Almighty will establish an ever-increasing government." And for those who are looking for the Church to start off with a big bang in Acts 2, and then drift into obscurity and irrelevance and a pitiful weakness with no witness at all—that cannot be so! That cannot biblically be so. What we are seeing now is *not* the end of the story. God will have that Bride that has made herself ready.

The Elijah of God, the John the Baptist of God, will prepare the way for the Second Coming of the Lord also. The people of God will prepare the way for the Second Coming of the Lord. The people will see Jesus Christ on earth again. And our job then, especially in the light of being overcomers, is to join ourselves wholly to that purpose and not be distracted by anything—not be a double-minded man who is unstable in all his ways. To have an undivided heart and to go after that with all our energy, everything—all of our heart, all of our soul, all of our mind, and all of our strength—that's the only definition of a Christian. I think you can see that this is what it is going to take to be that people that are ready for the return of Jesus, and have made the way ready for Him.

In order to be that people, there is something that is absolutely essential because these things will be done by the zeal of the Lord God Almighty. Jesus said, "I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." "Unless the Lord builds the house, it is built in vain." So there is something that God is going to accomplish in His people as He makes a name for Himself by taking a people that were not a people. Do we

qualify? It's all prophetically there in the Old Testament. You were nobody. You were the smallest of nations. You had nothing going for you. You didn't have anything to brag about or boast about. You weren't so smart; not many of you were wise or noble by human standards. That's not what the Kingdom of God is all about—to somehow be so big and tough and strong and have our methodology so precise and well-tuned that we can accomplish God's purpose by fleshly effort! We are not going to build a tower of Babel and reach God. It is not going to happen, no matter how swift we think we are.

Here is the point: How are we going to accomplish that if *we are not the ones who are going to accomplish it?! We have a choice of whether or not to be in on that. This is one of the mysteries of God that I want to share with you. We've talked about experiencing the Glory of God that we lost when we sinned and fell short of that Glory, and how to walk back into ever-increasing glory (2Cor. 3:18). You are not going to be able to do that out of the flesh. God gives the increase. Men plant seeds; they water, but God gives the increase. You are not going to be able to beat your way back into the Glory of God by some man-made way of doing it. Your zeal won't do it, your Bible knowledge won't do it, and your sincerity won't do it. There have been sincere people for generations, for centuries. Are you any more sincere than anyone else? I don't think so. But something about the nature of God is that there is ever-increasing revelation. It is like being in a funnel, and you look up and all you see is this little bit. But then as time moves on, you can see from Genesis to Revelation. As you move up and the circumference of the funnel gets a little bigger, you can see more of the universe, more of God's precious truth—1 Corinthians 2 is a good example of how that is so and God said it is so!*

As the apex of the ages, the fulfillment of the ages as it says in 1 Corinthians 10, comes upon us, we are moving higher and higher up into that funnel where we are seeing more and more of the Mind of God. We are building on those things that were before us. God over and over again said, "As I said to Isaac..." "As I said to Jacob..." "As I said..." "As I said..." God does not mean for us to criticize the past, He does not mean for us to criticize anything that ever was. What He means for us to do is **build** on that. "As I said unto Isaac..." "Listen, guys. Think back. Grow. Build on what you have already received, but don't stop there. Do not let anything be your ceiling. Do not let your father or your mother be your ceiling. Do not let anyone ever be your ceiling. Go for all that I have for you, and don't stop short because of any peer pressure, because of anything under the sun. Do not stop short. Promise? It's not worth it to live in poverty for someone else's sake. It can't be!"

This is really risky, because I run the risk that you are not going to understand, or you are going to do the very thing that I am saying *not to do*, and that is to *analyze it to death*. I am afraid you are going to chew on it, then spit it out. And that will be the end of it because you will never really find what is in here if you try to analyze it intellectually. What I am asking you to do is **not** decide whether I am right or wrong. Don't decide that. *If you find yourself starting to sit in judgment about whether this is good or evil, whether this is right or wrong, then just stop right there.* You can always put it aside, but don't sit in judgment of it. Just listen and pray through it as we are going along, and you will see how important this is.

Which Tree Will You Eat From?

The crime in the Garden of Eden was not simple disobedience. It was falling into satan's number one desire. His desire is that we eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil rather than the tree of Life. I think Genesis 3:22 is the best place to see that.

"In the middle of the Garden there were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2).

There were two trees in the middle of the Garden in the initial creation. Then we see a little later in verse 16: *"You are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it, you shall surely die."*

Of course, the first temptation that we are all familiar with is the serpent saying to Eve, "Do you know what God said?" She said, "Yes, I do know what God said." Eve said, "God said if I eat from this tree, I will surely die." Satan's number two attack: "Well, God might have said that, but what He really meant was..." And satan started to twist and contort the Words of God and to deceive us with the very Word of God. He intended to take the very Word of God and deceive us into poverty with that Word. "Here's what God meant. It's not so. God fooled you. He is trying to cheat you." Satan said, "I have a deal for you, but God is trying to cheat you." The disobedience occurred when Eve took a bite of that fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and then she passed it on to Adam and he started chomping on it, too.

"The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. The Lord God said, 'The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat and live forever.' So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.

After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life” (Genesis 2:21).

I think it is easy to see that God took it a whole lot more seriously than, “They didn’t do what I told them to do. I said not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They did it anyway, so I’m going to throw them out of the garden.” It’s much more serious than that. He said, “They’ve become like one of us.” God acknowledged that satan was right. If we eat from that tree, we make ourselves to be God knowing good and evil in ourselves, no longer dependent on God minute by minute. Now we can function externally based on our knowledge of good and evil. And to that God said, “This can’t be! I can’t let anyone like that live forever. I have to get them out of the garden. I have to get them away from the tree of Life, because they have eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” What I want to share with you is—*that* is the battle that is raging.

It’s not simply satan trying to tempt us to disobey God. That’s bad enough. But satan’s major focus, and I think you will see this as you pray through these things in the months to come, is to get us to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil rather than the tree of Life. He knows that if we do that, we will surely die. Sooner or later we are going to shrivel up and die or at least be impoverished. We will not be able to be a witness for God. We will not be able to fulfill His purposes. We will just drag our way through life barely hanging on, if that, and it won’t be the Life that Jesus came to bring in abundance. It won’t be the Life that destroys the works of the devil. It won’t be the Life that turns cities upside down like the people that were in the first century church learned to do by eating from the tree of Life rather than the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Just stick it in your mind that satan’s major focus, major battle with you as an individual, is to get you to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil rather than the tree of Life.

Let’s Look at Some Examples

This is kind of a bubble-popping session. What I want to do is really rattle your cages a little so I can show you something that you may not have thought too much about. If you don’t see the futility of eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the rest of this isn’t going to mean too much to you because you are going to keep jumping right back into eating from the wrong tree over and over again. If you try to take your own intellect, your own study of the Bible, your own morality, your own

anything and try to establish what is good and evil apart from a minute-by-minute communion with God, it will be futile and, ultimately, death!

“You shall not murder” (Ex. 20:13). “Thou shalt not kill,” as some of the translations say.

“Moses turned and went down the mountain with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand. They were inscribed on both sides front and back. The tablets were the work of God. The writing was the writing of God engraved on the tablets” (Exodus 32:15,16).

So Moses received these ten commandments on the stone tablets. God wrote them out and one of them was, “Thou shalt not kill.” That’s scriptural, right? Would you agree that is very scriptural? That was in the law of God, “Thou shalt not kill.” Notice what happens next though.

“Then Moses said to them, “This is what the Lord the God of Israel says: Each man will strap a sword to his side. Go back and forth through the camp from one end to the other, each killing his brother and friend and neighbor.” (Exodus 32:27).

He has just come down from the mountains with these tablets that say, “Thou shalt not kill.” They had the Scriptures right in front of them (except they are in little pieces now), and then the Lord says apart from the Scriptures, “Go kill your brothers and your friends.” I don’t know whether you have thought about that, but some of those things are hard to understand. And if you are busy eating from the wrong tree you are going to choke on something like that!

In Genesis 22:2, Abraham was told to go kill his only son, Isaac. Written in the heart of God was “Thou shalt not kill.” And now God commands Abraham to go kill his beloved son, Isaac. And guess what? Abraham went to do that. He had full intentions of killing his only son Isaac. And, yet, written in the heart of God was, “Thou shalt not kill,” and yet God commanded that Abraham kill. Do you see a discrepancy there? Does that offer any source of confusion?

Revelation 11:5 *“If anyone tries to harm the two witnesses, the lampstands (the people of God as represented by the lampstands in Revelation 2), fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die.”* This is something that, with a careful study I think you will find, has yet to be seen on the face of this earth. There is apparently something still out there where the enemies of God will be devoured by the people of God and that’s how anyone who opposes the people of God must die. “Thou shalt not kill.” The people of God are

commanded and would be disobedient if they didn't kill the enemies of God in this case, or if you prefer, back in Exodus 32. You basically have a problem on your hands, I think you would say.

Exodus 20:4 is the passage that says, "*Make no graven image.*" To prove that is a valid commandment, when Moses came down with the tablets that said, "*Make no graven image,*" what did he find down there? He found a graven image, a golden calf, right? So Moses took this golden calf and ground it up into powder and made the Israelites drink it! So, now they are drinking a golden calf cocktail and they are going to remember that for a long time because the Scriptures say, "*Thou shalt make no graven image.*" Experience says it's not a good idea to make a graven image when Moses is around. You end up drinking it!

In Numbers 21:6, 9 "*The Lord sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, 'We sinned when we spoke against the Lord and against you. Pray that the Lord will take the snakes away from us.' So Moses prayed for the people. The Lord said to Moses, 'Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at the snake, the graven image, the brass snake and live.' So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, the graven image, he lived.*" Scripturally, the Lord said, make no graven image. But the Lord also said, "*Make a graven image, and if you refuse to look at this graven image you will die of the venomous snakes.*"

You now have a problem on your hands. How do we understand this? They had the Scriptures. They had the tablets that said, "*No graven images.*" They got a preacher named Moses who has already messed up; he already smacked the rock and he has already been prohibited from going into the Promised Land. He is getting a little senile. Moses comes back and says, "*The Lord told me to make a graven image.*" And they looked down, looked at the Scriptures, and they listened to Moses about making a graven image and they say, "*We've got a problem on our hands here.*" Yet amazingly enough, they looked at the graven image and *lived!* Now if you go about 750 years later, you would find in 2 Kings 18, that they are worshipping this brass snake and Hezekiah has to break it into little pieces to restore the Lord's favor. So, they are still hanging onto this thing 750 years later and, in fact, by that time they are *worshipping* it and then the point is "*make no graven images.*"

1 Corinthians 6:7 says that it would be much better to be cheated than to take somebody to court. Don't do that—don't mess with courts. Then you see in Acts 25:11, Paul says, "*I appeal to Caesar.*" Paul writes don't take

people to court, stay out of the judicial system—stay away from heathens sitting in judgment on your problems. And, yet, Agrippa says, “Hey, we could have let you go except you appealed to Caesar. You purposely got yourself into the judicial system.” A minor example, but Paul seems to be messing with his own commandment, his own scripture.

1 Corinthians 11:14 says that the long hair of a man is a disgrace, that the very *nature* of things tells you that long hair on a man is a disgrace. Yet, the greatest man ever born to woman had hair, never cut, perhaps down to his knees, and ate bugs. Yet again, “the very nature of things,” says the Scriptures, is that long hair is a disgrace to a man. So once again, you’ve got a problem.

In Luke 7:29, all the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus’ words, acknowledged that God’s way was right, because they had been baptized by John. But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God’s purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John. Read these other verses: Mark 11:28-30, John 1:25, and John 1:33. What you read in those passages is that they questioned John’s authority. They said, “Who gives you the authority for that?” They said, “By what authority do you do this?” And He said, “By what authority did John baptize? By heaven’s authority or by man’s authority?” And they scratched their heads and said, “We better not answer this.” And He said, “Neither do I answer you.” But that was a very valid question. What authority did John have to baptize? That was a valid question because.... guess what? It was unscriptural. There was absolutely no hint of any scripture that said John had the right to be baptizing anybody, or even that there would be a man baptizing people. There was nothing in the Scriptures, and yet guess what it says in Luke 7:30. It says that they rejected God’s purpose for themselves by refusing John’s baptism. They were disobedient to God even though it was unscriptural (as we determine unscriptural) for John to be baptizing anyone. “Why should they have to do that? Prove it to me. Where is the scripture, John?” And yet the Holy Spirit said that they were disobedient to God because they refused to be baptized by John. There’s something weird going on here.

Luke 6:29-30 says to always share. “*Lend to everyone. Don’t expect repayment.*” Matthew 25:7-9 is the parable of the ten virgins. Have you ever thought about that? The five without oil said, “Share your oil with us.” The other five said, “No. Uh-uh.” Were they right or wrong in not sharing? They were right. They got to go into the banquet. The other ones didn’t. That’s why Jesus taught the parable. You see, no one’s going to share his or her oil with you and you can’t ride on anyone’s coattail into the kingdom.

You have to have your own oil. But the point is that Jesus Himself taught sharing—“Don’t ever refuse anyone who asks you to lend.” And now we see Jesus condoning a people who refused to lend, and rightly so. Seemingly, you have a scriptural incompatibility.

In Matthew 5:43-48 it talks about always forgiving and not holding anything against your enemies—be sure to be really free about that kind of thing so that you will also be forgiven. In Genesis 7:1-10, there is Noah with the seven members of his family, and these other people are banging on the door of the ark saying, “Let me in. I repent.” And Noah would have been sinful to let them in. What an unChristian thing to do! What an unChristian thing to not share your oil! What an unChristian thing to not let those guys in! What an unChristian thing to murder your son! That’s terribly unChristian!

So we have a whole series of scriptural discrepancies, and I could give you many more. These discrepancies provide a serious problem for us if we have a mentality of eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That’s where I am going with this. If we eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil based on our understanding of the Scriptures, we will often disobey God and be accountable for disobeying God. I realize that what I am saying may be foreign to your thinking. So I’m asking you to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil now by sitting in judgment on what I am saying. What I am asking you to do is ask the Lord if these things are so. I am asking you to pray through these things—to read them, pray through them, and try to understand what is happening here.

My purpose for doing this is just to rattle your cage a little. I just want you to see that if you function out of your intellect, you are in big trouble. In fact, you don’t have anything to offer a non-Christian either, because any halfway intelligent non-Christian is going to have big problems with some of this stuff. Murdering people in the Old Testament—“What’s the matter with God, anyway?” We have all heard that at some time or another from a non-Christian.

His Ways and Thoughts are HIGHER

This is one choice excerpt from Job 38-42:6: *“You ask, O God, who is this that obscures my counsel with words without knowledge. Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.”*

Job saw something that everyone needs to see very clearly and repent of in ashes. God's ways are higher than your ways; His thoughts are higher than your thoughts. Job finally came to the realization that God spoke things that he didn't understand and things that were too wonderful for him to know. "Where were you, Job, when I laid the foundations of the earth? Who do you think you are, anyway?" That's what God said. "You have made yourself like one of us." That's what Satan said. "You can be like God, knowing good and evil." When you think you know good and evil based on your scriptural knowledge, you have made yourself to be a god. And it's time to repent in ashes because these things are too wonderful for us to know. These discrepancies that you have just read ... you don't know the mind of God and you never will. "How unsearchable are His riches," were the words from a man that was caught up into the third heaven, the apostle Paul. Unsearchable. I don't understand. The mystery of incarnation. The mystery of godliness. The mystery.... Paul couldn't even figure out half the stuff that he was teaching. He didn't quite have a handle on it. The angels longed to look into these things.

It was God's purpose through the church to make known his manifold wisdom to principalities and powers. We don't have a handle on the ways of God, the thoughts of God. And as soon as you think you do, you are in big trouble. When you can take your knowledge, whether it is experiential or whether it is something you have studied and crammed into your little brain, and think you have got it all figured out, then you are hurting spiritually. You say, "Now I know what is good, and now I know what is evil. It's obviously evil to kill your only son. It's obviously evil to keep these people out of the ark. They said they repent. Who am I to judge? It's obviously evil to not share my oil with this other person. It is obviously evil to let my hair grow down to my knees. It is obviously evil to be naked, therefore, I will hide myself and I will make a fig leaf." *"Who told you you were naked?"* It is obviously good to offer a grain sacrifice," and God said, "Cain, sin is crouching at the door. You messed up. You decided you were a source of knowledge of good and evil. Now, sin is crouching at your door."

And the next thing that happened? Cain murdered his brother. Ever-increasing wickedness (Rom. 6). That's what happens when, based on your intellect, you start eating from the wrong tree. We have all been well trained to do that. We have learned it in school. It's up on the chalkboard. We learned it in seminary. It's just the world's system. Everything is like that. The business world, everything. The whole world system, the whole Babylonian system that we are living in right now is set up to train us to eat from the wrong tree.

And if we approach religion the same way—guess what? We are going to be impoverished until the day we die. But, God is going to have a people that don't live like that anymore. A people that dare to eat from the tree of the Life instead of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, will be the people who will display the Christ-life over the face of the earth. Only those people. And that's why I need to bring this up, because this is the foundation that will make it possible *to live in the glory of God*—to live in the pillar of fire.

Two Kinds of Wisdom

Obviously our intellect, our knowledge, cannot lead us into God's ways. We saw several examples of that. 1 Corinthians 8:1 talks about knowledge puffing up. Whatever you think is knowledge is just going to make you arrogant. We will see that in James also.

James 3:13-18 says there are two kinds of knowledge, two kinds of wisdom. *“Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such ‘wisdom’ does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil.”*

Whatever is earthly wisdom is of the devil. Don't kid yourself into thinking it is neutral. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. The opposite kind of wisdom, the wisdom that comes from heaven, is first of all pure, then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit. Impartial and sincere. *“Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.”*

There are two kinds of wisdom, two kinds of knowledge. The one that is of this earth and of the devil is one that, when you start to live in that kind of wisdom and that kind of knowledge, is going to create disorder. That wisdom of the earth is going to create factions and competitiveness. “I know more than you know. You misunderstand that. I understand it. You don't understand it. You are not as smart as I am. I have been studying it longer. I understand this and you don't. If you understood this verse, then you obviously wouldn't believe that anymore.” It creates division among us. It creates factions and hatred and envy. “This guy knows his Bible better than I do. I'm envious.” That kind of wisdom creates disorder and every evil practice.

But there is a *wisdom from above!* There is a knowledge that is from the Kingdom of God that comes from the Throne of God that is peace-loving

and considerate. And when you are living and breathing in *that* kind of knowledge, there is peace, joy, and prosperity to the soul. And if there is disagreement, it does not break us. It does not divide us. It doesn't somehow break us into little pieces. What it does is joins us up into a common purpose. If everyone is functioning in *that* kind of knowledge, *that* kind of wisdom, we don't have any problems anymore. Like Paul said, "Everyone who is mature ought to think the same way I do, but if you don't that's okay. Because God will make this clear to you." Didn't he say that? Philippians 3 says, "This, too, God will make clear to you." He also told that to Timothy.

What I'm saying is, if you don't think the same way someone else does, it doesn't have to cause a rift between you. And the only time it will is if you are eating from the wrong tree. If you are both eating from the tree of Life, you are going to grow closer and closer. You will work these things out with peace and joy and inner strength and prosperity in your soul, rather than division and hatred and envy and factions and divisiveness as happened in the tower of Babel when they all started to hate each other and go their different directions. The result of eating from the wrong tree is pain, frustration, broken relationships, and the insanity of sin. This is what happened to Cain. He became a judge of what would be good as a sacrifice, and sin crouched at his door from then on.

Read 1 Corinthians 2:3-16 with special focus on verse 4—*"I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power."* If you were to really look at that carefully, I think what you would find is that Paul is saying, "I was scared that I might persuade you by my human wisdom. It's not meant to be that way. It's meant to be a gift from God and not by my persuasion, not by my logic, not by reason."

John 1 says that man is not born again by human decision, a husband's will or natural descent. It is not an intellectual process, coming into the Kingdom of God. We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. It is a different kind of wisdom, a different way of approaching this idea of knowledge or wisdom. We speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory.

Notice this idea—"For our glory..." He wants to bring us back into glory. He destined a secret kind of wisdom for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

Only the Spiritual Man

“However, as it is written: No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him; but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God” (1 Cor. 2:9). Then he goes on to give an example: *“For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him? You can’t read another man’s mind. In the same way, no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.”* The example is, *“Who knows the mind of God, His thoughts, except His own Spirit?”* *“We have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand what God has freely given to us.”* He said we have the Spirit of God that allows us to know the mind of God. *“This is what we speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in words taught by the Spirit.”*

Amazing! Expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him and he cannot understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man makes discernment about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man’s discernment. No one can figure him out. *“For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.”* *“What kind of thing is this that cannot be learned by studying?”* That’s exactly what he said. He said, *“Using the wisdom of this world, using logic, using the scientific method of approaching subjects—by taking all these facts and accruing them and building them and making a framework of these things—there is no way in the world that you can understand the mind of God approaching it that way. He said, “In fact, the unspiritual man cannot understand these things.”*

That is a pretty amazing thought, because what is being said is that no amount of studying by an unspiritual man can ever allow him to understand. There is no way anyone can explain it to him, there is no amount of verses he could ever read, and there is no Greek text that would ever help him to understand it if it is God’s wisdom. If it is man’s wisdom, yes, he can figure it out. He can work his way through it. Any heathen, any atheist can get out his concordance and study a bunch of principles. Any person with a brain can study it the way we have been taught to study it. And they can reach the same conclusions we would. Right?

If that is so, then that means we are doing something wrong because if it is *God’s* wisdom, a person that is unspiritual *cannot* understand it. Impossible. God said so. It is impossible that he could ever understand it no matter how much he studied. That tells us something about how our life has to be. If we are eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and

evil rather than the tree of Life, what that means is that we are not going to be able to understand these things, *because we are approaching it on the wrong level*. We are on the wrong channel. We are on Channel 5 and God is on Channel 8. You can watch Channel 5 all day long, and you are never going to learn anything that is on Channel 8.

You can study it in great detail, but it isn't going to help any. You cannot understand it without the mind of the Spirit of God. I hope you realize the full impact of that because it discredits most of our study methods. That's just not the way to grow in the knowledge of God. It is clear. The wisdom of the world, the way man approaches knowledge, will not work in approaching God.

Matthew 11:25 says, *"I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned, and revealed them to little children."* Who does the revealing? God does the revealing. Who does He hide it from? The wise and the learned. The smart guys don't get any of this stuff. The people that approach it with God's methodology, the little children, they receive it. Those who are wise and learned, the smart ones who approach it intellectually, never get any of it. "Yes, Father for this was your good pleasure." "God, You got a kick out of that, didn't You? Making Your knowledge supernatural in such a way that You can't be received by being wise and learned. You can't be received by being really smart."

This is going to help some of you a lot, especially if you don't consider yourself a tremendous Bible student and if you don't consider your memory or your knowledge of the Scriptures to be so great so as to be able to understand everything. Have you ever felt like you couldn't figure it all out? Guess what? You don't have to. That's not the point. The wise and the learned don't get any of the real stuff. All they get is a bunch of words in their head. "It was your good pleasure, Father. You had a lot of fun doing it that way! That way man couldn't touch it with his own intellect."

To Whom the Son Chooses

He goes on to say, *"All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father and no one knows the Father except his Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."* It's the Son's choice. I chose you—you didn't choose me (Jn. 15). There is this relationship with God where we cannot build a tower of Babel and reach God. Ol' Nimrod was a very religious man. He wanted to reach God. But he was going to do it his way using the world's system. He wasn't going to use stone; he was going to use bricks. He wasn't going to use mortar; he was going to use

lime. He had his own way of doing things and he was going to reach God, and it didn't work out. He lost. The tower of Babel turned into Babylon—which was the enemy of God. That's the Babylonian system.

“Blessed are you, Simon Son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven” (Mat. 16:17). So you have another problem here. It was not revealed to you by man, by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. We once knew Christ according to the flesh, Paul said—by what we could read, by what we could study, by what we could see, by what we could hear. We once knew him after the flesh, but no longer do we know him after the flesh. No longer is it something that happens by flesh and blood. It is something that happens by revelation from the Father, the same thing Jesus said a little earlier.

So you may be a good Bible student and respect the authority of the word of God, but do you believe what we just read? Because that's what the Bible says. I'm not making that up. *Jesus* said that. I didn't say that. These other things—the Holy Spirit wrote all of 1 Corinthians 2. I didn't write that; I'm not making it up. Ponder these things.

To those who are religious, moral, know the Scriptures backwards and forwards, Jesus said in Matthew 22:29, *“You are in error, not knowing the scriptures or the power of God.”* And they said, “I beg your pardon. I know my scriptures. I have them memorized. I couldn't have graduated from Sanhedrin school if I didn't know my scriptures.” And Jesus said, “Nope. You don't know the Scriptures or the power of God.” You can know the Scriptures backwards and forwards and not *know* the Scriptures, according to Jesus.

“You have taken away the key to knowledge,” He said to the Pharisees. “You don't have it, and you won't let anyone else have it, either.” And those were the guys who knew their Bibles the best. They didn't *know* the Scriptures, but they knew the scriptures. And that is entirely possible to this day.

Jesus speaking to the Jews said, *“You diligently study the scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the scriptures that testify about me. Yet you refuse to come to me to have life”* (Jn. 5:39). Do you notice the word “life”? The “tree of life”? Diligently studying the scriptures does not mean we have **life**. Knowing the Bible doesn't really mean very much because what God is after is for us to have a relationship with Him.

“This is eternal life that they might know you, have intimacy with you, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you sent” (Jn. 17:3). There isn't any other eternal life. I don't know what eternal life you are after, but the only

kind of eternal life that exists is having intimacy with the Father and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. That's the only kind of eternal life there is. And you can go through all the rules and regulations and rituals and acts of obedience that you want to, but if you don't have a fellowship, sharing all things in common with Jesus Christ and His Father, you don't have eternal life. Diligently studying the scriptures isn't going to cut it! It didn't then, and it's not going to now either!

The Tree of Life—Come to HIM

What I want to share with you is the fact that these guys were approaching life by eating from the wrong tree. What's available to us is to eat from the right tree. God is raising up a people that will do that. There are going to be people that will do that. There has to be in order to fulfill all the other things that He said are going to happen. And He has never lied before!

Eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, studying to get knowledge and then making our own decision based on our reasoning about the scriptures—that's the problem. The problem comes when we study to get knowledge and then base our decision, our act of morality or immorality on what we understand rather than on a fellowship with God. That's why the people stayed outside the ark... because Noah knew what he was doing. That's why Isaac was going to be murdered... because Abraham knew how to walk with God.

How does one receive wisdom? *"If anyone lacks wisdom ask the Father?!"* (Jas. 1:5).

Do you do that? Or do you have another method of getting wisdom, another method of diligently searching for wisdom? That passage about doubting isn't out of context. It has to do with the search for wisdom. That's not some verse that is thrown off by itself. God doesn't think in sporadic terms. That doubting has to do with the search for wisdom... If you doubt when God has given you that wisdom, you are double-minded and unstable in all your ways. You are disobedient. Why should the Lord invest in someone that doubts after asking for wisdom and then wonders, "Wait a minute." He asks but then goes back to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—"Wait a minute. Seems like if..."—and starts to rationalize through the whole process and *that* is what causes the doubt.

"And this is my prayer; that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with

the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God” (Php. 1:9-11). How did Paul say that Christians would receive knowledge and depth of insight? How does one go about securing knowledge and depth of insight based on verse 9? Looks like prayer to me. He said, “I pray that God will give you knowledge and depth of insight.” That’s not all that different than “if any man lacks wisdom let him ask God.” He said, “I’m praying that God will give you knowledge and depth of insight,” and he goes on to say, “so that you will be able to discern what is best.” It’s God’s knowledge and the depth of insight that He gives us that allows us to discern what is best. It’s not basing it on our knowledge from the concordance of our brain and studying in a way that is “diligently studying” but refusing to come to Him.

Refusing to come to *HIM* for that life is going to create some problems. Did Paul say, “Read this letter over and over again. Dissect, outline, and talk about this letter one sentence and one word at a time. Conjugate and parse my verbs and you will soon have knowledge and depth of insight”? Isn’t that what we do with it, though? Paul did not say, “Please read my letter over and over again and you will have knowledge and depth of insight. Please tear this into little bitty sentence fragments and refer to the ancient history of the day and get it all in context and beat it up into little pieces and words and give me five definitions for the word ‘the’ in the original language.” Paul did not say if you want knowledge and depth of insight then read his letter over and over. He said, “I pray that God will give you knowledge and depth of insight so that you might be able to discern what is best.” That sounds just like “if any man lacks wisdom let him ask God.”

It also sounds a lot like Colossians 1:9. This is to a different group of people, but Paul is not changing what he has discerned to be the Christian life. *“For this reason, since the day we heard about you we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. We pray this in order that you might live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every good way, bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you might have great endurance and patience and joyfully giving thanks to the Father...”* We talked about fulfilling God’s purposes on earth, and that this “bearing fruit in every good work” is dependent upon growing in the knowledge of His will—asking God to fill you with the knowledge of His will and all spiritual wisdom and understanding. How does one receive the knowledge of His will, all spiritual wisdom and understanding, growth in the knowledge of God? What is the source? *God* is the source. All you have to do is read the Scriptures that God wrote to come up with that

conclusion. He did not say to read this letter over and over again, to write tiny numbers between the sentences of his letter, and impress and compete with one another over being able to quote his letter and remember the little numbers.

That's not God's way. That's not what Paul said to do. He wrote his brothers in Christ a letter and he said, "I am praying that you will be filled with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge, with depth of insight, because if you don't do that, you won't be able to live a life worthy of the calling. You won't be able to bear fruit in every good work. You must have a knowledge of God's will and I am praying that God will open your heart and eyes to be able to understand His will and discern what is best."

Let's see if Paul changed his mind with the brothers in Ephesus: "*I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe*" (Ephesians 1:17).

He goes on to say that the same power that rose Jesus from the dead (it's pretty powerful power, right?) *dwells in us*. "I keep asking God to give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened." Prayer. Prayer. God. Prayer. Prayer. God. I hope this message is getting through, because this is the message that was spread all over the ancient world. This is the message that was spread all over that first century church that changed the course of the world. And you wonder why we are not bearing fruit in every good work? You wonder why we are not living lives worthy of the calling? You wonder why the glory of God is not established with ever-increasing glory and the glory of the latter house is not exceeding the glory of the former house as God said it is supposed to? You wonder why that is? It's because we are not living the life as they did. We are living it eating from the wrong tree. We are living it intellectually—reading the letter over and over again, breaking it into little pieces and using our intellects to decide what God's will is. And if we do that we would not have been able to stick that knife in Isaac. We couldn't have brought ourselves to do that.

One time I thought—If God asked me to sacrifice a groundhog I would have a hard time doing that because I don't see the point. My mind, the knowledge of good and evil says, "I don't get it. I don't understand it." Naaman was the same way. The knowledge of good and evil said, "I have

better rivers than this at home.” And the servant said, “Don’t worry about that. You just be *obedient*. You obey God. You don’t have to worry about what is going on here. Don’t doubt. When you receive wisdom, *don’t doubt*. The double-minded man won’t receive anything from the Lord.” That principle goes all the way back to Naaman.

If we want to live a life worthy of the calling, if we want to grow in revelation and wisdom and knowledge and depth of insight, if we want to bear fruit in every good work, if we want the eyes of our heart enlightened—then it is going to happen because of a fellowship with God. It is not going to come from breaking a letter down into the original language and parsing and conjugating and beating it up with our minds. That is not going to restore the glory of God to planet earth. It didn’t have a thing in the world to do with what they did in the first century, and it doesn’t have a thing in the world to do with how God’s people are going to tear down the gates of hell now.

The message that Paul wrote to all those churches that he established was, “I’m praying for you that God would give you wisdom from above, not an intellectual thing.” You are not going to *achieve* this. You can position yourself for wisdom, but it isn’t something you can achieve. Because if it is something you can just achieve, then any atheist can do it too, which means it’s the wrong kingdom. Just ponder this thought for awhile.

Romans 12:1-2 talks about offering your bodies as a living sacrifice, not conforming any longer to the patterns of this world. Then it goes on to say, “*Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.*” How do you know what the good, perfect and pleasing will of God is according to Romans 12:1-2? The word “then,” for all those that are acquainted with exegetical principals, is in there for a reason—“*Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s perfect will is, the good, perfect and pleasing will of God.*” How do you know what God’s will is according to that? What does “then” refer to? Although we are not going to fully arrive until we see Him face to face, we are being transfigured and restored to Glory with ever-increasing Glory. How? By the renewing of our minds, the crucifying of our flesh, not being conformed to the patterns of this world, offering our bodies as living sacrifices, climbing up on the altar with all our future plans and possessions and ambitions—when we are ALL ALONE in the sight of God—**THEN WE WILL KNOW THE WILL OF GOD.**

Again, Paul did not say, “Please read this letter over and over and beat it to pieces with your brain, and then you will know the good, perfect and pleasing will of God.” He said, “Be one with God. Be renewed, be restored

to God's purpose for you. Be transfigured by the renewing of your mind. Don't conform to the patterns of this world. Then you will know the good, perfect and pleasing will of God. You will be able to test it and taste it. You *will* be able to walk in the purposes of God if you stop feeding your flesh, if you stop conforming to the way everyone else does things, and if you get yourself out of the Babylonian system and "scientia." Scientia is the word for knowledge in Latin, the scientific method. Get yourself out of that and into the ways of God and then you will be able to know the Will of God."

If you won't do this, then you won't know whether to open the door of the ark and let in everyone else because they are repenting, or whether to keep the door slammed shut. You won't know whether to kill Isaac or not. You won't know whether to murder with a sword or not because the scripture says, "Do not kill." You won't know whether to look at the bronze serpent or not. *You won't understand the things of God unless you learn how to walk in these things.*

Question: But what about the Bereans? Weren't they commended for their eagerness to search the Scriptures?

The Bereans' purpose was that they not be ignorant. They were more noble than the Thessalonians because they dug into the Scriptures to see whether what Paul was saying was so. That is different than digging into the Scriptures to establish our own righteousness, to make ourselves to be gods, knowing good and evil. These things that I am saying now, I dare say you *can* find them in the Scriptures, and I dare say you best see it if this is what is in the Scriptures.

You will not establish whether this is truth or not by analyzing it and picking it apart, but by breathing it! Jesus said, "If you don't eat my body and drink my blood you have no life in me." "Eat the scrolls, Ezekiel." There is a difference between intellectually analyzing to accomplish something (we will look at that in John 7 and also in 1 Peter). The prophets diligently studied the Scriptures to see what the Spirit of God within them was testifying towards. That is such an amazing passage because it pulls all of these things together for us. There is a diligence that the Bereans had that the Thessalonians did not have; although the Thessalonians were the model church for Achaia and Macedonia, so they must have pulled it together at some point. The point is that all this has to do with *how you approach these things*. This is not about encouraging anyone to be ignorant; it's about how you approach it.

"(There is) a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. Men will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the

Lord, but they will not find it” (Amos 8:11-12). There is a famine in the land. They all had Bibles. That wasn’t the problem, but there was still a famine. Therefore hearing the words of the Lord, the same word that is in 1 Chronicles 17:1-3, “And the word of God came unto...” It’s the word that is used over and over again. “Debar”—the utterance of the living word of the Lord was what they didn’t have that left them desolate, even though they had Bibles. It’s possible to be in a famine even though you know your Bible. Jesus talked about that over and over again. The Pharisees are a perfect example; they knew the Scriptures but they didn’t know the Scriptures or the power of God!

“My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God, For the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding” (Proverbs 2). That is really, really rich. How do you achieve knowledge and understanding? Cry out. Also, you have to accept His words, grab hold of them.

“Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). The very next verse is: “Have they not heard?” Of course they heard, but they were disobedient and obstinate so they had no life in them. They heard the Word of God, but they didn’t have any faith because they were disobedient and obstinate. They cast off restraint (Rom. 10). We always stop at the “faith comes by hearing.” Hearing the Word of God isn’t the end of the matter. You have to accept it and combine it with faith, as the Hebrews letter said. Store up commands within you. Let the word dwell in you richly. Turn your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding. It has to be *your passion*. You have to desire these things, seek the Kingdom of God, and hunger and thirst for righteousness. If you are not hungering for these things, they won’t do you a bit of good. It has to be your passion. It has to be your heart.

“If you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, you look for it as for silver and search for it as hidden treasures.” Psalm 119 is so rich. “I long to look into the law. I love Leviticus. I eat it up.” Leviticus was “the Bible” he was talking about when he said, “I just love to meditate on the word. I love your word, O Lord. I look for it as silver.”

Lean Not on Your Own Understanding

Then you will understand the *fear of the Lord* and find the *knowledge of God*. (And those things do come together). *“For the Lord gives wisdom and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.”*

Wisdom comes from God. It doesn't come from your intellect. You apply your heart to it, you seek it as you would seek silver, and you call on the name of the Lord. If that's not what you are doing, but you are just applying your mind to understanding, then you are eating from the wrong tree because wisdom comes from the Lord. True understanding comes from the Lord. Pray for those things! *“If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask God.”* *“I pray that you will have knowledge and depth of insight and wisdom.”* In Proverbs, it's the same message.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight” (Prov. 3:5). Do not trust in your scriptural understanding. That is so vital. What you think you know, you are probably wrong about. But that is not the point. You tell me what you believe in—predestination or no predestination and I will logically prove to you the opposite. You tell me if you believe in a thousand-year reign or not, in post-millennial or a-millennial or pre-millennial, and I will prove the other two to you. Everything is like that. You prove to me baptism is necessary for salvation, and I will prove to you it's not. Or, take your pick. Go the other way, and I will prove to you that it is necessary! The nature of God is not to be found in leaning on our own understanding. That is not the nature of God. What that does is create wars, rifts, bitterness, competitiveness, envy, faultfinding, arrogance, and fear. If I have a 42 IQ and you have 120 IQ, I am in big trouble if we are going to try to find God together because you are going to intimidate me to death with your scriptural knowledge. I'm not going to know what to do with that. BUT, that's not God's way.

1 Corinthians 1 says, *“I have hidden these things. Not many of you were wise. Not many of you were learned, not many of you were noble.”* It pleased God to do that. It pleased God to shame the wise by bringing his wisdom to those with the 42 IQ. That's God's way. If we trust in the Lord with all our heart and lean not on our own understanding, if we acknowledge Him in all our ways, then He will make our paths straight. Whatever you think you know, do not trust in your own understanding of that, if indeed you really want to eat from the tree of Life and find the glory of God in your soul. You are not going to be able to lean on your own understanding. Whether you are “smart,” whether you are “dumb,” whether you know something or don't know anything, *do not lean on your own understanding*. He will not

make your paths straight if you are leaning on your understanding and on your accumulation of knowledge.

“But it is the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding” (Job 32:8).

“Flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, Simon Peter. That’s not how you came to understand this. My Father in heaven revealed this to you.” The breath of the Almighty is what gives us understanding. That’s exactly the same thing Paul said to every church—they were new Christians. He only spent a few months in each of these places. They were coming out of these heathen, pagan, idolatrous situations and knew nothing of the living God. In many of the places Paul went they didn’t even have a Jewish background, so they couldn’t draw on the Old Testament Scriptures and they didn’t have much to go on. And, yet, Paul, in his attempt to nurture these new baby Christians said, “Lean not on your own understanding. You don’t have to read this letter 10,000 times to accumulate wisdom and knowledge and depth of insight. Don’t lean on your own understanding. It’s the breath of the Almighty that gives understanding. It’s God’s way. He hides it from the wise and the learned. He does not reveal it to those that are just super-duper Bible students.”

You can be a super-duper Bible student like Paul was and still have the breath of the Almighty, but you can also diligently study the Scriptures and never go to him to have that *LIFE*. I’m not talking about *refusing Jesus*. What I am talking about is *not fellowshiping with Jesus*. That’s the problem. This is eternal life, that you might have intimacy with the Father and Jesus Christ whom He sent. That’s the only eternal life there is—intimacy with HIM. There is not another brand of eternal life. You are not going to have another way of finding eternal life other than intimacy with the Father and His Son, Jesus. Intimacy has to be there.

Is the bubble sufficiently popped? The bubble of man-made christianity that builds a tower of Babel made of scriptural knowledge to reach God? Then when we get up high enough in that tower, we get confused about it and split. That’s exactly what has happened to the religious world today. You say the reason it’s split is because I’m right and they’re wrong. Right? Well, you are eating from the wrong tree. You are never going to be able to do others any good. You might be right, but you are robbing your own soul of the vitality of God when you eat from that tree. That’s not your place to judge. It’s not your place to make that kind of decision to lean on your own understanding. If you eat from that tree you are going to find out you are wrong about a lot of things. You’ll have to “eat crow,” and if you then refuse to “eat crow,” then you will be in even worse shape. I’m

saying as clearly as I know how—Lean not on your own understanding, no matter how much you know or don't know.

We Must Walk as Jesus Walked

There is only one kind of Christian life. “Whoever claims to live in Christ must walk as he walked.” How did Jesus walk? What characterized his life here in stark contrast to the religious people of his day? We must walk as Jesus walked. How *did* Jesus walk? That's a big question. That's the bottom line. There is only one kind of Christian life and that's the walk that Jesus walked. It's really easy to think of that in terms of morality. But there are a lot of moral Buddhists, yet there is only **one** Christian life. *There is only one Christ-life!*

Please ponder this in John 7:15, “*The Jews were amazed and asked, ‘How did this man get such learning without having studied?’ Jesus answered, ‘My teaching is not my own. It comes from Him who sent me.’*” Anyone that claims to be in Him must walk as Jesus walked. There is only one kind of Christian life. There are no substitutes, and that's exactly what all these other verses we have been reading say... “How did this man get such learning without having studied?” and Jesus said, “Here's how. My teaching is not my own. It comes from Him who sent me. If anyone chooses to do God's will he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.” There's a dichotomy. Does it come from God or is it man-made? He who speaks on his own, which in other words is man-made, does so to gain honor for himself. But he who works for the honor of the One who sent him, which is the man who speaks from God, Jesus says that man is a man of truth and there is nothing false in him.

Jesus' way is eating from the tree of Life. “Their” way is eating from the tree of knowledge of right and wrong. “This is right, this is wrong. This is scriptural, this is unscriptural.” In contrast to that, Jesus' way, eating from the tree of life, is not knowledge accumulation. In “their” way, knowledge can only be what they have compiled, analyzed and researched. But we know that the Christ-life is impossible, trying to achieve it the way the Pharisees did. They didn't have any knowledge that they didn't analyze, compile and research. That's the total depth of their knowledge—what they themselves studied. But Jesus said, “I didn't study these things. I didn't grind these things and analyze them, but I ate from the tree of Life!”

The second thing is that Jesus didn't speak from His own head, but, in contrast, He said what “they” do is speak on their own. They are speaking out of their own mind, their own knowledge accumulation, and what they

get out of their concordances or commentaries. Jesus said that men of *aletheia*, men of reality, of truth, have no self-motives, no deception; it's for His Father's Glory!

On the other hand, the man that studies to accumulate knowledge does so for his own glory—hidden motives, shadows, and words instead of reality. He may not be living in it, but for some reason he feels very free to teach something he is not living in. The person who is walking with God—fellowshipping with the Father, asking God if he lacks wisdom—that person is eating from the tree of Life. A person with a low IQ and poor memory, an unlearned and ignorant man, can penetrate into the mysteries of the Word the way Jesus did. (Anyone ever heard the term “unlearned and ignorant men”? That was used to describe Peter and John.) But the way “they” want to do it is with a good memory and intelligence where study methods and aides determine how much “they” can grow. They can never grow in their knowledge beyond that which their Greek lexicon and their commentary and their own intellect can take them. They can never grow beyond what they heard from flesh and blood, from another man. Their knowledge is limited to their five senses or their own intelligence.

Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus walked. The primary characteristic of Jesus' life was—He walked with the Father. “How does this man have such phenomenal learning without having studied, without having accumulated knowledge out of his own intellect and building a framework of truth based on his own study?” *“I do nothing on my own, but speak just what the Father has taught me”* (Jn. 8:28). *“The words I tell you are not just my own, rather it's the Father who is living in me who is doing his work”* (Jn. 14:10). Anyone who claims to be in Jesus must walk as Jesus walked. This is the only way to live in the fullness of God's purpose for you. Everything, other than walking as Jesus walked, is religious philosophy and religious behavior modification and religious natural ability. That's the way of man, not the Way of God.

“As many as are led by the Spirit are sons of God” (Rom. 8:14). I suspect we haven't given that verse as much thought as it is due in light of it being a salvation verse. Does it sound like a salvation verse to you? I strongly advise that we learn how to be led by the Spirit. Are you confident that is how you live your life? Do you walk as Jesus walked, being led by the Spirit of God? Do you feel really secure in the fact that this is how you live and move and have your being, as Paul said? Are you confident that you don't say anything that you don't first hear the Father saying, and that the words you say are not your own, but rather it is the Father who is living in you to do His work? I have been crucified with Christ. I don't live any longer.

He lives in me. That's the Christian norm. That's not some phenomenal, super-special thing-a-ma-bob reserved for the first century. Anyone that claims to be in Him must walk as He walked. That's how He walked. You must be a person that has learned to be led by the Spirit if you are a Son of God.

CHRIST IN YOU- the Hope of GLORY!

"If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ." That's in the same context in Romans 8. If you don't have the Spirit of Christ, you don't belong to Christ at all. "The mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations God has chosen—to make known among the Gentiles (that's us) the glorious riches of this mystery, which is—Christ in you, the hope of glory." That same Christ who lived in that intimate fellowship with the Father, eating from the tree of Life and not eating from that tree of right and wrong that comes by applying mere intellect, *lives in those who are born a second time*. The gloriously rich mystery revealed in us is that Christ lives in us, that we may walk as Jesus walked. "*Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit*" (1Cor. 6:19). "*Christ lives in your hearts by faith*" (Eph. 3:17). "*The mystery that was withheld from the Gentiles for generations has now been revealed to us—Christ in us the hope of glory*" (Col. 1:27). "*But you have the mind of Christ*" (1Cor. 2). "*Let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus*" (Php. 2: 5). You can see that it is God's purpose, under the full measure of the stature of Christ (Eph. 4), that we be conformed to the family likeness of Christ (Rom. 8). God's purpose is that we learn to walk the same way Jesus did.

God wants us to live that same kind of life that is not subject to man's intellect. We can live a life that is led by the Spirit—just the same way Jesus did. We can live that same kind of life that allowed Jesus to just sit there for four days while His best friend Lazarus was dying, and to not go heal him like He had healed everyone else. How did Jesus do that? I think we touched on that. "Jesus, your friend Lazarus is dying." "Okay." And Jesus sat back down again. The next day, he got up in the morning and someone said, "Well, Jesus, let's go. Lazarus is dying. He's going to die." And Jesus stood up and said, "Can't do it." "Jesus, you are crazy. He's going to die." Jesus says, "What can I say? As many as are led by the Spirit are sons of God." "By the Lord who is the Spirit..." (2Cor. 3:18). Jesus didn't have a choice. The Lord who is the Spirit—the Lord who is The Decision-Maker. We don't make decisions. That is eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If Jesus had decided it would be a good thing to go heal Lazarus, He would have been disobedient. After Jesus healed that one man

at the pool, if He had decided to heal all those other bodies that He stepped over on the way out, He would have been disobedient. He didn't have the right to do that. If He had decided to heal the man at the Gate Beautiful rather than letting Peter and John do it a couple of years later, then He would have been disobedient. He didn't have the right to do that.

That's the kind of life that God is showing us how to live. And the same Christ that lived the kind of life that didn't say one thing He didn't hear the Father saying and didn't do anything He didn't see the Father doing, **is living inside of you.** *"Christ in you, the hope of glory."* Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. It's not some external thing. All that is required to walk as Jesus walked is already living inside of you—if you are born a second time. Is that good news? We don't have to achieve it. It's a gift from God that He would pour out His Spirit on all flesh.

"You have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Think about that first sin. The primary objective of satan then and now, the thing that makes us fall short of the glory of God, which we were created for, is to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil instead of the tree of life. The result of this is a life of shallowness and spiritual poverty. No glory, no tasting the powers of the coming age—*which is supposed to be a Christian norm.* No rivers of living water gushing from your belly—*which is supposed to be the Christian norm!* No power of an indestructible life—*which is to be our Life!* But none of that will happen when we are eating from the wrong tree. You have to eat from the tree of life, like Jesus did, in order to find that kind of glory.

"We speak of God's wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden..." a wisdom not dependent on IQ or study materials or externals, "a wisdom that God destined for our glory before time began." God has revealed it to us by His Spirit. We speak not in words taught us by human wisdom but the words taught by the Spirit. A man without the Spirit cannot understand them" regardless of his intelligence or amount of study. Apparently, it is not the kind of knowledge that can be received by human study. We have that mind of Christ.

On Our Minds and In Our Hearts

The nature of the New Covenant itself is no longer on stone tablets. No longer will a man teach his neighbor saying, "Know the Lord," for they will all know me, from the least to the greatest. I will put my laws in their minds and I will write them on their hearts—not on leather bindings. That method is obsolete (Heb. 8:13). Read the passages in Hebrews 8:7-13 and

Jeremiah 31:31-34. What it says is the old method was a man teaching his neighbor saying, “Know the Lord, Know the Lord.” And God said, “That won’t be my way anymore. It won’t be written in an external method where you crank it out.” He said, “I will put my Spirit in them. They will all know me from the least to the greatest.” From the 42 IQ to the 142 IQ. It won’t make a difference. The wise and the learned don’t have access to it anyway. The nature of the Kingdom of God is that it is not dependent on your intellect and your study materials and how hard you labor and struggle to be able to achieve some framework of biblical theology. That’s not what the Kingdom of God is all about. He said clearly, “I will make a new covenant with them,” saith the Lord. “I will put my laws in their minds and write it on their hearts.” The old method is obsolete.

The only kind of Christian life is walking as Jesus walked, led by the Spirit, not eating from the tree of knowledge. Thus *“apart from me you can do nothing”* (Jn. 15:5). Do you know what we say to that? “Who says I can’t? Anybody can do anything they want apart from Jesus, right? I can build a company, I can build a church, I can do anything I want apart from Jesus. I can teach “bible study”—all I have to do is study it. I can be a total heathen, and if you want me to teach a lesson on prayer, I can pick up my concordance, look up prayer and tell you everything you ever wanted to know about prayer.” That’s not God’s wisdom. That’s wrong. That will not bring life to anyone’s soul. It’s wrong because apart from Him you can do nothing if you are not in intimacy with Jesus Christ. There is nothing you can do in the eternal realm—at least nothing of value to God. *“Flesh and blood have not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven.” “I praise you Father because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and you reveal them to little children.” “Yes, Father, this was your good pleasure.”* It’s not revealed to those who talk to the right professors, study the hardest, and have the best memories. That’s not what the Kingdom of God is about, it’s about walking as Jesus walked. *“As many as are led by the Spirit are sons of God.”*

“How did this man get such learning without having studied?” What Jesus instructed the disciples to do when they needed to speak out for Him before the kings was, *“Do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”* Bear in mind that He lived with them for a couple of years before he said that. They had it stored in their life. They let the Word dwell in them richly. The Holy Spirit would bring them into remembrance of all things. It has to be there first before you can forget it so the Holy Spirit can bring you into remembrance of it. ☺ It’s really essential that you bury your life in Jesus, but there is a big

difference between eating the scrolls and memorizing them—eating Jesus instead of establishing a framework of knowledge and sitting in judgment of the rest of the world because they don't know what you know.

Three Things

“Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus walked” (1 John 2:6).

“Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16-26).
Live by the Spirit—be led by the Spirit.

“Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care trying to find out the time and the circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow” (1 Peter 1:10-12).

Here's a lesson in how to study the Bible. It's a comment Jesus made when He gave them a very brief and somewhat difficult statement to understand—the Spirit of Christ in them pointed towards something, and they studied and searched intently with the greatest care to discover what God was saying in them. *“It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told to you by those who have preached the gospel by the Holy Spirit sent from Heaven.”* Not preached by intellect, not by human wisdom, not by three points and an illustration, but preached to you *by the Holy Spirit who is from heaven*. If you just took those three verses and made that your method of studying the Bible, you would learn rather quickly how to eat from the tree of Life.

Deep or Elementary?

All that is required to live this Life—restore the glory, eating only from the tree of Life—is living within you already if you are a disciple. Christ in you, the hope of glory. Does this sound like deep, heavy stuff? Is this really simple? This was kind of a shocker to me. I was playing around with a thought in my mind and all of a sudden it clicked. This is elementary teaching that everyone should be walking in.

How do I know? I'll tell you. The native folks in Galatia and vicinity were notably 90% illiterate and uneducated. The masses there were UNABLE to parse and conjugate, even in their own language. They COULD NOT utilize the scientific method to ascertain the “Will of God” by dissecting

sentence structure and running word studies (of scrolls and parchments that either hadn't even been written yet, or did not apply to them per se, as non-Jews, anyway). So, they would then be, sadly, unable to know God, right? And yet, Paul spent perhaps four months in Galatia, planting the church and opening God's Heart to his new brothers and sisters there. In a mere four months, he was so assured of their understanding of what it means to be "led by the Spirit," "Christ formed within," "beginning in the Spirit and now trying to obtain their goal by mere human effort," and other such Matters, that he spoke freely of these Lofty things, without qualification or footnote. He just refers to them in passing. He said, "Keep in step with the Spirit—be led by the Spirit. I am in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you. You began in the Spirit, and now you are trying to obtain your goal by mere human effort. You have gone back to the Babylonian, carnal tree of knowledge kind of system."

Paul wrote to these illiterate, uneducated people as if they understood all of that. He did not go into great detail to explain those things in that letter, *because he didn't need to*. In four months they were already walking in it. In fact, they walked in it so well that they were even drifting away from it. He assumed that they began in it and then walked away from it.

This is very elementary teaching. This is the nature of Christianity. This is the Christ-life. This is walking as He walked. This is a bare-boned basic of living as He lived. This is the new covenant, no longer written on stone tablets. "I will cause my spirit to live within them, and I will write my law on their hearts and in their minds. I will cause my spirit to rise up within them and they will be my people and I will be their God." That's the definition of the New Covenant. I'm telling you that as many as are led by the Spirit are sons of God. Well, **our four months are up!** We need to be a people that rise up and take hold of what God has established as a Christian norm. How many times are we going to read those passages about the rivers of living water gushing out of our bellies and peace that transcends understanding and joy inexpressible and full of glory and all of these glorious things? We have the mind of Christ. Who knows the mind of God? The Spirit of God does, and we have that spirit *in us!* And we discern all things and the unspiritual man judges nothing, discerns nothing.

How many times are we going to read all that stuff and stay in poverty? There is only one Christian life, and that is to walk the way he did. How did he walk? "I don't do anything I don't see the Father doing." "My teaching is not my own." I didn't study. I didn't intellectually arrive at these things. There is only one kind of Christian life, and that is to be led by the Spirit, to eat from the tree of Life, not the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

At the Lord's Command

“From evening till morning the cloud above the tabernacle looked like fire. That is how it continued to be; the cloud covered it, and at night it looked like fire. Whenever the cloud lifted from above the Tent, the Israelites set out; whenever the cloud settled, the Israelites encamped. At the Lord's command the Israelites set out, and at his command they encamped. (Do you notice it was the LORD'S command, not Moses'?) As long as the cloud stayed over the tabernacle, they remained in camp. When the cloud remained over the tabernacle a long time, the Israelites obeyed the Lord's order and did not set out. Sometimes the cloud was over the tabernacle only a few days; at the Lord's command they would encamp, and then at His command they would set out. Sometimes the cloud stayed only from evening until morning and when it lifted in the morning, they set out. Whether by day or by night, whenever the cloud lifted, they set out. Whether the cloud stayed over the tabernacle for two days or a month or a year, the Israelites would remain in the camp and not set out; but when it lifted, they would set out. At the Lord's command they encamped, and at the Lord's command they set out. They obeyed the Lord's order, in accordance with His command through Moses” (Numbers 9:15-18).

I don't know of any other way to say that, but that to me is just awesome because what happened was that they were willing to set up their whole lives and in one day, move it! That is what it means to be led by the Spirit. “By the Lord who is the Spirit.” Do you know what lordship means? Got any idea what that means? 2 Corinthians 3 says the Lord is the Spirit of God. And if you won't follow that pillar of fire, then you don't know what Lordship means. “As many as are led by the Spirit are sons of God.” If we are going to stay a year, so be it, by the Lord's command we will stay. If we are going to pick up and move every two days, by the Lord's command we will move. Don't think God is so different today. The same yesterday, today and forever! And just because you don't see anybody else living like that, don't think that is not the Lord's way. If God said it is so, it is so. Paul got up in the middle of the night and had a dream. He said, “I guess we ought to go.” So they packed their bags in the middle of the night and off they went. That's the nature of a pilgrim people, of aliens and strangers in this world. As many as are led by the Spirit are Sons of God. By the Lord's command we go, by the Lord's command we stay.

And guess what? If we don't stay under the pillar of fire, we don't get any manna. You decide you want to stay on the oasis when the pillar of fire moves on? “Hey, I kind of like it here, I have made a lot of friends and this is a nice plush land and all I see out there is wilderness. It doesn't look too

exciting out there to me. I'll stay on the oasis." Well, the oasis will dry up sooner or later and you will wish you moved on with the Lord, because you'll be poverty-stricken in your soul. As many as are led by the Spirit are Sons of God.

Now, if you think this is something that's for those particular people—Isaiah 4:3-6, which is almost 750 years later after the wilderness, says, *"Those who are left in Zion, who remain in Jerusalem, will be called holy, all who are recorded among the living in Jerusalem. The Lord will wash away the filth of the women of Zion; He will cleanse the bloodstains from Jerusalem by a spirit of judgment and a spirit of fire. Then the Lord will create over all of Mount Zion and over those who assemble there a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night; over all the glory will be a canopy. It will be a shelter and a shade from the heat of the day, and a refuge and hiding place from the storm and rain."*

Seven hundred and fifty years later, Isaiah is prophetically speaking of the Kingdom of God, and he said there will be a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. And if you stay under the pillar of fire, it says you will find a refuge—the shade from the heat, a hiding place from the storm and the rain. There's a hiding place under that pillar of fire. Being led by the Spirit is hiding in the shadow of the Almighty. That's the nature of walking with God. "Come to me, you that are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest for your souls." "I'll be a hiding place. I'll give you a vacation, literally, for your soul. I'll give you a break; I'll give you a rest. I'll give you a hiding place. My yoke is easy, my burden is light." Is that true or not? Experientially, no? Scripturally, yes!

We've got a problem here. Okay, here is the problem. If we won't be led by the Spirit, we won't go with Him into the glory. There will be no manna if we stay on the oasis. If we are not willing to "get up and go" the next day, or the year after, or stay for twenty-three years like Jeremiah, we won't go with Him into glory. Jeremiah had it rough—thrown in a well, beat up, abused, and, yet, he said, "Twenty-three years now I have been saying the same things to you all and you never have listened." The pillar of fire stayed there for him for twenty-three years! It wasn't because he was successful either. It was because that's where God wanted him to be, so he stayed. That's the pillar of fire that is a foreshadowing for us. Man's carnal nature always wants to go back to the slavery and the security and the predictability of Egypt rather than follow the pillar of fire. But the manna from heaven is only for those under the pillar, ready to move with no notice whatsoever.

Remember what happened as soon as they got through the Red Sea and they started having to play this pillar of fire game? They said, “Appoint for us a leader. Let’s stone Moses. Let’s go back to Egypt. It may not have been much fun back there, but at least we had three square meals. It was predictable. We knew what was going to happen. We knew we would always be there. We knew how everything was going to go.” And it is written into your genetic code, into your sinful nature, to hate following a pillar of fire, to want to stone Moses and go back to Egypt. Just as soon as you are set free to follow a pillar of fire you want to have your cake and eat it too. We don’t want to be led by the Spirit. The sinful nature fights against that. The war is between the Spirit and the flesh, it says in Galatians 5. In the context of being led by the Spirit Paul said there is a war there with the flesh. Our flesh doesn’t want us to live this way. Some of us will bail out and go back to Egypt because it is safer there, to not have to be led by a pillar of fire.

The Urim and Thummim

Have you heard of the Urim and Thummim?—*“Whenever Aaron enters the Holy Place, he will bear the names of the sons of Israel over his heart on the breastpiece of decision as a continuing memorial before the Lord. Also put the Urim and the Thummim in the breastpiece, so they may be over Aaron’s heart whenever he enters the presence of the Lord. Thus Aaron will always bear the means of making decisions for the Israelites over his heart before the Lord”* (Ex. 28:29-30). The Urim and Thummim was possibly a rock or a stone or a gem that, when the priest was making the right decision, would get warm and glow. We are not sure exactly what it was and there is more indication of what it is in different places, but this was something that the priest was supposed to store close to his heart. When he was in the presence of the Lord, it would be the means of making decisions, of knowing good from evil, by discerning the Lord’s will, not by using his intellect.

“The Thummim and Urim belong to the man you favored. You tested him in Massah, you contended with him at the waters of Meribah. He said of his father and his 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. He teaches your precepts to Jacob and your law to Israel. He offers incense before you and whole burnt offerings on your altar. Bless all his skills, O Lord, and be pleased with the work of his hands. Smite the loins of those who rise up against him; strike his foes till they rise no more” (Deuteronomy 33:8-11).

That's powerful. Offer your bodies as living sacrifices. Don't conform to the patterns of this world. Then you will know the good, perfect, and pleasing will of God. The Urim and Thummim would allow them, in the presence of God, to make decisions, to know good from evil from God's mind, not from their own mind. The man that is tested and favored by God, that has the Urim and Thummim working in his life, is a person that doesn't recognize his brothers or acknowledge his own children. But, he watches over the Word of God, guards the Covenant of God, teaches the precepts to the people of God, and offers incense and burnt offering before God. He is offering his body as a living sacrifice. He is weeding out all of the things that would distract him and offering his life as a holy and living sacrifice before God.

Then the Urim and Thummim work and bless the skills of his hands, O Lord. Bless his life. Give him the fullness of prosperity in Your sight. He is not distracted by the world. He is crucifying the fleshly distractions, and, therefore, the Urim and Thummim is useful to him. This is just a picture of things you can hang your hat on. These were written for our learning, the New Testament says so in at least a half a dozen places.

The Tree of Life Versus The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

Man craves the knowledge of good and evil. Satan longs for us to live that way, making our own scriptural decisions apart from calling on the Name of the Lord. The "old man" desperately wants to do good for God, to build for God, but he doesn't want to inquire of the Lord or ask for wisdom and not doubt when he receives it. It is critical that he be willing to live this way in order to accomplish God's purposes and live in victory.

NOTE: "Bible studies' are dangerous things." I will let you take that as you please and just think about it. But I have found that to be true, *when you function in a chalkboard mentality and you train people to answer questions and be graded on how they answer your questions.* What in the world are we doing? Are we training people to fellowship with God, or are we training people to think like we think? Are they right because they fill in the blank the way that we told them, because they believe what we said is right, or are we training them to fellowship with God?

I hope you will appreciate that when you spend time with other brothers and sisters that you are helping to nurture in the faith, because the only thing you are ever trying to accomplish in them and for them is that they

learn how to fellowship with God. You are not trying to teach them right from wrong. You are not God. You are not capable of leading men into all truth. I have news for you, that's the Holy Spirit's job, the way I read my Bible. Your job is to teach them how to fellowship with God, the Father, and Jesus Christ His Son, to draw on Them. You are not to give the brothers and sisters that you are trying to nurture all *your* answers, because your answers are likely to change. Your answers are not the same as they were five years ago, and they won't be the same five years from now either. Don't lean on your own understanding. You are going to be very embarrassed if you do that. God's way is to walk in humility and grow in fellowship with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Fellowship, "*koinonia*," means to share life, hopes, dreams, fears, and purposes. It means to have a common mind, a common purpose, to have all things in common. That is God's will—that we have fellowship with Jesus Christ (1Jn. 1), and that we have fellowship in the Holy Spirit (Php. 2 and 2Cor. 13). We have all things in common with him; we are breathing Him, not our own intellect.

To obey the first command is to say, "I will not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, I will eat from the tree of Life." Don't search for good and evil. Just ponder this thought. This is something that takes probably four months to learn. Don't search for good and evil from your knowledge. Call on the Name of the Lord, ask and then don't doubt. Search in the Urim and Thummim. Search in the pillar of fire. Search in the fruit that you are eating for life and grace and truth and reality and liberty and nourishment.

This sounds strange, I know, but think about John 4, just to take nourishment as an example. John 4:31-34 Jesus sent his disciples off to get some lunch and they came back and said, "Here's your Big Mac, Jesus," and He said, "I have food that you know not of." They said, "You are kidding! We walked ten miles round trip to the nearest town to get you food and now you are telling us you ate food while we were gone!" Jesus said, "You are misunderstanding me. I have food that you know not of. My food is to do the will of the Father." There was nourishment in serving His Father. This nourishment was something that allowed Him to grow and He fed on it. It was something that nourished His soul. If you are doing the Father's will, it's food; it's meat for your soul. You get stronger, not weaker, when you are doing the will of the Father. In John 6:53-57, Jesus said, "Unless you eat My body and drink My blood you have no life in you. But if you'll eat Me, consume Me, digest Me into your very being—not study Me, not analyze Me under a microscope—but let the word become flesh within

you. If you'll do that, there will be life in you. "*The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life*" (Jn. 6:63). In Ephesians 5:29, it says Jesus cares for and nourishes His sheep. "*Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that continually proceeds from the mouth of God*" (Mat. 4:4). Bread from heaven is the continuing Word from the mouth of God. In the Greek, that's absolutely, totally, 100% accurate. I dare you to look it up. "*Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that continually proceeds from the mouth of God.*" It's bread from heaven. If we are eating from the tree of Life, there's going to be sustenance provided. There's going to be **Glory, Peace, and Liberty** in it. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Truth, reality, grace, life—all of those things are going to be present. The only time you'll get manna and receive its nourishment is when you are under the pillar of fire.

Let me give you a couple of examples. There was a man who was a preacher who was going to spend a week with us. I wrote to him about a month before his scheduled arrival and asked him not to come. He had been with us before and said a lot of good things; I didn't have any reason, intellectually, to withdraw my invitation. But I started really praying about that and eating from the tree of Life, not using my intellect to make a simple decision like that. As I prayed about it, there was a dark cloud settling over it. There wasn't life in it. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. There wasn't nourishment in that—there wasn't liberty. I didn't know why. I couldn't figure out why.

If I were eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it would have been a simple matter. I would have had him come. It was already set up, so why mess it up. We had a great time last time. A couple of days later, I got a package of stuff in the mail from him. Maybe it crossed in the mail with my letter. Maybe he got mine and sent the package then. As it turned out, this man was breaking off from what he was a part of and starting a denomination, and he wanted me to join his denomination! If this man had shown up on my doorstep for a week and spent all this time teaching the whole church, I wonder what he would have done. What a difficult thing that would have been if he had spent that week with us. He had everything in the package about how his denomination was going to be set up administratively—there would be a board of this and that, etc..... I had lunch with him when he was in the area and found out what it was all about. It was really a bad scene. But my point really is that I was thrilled that God was faithful to make the whole thing clear on the front end and that He *will* nourish us when we stay under the pillar of fire. But if we start using our intellect... trouble comes.

I could give you more examples, but the point is that you must walk as Jesus walked. There is only one way to live a Christian life. There is only one kind of Christian life—as many as are led by the Spirit are Sons of God. The way Jesus walked was—in fellowship with the Father. He knew to wait four days for Lazarus. Would you have known that? You should be able to know. Christ in you, the hope of glory. RIGHT? As many as are led by the Spirit are Sons of God. You should be able to know. That's His purpose. If you think about Christ's physical body when He was on the earth—the Son of God was manifest that He might destroy the works of the devil. He did that. He publicly humiliated satan—made an open show, a spectacle of him.

It is God's purpose that this happens in us. The only way it will happen is if His Body on earth now is joined to the Head of the Church, which is Jesus. If we don't respond to the Head as readily as His physical body responded to His head when He was here on earth, then we won't accomplish what He set out for us to accomplish. We have to be so one with the Head of the Church that we are functioning just exactly as He wants us to. Anything less than that is epilepsy. If your body starts dancing a jig and your head doesn't tell it to, you are sick. You need to see a doctor.

That's been the problem, in my observation (again, test everything and hold onto the good). The Church has been robbed of the glory that She was destined for because She is running Her own meetings. Jesus said, "I will be where two or three are gathered in my name." If the Head of the Church is in this room, I dare say He had better be running the meeting. I'll say another thing... if Jesus were not part of the meetings that you have, whether Sunday morning, Friday nights or whenever, if Jesus were dead, how would that affect your meeting? Would you all sit there and wonder what to do if the head of the meeting wasn't there? That should be the case. If your meeting could go on as if Jesus didn't exist, then you are busy doing it all for Him. You are not functioning in the headship of Jesus. If "two or three are gathered in my name and there I am in their midst." **If the Head of the universal Church of the Living God is in this room, we had better be responding to Him.** We had better be functioning with Him. That's true individually and corporately. There can be no epilepsy in the Body of Christ. We must respond instantly to the Head, just as His physical body did, to accomplish His purposes and kick down the gates of hell.

I am fully aware that this stuff may confuse you, intrigue you, depress you, anger you—I don't know what it will do to you. But all I know is that a church that Paul spent four months with and wrote a letter to a year later (the Galatians) knew all this stuff backwards and forwards. They

knew how to be led by the Spirit. They knew how to walk in God. They knew how to keep step with the Spirit. And if we don't learn how to do that, we are going to be another generation that is impoverished. We are going to be another generation that disappears back into the dust where we are a totally irrelevant, irresponsible, boring church—and that's *NOT* the bride that Jesus is coming back for. Jesus Christ is not coming back for a cross-eyed, buck-toothed church. He is coming back for a glorious radiant Bride, without spot or wrinkle or blemish. Holy. Blameless. That's the Church He is coming for—a Bride that has made herself ready. A Bride prepared for the return of the Groom. That's Her nature. That's what was in the mind of the Father when He took the Church out of Christ's rib on the day of Pentecost and planted Her here on this earth. His intentions were that this Bride would be ready when Jesus came back for Her.

Though I readily admit that these things are not something that you hear everyday, I hope you will at least give them the benefit of a doubt. Actually, I hope you will just pursue these things. Jesus, who could have explained it much better than He did, said to go out and find the meaning of these things. And that is your job, too. Find out what it means to be led by the Spirit. Find out what it means to keep in step with the Spirit, to walk under the pillar of fire, to eat the manna of God, to share in the life with God and the tree of Life. That's what we were created for. Don't let satan dupe you into eating from that tree of great death anymore. God *is* going to have a people that walk as Jesus walked.

Come Along and See!

Fried Minds and Open Hearts (Part 2)

Thursday Night, September 26, 1991

Not Against Flesh and Blood

Sam: Jesus is the Head and the Source and all things proceed forth from Him. He says He doesn't do anything that He doesn't first see the Father doing, and He doesn't say anything that He doesn't first hear the Father speaking. If the work of God is to conform us to the image of His Son, with all things working together for good, then it's also His desire that progressively we begin to operate more and more like His Son. We'll begin to do things because we do see the Father doing them and begin to speak things because we do hear the Father speaking them. For me, that takes us out of "religion" and into relationship. I certainly don't profess to do that perfectly all the time, but I'm on my way. More and more I want that to be the testimony of my life, and I want to be able to say it's true. So I'm filled up today at the level I'm at today, but I want that to be perfected. I think that's what being a prophetic people means. It means we're sensitive to what God is doing and to what's happening around us in a realm we can't see with our natural eye or hear with our natural ear.

Matt: Smith Wigglesworth is a guy who some of you may have heard of. He lived in the early part of the twentieth century. Once, several hundred people had come to hear him talk about Jesus but he felt really frustrated and didn't know why. His words were all gunked up, and his thoughts were unclear, and he wasn't sure what the problem was. He saw a group of people in the audience who were all holding hands, and he knew in his spirit that they were "spiritualists" and not Christians at all. He kept on "preaching," but walked down to the bench where they were sitting. Now he was a big, hefty man, a plumber by trade. Well, he picked up the end of the bench and just dumped these people in a pile on the floor at the other end and told them to get out! His comment later on was that instead of casting the demons out of them, he cast them *and* the demons out.

So part of being a prophetic people is discerning in the spirit these “warps” around you. *“Our battle is not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers.”* You can get weird with all that and you can turn it into superstition, which is what a lot of the charismatic movement has done. A lot of it is not that much different than superstition when you get right down to it. God never called us to be weird and freaky, and to operate in that realm of strangeness. Paul and John and Peter and Jesus were strong, wise, stable men who didn’t do a lot of weird things. “The common people heard them gladly.” There was a strength and stature there, a fullness. The sinners and tax collectors saw something that appealed to them that was valid and strong, not something “religious”. There wasn’t a religious spirit to the true men of God, and so it is today.

Nevertheless, you have to understand that our battle is with principalities and powers, rather than bad manners. If we’re together talking about important things and people are dozing off, does that mean they just got up too early this morning? That may be the reason, but maybe there’s something else going on too. Our battle is against principalities and powers! You just have to understand that. It’s an undergirding of the world that we live in. The unseen world controls and impacts the seen world. Part of what God is doing is preparing a Bride to be an equal yoke for Jesus. He was a seen-world Person of flesh and blood, yet One who penetrated through into the unseen world. *“The prince of this world has come, yet he has nothing in Me.”* That was Jesus’ testimony about Himself. What He’s building His Bride into is a Body of people with various gifts and callings, joining them into relationships together, so they can walk as He walked, and do even greater things than He did.

So the purpose of all we’re talking about is for us to learn to walk as He walked, as partakers of the Divine Nature, to fix our eyes on the unseen things that are eternal rather than the seen things that are temporary. That’s the Christian walk: to more and more and more fix our eyes on things unseen, to walk by faith, not by sight. With the Word of God or anything else, don’t immediately assume natural things; don’t be a natural man. Primarily understand that our battle is with principalities and powers and respond accordingly. That doesn’t require that you be weird and superstitious, but it does require that you be a discerning person. Understand the nature of the universe we’re living in and respond accordingly. First to God... your first response has got to be to Him.

Pushing the Limits—Break Free!

Sam: Could you talk about hearing God?

Matt: Again, there are abuses out there that can frustrate us. You can flip on your TV and find people who say they have had continuous angelic visitations. Jesus has personally appeared to them every third Saturday of the month for the past fifteen years and given them a word of advice. You can find a lot of things like that. But please don't assume that because there are abuses, that there aren't valid things that go way beyond your previous experience! Unless you have "attained to the full measure of the stature of Christ" and are "bearing fruit unto every good work;" unless you are changing the destiny of men with every step of your foot and every breath of your mouth, don't assume that you already know everything there is to know about hearing God or walking in the Spirit. When Jesus walked, He made a difference everywhere He went. If you're not doing that, then don't assume that everything you've experienced is the limit of what Christianity is. There's probably more! So don't be cut off, just because there are abuses out there, and assume that you've already experienced the limit of what Christianity is. *Fruit* is the test of whether or not you are pushing those limits. No fruit or little fruit? Assume that there is a lot you don't know and haven't experienced that *is* valid.

Let's go back for a minute to the men who knew Jesus best. Peter said, "Though you have seen Him not, you are filled with joy inexpressible, and full of glory." Now what was Peter's assumption about the believers scattered throughout the known world at the time he was writing? His assumption *wasn't* that they had all had personal visitations from Jesus. Peter didn't assume that. His assumption was, "Though you see Him *not*..." Okay? Jesus Himself said to Thomas, "Blessed are those who have not seen, yet believe." And John wrote, "How can you possibly say that you love a God whom you have not seen, when you don't love your brother whom you have seen?" So I don't think it should be our expectation that we're personally going to have a visitation from Jesus or the angelic host on a regular basis, or else we're unspiritual.

On the other hand, a man named Cornelius, who wasn't even a Christian, had a legitimate angelic visitation. That's not something to rule out as a Biblical impossibility. Don't rule that out! Paul, on a ship that was about to be shipwrecked, had a true vision about the future. And when Paul was in Corinth, Jesus found a way to communicate to him that He had many people in that city. Once, Paul was even caught up into the third heaven and heard things that men were not allowed to speak. There are certain things of this kind that are possible within the realm of Biblical testimony.

Some things we would even be repulsed at, like Paul's handkerchief healing people! That sounds incredibly bizarre! And people lining up to try to get inside a man's shadow—picture it, people diving on the ground when a man's shadow went by. There are things that would repulse us that are *very* Biblical. Laying money at the apostles' feet...my goodness, that sounds rather cultic! Imagine all of us laying money at Sam's feet right now. We'd be grossed out by a lot of these things that are Biblical and were *not* repulsive at the time. I think we'd have a real hard time if someone decided to strike Susan dead right now! Then someone else walks in, and says, "The men who dragged Susan out are standing at the door to drag *you* out."

Those sorts of things seem very offensive to us. But it's best to let our senses and our minds be refined by the Word of God. We need to let our minds take a journey back to when God was really doing something and make sure we're prepared to have God really do something in our generation. We say we want it, but do we really? Is that *really* what we want? Are we prepared for that if it *did* happen? Or would it be so offensive and repulsive to us, and so disconcerting that we'd bail out and go sit in a pew, somewhere safer? I want you to know that *your past experiences are not the limit of Biblical possibility*. If you really want all of God, you better be prepared to give all of yourself for that.

Once again, the Biblical record is very helpful for understanding what God is capable of and what He's historically done—and what is yet to come, potentially, too. If someone told me that a handkerchief healed a man, I'd be a little reluctant to embrace it, if it weren't for the Scriptures. They didn't have a Bible to go to back then. We got a little bit of a break! But think about it: what if something happens that isn't recorded? What if it isn't a handkerchief, but something else? The point is that they didn't have a Bible to say, "This is Biblical; this really can happen." They had to deal with the reality of what was right in front of them, and make a judgment based on *that*. That's tough, that's hard. God help us to have *the kind of faith they had and the kind of discernment they had*, to not be prone to deception, but also to not be prone to rejecting truth, either. It's tough. Ananias was a nice guy. He was somebody's father, probably, and definitely somebody's child. It's not easy to see somebody struck down. "Cut him a break, man! It was just a little lie, so what's the big deal? Haven't you ever lied before?" My point is, just gird up the loins of your mind and be ready for action. As it relates to hearing God, be aware of the fact that there is probably more to it than you've previously experienced.

Now, back to the apostolic testimony from the trusted men of God who were taught and shown by Jesus how to walk in these things. How did

they walk? It's really important to come to grips with that. First of all, they didn't really anticipate that people would have personal visitations from Jesus. It's not that it *couldn't* happen; it's not that it *didn't* happen. But it wasn't the norm or the expectation. They spoke in such broad terms as to say, "Though you have seen Him not," and "God, whom you have not seen." If those words were accurate, they didn't really expect that anybody they were writing to had seen Him. So it's not an automatic part of Christianity. "Blessed are those who believe and have *not* seen." Is it possible to see Him in person? Yes, but it's not automatically to be expected, and "you're unspiritual if you don't".

Not a Lot of Clutter

As for hearing God and being led by the Spirit...again, check out the lives of the men who were trusted men, who you know for a fact were on target. Those were the twelve apostles of the Lamb and those who wrote the Scripture. Remember when Peter was defending the fact that he had baptized Cornelius in water, and he was under scrutiny from the other apostles? In Acts 10 and 11, he told them, "And then I remembered that Jesus said, 'John baptized in water, but I'll baptize in the Holy Spirit.'" What he *didn't* say was, "Then the Spirit whispered in my ear this thing." No, he said, "Then I remembered."

In Acts 15 they were trying to determine what to do with the Judaizers and the men who wanted to circumcise as a prerequisite for becoming a Christian. They worked it all through and fussed with it a little bit. Peter thought of a scripture out of Amos, then Paul and Barnabas talked about the miracles that had been done as a testimony that they were on the right track—a confirmation of the Word by the signs that followed. And James said, "Well, what I think we ought to do is..." and they went on to write the letter. And they said, "It seemed good to us and to the Holy Spirit." They didn't say, "Thus saith the Lord." They didn't say, "God spoke to us and said this in our prayer closets." *There was something about it that was very real.* The transaction had to do with digging into the wells of Life that had been planted within, and weighing the testimony of signs and wonders, and hearing the Scriptures about that. Then the collective wisdom of the elders and apostles in Jerusalem was, "It seemed good to us after we hashed it all out. We laid it before God and it seemed good to us, and it seemed good to the Holy Spirit that we should..." That's a whole lot different than the flamboyant sort of attention-drawing, gimmicky, Hollywood version of today. But it's also a whole lot different than, "We studied it out thoroughly, and we decided that..." The truth was very different than *either* of those

things. “It seemed good to us, and somehow we know that the Holy Spirit smiled at it, and it seemed good to Him, too.”

How did they know that? How did they know the Holy Spirit was smiling at the direction they were taking, and He was pleased? It’s something more than “studying it out,” and reaching some conclusion. But it was something less than “the whole place shook,” and they heard an audible voice, or they were praying, and “thus saith the Lord.” That isn’t the way they portrayed it, and I think we’d have to say those men were far more spiritual than most anyone around today. They were tested. They were specifically selected by Jesus to tell the tale, and to show the world what it was He was doing.

So then you go on and read the writings of these men of God... Peter, Paul, James and John and Jude. It isn’t filled with a lot of clutter. There isn’t a lot of, “Jesus told me” and “thus saith the Lord” and “Praise God, hallelujah.” It isn’t filled with a lot of chaff. It was very solid, very practical. I would beseech you, that your speech be such as Paul’s and John’s and Jude’s and James’. *Be a man like the Carpenter from Nazareth who was pragmatic, and yet led by the Spirit, full of the Counsel and the Wisdom of God, with communication that’s strong and sound and wise.* Be filled with faith, and yet without all the gobbledygook surrounding it. Let your speech be such as came from those we know were led by the Holy Spirit. Let your thoughts be transformed by their thoughts, by the Word of God. We’ll be on very solid ground if we do that. Peter, John and Paul didn’t use a lot of leverage by saying, “Jesus told me this and the Spirit showed me that.” They just spoke it, and assumed that the sheep would know the Shepherd’s voice. They didn’t have to apply that kind of leverage. They didn’t have to use any name-dropping to get their point across or to impress or to add weight or authority to what they were saying. They SPOKE it. They appealed to the consciences of men and women, knowing that if the Spirit was living in them they would respond to it. Paul applauded them, because they received their message, not as the word of men, but as it actually was, the Word of God. But that was *after* the fact; he wasn’t trying to use leverage or manipulate them with a lot of things that would add weight to his testimony. He appealed to their hearts and their consciences. He was down on his knees in prayer to God that He would demonstrate it with Spirit and power. It was a process of very solid life.

Apparently the communication of the gospel and the propagation of the Kingdom of God was a very strong and sound sort of thing. Brothers sitting around a crackling fire, with an elbow in the ribs and a “Brother, are you sure?” It had to do with the hammer and the anvil of life and relationship in reality. Jesus was a friend of the tax collectors and sinners

and was called a glutton and a wine-bibber. *There was a certain strength and reality to His Life that wasn't considered hocus-pocus or hyper-religious or anything like that. It was the Wisdom of God, the Wisdom of the Ages that shattered men's hypocrisy and opened their hearts and minds, filled them with hope, and pierced them with conviction. It was solid with strength and wisdom. It was a Word from Heaven, it wasn't just clutter! It was Life in a profound sense—more profound than anything they'd ever dreamed of. It was wiser than anything they'd ever considered.* When people heard Him speak, their own words seemed like chaff before the words even left their mouths. Like Job speaking the words of God, and his friends were all silent. Everything else sounded like chaff after that.

That's the nature of the oracles of God, and “if any man speaks, let him speak as the very oracles of God” (1Pet. 4:11). Speak as those men spoke in their writings, and you'll find yourself in a place of harmony with the Spirit of God, thus having proved that you've heard Him. “If they had stood in My counsel, they would have turned Israel from their sin.” That will be the fruit.

Keep in Step With the Spirit

Now in a real practical way, as you continue to prepare yourself to hear God, there are a thousand things we could say about it. But here's what I want to refresh your memories about. Galatians 5 talks about “being led by the Spirit” and “keeping in step with the Spirit.” And Paul, in between those two verses, says, “This is the nature of it: the acts of the sinful nature are obvious.” He goes through a list of grotesque things that are very much a part of every day life for many people. And he says that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience and kindness. What he's saying is that the Spirit and the flesh wage war with one another and the process of learning to be led by His Spirit is two-fold.

First of all, *the acts of the sinful nature are the things that block your ability to be led by the Spirit* and keep in step with the Spirit. Get rid of that junk in your life. And in the process of getting rid of it—and warring with these things and pushing them out of your life—you'll learn how to be led by the Spirit. If you're living in these acts of the sinful nature, they are flags that prove to you that you are NOT being led by the Spirit. If you find yourself being jealous or short of temper (“fits of rage” is what it is called in that passage), know for sure that you're not being led by the Spirit. You need to be in tune with that.

For example suppose you find yourself out on a golf course with a curse word running through your mind after you've blown a shot. Whether or not you ever say it, you better know for sure that this grumbling and complaining—never mind the curse word!—proves that you had not been keeping in step with the Spirit prior to that shot. Perhaps you felt like everything was all right, but the thoughts in your heart after that shot only proved that you had not been in harmony with the Spirit. Maybe you're not supposed to be out there in the first place, or maybe your whole attitude was off. Perhaps there was pride or ego involved, or some sort of fear of men. So take note that the acts of the sinful nature coming out in your life are flags that you're not keeping in step with the Spirit. If you embrace or tolerate those very acts in your life, you *will not* be led by the Spirit, for they wage war with the leading of the Spirit.

Secondly, *the fruit of the Spirit in your life are indications that you are keeping in step with the Spirit*. Love, joy, peace, patience... if you're not seeing those things in your life, you're probably not being led by the Spirit. If you'll embrace and develop the fruit of a walk in the Spirit, then you'll be more and more in tune with the Spirit. Add those things to your life, as Peter put it, and dig into them as an objective for your life to know and experience. You'll be led by the Spirit if you keep in step with the Spirit. So that's a very practical passage of scripture about hearing God, which is very much the same subject as being led by the Spirit.

And I think what you'll find is that the substance of Jesus' life wasn't that He went around with a hand to His ear, "What'd You say, Father? What'd You say? What'd You say?" That was not how He functioned. He functioned in harmony with His Father, with His flesh crucified and His hands open to the Father each step of His life. But it wasn't an external "What'd You say? What'd You say? What'd You say?" *It was a relationship that He had with His Father*. And His life was, "When you've seen Me, you've seen the Father. I and My Father are One." Hearing God has to do with being One with God, not getting a message in a bottle for every new move that you make. Hearing God isn't, "What? What? What was that?" But hearing God is being in *harmony* with Him. He lives inside of you. That's the nature of the New Covenant... "I'll put My Spirit in you." The nature of the thing isn't that God's *out there*, and you're trying to hear Him. The nature of it is that you're crucifying the flesh, and as Nee would say, you're releasing the Spirit. You're not so much gaining the Spirit's direction; you're allowing the Spirit of God who's dwelling inside of you to rule your life. It's a release, not an apprehending. That's the primary thing of the New Covenant.

God's Messengers

Now occasionally God may send one of His messengers. Hebrews 1 says that the angels are His messengers sent for the purpose of serving those who will inherit eternal life. Now if you consider yourself one who is a Christian and will inherit eternal life, and you don't have any knowledge or evidence whatsoever that angels have anything in the world to do with you, you're missing something. Because the angels are real—they are as real as you and I. They're meant for the purpose of serving those who will inherit eternal life, which means that they're involved in tangible things.

My reason for bringing them up is that occasionally God will utilize them. A “for instance” from a Biblical perspective is if you are in a situation where you need some sort of intervention or communication to get you on the right course. It's entirely possible that you could entertain angels, unawares, as the Hebrews writer says. Angels could be involved in redirecting the path that you may be on. You might be misguided, though sincere, or you might be discouraged, as Paul was in Corinth. You may need some key information about what to do with a food supply on a ship, as he did. There may be some purpose where God would need to send you some messengers as servants. You need to be aware of that realm, is my point, not that you'd be focused on it or superstitious or hyper-spiritual about it. But *it is real*. It's just as real as you and I sitting here. If you're not aware of that, you're going to miss the blessing. You're not going to utilize the tools that are available in serving God's purposes. You're not going to appreciate the things that God has done, and you'll write them off as circumstances or coincidences.

Fried Minds and Open Hearts

If I've fried your minds with anything we've talked about, I'd encourage you to do the only thing you'd want to do anyway. Get on your face before God and ask Him to give increase to any seeds that are from Him and tell Him that you're going to have a good and honest heart. Jesus said that people with good and honest hearts will refuse to do anything other than hear and persevere in the Word of God and produce fruit. If you make an agreement with God that you will respond to His Word and plant His Word in your heart, and you'll beg Him to give increase to it and you'll do anything He wants you to do, then you're in good shape. If that's your agreement and pact with Him, it will turn out well. His Word is a seed. Plant it in your heart. You don't have to remember everything, because the Holy Spirit will bring things into remembrance. You don't have to make

everything happen, because God gives the increase. All we can do is plant and water—God makes it grow, we know not how. It isn't some "thing" you have to accomplish. It's just a heart you have to have towards God... an openness to embrace His Word that He's planted in your heart, and to persevere in it and not be foolish or lazy hearers. Have a heart to grab hold of it!

George: Can we pray for our fried minds, guys?

Father, I know that I could be overwhelmed, but these things are from You. I pray that we would have open hearts that would allow the seeds that were planted tonight to sink in. We don't want our minds closed to new truth, but expanded so our hearts can receive more of Your Son. We pray that you will allow the things that were shared tonight to grow in our hearts. Help us not to react or rebel. Father, we want to be useful in Your Kingdom. Help us be known by our fruit, not by the doctrines we talk about. Purify us so we can produce it. We trust You!

The “Un-Confusion Principle”

Monday Morning, December 2, 2002

Victor Martinez, a world championship competitive athlete, makes this statement:

“I used to do all my training by the book—a certain way and schedule. Then I noticed my progress plateaus quickly. I found that to break through the plateaus, I need to mix things up in my workouts. When I change out of the routine, my condition changes faster than ever. This is known as the ‘Confusion Principle’ of training, but in actuality it is not ‘confusion’ at all. It is the shock of breaking routine that has allowed me to go past my limitations, and to succeed at ridiculous levels.”

I don’t know if you can see it yet or not, but THIS IS ONE OF TWO REASONS WHY JESUS SAID, “*You nullify the Word of God by your traditions you have handed down*” and the Apostle Peter referred to the empty life “*received by tradition from your forefathers.*”

Is Jesus trying to rob us of all of our fun and comfort?! NO WAY! That’s not “why” he wants us to bust out of our comfort zones and traditions and trust Him. We’re warned off of always doing stuff the same way, “same bat time, same bat place, same bat way”... because it DESENSITIZES us to REALITY. “Simon says kiss your wife at 3:15 pm every day, and be sure to really mean it every time for the next 50 years.” “Simon says start at nine o’clock sharp, sit down, stand up, raise your hands, shake your neighbor’s hand, put the money in the basket, sit and listen to a speech, swoon to the music, every eye closed, every head bowed.”

SINCE WHEN did Jesus EVER do anything of the kind? Psssst. ☺ He still isn’t. ☺

If we want to grow Spiritually and get off of that ridiculous plateau? Well, consider busting up your traditions and rituals and popping the bubble around the “show”—and BE LIKE GOD LIVES INSIDE OF YOU! In Him we will sing “a NEW song!” Every day.

Sooooo... What’s the OTHER reason Jesus said, “*You nullify the Word of God by your traditions you have handed down*” and stuff like that?

Because “Tradition is the last refuge of the scoundrel.” Anyone and everyone can “attend” something, and look and sound spiritual in the process. Anyone can hide in religious ceremony and form and ritual, and even be a LEADER—when they are not even truly Regenerate in some cases! When we build Jesus’ Way (Acts 2:42-47; Lk. 9:57-62; Heb. 3:12-14; Eph. 2:21-22) amazing things happen in our lives, plateaus catapulted and lethal foes held at bay for a lifetime! And Jesus never did rituals, responsive readings, assigned times and places for “Wednesday night bible studies” or hold weakly “Prayer Meetings” or assign an automatic “Worship Leader.” And there’s a reason HE wouldn’t do what comes so natural to the natural man. It robs us of the chance to know Him, to know one another, and to know OURSELVES.

Now, just as an example... you know your Bible. Right? Notice the ONLY New Testament “Meeting” instruction for the “whole church” in the BIBLE, in 1 Corinthians 14:23-40. *“When you come together brothers, EVERYONE has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or interpretation. All of these must be done—for the strengthening of the Church.”* And this creativity and life and spontaneity God has planted within EACH of His Priesthood of Believers, ruled by His CURRENT Headship of His Church is a beautiful thing—always New. ☺

And you know, without predictable rote and form to lean on, we get to find HIM! And, you know it’s tough to “plateau” if we’re always LISTENING and EXPRESSING, each of us, “the PLAN”: “Christ IN you, the hope of Glory!”

It’s not really a “confusion principle” (as sports training may call it)—but for us it is the “Creativity Principle” and the “Submission to the LIVING CHRIST Principle.” We are little more than blind slaves chained to a nose ring for those moments we’re committed to “I always do this, go this way, do these things” or “Our family always does this” or “This is how we always do it”... no matter what the “this” or “it” may be. You can’t be that way—and simultaneously SEE and LISTEN. When we violate His Lordship with our own, *“we nullify the very Voice of God with our traditions.”*

“The Jesus is ALIVE Principle” and the “Tradition is the last refuge of the scoundrel Principle” are the two main things wrong with falling into form and automatic and ritual and tradition and comfort zones. And that’s all I have to say about THAT. ☺

FOR NOW. ☺

Playing the Sunset

Friday Morning, March 9, 2001

Question: Do you remember the redheaded girl who played clarinet in the movie Mr. Holland's Opus (an edited version)? I heard that you've expressed a Truth through that analogy in another city, and I wondered if you could relay again what the difference is, spiritually, between "playing the sunset" versus just reading notes on a page?

Doing Everything "Right"?

Something I've always liked about golf is that there are so many spiritual analogies in it. One of those things is called tempo, which is incredibly elusive. You can be in all the right positions, and do everything technically right, but something about it still be erratic. Your grip can be right, your swing plane can be perfect, your ball position can be right, and something still be "off." You can go through a pre-shot routine, do all the things you have to do to be a great golfer, and your swing can even look pretty! But for some reason the ball sprays everywhere and has no consistency about it. And forget scoring well; it's impossible. This elusive quality—tempo—binds everything together. You're better off having *good tempo* and bad mechanics than you are having perfect mechanics and bad tempo.

It's the same principle with the spirit and the law. You can do everything exactly right—you know everything you could know, you can say everything there is to say, you have the right answers memorized for every possible issue that would come up—yet, something about your life doesn't *SING!* You even know all the verses and you live like the rich young ruler—living a great perfect life since the time you were a youth. You'd never do any of the "bad" things. You can do all the right stuff, but if you're not living in the Spirit of Christ, in a relationship of life and love and fellowship with HIM, then you are a clanging gong. If the tempo isn't there, if the life of fellowship and relatedness in the unseen world isn't there, then there is nothing to it. You need to "taste the powers of the coming age" where you can say, "Yeah, I know what that means. I can't necessarily describe it to you, but absolutely, I know exactly what that means. That is the best part of my life. I couldn't describe it to you for a million dollars, but yeah." If you don't have that part—the Life, the Spirit, and the Anointing that is real and

not counterfeit—then all the other stuff ends up being junk. Your elbow in the right position and the perfect follow-through doesn't amount to much if the ball just sprays 40 yards off to the right.

I think that's one of the ways God frustrates us out of the rich-young-ruler-syndrome of doing everything "right," and of knowing everything and even being humble enough to fall at Jesus' feet. "Look, I'm humble. I'm willing to sacrifice my great position, my great wealth and my great status to fall at a poor carpenter's feet. Aren't I spiritual?" Yet, something on the inside never lets go. And that refusal to let go kept the Life and the Spirit of God and the Love of God from filling the rich young ruler's pores and emanating outwards. The rich young ruler kept that from happening in his life because he never let go. He was living by all the "right" externals, and the fundamentals were all there, yet he never really opened his heart so the tap could flow.

Cups of Water or RIVERS of Water?

It wasn't a river of living water that he was drawing from, but little cups of living water that he kept dumping into his life. He was missing that unlimited flow, because the pool he was dipping from was too shallow. At the end of the day, do you run out of strength and steam? You can't think anymore. All the things you had accumulated for yourself spiritually, and all the fundamental things that you had been doing "right," seem to dissipate. All it takes is one bad mood and all of a sudden you're a lazy slob again, totally disconnected and not caring about anything. You don't necessarily even believe in God anymore. We can get ourselves all jumbled up in this messy world of externals if we are living by a cup of water, rather than the *RIVERS of living water* that have no limit. There's no beginning and no end. It just flows and flows and flows. There is no tap on it and no end to it. That's the miracle and that's the thing we ask God for.

So the rich young ruler did all these things—that's great. Jesus didn't say, "I don't believe you," to the rich young ruler. He looked at him and loved him. He *did* believe him. But Jesus saw something missing that was way down deep inside. It wasn't necessarily about what the young ruler did or didn't do. I suspect he had enough self-confidence that if he gave away all his money, he could probably earn another fortune, because he's a "pretty shrewd guy." He's got the "connections." He's got the "brain power." "Yeah, I think I could start all over again. I could take that as a challenge. I'll go down to zero and I bet I could have all this wealth all over again." He probably could have, but he knew that wasn't what Jesus was getting at. He was getting at the heart of the matter. The valve on the young ruler's heart

kept his heart from being a river. Jesus knew that if he did and said all the right fundamentals, but didn't have the Life and the Love of the Spirit in his pores, then the man's life was just a wasted effort in some sort of higher form of religion. That's worthless.

Not Every Man LIVES

Jesus was saying, there's something in your heart that you've got to let go of. Let go of your right to even make another fortune. You've gotta let go of valuing this stuff. You've gotta let go of caring about it. *If you really want ME to fill your heart instead, you've gotta let go of the stuff of you in your heart.* I'm not content to just have your actions, your knowledge, your commitment and all that other nonsense. I want to transform you into a walking miracle. I want you to *be* a miracle! I want you to have my Spirit inside of you, making its home there. I want you walking around on two legs with My Spirit, My anointing, My life, My love, My power, and wisdom that you know not of. I want you to have things that you never thought of before, *flowing through you*—things that you could never have said for a million dollars. You didn't even know of them and you never studied them. "How could this man have such great learning without having studied?"

That's the Jesus that lives inside of us! This One that's full of surprises, the creative ideas, and the wild stuff. The One born of the Spirit is like the wind—He's a wild thing. He can't be controlled or predicted. He's always going to say something different than what you think. Just when you think you've got Him figured out, something different is going to come out and just shatter your world. That's the nature of the Life of the Spirit of God, and *that's a miracle!* And we've got to be willing to let go of everything so that the miracle can happen.

"Playing the sunset" means that you're letting go of the notes on the page. The notes are still there; you're still obeying the rules. But you're not making up your own song, which is what a lot of the religious and emotional world does. They make up their own song as they go along, and they call that "playing the sunset." No, that's not right; there are still notes on a page that can't be ignored. There's still the Word of God. There are still truths that Jesus taught. He said that if you really love Me, you'll obey My commands. He didn't say that you'll do whatever you please and just "feel" like you love Me. He said the proof that you do love Me is that you'll do the things I've told you that you'll one day be judged by (Jn. 12:48). You'll *love* to obey those things. You function in them. So, the notes on the

page are real and it's still 4/4 time, and a half note is still two beats. All the things are still true. But keep in mind that you can play all the notes and never play the song.

Go back to the golf analogy for a minute. Let's say you start thinking about the many things you're supposed to do right. The more you contemplate what you have "to do" and "not do," the less likely it is that you'll ever have good tempo and ever hit the ball well. However, you can't violate all the principles of golf. You can't let the right elbow fly, and you can't put the ball anywhere you want in your stance. You can't grip it any way you please, differently every time you grab the club. You can't do that. You can't violate all the truths and think that you'll ever have a golf game. But after you've learned all the truths, *you have to close your eyes and play the song!*

"Every man dies," as that poster says, "but not every man really lives." That's the essence of the nature of the life of Christ. It's a life that really *LIVES*. There might be suffering—there *will be* suffering. There might be scandal and embarrassment. You will be accused by satan. You will be entrapped as Jesus was. You will be lied about. It's not that this *LIFE* is without pain, but you have something that can never be taken away from you. As a favorite song of ours says, "When I fail, when I succeed, I can press on because I'm free. No matter what they take from me, they can't take away my destiny. Because *the greatest love of all lives inside of me.*" And that can't be taken away. Nobody can take that away—even if I make mistakes. When I fail, or when I succeed, it doesn't make any difference. Those are both the same thing. One is not better than the other. They're both rubbish, because the only *real* thing is what's inside of me and that can't be taken away. Not everyone can say that. "Every man dies, but not every man really *LIVES.*"

Close Your Eyes and Let Go

Some people don't care at all about the notes on the page and those people are in BIG trouble. Other people know and *do care* about all the notes on the page. Like the rich young ruler, they know all the right answers and are committed to the process. Remember that part of *Mr. Holland's Opus*, when the teacher is trying to help the struggling music student? "Do you ever practice?" And she says, "Yeah, I practice everyday." And he says "Oh, no!" He was thinking she never practiced, but the problem was that she practiced all the time and the music still came out sounding bad! The problem was *inside of her*. The problem wasn't in her brain and it wasn't in her fingers. It was inside of her heart.

She didn't close her eyes, and she didn't "play the sunset." Therefore, she had never *really* played the song.

In that movie, the teacher asked the young girl what she liked about herself when she looked in the mirror. She answered him by saying, "My father always says that my hair reminds him of a sunset." Mr. Holland said, "Play the sunset then." She loved what brought her father pleasure, not what qualities she thought were best, or what she thought was good or desirable or pretty. She never made mention of what *she* liked—she only remembered what pleased her father. So, with a smile on her face, she could *play pleasure to her father* because it brought her pleasure to please him. *What pleases my Father?!* That's the song I want to play! The song that flows from His Heart, to my quiet and listening and courageous heart, and back to Him as my gift to Him.

Commitment or ANOINTING

Closing your eyes and playing the song is a very difficult thing for some. It involves a trust factor that is just very difficult for intelligent people to do. That's why the little children get most of the good stuff. ☺ It's not that it can't be done. Paul had an immense intellect. John Wesley, Charles Finney—immense intellects. It's not that it can't be done, but it's harder when you're pretty intelligent and skilled. "Not MANY of you are wise by human standards." Paul didn't say, "Not ANY of you," but he said, "not many of you." This is because it's harder for the immensely intelligent. The more you know, the more tempted you are to think about yourself and what you know, rather than (as Jesus said in Matthew 10:20), "Don't consider what to say or how to say it. My father will speak through you." "But I thought I was supposed to just say and teach the things you taught" "True, once you've sown the seed and you've let go of everything on the inside. Then, you can trust Me to work through you."

There's that trust factor, and that is the difference between commitment and anointing. Not many people are committed. They want to do it their own way. They don't even want to play the notes on the page. It's too limiting, too confining, too "legalistic." They don't even *want* to play the notes on the page. But even amongst the few who *DO* want to play the notes on the page and *ARE* committed to them, there's fewer still who are willing *to be absolutely abandoned to Him*. There are very few who will *close their eyes and trust* once they're committed to the notes on the page. That's the difference between committed and anointed. We are invited to go to that level of existence and *taste the powers of the coming age*. We're invited to

not just study about true thoughts and be committed to true thoughts, but to *taste it* with our own taste buds and *experience it* and *help others* to do that, too. **Anointing**—that’s the invitation for all of us!

Playing the Sunset?! That girl, like so many Spiritually, could read the music notes, but couldn’t play the SONG. She could read the notes on the page, but she couldn’t make the MUSIC within the notes come alive. She needed help to “play the sunset” and make the music leap off the page and come to life like that beautiful sunset. THAT is what is meant by, “As many as are led by the Spirit, are SONS OF GOD!”

The Church: God's Fortress to Overcome Hell!

(Fighting for the Walls—But No Nit-Picking)

Tuesday Night, June 24, 1997

I know over the years some different thoughts have gone “round and round” about the nature of the church and how we should relate to the world. After a period of time, it's like the telephone game where you send a message around the circle. Remember that? Someone whispers in someone's ear and the message goes around and around the circle. Then all of a sudden we're not quite sure what was said in the first place or what we're doing anymore! It's easy to lose track after so much time. So I think it's incredibly important to get your feet dug in *very* deep about what we're going to talk about. There is *very* good reason to lay a foundation about what a church is and what our existence is together. Plug into this and comprehend it with your heart and mind, because *it will lay direction for the rest of your life*. It will spare you a ton of imaginations, and hurt feelings, and a lot of confusion. It will spare you countless mistakes of reacting or overreacting or underreacting. If you can comprehend the basis of some of these things, it will spare you much grief and you'll become a deeper person for it. The way you function or the way you've seen others in the Church function will make *so much more sense to you*. Or perhaps this discussion will cause you to see a need to change because you've been functioning from a shallow perspective.

A Fallen World...

First of all, we live in a fallen world. So of course, we have concerns or thoughts about going to this place or that, or patronizing this place or that. And we should! Haven't you at different times felt some level of confusion in your heart and mind about the kinds of places you should or

shouldn't go? Or if you should go at all to certain places? Or you observe what others are doing and you wonder, "Should I do this?" "Should I not do this?" "Should I be careful?" "Should I be paranoid?" Has anyone ever experienced that? I have! It's been a journey for what seems like forever trying to figure out exactly what it is that God wants from me! How do I function, how do I act? How should I perceive the world around me and how should I respond to it? It's a perpetual concern and something we'll need to fine-tune the rest of our lives, because there are no automatic answers. Unfortunately, our western, industrialized mindset wants to make pat answers out of everything... "This is what you always do," and "This is what you never do." "There you have it, now we can live life in peace." Well, it's just not like that!

So...Point number one: *We live in a fallen world.* We're living in a world that's totally infested with the enemy and his footprints, his stench and his henchmen. It's filled *to the brim* with it. Because that's true, it will affect how we think and how we act and how we respond to the world around us. You can choose to overreact to what I'm saying and blow your reason for being here. OR you can underreact and destroy your own life and the lives around you. *That's* how important all of this is. You can destroy others and yourself if you don't take this seriously in the right way. It's just essential that we have a proper understanding so we don't overreact *or* underreact to the point that *we live in a fallen world.*

If you go back to Adam and Eve, you realize they once had a utopia called the Garden of Eden, and everything in there was good and pleasant, right? No, not quite everything...there was a serpent in there. There was potential for temptation and obviously, for evil—even in utopia. There was some level of mixture because satan was in utopia, wasn't he? Even when you look all the way back to the Garden of Eden you have a problem in front of you! How careful do you need to be? How *incredibly* sensitive must you be to which tree you eat from and who you talk to? You can talk to the animals like Dr. Doolittle did, all you want...but don't talk to *that* animal. Right? "Be careful who you talk to" goes all the way back to the beginning of time, doesn't it? Adam and Eve didn't pay careful attention, so they were thrown out of the garden, and because of that, we're in a seriously cursed situation.

...and WAR!

And with as terrible as that is, the second point I want to make is that something *even bigger and more obvious is at stake right now.* Satan was thrown down, and we are in a WAR for real. And it is really, really dumb to ignore this—either because of arrogance *or* because of ignorance. If

you say to yourself, “Hey, it’s just not a big deal, I can handle it,” then you are arrogant. Because *it is a BIG deal*. It’s a *very* serious, serious deal!! This world that we live in and the deceptive things that even masquerade as supernaturally good—“angels of light”—that’s a *serious* deal. It’s a **supernatural** world that we live in. And if you don’t understand that—that your battle is not with your bad habits but with “and principalities and powers and spiritual forces in heavenly realms”—if you don’t understand that, you are either very foolish or very arrogant. You are either naïve—you don’t understand it, and no one has told you before, and you’ve never seen the Word of God clearly; *or* you are arrogant enough to think you are bigger than all of that, which is a very, very dangerous posture. “It doesn’t affect me. It’s not a big deal.” That’s a *very* dangerous posture.

“Then I witnessed in heaven an event of great significance. I saw a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon beneath her feet, and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant, and she cried out in the pain of labor as she awaited her delivery.

Suddenly, I witnessed in heaven another significant event. I saw a large, red dragon with seven heads and ten horns, with seven crowns on his heads. His tail dragged down one-third of the stars, which he threw to the earth. He stood before the woman as she was about to give birth to her child, ready to devour the baby as soon as it was born” (Revelation 12:1-4).

This is *not* a fairytale. It’s not some fictional account! You’ve seen so many science fiction and *Star Wars* episodes that this kind of language sounds like fiction to you. It is *not* fiction. This is REALITY!! The words are somewhat figurative, but *the reality of a dragon “seeking to devour” is absolutely, totally, 100% real!!!* If a dragon showed up in your front yard breathing fire when you wake up tomorrow morning and you could see it with your naked eyes, I don’t think you would carelessly wander out your front door thinking, “Oh, I’d better not be paranoid.” You would take it seriously, wouldn’t you? Stop and think for a minute with me. If this huge dragon was in your front yard, breathing smoke and fire...it’s clawing and killing and tearing up your yard and eating trees and eating the dog that wanders by...if *that* was in your front yard, would you let your children go out and play and tell them not to be paranoid?!! I don’t think so! I sure wouldn’t and I don’t think you would either. This is real, and that’s the point I’m trying to make. This is NOT an imaginary dragon. This is very real.

“She gave birth to a boy who was to rule all nations with an iron rod. Hallelujah. And the child was snatched away from the dragon and was caught up to God and to his throne. The woman fled into the wilderness, where God had prepared a place to give her care...Then there was a war in

heaven. Michael and the angels under his command fought the dragon and his angels. The dragon lost the battle and was forced out of heaven. This great dragon—the ancient serpent called the devil, or satan, the one deceiving the whole world [deceiving the whole world!—was thrown down to the earth with all his angels” (Revelation 12:5-9).

The nature of deception is *not* that you are overcome by power; it is that you are overcome with the sense that “I am right.” It goes like this...“I’m still right, and now I’m still right and now I’m STILL right.” But in God’s sight, you are very wrong! *That’s* the nature of deception—“**I still feel right.**” Satan doesn’t overcome you with a big obvious power play and just blast you into smithereens. That isn’t how he works. He overcomes the whole world *with deception*. He makes you think, “it’s all right,” when from God’s perspective it’s totally, TOTALLY wrong. That’s the nature of how the beast and the dragon do their business.

“Then I heard a loud voice shouting across the heavens, ‘It has happened at last—The salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ! For the accuser has been thrown down to earth—the one who accused our brothers and sisters before our God day and night. And they have defeated him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of their testimony. And they were not afraid to die. Rejoice, O heavens! And you who live in the heavens, rejoice! But terror will come on the earth and the sea. For the devil has come down to you in great anger, and he knows that he has little time.’

And when the dragon realized he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the child. But she was given two wings like those of a great eagle. This allowed her to fly to a place prepared for her in the wilderness, where she would be cared for and protected from the dragon for a time, times, and half a time.

Then the dragon tried to drown the woman with a flood of water that flowed from his mouth. But the earth helped her by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that gushed out from the mouth of the dragon. Then the dragon became angry at the woman, and he declared war against the rest of her children—all who keep God’s commandments and confess they belong to Jesus” (Revelation 12:10-17).

The devil is warring against anybody who confesses they belong to Jesus and keeps God’s commandments. He has declared open war. He wants to kill and destroy *anyone* who wants to keep the commandments of God and declares or claims to belong to Jesus. It’s a **supernatural battle**. We are not of this world, so let’s not be afraid to *act like it*.

Set Apart

The third thing you need to know is in John 17 where Jesus said, “I want them to be in the world but not of the world. They are mine, they belong to me. They were separated by my Father for me. I claimed them, and did not lose any that were given to me. I separated them to Myself, and I’ve saved all of the ones that the Father gave to me except for the one that was destined to destruction.”

Jesus and Paul said very clearly in a number of places, that we are to be *IN the world but not OF the world*. We are in the world, but we are separate from the world. A *distinct separation* stands between us and the world... but you are still *in* the world. I’m not talking about being in a commune out in the woods somewhere gathering up ammunition. There is nothing weird about this except that the world will *say* you are weird if you have any separation from them at all! There is a difference, a distinction, and a clear defining line between the people of God and the world that they live in. But they haven’t pulled out of the world altogether. They are *in* the world, but they are clearly *not of* the world. Get that picture in your mind, because from a practical standpoint a lot of people think, “Well, I have to live like the world lives and do what they do, and think like they think...I have to blend in at work, or else I’m not being ‘in the world but not of it.’” But the truth is, *Jesus never said we were supposed to be like them*, and in fact the commands are clear: “*Come out from among them and be separate, otherwise I won’t be your God and you won’t be my people*” (2Cor. 6). It’s just that clear, and that serious. If you love the world, you are an enemy of God (Jas. 4, 1Jn. 2).

When that distinctive line breaks down, we begin to merge into the world and are not a separate entity anymore, the way we *need* to be. When we have a breakdown about what is important to us, and how we live and think, we begin to merge into the world. And then we’re not only in the world, but we are also *of* the world. We become enemies of God because we become lovers of the world. We conform to the patterns of the world and we no longer know the good, perfect and pleasing will of God. We “lose it” and we’re gone. Our minds are no longer renewed and we lose it into the world when there is no more dividing line and no clear distinction.

We Live in Hostile Territory

In Luke 19, Jesus said, “*A man of noble birth [speaking of Himself] went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. ‘Put this money to work,*”

he said, 'until I come back.' But his subjects **hated him** and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We do not want this man to be our king.'"

Jesus said the same thing in many different ways. Like in Matthew 21, "There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit.

"The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. Last of all, he sent his son to them. 'They will respect my son,' he said.

"But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance.' So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him."

They beat and killed all the servants, and then the owner said, "Well then, I'll send my son. They will surely honor him." But they killed him, too! They said, "If we can just kill the heir, then all of this will be ours." **They want ownership**, and they **hate** the fact that they can't have ownership. They don't want a king. "We will not have this man to be king over us." When Jesus went off to a far country, the world that he left behind said, "We don't want a king. We hate the idea that someone else is going to tell us what to do, and someone else is going to own our property. We want to kill the heir, we want to kill the prophets, and we want to kill everyone who obeys the commandments of God and claims to know Jesus (sound familiar?). We want all of them out of here, because *they challenge our ownership*. We want to inherit the whole thing. We want it all for ourselves." And Jesus and Jesus' people defy the principle that the rebels live by, that Jesus taught about. Jesus' people **will** have a king to rule over them! And that is what becomes the dividing line.

You must understand: We are at **WAR!!!** We are in **HOSTILE** territory!!!!!! When you walk into Wal-Mart or wherever you happen to go, you need to understand that *there is a war going on!!!* And by and large, the majority of people in the world are in the delegation that says, "We don't want a king." Of course they need to be invited to have a king...there's no question about that. They surely deserve an invitation to the banquet. But that's not what I am talking about right now. I am not talking about not issuing invitations to everything that walks! We should do that for sure. But what I **am** saying is that your perception should be that *clearly* the broad road to destruction

is just what Jesus said it would be: BROAD... *Most people will choose that road.* “Few will be those that find the road to eternal life.” Why? Because people won’t want Him to be their Lord. They won’t want to “do the will of the Father,” and they won’t want to put His words into practice (Matt. 7). *That’s* what is at stake: Some people don’t want a king, and some people do. And Jesus said that the odds are that most people won’t want it.

So...*do* understand that this is *not* a neutral battle. A very real dragon called satan wants to devour everyone who obeys the commands of God. There is a *massive war* going on!! It’s not just a bunch of pretty people wandering around and some people are nice and some aren’t...some people have a whole bunch of close friends and some don’t have any. *It’s not like that.* An ABSOLUTE, TOTAL, ALL OUT WAR is taking place right now, and that’s why this planet exists. You need to SEE that. Like the time when Elisha’s servant came to him and said, “*There’s a great army surrounding us.*” And Elisha said, “*God, open his eyes. Let him see that those that are with us are more than those that are against us. Open his eyes.*” And then the servant could *see* the supernatural world... not just the *natural world.* I want you to understand both sides of that principle. A supernatural war is raging, and if you don’t see it, you’re not going to respond properly. You are going to be naïve about the nature of it.

Cyanide and Acid—Kaboom!!

Suppose you’re a chemist in a laboratory and some cyanide powder and a beaker of acid are sitting on the counter. Someone walks by and bumps the beaker with their elbow and this puddle of acid starts flowing across the counter toward the cyanide powder. Do you see what’s happening?? If you are a chemist, you SEE what’s happening! You *know* how dangerous that is!! If you are *not* a chemist, you don’t know the danger and you won’t respond the way you should. Perhaps you don’t know that cyanide and acid is how they kill people in a gas chamber! They drop cyanide pellets into acid and it creates toxic fumes and death—it’s a deadly gas chamber. If you are a chemist you *respect* that and you can see what’s happening. You see the cyanide, you see the acid, and you say, “UH-OH!! We have a major problem on our hands! Let’s get outta here!!!!” There’s no time for you to stop and think about it. “Let’s GO! NOW!” You’re sure not going to sit there and debate in your mind about what needs to happen. You would gather every man, woman, child and hamster and pull them out of there as quick as you can because *this is fatal.* It’s final; it’s over with. No debating, no procrastination. It’s a settled fact that if those two things mix, everything around will be dead.

Okay. That's your reaction if you know the danger. What if you *don't* know the danger... what are you going to do? You would say, "Well, let's not overreact. Let's stay orderly here. Single file out the door, everyone. Nobody panic. Let's not be paranoid here...we're not really sure it's a problem. Of course it *could* be a problem, but we don't *know* it's a problem. So let's just stay orderly about it and not panic." If you don't *see it* for what it is, you'll not be in any big hurry to do anything about it.

What I'm trying to do in part (and this discussion right now is a product of a number of different very genuine conversations and events) is to make sure you understand that *the world we live in is acid and cyanide running together*. If you're not aware of that, you won't respond properly to it. You'll say, "What's the big deal?" No!! We are AT WAR—unless Jesus lied, unless the book of Revelation is just a pack of fiction, unless all of Jesus' emphatic teachings and warnings about all these things are just a bunch of fairytale fantasies. We are living in a world that has acid and cyanide about to meet! We have a *big problem* on our hands, and we'd better respond properly.

I saw heaven standing open and there was before me a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but He himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, "Come, gather together for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and mighty men, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, small and great."

Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army (Revelation 19:11-19).

This describes *the world we live in*. All that is happening *right now* and all that *will* happen right up until the last day of this planet is described here. It's a description of the finality of the ages. The words almost make it seem a bit too fictitious to believe, because of sci-fi writers like Stephen Spielberg. But the *fact is*, it's TRUE and we have to be chemists. We need to see what is *really* going on and respond with the fervency of heart that's appropriate

to the dilemma that we're in. You have to start there and have a passion in your heart about it. If you don't start there, you're either 1) foolishly ignorant of the Word of God. You don't believe the Word of God and you've never understood or read the Word of God. Or, 2) you're arrogant, because you think you're "bigger than all that" and it's just not a factor for you. Remember, however... *that the dragon deceives the nations*. The dragon convinces us that "everything is okay." He doesn't overcome us by "chewing our head off." He overcomes us by lying to us, just like he did in the garden... "Well it's not really a big deal. God's trying to cheat you. God didn't *really* mean *that*. There's a lot of room in here for interpretations..." saith the evil one. So we respond without the deep gravity and seriousness that is proper—given the condition that the world is in. I just want to make sure that we all have a fighting chance to see it right.

Our Oasis... the CHURCH!!

God provides an oasis for His betrothed, His beloved. Oh yes! His Holy Spirit, the Comforter. Wonderful Counselor! What a nightmarish life to not have constant and true Companionship in the Person of the Spirit of Christ Jesus! What a Gift! And yet, did He even stop there, as He seeks to bring us real and constant hope and life and truth and love? No, there's still MORE! "I will build my CHURCH—and against that, the gates of Hell itself will crumble—in your life, and in the lives of those you love!" Just as the Father sent the Son—the Word became visible, touchable flesh... there is again Treasure in earthen vessels: the very Body of Christ... There is Oasis in His Church!

All the way back in the garden...there was Oasis in the middle of a fallen world. The fallen world *did* exist, but Adam and Eve were protected in the Garden, as long as they obeyed God's command of them. When they were thrown out, with the cherubim guarding the entrance, they found themselves living in the fallen, cursed part of the world.

Later on, the ark of Noah became an Oasis for God's people. God pulled the righteous people of the earth out of the contaminated world and He put them in a safe place. No doubt that some people—even *sincere* people—were banging on the walls of the ark saying, "Let me in, I repent, I repent!" But the way *God* saw it...some people had made the choices to live for Him; the rest of the people were living in their own environment and totally engrossed in it. They were eating, drinking, making merry, getting married and were just generally callous—partying and doing what was "right in their own eyes." God saw this whole thing, and He built an ark to separate His betrothed for Himself from the rest of the decadence

and callousness. Was there a nice, sweet little grandmother out there? You bet there was. Did those people love their parents? Some of them probably did. And some of those parents were probably pretty nice people. But *if they weren't responding to God, then they were outside of the Oasis*. And a lot of people obviously weren't responding to God, because only a handful was saved.

As you go on through the Old Testament, you see the camp of the Israelites. That also was a separation of God's people from the rest of the world. And right on into Jesus' day...

"While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction...I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world" (Jn. 17). He kept them safe by His Word. They were *in* the world but not *of* the world. He kept them safe and He saved everyone that the Father had given Him. The separation was clear with a circle drawn around a certain group of people that He loved and separated for Himself. He loved the whole world, but *these* were the people who obeyed His commands.

"Upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not overcome it" (Mat. 16:18). "All the powers of hell will not be able to conquer the oasis that I have built for My people." The fallen world is a dangerous, decadent, seriously depraved place and Jesus said, "I will build an oasis in the middle of it. I will not mix my people with the world. I will build my church and then all of hell will not be able to prevail against my church."

"In him [Jesus], you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit" (Eph. 2:22). That oasis is a place where God lives. You are being built as a church to be *a place where God lives!*

"God's intent was now, through the church, that the manifold wisdom, the many-faceted wisdom, of God would be made known to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 3:10). God's intent was now, "through the church"...This oasis of life...It's something that is *in* the world but separated from it. It's not like some weird type of commune thing. But it IS still *separate from the world* as a defined entity, apart from the world's system. We're connected to one another and separate from the world. "My intent," saith the Lord, "is to build a church that will so disable satan and his schemes, that all the manifold wisdom of God would be evident now, through the church." Not when Jesus returns, but *right now* His church could embarrass satan. That's His plan and His intent. His church will embarrass satan. She'll be in the world but not of the world. A separate

entity. “Come out from among them, and be separate, says the Lord” (2Cor. 6:17). In the world, but not of it. We don’t need to be afraid to *not* be part of the world. We don’t need to fear being different. We don’t need to fear making a different set of decisions than the ones the world makes. That’s not something to be afraid of—that’s something to be proud of!

“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some shepherds and teachers to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ might be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and the full knowledge of the Son of God, and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching, and by the cunning and craftiness of men and their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up together into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (Eph. 4:11-16).

Again...God made a very strong statement that He is going to give gifts as He will. He ascended on high, led captives in His train, and He’s giving gifts as a Victory Celebration for having defeated satan on a cross. He’s going to give gifts to His church so we can build each other up *inside of the church, together*. By “every supporting ligament” we will all learn how to do our work in love. We won’t be “infants tossed to and fro.” What happens if you step outside of God’s provision? What happens if you jump outside of the ark? What happens if you get yourself into a situation where you’re not relating intimately on a daily basis, with people that are listed in Ephesians 4 as relationships and gifts that are essential? What happens? Well...we don’t grow into maturity, we don’t grow into headship, and we don’t grow into unity of the faith. We remain infants, “tossed to and fro by the cunning and craftiness of deceitful men and their scheming.” We don’t learn how to do our work in love. We are not “equipped for works of service.” If we are outside of God’s oasis somewhere else, instead of connected in daily relationship, then the eight or nine things listed in Ephesians 4 don’t happen and it gets very distressful.

“I will build my church that the gates of hell won’t prevail against.” God is saying, “I have a plan, I have an ark, I have an oasis. I have something that will save you. I will build my church that the gates of hell won’t prevail against.” No one is strong enough on their own to *not* be deceived by the deceitfulness and scheming of false teaching that leaves us as infants, twenty years after we were born in Christ! There is *no one* that is good enough, or strong enough that can grow into the “unity of the faith”

without people in their lives EVERY DAY. No one is that wise or strong or mature or courageous or holy that they don't need ekklesia—a *church that the gates of hell cannot prevail against!!* You step outside of that, and you're subjecting yourself to much, much misery and pain.

If you see that the world is filled with a major war and that God is building a fortress...If you can SEE and understand that God is building a Holy City with walls around it...If you can SEE that inside of those Walls are provision for growth to no longer be infants, no longer be tossed to and fro...If you understand that it's a place where you no longer need to be destroyed by all the garbage of your own flesh and the world or the dragon that is trying to kill you all the time... If you can *see* that, you *will* make good choices.

My desire is to help you solve the dilemma: "Should I go to this certain place? Should I not go there?" "How should I interpret this?" "How should I feel about the world and how to function in it?" I simply want you to understand what is happening in the world so you can make your own decisions about that, if you care. I am trying to educate you as to what the world is all about *REALLY*... not what it "appears" to be. I want you to know what it *really is*, and then you will understand what kind of precautions to take in order to live "*in the world but not of it.*" You'll know how to live in the Fortress of God, so that your mind, your body and your emotions are not devastated by the garbage of the dragon that is trying to kill you.

"See to it brothers that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God, but encourage one another daily,—warn one another, be called alongside one another daily—as long as it is called Today so that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first. As just has been said, 'Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion'"(Hebrews 3:12-15).

How do you hear His voice? "Today if you hear his voice, harden not your hearts." One of the ways, it says two verses earlier, is to warn one another daily so that you won't be hardened. We have to be committed to the process of daily relationships where we can hear the Word of God and see the Word of God...where we help each other and gift each other... where we protect each other and build each other up—where we can be in the world, but separate from the world... We commit ourselves to that process—it's a decision we each have to make in our hearts. No one makes that decision for us. You are not here because you live here. *You live here because your heart is here.* The *only* thing that will give you the provisions of the church and God's place for an oasis from the dragon, is if *your heart*

is engaged in the process of seeking that. “I *want* to be encouraged daily, and I *want* to encourage daily, because I don’t want to be hardened and deceived by sin. I don’t want to be hardened and not feel it anymore, and I don’t want to be deceived into thinking things are okay when they’re not.” That’s what happens—the dragon deceives; but God builds a Holy Wall around His City and gives us all the provision to be able to do His work in the world while not being of it. But it’s a decision from the heart that we make, to be within His walls.

Abandoned to His Dream

“This is what the kingdom of God is like: A man scatters seed on the ground night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up. The seed sprouts and grows though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain, first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head” (Mark 4).

When you are inside of God’s Holy City there is an awesome thing that happens. God’s Holy City is one that is functioning as it should: out of relationship and not attendance. It is a City defined by commitment to one another on a daily basis. It is not defined by where you show up or what you believe or who you know. It is defined instead by how much your heart is open to receive and to give on a daily basis. In a City like this, the awesome thing is that the seed grows into full maturity and fruitfulness, and we don’t even know how! That really strikes me as awesome. Because if I plant myself in that environment, and if I stay in that environment, then I don’t even have to “figure out” how to grow. The Word of God is going to come at me in so many different ways that I don’t have to spend my energy “figuring it all out.” Maybe you have lived in situations where most of what you got was on Sunday morning, if that, and there weren’t people in your life who were watching, involved, caring, loving, and praying for you every day. Maybe it was just a collection of people that showed up someplace. You know good and well how difficult it is to grow in a situation like that. It’s difficult to even stick to your own, sincere commitments to live for Jesus. You know how easy it was then to get off track. But, something is very different when you’re living in that City—that Oasis. The seeds sprout and grow, “though you know not how.”

I’m not saying everything is easy when you’re inside His City. It’s still not easy! My flesh and my spirit wage war with one another. Paul didn’t say, “Your flesh and your spirit wage war with one another, unless of course you happen to know the right people.” No, I’m sorry. It’s a battle until the day we die. That’s just the way it is. Until we face Him, and see Him, and become who He is because we have seen Him face to face, the Spirit and the

flesh will wage war with one another. And part of that is good. God left the enemies in the Promised Land in order to purge His people and teach them war in the wilderness. He *needed* to teach them how to be warriors. Part of this is preparation in being overcomers so that we can sit with Him and rule with Him. Part of the pain and struggle is very, very necessary. A cup and a baptism are required in order to be useful to God. No question about that. The seed must fall to the ground and die, otherwise it abides alone.

Do you want to be the loneliest person on the earth? Then just avoid dying. Just avoid it, avoid it, avoid it. Avoid any kind of pain. Avoid any kind of fear and rejection. Avoid any kind of cost at all in your life. Avoid obedience that hurts. Avoid all of that—and guess what? You have a guarantee from the Son of God *that you will remain alone*. You will be a lonely, empty person your entire life if you won't let the seed fall to the ground and *die*. If you won't give away your life regardless of the consequences, you will be alone. That's just the way it is. That's a promise from God.

But the neat thing is... if you will abandon yourself into the process of living life in the Kingdom of God on a daily basis, then you will grow and you won't even know how. Time will pass and you didn't have any "Bible studies," any systematic format for discipleship growth, any "prayer partners," any "prayer meetings" (per se), or curriculums, or VBS. You didn't have anything but people who loved you every day of your life. You helped each other live out the Word of God out of your own weaknesses and out of your own love of one another and your love of God. But the seed grew and you don't even know how. The seed has to fall to the ground and die (that means you are going to suffer various things along the way), but the neat thing is that there is nothing systematic or programmed about it. You will become a different person from the very process of letting the seed be in the soil of God. We "know not how," but the seed grows.

That's a beautiful thing to me because I spent a good part of my life trying to "engineer" what Christianity was supposed to be. Making sure the right "sermons" were there, the right "programs" were there, the right "things" were all in place. Maybe you've gone through the process of thinking, "I should put all my effort into creating systems to accomplish God's will. That's the thing that would be most helpful to God." Eventually the light dawned on you that Jesus didn't do things that way! It was nothing like that in the New Testament—so lo and behold, maybe that's just not God's way today, either. Maybe it is Isaac and not Ishmael. Maybe it is a child born of the Spirit rather than a child born in the ordinary, logical way. Maybe God's way is not to borrow western technology and the scientific method, but just to abandon ourselves in love. Perhaps then the seed will

grow up to the full head and the multiplying seeds will allow us to fill the earth 30, 60 and 100-fold. But the fun thing is that we don't even know how that seed grows. There is something simply supernatural about, "I will build my church that the gates of hell won't prevail against."

"Happy are those who can live in your house always singing your praises... Happy are those who are strong in the Lord" (Ps. 84:4-5). Who are the "those"? "Those that set their minds on a pilgrimage"—to Jerusalem, to the City of God, to the Oasis that God has planned! We set our heart and our mind on that. (Hebrews 11—"I'm looking for a city whose builder and maker is God, and I'm not going back to the old country. I'm looking for a city. And God will be pleased to be called my God if I am looking for a new Jerusalem—one that is descending from heaven, becoming a habitation of God by the Spirit. If that is what I set my mind on, I will be strong in the Lord.")

"When they walk through the valley of weeping, it will become a place of refreshing springs where pools of blessing collect after the rain" (Ps. 84:6). Guess what? There is still weeping there. But if you are on a pilgrimage to the holy city, your tears become springs of blessing.

We all remember the verse, *"I'd rather be a gatekeeper in the house than live a single day with evil people out in the world."* But can you see why he says that? You can if you read the verses before it, right? *"Because my pool of tears becomes a pool of blessing in the house of God."* God miraculously turns the water into wine. He turns the water of your tears and the water of your sufferings into the wine of glad singing—if you are in the oasis. If you are not, it doesn't work that way. It's vanity. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house. I'll be the butler or the baker or the candlestick maker. I don't have to be important; I don't have to be recognized. I don't have to have anything. I just want to be where tears turn into the oil of gladness. That's what I want. That's where strength comes in the morning.

Nehemiah—The Wall

A supernatural battle is raging that wants no Wall and wants no one to be protected by that Wall. That's what much of this book of Nehemiah is about and if you dig for yourself, you will see that it is just jam-packed with things to teach us and equip us. Paul said to the Corinthians that all this history of God's people is not only recorded for our learning "upon whom the fulfillment of the ages has come,"... but he said it actually happened for our learning so that those "upon whom the end of the ages has come" would be equipped to comprehend the Fullness of Time and all the issues

that are at stake. These things actually happened in Nehemiah's time so that we could understand what was at stake.

The Gates: We NEED Them!

As cupbearer for the king at the fortress of Susa, Nehemiah had a place of honor, much like Daniel or Joseph had, in some ways. *"In late autumn of the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes' reign, I was at the fortress of Susa. Hanani, one of my brothers, came to visit me with some other men who had just arrived from Judah (the place God had called His treasured possession, the land flowing with milk and honey). I asked them about the Jews who had survived the captivity..." (Nehemiah 1:1-2).*

"...Jews who had survived the captivity..." I want to make a distinction here about believers—Christians who have "survived the captivity." They are people who have ***truly been purchased by the Blood of Jesus***. They have *truly* given their lives to Jesus and they are just as saved as Paul of Tarsus or even Jesus, Himself (I say that very reverently). You are either saved or you're not. Paul, because he was "in Christ," was as saved as the Son of God. Anyone who has been purchased by the Blood of Jesus is just as saved as Paul or Peter or John.

And if you are saved, then you have "survived the captivity" and you ain't going back! The dragon is there! Heartache, destruction, despair, and deception wrack the place and you don't want to be there. And the *consequences* of living in that place far exceed anything you could ever imagine. "The devil is a roaring lion seeking to devour." These are *very* real things to people that *see* them. To people like Elisha, who see the unseen world, these things are *very real*. Jesus talked about hell more than everybody put together. Why? Because He could *see* it! It was not a secondary thought to Him. It was very real to Him and extremely important for everybody He met to understand the seriousness of what was at stake.

Okay, so there are Jews who have "survived the captivity." They have been purchased—they have come out of captivity. Nehemiah asks them, "How are things going in Jerusalem?" The men say to Nehemiah, *"Things are not going well for those who returned to the province of Judah. They are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem has been torn down and the gates have been burned"* (Neh. 1:3).

The people are "saved" and they're in the Holy City, but ***the walls are torn down and the gates have been destroyed***. The "entrances and exits," as

Ezekiel called them, are all torn down. And without any entrances and exits, the place is just a big free for all. Any kind of person you want to name can come and go any time he pleases with no one saying a word. Quite frankly, that describes most of the religious world today—it's a major free for all. You could be satan himself, and be an elder in most religious organizations! Because all you have to do is "know your Bible," and even satan knows his Bible, right? There isn't enough scrutiny or enough relationship between people or enough discernment in most religious settings to be able to understand even how to *respond* to things that are very deceptive. This happens everywhere you look, 10,000 times over.

For example, a famous leader in South America talks about the guerrilla terrorists that would sit on his front pew every Sunday morning. They were "members of the congregation," but *really* they were spies for the communist, terrorist government! People didn't even know the difference! Little relationship and discernment to even see the difference between people—*that*, unfortunately, is mostly how the "church" has been built over the last two thousand years. Unlike Ephesus in Revelation 2, there isn't any "trying of men." There's no discernment or separation between those who have a revelation of Jesus from those who don't. A "claim" of Christianity is sufficient to "be a member" as long as there is reasonable attendance and financial contribution. For the most part, it's very difficult to find yourself unwelcome in the religious world.

Now Jesus' standard is very different, as you know. "If you are lukewarm, I'll spew you out of My mouth." If you're a little hot and a little cold, I'll spew you out of my mouth. If you don't take up your cross daily and follow Me, you can't be a Christian; you can't be a disciple. "The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch" —those two words are equivalent terms: "Christian" and "Disciple." Unless you take up your cross and *deny your very self*, you can't be part of Me. The rich young ruler found that out, didn't he?

My point is, it's essential that the "entrances and the exits," as Ezekiel called them, or "the gates" (as we see here with Nehemiah), are where Jesus wants them to be. *It's His Church*. He said, "I will build *My* Church." He didn't say, "I will build *your* Church. He said, "I will build *My* Church." He is the one who decides about the entrances and exits.

The Holy Spirit Weeps for Oneness...

"They are in great trouble and disgrace..." Why? Because *"The wall of Jerusalem has been torn down, and the gates have been burned."* There is no wall for protection and there are no gates for discernment. *"When I heard*

this, I sat down and wept. In fact, for days I mourned, fasted, and prayed to the God of heaven” (Nehemiah 1:3-4).

The name of Nehemiah means “Comforter” in Hebrew... So you can see the correlation in God’s mind that we’re talking about the Holy Spirit’s work here. The Wall is built around the City by the leading of the Holy Spirit, by the leading of Nehemiah. And from God’s viewpoint, when there is no Wall around His people, the Holy Spirit weeps. People can be saved, and be free from captivity in a sense, and they can be trying to live the Christian life, but *if there are no walls around the Holy City, the Holy Spirit weeps*. That is *very important* to understand. Even if you look at it in the natural sense alone, here is a man who knows God and he *weeps* when he hears there are no Walls around God’s people to protect them. If the distinction of God’s Wall around His people is broken down, then His people are prey for the enemy. True followers of Jesus aren’t meant to blend in with the world and “attend” some place, hear good words and then desperately try by themselves for the most part, to put it into practice through the week. It doesn’t matter how sincere the people are, *without the walls, they’re out where the lion is waiting to devour and deceive*.

If we are not within the walls as ONE—“contending as one man”—because our heart is elsewhere, then we’re in territory where the dragon is waiting, ready to devour. We’re in a place where there is no “unity of the faith” or “full knowledge of the Son of God” or “full measure of the stature of Christ.” It’s not possible! We’ll remain as “infants tossed to and fro” and we’ll be hardened and deceived by sin (Hebrews 3). Outside the Walls, people of the world will make war “with everyone who obeys the commandments of God.” Remember? It is *essential* that the Wall be built around God’s people, and that there is a sense of protection and unity and oneness. His Wall is something that is *defined*—and I don’t mean by a roster, attendance and a creed. Rather, “I pray that they will be one, Father, as You and I are one.” Is that oneness or what?! *“As you and I are one.”* That’s how “one” we are supposed to be with each other!!! “When you have seen me, you have seen the Father.” *That’s* how ONE we are supposed to be with each other.

“Oneness” isn’t defined by a “common creed,” but rather *by hearts that are joined together*, totally submissive to the Word of God and leaning on and growing from each other every day. The opposite of that is, “I have no need of you.” If you want to be “baptized in the Spirit,” Paul said that means you are “baptized by one Spirit *into one body*,” where we say, “I have need of you, I have need of you, *I have need of you!*” *That’s* what it means to be baptized in the Spirit, amongst other things. “I have need of you” will be our heart... It *has* to be, because the context of “baptized in the Spirit”

is... “We are ONE body.” “Contending as *one man* for the faith.” That *must* be our heart.

That’s where Acts 2 came from! It wasn’t some shallow “cultural experience,” where people shared with each other because there weren’t enough houses to go around. Those people became ONE because they were “*baptized by one Spirit into one body*” and so “none of them counted their possessions as their own.” It was the natural overflow *because they were one!* I don’t mean that we’ll be generic robots with all the same gifts, and all the same maturity level. I don’t mean there will be no such thing as leadership—I don’t mean anything like that at all! I just mean that our hearts are in union with one another, and we count our lives and our possessions, our hearts, our minds, our moods—we count those not as our own. We *need* each other. “I have need of you,” as opposed to “I have NO need of you.” That’s a *terrible* thing that Paul expressed as being very destructive and “anti-” the Spirit of God.

Nehemiah cried out and said, “O Lord, God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps his covenant of unfailing love with those who love him and obey his commands...”(Neh. 1:5) Who does He keep that covenant of unfailing love with? He keeps it with those who love Him and obey His commands.

*“Listen to my prayer! Look down and see me praying night and day for your people Israel”(v. 1:6). He had a PASSION about it because he could see the supernatural realm... “Please listen to my prayer! Look down and see me praying night and day for your people Israel.” He could *see* that these things really, really matter. What would make you *fast and pray* for several days? What would make you *cry passionately*?? This man was *passionate* about this problem that there was no protection for God’s people!! God’s people had come out of captivity, and they were “saved,” but he could see the tremendous danger of not having the Wall built around them, and he was *passionate* about it. It just wiped him out—it destroyed and devastated him—So he couldn’t *help* but spring into action about it...*

“Look down and see me praying night and day for your people Israel. I confess that we have sinned against you. Yes, even my own family and I have sinned! We have sinned terribly by not obeying the commands, laws and regulations that you gave us through your servant Moses.

“Please remember what you told your servant Moses: ‘If you sin, I will scatter you among the nations. But if you return to me and obey my commands, even if you are exiled to the ends of the earth, I will bring you back to the place I have chosen for my name to be honored’” (v.1:6-9).

Again, you can see God's Heart and Mind for continuity, for oneness: "If you disobey me, I will scatter you. But if you obey me, I will bring you back from the four corners of the earth—from the north, south, east and west. I will make you ONE if you obey me." But My curse is to scatter you if you don't. Remember what happened in Babel? They had a false sort of oneness when they tried to build their tower to reach the heavens. They were arrogant with their worldly mindset—a Nimrod sort of approach to life. A terrible worldliness! God's plan and His judgment were to scatter them. That's what happens when you disobey—He scatters you. But if you will repent of sin, He draws you together. Again, you see His plan... "Let them *be one*, Father, as you and I are one..." You can't artificially produce that. You can't "administrate" that. You can't "be one" by gathering around a program, a building, a speechmaker or a personality. It ain't going to happen, because *true oneness is a supernatural issue*.

The king said to Nehemiah, "*Why are you so sad? You aren't sick, are you? You look like a man with deep troubles*" (v. 2:2). What was the big deal? Nehemiah himself was doing just fine. But his "deep troubles" that had affected his countenance and his eating and everything else was due to the fact that he cared *desperately* that God's people have a Wall around them. He cared deeply that there be no separation between God's people and no lack of protection or lack of oneness. This was a passionate issue with him, and he had "deep troubles" because of it.

Raging, Supernatural Battle

So Nehemiah goes back to Jerusalem to rebuild the wall, where he is immediately met with opposition. "*When Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem the Arab heard of our plan, they scoffed contemptuously. 'What are you doing, rebelling against the king like this?'*"(v. 2:19). (Chew on this one: since the Arabic language is the mother language of the Ishmaelites, that makes Geshem an Ishmaelite, doesn't it. And remember that Ishmael was the product of God's man and man's plan. He was birthed by marrying God's promise with the world's way in order to accomplish the promise. And it created opposition to God's work.) So you can see that these three men and a multitude of others are stirring up trouble as time goes on. What is their problem? Why do they even care? *Because there is a supernatural opposition raging that wants no Wall and wants no one to be protected by that Wall*. Why would those men even *care* about it in the first place? Because this is beyond the scope of "natural world" stuff! There is a SUPERnatural war, and an envy, strife and immediate attack on this desire to build the Wall. No one cared and it wasn't a big deal *until the wall*

started going up. The Wall was going up, the gates were being set in place and God's people were now becoming impervious to attack. Until then, it just wasn't a big deal. But as soon as those things started to happen, all of a sudden Satan is up in arms. "Sanballat" means "secret enemy." Satanic efforts *will* attack the building of the Wall around God's people—there's an attack when a clear distinction is made between God's people and the world. It's an attack on the oneness God intends for us. "I will build My church that the gates of hell won't prevail against." Satan wants to tear that down, and pluck people out. He doesn't want it to exist in the first place, and so he uses any means he can, to come against it.

You see ten or twelve different means through the book of Nehemiah that the secret enemy uses to try to destroy the Walls that are being built. He tries to discourage them... "You'll never be able to do it. Ha! It's never been done before. It might work with ten of you, but it won't work with thirty! And forget about it if there are one or two hundred of you." "Yeah, we were like that too when we were young. You will succumb to the whole thing like we did—your teens will sow their wild oats just like everyone else. That's just the way life is." All this garbage talk goes on! All these lies that are *so* completely unfounded in the Word of God, yet they are so much a part of everyone's experience. WHY is that so? ***Because there are no Walls.*** People are totally subject to the enemy's lies and attacks. Mark it down that as soon as you try to build those walls and be part of what God wants to build, you *will* encounter much, much difficulty. The secret enemy will come and sow his seeds.

Another example in Nehemiah is the way the enemy made "contacts" inside of the Holy City. He contacts and secretly whispers to people inside of the Walls. How can this be?? *Why* do the people listen? Because they are related to the enemy—they have "family ties." So they swear allegiance to an enemy because "family" is more important to them than God's Work! They have a father-in-law...check it out (Neh. 6)! There were *reasons why* those contacts happened, and it stunk.

Or the enemy comes at you with, "Well, you are just trying to be somebody. You just want to be a king. You are rebelling against the king. If you don't come and talk to me about all this, then I will "rat" on you and prove to everyone that what you're doing is ambitious. You're just doing it for yourself." What was Nehemiah's response to that? He said, "You are lying! You're making this stuff up in your head, so go jump in a lake. I'm not listening, and I'm not responding to it. I've got work to do" (Neh. 6). They had invited him outside the walls to the plain of Ono, and *he knew that they wanted to do him harm.* The secret enemy wanted him to go out there

for a “good, meaningful conversation” and told him it would be in his best interest to do it. But *really*, he meant to destroy Nehemiah by taking him outside of the Holy City.

Are you starting to see WHY these subjects about how we function together, practically, in the world, come up?

“I Have Need of You!!”

Case in point: suppose someone says, “I have parents in Boise, Idaho that I haven’t seen for a while. I think I’ll go out to Boise and spend two or three weeks with my pagan parents. I’ll just take a little vacation and maybe do some sightseeing.” Well...when you live outside of God’s Walls, “sightseeing” sounds like a great idea because you *don’t have anything better going on in your heart*. You have no scenery in your heart—no mountains and rainbows on the inside—so you have to go find them elsewhere. So visiting some “great place” and seeing some “cool things” gives you a temporary high. But all along, God meant for you to have that “high” *in your heart!* “Vacationing” and those sorts of external events “draw you in” when there is little going on inside of you. “I think I’ll spend three weeks with my family in Boise, Idaho at a family reunion. I know it’s a big beer bash, but I don’t plan on getting involved in *that* part. I just want to see my family and goo-goo over my nieces and nephews. Blah, blah, blah...” That kind of reasoning makes sense if the “church world” as we know it has no Walls and everyone does what is “right in their own eyes.” The lives are disconnected and independent from each other. That’s what makes it “normal” in a “church” environment, that if someone gets an offer of a 20% pay raise to transfer to another city, they snatch it right up! They’re gone, because they can easily “place membership” somewhere else...“membership” where they were, never meant anything anyway. It’s not their LIFE! Their lives are not intertwined in such a way where they’re *desperately connected*, having need of one another on a daily basis. It’s not a big deal to go place “membership” someplace else. A 20% pay hike is all it takes for 90% of the people in the religious world to move away because they didn’t have anything where they were, anyway.

When the believers in Corinth didn’t eat with a certain guy, *it almost killed him*, Paul said. In most situations today, if you don’t eat with a guy, it doesn’t matter to him because they never eat with him anyway! It’s a big charade—it doesn’t mean anything. But when it’s *really* the church and God’s Walls are there, all of a sudden some *amazing* things start to happen. Does anyone care if I want to take a three-week vacation to

Boise, Idaho and do some sightseeing? Yes, I suspect someone would ask me about that. Is it a problem to me that they ask me about it? No! It's *irresponsible* if they don't! Because what if my heart is in love with the world? What if I am seeing things wrongly? I'd be hurting my relationship with God and showing that I obviously don't have much of a relationship with God's people. I've proven that I "have no need of them" because I can just disappear for three weeks and it's not a big deal to me. It's not a matter of someone just telling me that I can't go to Boise, Idaho. Of course I can—I can do anything I want. But people care for me and question my *reasoning behind it*, because the heart is deceitful above all things! They'd *better* be called alongside me daily...otherwise, I'm going to be hardened and deceived by sin. I *need* the Walls. "*I have need of you,*" and vice versa. That's just the way God planned it. "I will build my church that the gates of hell won't prevail against." "God's intent is now, through the church, to make known the manifold wisdom of God to the principalities and powers." Foundationally, this "manifold wisdom of God" shows itself in very practical ways.

Now if anyone ever tells you that you *can't* go—that you're not allowed to go—to Boise, Idaho, tell them they are *way* out of line, because they don't have the right to say that! But if they *don't care* that you're going to Boise, Idaho for three weeks by yourself, they are *just as out of line*, and maybe more so! Don't have a foolish, naïve, legalistic idea that—"Oh, I just have to check with so-and-so before I do anything." That's *nonsense*, that's ridiculous. It has *never* been Jesus' intent that anyone has to "ask permission" to do thus and such. Or you have to get a quorum to make a decision about whether to buy a blue doormat or a red one, or what kind of car to have. That's all *total* ridiculousness.

On the other hand, I would *want* people to care WHY I want a red convertible instead of some other more functional vehicle. It's perfectly fine for me to own a red convertible. But is it perfectly fine for me to love attention? No—obviously not. So if you care about me, you won't let me destroy my life by refusing to ask... "Why did you just buy yourself a red convertible?" That doesn't mean you badger people with nonsensical questions. *You simply love people enough to watch and pray and care. Why is that? Because that is what the Church is! That's what the Wall IS! It is relationships that are intimately tied with one another where we need each other. We acknowledge that we need each other and we are all carriers and bearers of the Word of God. We are bearers of the Person of Jesus to one another and together corporately. We need that kind of relationship.* But let's not be childish or ridiculous about it and turn it into a bunch of externals and badgering. Let's also not be naïve enough

to think it doesn't matter. Or hardened enough to not care about other people's well-being.

You ARE Your Brother's Keeper!

Let's try to understand that there is a *major war going on outside the walls* and if I'm casually walking out where the dragon is, someone better grab me by my collar and say, "Are you *sure* you want to do that? It's your choice, but can I give you a little insight into what happened to me the last time I did that? Are you *sure* that's what you want? Because here are the probable consequences if you do this "thing" like it looks like you're doing it. Here are the probable consequences." When satan sinks his teeth in, it's like a fish hook. It goes in pretty easily, but the barb on the other end doesn't let it come back out very easily! That's what satan's teeth are like... they go in pretty easily and you bleed a little bit, but in order to get that fish hook back out, you bleed A LOT. It just shreds you to take that hook out once it's gone in.

If we love each other and it's *really* the Church of Jesus, we won't let businessmen amongst us just lead their lives any 'ol way they please. We're not going to ignore it if they perhaps lie to people in their sales jobs or if there's a chance a brother is being a manipulative and domineering manager over people and abusing the authority that he has been given. Will we let him be worldly and drunk on the power, the overhead projector charts, the latest management techniques and all this nonsense psychology in the Dale Carnegie world of management? We're not going to let someone destroy his life like that! *We will want to talk about it!* We will be perceptive enough to know that the pressures and temptations are there and we *know* how easily the fish hook goes in. We want to spare him of being shredded and bloodied to smithereens by having to jerk that thing out later on...if you can get the hook out at all.

Suppose there's a mother who is raising three or four little children. Is she going to be tempted to be lazy in her home, or despairing or short of temper? Might she be tempted to be too protective of her little children and "own them" for her own ego trip? Or tempted to put all her energy into housework rather than putting it into the Work of God in addition to her housework? Sure, of course she will have temptations and difficulties to overcome in her life. If you refuse to get involved, and refuse to help bear the load of the difficulties... if you refuse to help her avoid the snares of that particular stage of life in raising small children, *then you don't love her very much*. You're willing to let the fish hook of bitterness, resentment,

laziness, worldliness or idolatry of family go in. If you're willing to let that hook go in and let them be bloodied to death getting it out...or let them be "dragged away and enticed" as James put it, and destroyed and led to death by it...you just don't love them very much.

The Nature of the Church is to be involved in details, because that's where the fish hook is. It's not about badgering or looking over your shoulder at people all the time and being nosy and a busybody—Paul speaks very clearly against being a busybody. Those will be temptations if you care, but you need to turn away from them. I know it's hard, but you have to be big enough people. I'm learning it myself only now, to be a big enough person to care desperately, but also to not be over-anxious about anything. Don't tell me to not care! But watch out for me, because I might be over-anxious and care too much and end up doing stupid things. It won't be because I'm malicious, but it will be because I care so much and I'm stupid—and the combination of those things doesn't work out very well sometimes. ☺ *Please care desperately*, because that's what the Church is. *That's* what it's all about! And the attacks are plenty. A whole bunch of them show up in the book of Nehemiah.

Passionate Obedience

You can see Nehemiah's approach inside of the Walls. What happened when people inside were intermarrying with people on the outside? They were getting mixed up with and giving part of themselves over to worldly relationships, marriage and otherwise. What did Nehemiah do about that? He hit them! He pulled out their hair! He was violent about it! Do you want to make a case about... "That's not very Christian"? You could try, but I'll tell you what: God wrote that stuff, and there is something Right about Phinehas putting a spear through an Israelite who was in sin. God stopped the plague and credited it to Phinehas' righteousness for having done what he did. There is something about a violence towards sin that is credited as righteousness before God—and that stops the plague. Remember... the result of obedience is that God calls us from the four corners of the earth and compacts us together. For disobedience He scatters us. *There is something about a passionate desire for obedience that God is very happy about and very pleased with.* Nehemiah is an example of that, inside of the Walls, where he had serious concern about how people lived their lives.

What happened when something unholy was invited into the House of God because of an unholy friendship? "*Eliashib the priest, who had been appointed as supervisor of the storerooms of the Temple of our God and who*

was also a relative of Tobiah, had converted a large storage room and placed it at Tobiah's disposal..." (Neh. 13:4-5). Nehemiah was out of town, and all of a sudden the holiness of God's people was being violated in a big way! This unholy situation and person were invited into their midst and camped out right there in the Temple, very conveniently—because of friendships, relationships, and "family ties." What was God's response to that situation? Nehemiah had him thrown out of the place! He was very upset and took Tobiah's stuff and just threw it out. He demanded that the chambers be purified. There was *fury* there—he wanted *nothing* to do with it.

What happened with the men who were breaking the Sabbath? (Neh. 13:15-22). Businessmen were carrying on their merchandising without a thought about it. They weren't aware of God's ways and weren't plugging into what was right. They weren't "detail-oriented" in their obedience. What happened to those men who were violating and merchandising on the Sabbath Day? In Jesus' case there was a whip and overturned tables. What did Nehemiah do? Pretty similar, right? He yelled at them and told them to stop, and posted guards to make sure they never did it again. ***There was a lot of wrath!*** (Neh. 13)

And what did Nehemiah say each time? "Oh God, hear my prayer! See my righteous attempts to serve you and please you!" He's crying out to God with a totally clear conscience about what is happening inside the Walls of the Holy City. The Walls are up, but attention *still* needs to be given to what happens inside of the Walls.

Won't we also care deeply about what's happening inside the walls? Yes, of course we will! We will give attention to the kinds of choices we make and the kinds of places we go...like traveling to a beach-and-bathing suit scene or some other questionable situation. Won't we at least be engaged in prayer and dialogue with each other and try to work these things out? "Hey, I care about you. I care that you may be planting crummy seeds in your heart. Satan is a deceiver. Don't you know that a little leaven leavens the whole batch? That's true for the church, and it's also true for the inside of your head!" If a person makes compromises and little choices that are destructive, it *will* lead to an avalanche of deception and hardening." Paul talked about consciences being "*seared as with a hot iron.*" Our nerve endings get deadened and sin doesn't matter to us anymore. We don't feel the prick of it anymore. **PLEASE...** Let's not let each other go! "*See to it brothers that none of you have a sinful, unbelieving heart.*" "See to it brothers..."—that's a command! "Make sure, brothers and sisters, that *not one of you* has a seared conscience... that you're not hardened and deceived by sin. Make sure not one of you falls into that sort of situation." Those are **COMMANDS**.

Staying Safe—Together!

The nature of “being in the world but not of it” has practical ramifications. But don’t interpret that as a license to impose “laws” on what kind of things we can and cannot do, or where we can and cannot go. Our passionate desire to help each other grow in Christ isn’t directed toward the practical decisions per se, but towards *the issues of the heart that lead to those decisions*. WHY do we do what we do? For instance, a temptation would be to tell a person they “shouldn’t go to XYZ store because after all there is immodest clothing on the rack...” If you get deep into being detail-oriented about actual decision itself, you’ll miss the real issues. The *real* issues have to do with *making sure our hearts and minds are purified*, and that our motives are right. The whole deal is to be “built up in love together.” “Let our hearts be in submission to one another.” “Let every matter be established by the testimony of two or three.” Sift and work through things *together*. But don’t be detail-oriented about specifics, like...“No one around here is allowed to have a red convertible.” That is nonsense! Maybe a red convertible is exactly what God wants for Sally, for a very specific reason, and it’s not really for you to say! But you would at least care *why* she wanted that convertible.

I would trust that Sally would be asking people beforehand if they thought it was a great idea or not to buy the red convertible. And I’d hope she wasn’t just “asking permission”—that would be childish, absurd and very shallow. For the most part, Sally should ask because *she cares*. Her heart *wants* to be inside of the Walls of the Holy City. She *wants* to be in a place where God’s Kingdom flourishes and God’s enemies are kept at bay. *Inside of the church, the gates of hell cannot prevail*. She *knows* her own heart, and she *knows* that unless she’s admonished daily she will be hardened and deceived. She doesn’t trust her motives and isn’t so foolish to believe, “Well, I know what God wants on my own. I hear God—I see Him face to face every day!” NO, *we have need of each other!* She *wants* to talk with someone and say, “Here is what I’d really like to do. I think my motives are pure and I know where the temptations would be, but I don’t think they are a problem. I think the reason I want to buy a red convertible is pure, even though it seems a little crazy! But if you don’t think it’s the right thing for me, I want to hear about it. I want to know, because I want to factor in the things I’m blind to.”

If I’m not willing to factor in the things I’m blind to, then I’m a fool, because I will be putting my heart out where the dragon is. I want my heart to be in a place where I can hear and listen and *respond* to the people of God. I want the Word of God to be living and active in His people,

and living and active in my life *through His people*. The Kingdom of God is neither here nor there, it's within His people. I want to make sure I'm drawing on that in a *real* way—drawing on the gifts in Ephesians 4 and the relationships in Hebrews 3. I want to make sure my heart is right smack in the middle of the Church that the gates of hell cannot prevail against. *The dragon can't get me, because I'm living and growing inside the midst of His people*. My tears of weeping—floods as they may be—will turn into pools of joy that water the gardens behind me. “Death is at work in me so that life can be at work in you.” Supernatural Life flows from my tears and my pain, in the wake of my willingness to submit to God and to brothers and sisters in the middle of my pain. Supernatural Life is created from that...lush gardens follow me wherever I go. If I'm within the Walls of God and I'm weeping, my tears turn into Rivers of Living Water rather than pools of despair out in the world. “*I will build my church the gates of hell won't prevail against.*” That has practical ramifications. It does not have *legal* ramifications as to whether or not a sister can buy a red convertible. It has *practical* ramifications where she wants to see things that she might not have seen otherwise. No one wants to tell her whether or not to buy it. What they want her to do is to see the issues of the heart related to it and help refine her thinking and expose the huge consequences if she makes the wrong decision...

...Like, what happens if she drives up to a stoplight in a red convertible and there's a carload of guys next to her? What will happen? There are consequences to our decisions that set us up for terrible, terrible, *terrible* things to happen. The car full of guys pulls up and she ignores them—this time. *Next* time she enjoys it...a little more, anyway. Then the next time, she has the top down—on purpose. The heart is sooooo deceitful. It feeds on that garbage and it grows and grows, more and more. Maybe God has a reason for the red convertible, but she sure better be aware of the potential consequences of owning it. All by herself, she might not have seen the terrible pitfalls. But when matters are “established by the testimony” of multiple witnesses—“wisdom in the multitude of counselors,”—all of a sudden the gates of hell can't prevail against her. She grows and “she knows not how.” She becomes a woman of God that the gates of hell cannot touch because relationships, gifts, wisdom, care and love are swirling around her. She has planted her heart smack in the middle of it. She doesn't despair of people talking to her about the pitfalls and the weaknesses. She welcomes it! She *desires* the wisdom and insight. She *desires* the food and *wants* the gifts and relationships. She doesn't want to be hardened and deceived! She doesn't want to be outside the Walls where the dragon and the roaring lion are. That's where there is deception, cunning and craftiness of deceitful

men and where she'll always be an infant till the day she dies. Maybe I can be "saved" but my whole life is burnt up because I've built with wood, hay and stubble outside the Walls of His House.

Life and Death to an EXTREME!!

These are issues of the heart, and I want to make sure you understand first and foremost, that *life and death are at stake*. The dragon is real, and the war is *REAL*. Jesus of Nazareth and His white horse Faithful and True—*that is real! That is exceptionally, incredibly real*. Heaven and hell are real. It is not a joke, it is not funny, and it is NOT trivial. It's not something we can arrogantly pooh-pooh. It is *life and death to an EXTREME*. I want you to be the chemist that can see the cyanide and the acid flowing toward each other and you *know what that means*. Like the sons of Issachar—you know the meaning of these things and you know what Israel should do. You *have* to see it. If you don't see it, you are dead. If you take the orderly approach...you blend in with what is "socially acceptable"...you don't rock any boats... you're careful not to offend anyone...you do what is "right in your own eyes"...you will DIE. At the bare minimum, you will be decrepit, weak, nasty and pitiful your whole life.

I hope you are getting the picture of the extreme life and death importance of submitting yourself, from the heart, to a Life of practical living in the Body of Christ, on a daily basis. It is ohhhhhh, so dangerous—*life and death critically dangerous*—to *not* join your heart to His Life in His people on a daily basis as Jesus and the Hebrews writer said. I just wanted to paint that picture one more time that yes, there are temptations, pain, failing, and various difficulties inside of the City with Walls whose foundation is laid by God Himself and by the Blood of Christ. There are problems inside of the City whose "Builder and Maker is God." Growth needs to happen... personalities and relationships need to be refined. There will be failure... and then loving arms to wrap one another and lift each other up again. Those things *will* happen. We're not talking about a Garden of Eden. Satan even showed up there too, remember? We're not talking about having a perfect environment.

We're talking about loyalty of commitment, love and submission one to another, and a recognition of our own hearts, and living inside of the City as a way of life, on a daily basis, from the heart. That's the only thing that the gates of hell cannot and will not prevail against. When you are inside the walls, there will be weeping, but the pools of your tears will water the garden of those that follow behind you, and it's worth it.

One Last Thought...

This may be really obvious, but I want to clarify it for any readers who may be wondering...this is a Call that's based on the Promises of God to His People all around the world. We need to apply the Word of God to our own personal lives and existence, individually, and also corporately. The fact is...God is strongly desirous of raising a City set on a hill throughout the world. People we know, people we don't know, 7,000, or 700,000 that haven't bowed a knee to Baal. Absolutely, not in the wildest stretch of imagination is there any feeling among us that we don't personally have a million miles to go!

So, have a passion to a) apply it to your own personal life, and b) recognize that God is calling His People by His Spirit all over the world to the common ground of Life in Christ in a real, corporate sense, not just individually. The Holy Spirit is crying for the Wall to be built around His people *around the world!* It doesn't have anything specifically to do with us. We want to be obedient as best that we can, but there are many other people who want that too. We've found out about many from other countries because we've had some correspondence or visits with them. But there is unquestionably a multitude of people that we don't know! This is the Work of God and isn't specifically related to us in any way other than: we just want to be a part of it too. ☺ If He is merciful to weak people like us, perhaps we will be blessed enough, fortunate enough, and obedient enough to be a part of that! God does *want* to do that and *He will* have a Bride that has made herself ready. Amen? Let it be so! Come, Lord Jesus!

The Unsearchable Riches of Christ Amongst His People

Wednesday Night, February 1, 1995

“I Will Build My Church”

What is this thing called “Church” and what is the significance of it? What was Jesus talking about when He said, “I will build my church and the gates of Hell will not overcome it”? This thing called “church” could be summed up in a lot of different ways.

I will build My Church and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18).

My Father seeks worshippers (John 4:23).

It’s “His Father’s House” that He’s consumed with zeal over (John 2:16-17).

You’ve made my Father’s house a den of robbers. It should be a house of prayer (Matthew 21:13).

One thing that you could say about the nature of the Church is that it’s meant to be a people of prayer and a people of worship. It’s the Father’s House; and the Father seeks worshippers in the most practical of ways. This thing called “church” is simply this: *People who see and experience Jesus on a daily basis, and live to help people around them do the same. They pour their lives out for people who may be sincere but not really able to see Him as well as they would like.*

There are different levels of people who can see and feel and experience Jesus in terms of a quality of life—a fragrance of relationship, an aroma of life. You could call it by a lot of different names. Call it a thankful, worshipful person... or a prophetic person who can see God and can see

what's happening in the unseen world. There are a lot of different ways you can describe a person: someone who has revelation versus someone who might not...or previously they didn't, but now they do. It's not really an on/off switch, but there certainly is progress to be made in revelation and closeness to Jesus and experiencing His presence through the situations and decisions of life. We are meant to grow and mature and have a very intimate relationship with Jesus. It's not zoning out and then at some moment of crisis or some moment of ecstasy remembering Him. Rather, it's abiding in Him and making our home in Him.

In simple terms, I wonder if this thing called “church” is really about people who abide in Jesus and make their home in Him as true worshippers. They walk with grateful hearts in worship moment by moment. You catch them worshipping. If you walk up on them and surprise them, then you will find them worshipping. They're not thinking about “stuff” and then trying to remember to be a worshipper, but this is their *life*. It's their heart, it's their experience, and it's the love of their life. They have an infatuation with and a marveling at Jesus—a fascination with the Son of God. They're always thinking, “Yes, yes, that was good, Jesus. I liked that!”

These religious words—“worship,” “adore,” and “praise” are real words, and they are good words. But, let me add a few more thoughts to that. When you really love someone, there is also a fascination with them. There is something super intriguing and inspiring about being with them. When love is cultivated properly, there is something electric about it—something real. You are not apt to just zone out and forget them for huge blocks of time and then, later on, remember, “Oh, yeah, I'm supposed to be a certain way.” With Love, there is something captivating you. A person that's really walking with God is *captivated by and fascinated with JESUS*; they adore Him. It's something that's very much on their heart.

The Unsearchable Riches

To say it again, “Church” should be defined as people who experience Jesus helping those who are sincere but who don't quite *experience* Jesus yet. Those who know Him well are helping others to become closer friends of Him. That's what Paul meant when he said that he was “in the pains of childbirth until Christ was formed in them.” They were saved; he already said that in Galatians 1 and 3, but they weren't really *experiencing* Christ. Christ wasn't formed in them. He wasn't abiding in them, and they in Him, the way that it might have been. In Ephesians 3 Paul said, “I came to bring to you the unsearchable riches of Christ, and I also came to bring to

you the *administration* of the unsearchable riches of Christ.” In verse 10 he goes on to say that the end product of the unsearchable riches of Christ implanted in men’s hearts and the administration of the unsearchable riches of Christ (or the working out of the unsearchable riches of Christ) *is that now, through the Church, the manifold, glorious wisdom of God would be made known even to the principalities and powers.* All these things are tied together. In the administration of the unsearchable riches of Christ, or the *working out of the riches of Jesus* (the fascination with and the adoration of Jesus), there are things God calls “commands.” There are right ways to do things. And there are wrong ways to do things. It was God who said we must be “very careful how we build” on the foundation of Christ, lest our work be consumed in the fire.

Now, why did He leave this planet in physical form and say, “Go teach them to *obey* everything I commanded you”? Why did He do that? Was it because He was trying to build some kind of external empire based on doing certain things in certain ways? NO! It was because He knew that in the working out of the unsearchable riches of Christ, that *as we stray from His commands, we also stray from His heart.*

As we walk in lawlessness, we walk away from the person of Jesus and our ability to see Him, to experience Him, to abide in Him, to be infatuated with Him, to marvel at Him, to love Him from the heart, and to be grateful in every circumstance. We forfeit all that as we stray from Him. How can two walk together unless they are in agreement? Jesus told us to obey His commands... but not because He’s some ogre on an ego trip. It’s because HE LOVES US!

In the Church, we don’t work out the administration of the unsearchable riches of Christ because it’s some kind of hard life, and we have to do some thing some certain way, or otherwise people won’t be happy with us. No. It’s about people who are infatuated with Jesus, deeply in love with Him, and experiencing His presence in a way that you perhaps may not be...and now they are showing you the way to walk with Him that you might *also* be able to marvel at Him and get the junk out of the way.

“Remove this from your life.”

“Why, you ogre! You hard-core person!”

No. It’s because your experience of Christ and fruit-bearing are inadequate to be so certain of yourself. Let’s be honest about it. The “seven sons of Sceva” knew the concepts and the words, but did not have the substance to work it out, and it cost them severely. “We are not ignorant of satan’s devices.” It is very important that you learn from those who can “equip you for works

of service”—Father’s solution for “no longer infants, tossed to and fro.” This is not “rocket science”—it’s ten thousand times more important than that, and not a game. I also want to say to you that *you* can experience Him in a deeper way *because He’s inviting you to*. But as long as you hold on to and cling to this independent heart—to pride, selfishness, fear of man, lust, miserliness, greed or whatever form of worldliness that is unlike the person of Jesus (i.e. your right to have a temper, your right to be impatient, your right to judge others)—you cannot walk in a friendship and a fellowship with Jesus by His Spirit. Incomprehensible! Absolutely impossible!”

Why the commands? Why the administration of the Word of God? Why did Paul write letter after letter, not with just flowery words about Jesus, but with “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace”? “If you have aught against your brother or he against you, lay your gift down at the altar. Go make it right.” In the commands and teachings of Jesus (and of Paul, Peter, John, James and Jude), there are a lot of very *practical* things. What’s the point to these commands and teachings? Are we trying to create some sort of lifestyle? No, we are trying to walk with Jesus. You cannot walk away from the teachings and the ways of Jesus and the men that Jesus has hand chosen, the teachings that come by the Spirit. You cannot walk away from those and have an abiding, alive relationship with Jesus.

The Administration of the Unsearchable Riches of Christ

The “unsearchable riches of Christ”—you will never see them apart from the *administration* of the unsearchable riches of Christ. They’re not two things. They’re really one. You can’t walk with Jesus, if like the rich young ruler you treasure something in your heart, and you won’t let go of it. You have to walk away sorrowfully. You can’t have your cake and eat it too. “Well, I think that if I do all these other good things, I can hold on to that, because you are just judging, or that’s just your opinion.” Go ahead and harden your heart if you want, but you are only robbing yourself. That’s the purpose of the commands of Jesus. It’s not so He can build some legal empire. Nine out of ten things that Paul said were very practical. They were either large in their scope and the view of God’s working among men, or they were very practical and very commandment-oriented: Do this, don’t do that oriented. There wasn’t a lot that was flowery about the person of Jesus. Why is that? It’s because if we walk together with Him, if we walk in His ways, if we crucify the flesh and the acts of the sinful

nature that are obvious, if we draw in close to Him, then, as James said in James 4, “If you draw near to Me, I will draw near to you.” The purpose of these externals is so that we can walk in His Spirit together and experience the riches of His unsearchable beauty, a fascination with His immense intellect, a total consuming zeal for His creativity and power, His love, His mercy, and His kindness.

These are just words to someone who disobeys His commands and lives in selfishness, to someone who dishonors Him with certain attitudes or actions in their life. They are just words, because you can only experience Jesus as you walk in His ways.

So, the purpose of a group of believers is that those who have a close friendship with Jesus...those who have a sparkle in their eye when they sing to Him rather than just singing words on a page or in the brain...those who are truly fascinated with Him and are truly brimming with affection for Him...that *those* people might be able to *help others* do that too. Like Paul and like Jesus, that doesn't just come by flowery words. It comes by helping each other walk in agreement with the character and the person of Jesus and His teachings, that we might explore His riches and experience it for ourselves. Our job, then, is to know Him in an unbelievable way and to help everyone around us do the same thing. That's “Church”!

We will become worshippers as we see Him, rather than ourselves, when we look in the mirror. As we see Him, as we look around at others in other situations, rather than just seeing the externals and our flesh making judgments, the Spirit of God will be allowed to discern the nature of the situation. As we walk together with Him, then we can have fellowship with one another and our joy is made complete. I want so much for everyone to experience Him and not just something external. It occurred to me that that only happens as we submit our wills, our strong wills, our selfish personalities, our external judgments, and our worldly appetites. We can only experience Him as we walk in the administration of the unsearchable riches, the teachings and the life and the character of Jesus. It frees us, by His Spirit, to be caught up into His heart, into His mind, and into His life. “Draw near to Me, and I will draw near to you.”

I hope that's our passion and what we live for. That we would know Him, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He sent by His Spirit, and that we would be in the pains of childbirth until everyone around us is also experiencing Him. Someone who's not living that way is not a person to bristle at. It's a person to care for, to pray for, and to try to help see the administration of the unsearchable riches, that they might experience the unsearchable riches of Christ themselves.

Bristle means “to freeze up,” “to judge,” or “to think bad thoughts about.” It means “to pull back away from,” as opposed to praying and caring and having a heart of mercy like Moses did. “Unless they go in, I don’t want to either. I don’t want to go into the Promised Land without them. God show me how I can help them walk in Your ways that they might also experience Your life in them.” It becomes an opportunity to serve God, rather than something to feel like is an inconvenience to us.

The administration of the unsearchable riches is to “work out” the unsearchable riches. It’s the practical “working out” of the administration. It’s similar to how a government administration has to work with the policies and people that are in place in order to carry out this more perfect union. You’ve all heard of the “Clinton administration” or the “Reagan administration.” What’s being referred to are the people and policies that have been put into place in order to make it work. There’s an ideal up here, and then there’s the administration that carries out the ideal. That’s the administration that you read about in Ephesians 3. Paul said, “*I came to bring the unsearchable riches of Christ and the administration of the unsearchable riches of Christ, that the whole unseen world would be awed as the Church lives out the personality of Jesus*” (v. 10). That’s its conclusion. Paul said, “I’m on a mission, guys. I want to show people Jesus, and I want to work out what Jesus looks like in their lives, so that the principalities and powers, the angels and the demons could all be in awe of what God has done in the Church.”

Verse 10 starts with, “His intent was that now, through the Church...” What is God’s intent? Surely we would want to know what that is—NOW! Not 1,000 years from now, but NOW, through the *Church*, it is not going to be through my own personal life and my own personal relationship with God, but through the *Church*, NOW, that He would humiliate the principalities and powers as we all learn to walk the way of the cross in God’s wisdom. He makes known His manifold wisdom, His many-faceted, glorious wisdom, and the thing that intrigues us and fascinates us beyond belief. He makes known His glorious wisdom now, through the Church by those who are walking in the administration. In other words, He does it through those working out the unsearchable riches of Christ, those who are in love with Him, and who then are working out what that looks like. Don’t tell me you are in love with Him if you don’t work out what that looks like. Doesn’t that sound like something Jesus said? “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.” There is a direct connection between our love for Him and our willingness to let Him mold our characters, our attitudes, our actions, our tongues, and our hearts. It’s a direct connection between our love of Him and the working out of our love of Him, just like there is with anybody else.

Walking It Out—Practically

Some of the things that we walk in at this point in our history (that we haven't always walked in, but we almost take for granted now) are revolutionary to others. Something simple like taking other people with you when you go shopping is a revolutionary idea to some. It can be a chance to share some life and interact with people, to help and encourage one another as you go, and a way to be together. It's very valuable. It's *proved valuable* for us. There are also some challenges with that—you won't be quite as independent, there will be some inconvenience since you can't go exactly when you want to go, and it might take a little longer.

There are several kinds of responses that you will be greeted with when you talk to others about living life together in this way. Some will be apathetic, "Well, I don't really get it. I don't know what the big deal is about doing ironing or laundry or shopping together. I hadn't really thought about it. I don't see why it's important, and I probably will never think about it again. Thanks for saying it though."

Another possible response is that some will be highly offended by the thought of walking that closely with others. Now you have to ask yourself, if that's offensive, *why* is that offensive? Exactly what nerve did that touch? Now you are getting somewhere, because you are finding a root of evil in your own heart if you know that that's offensive to you. If you can figure that out, you now know something about the administration of the unsearchable riches of Christ. You know a little bit more about why you don't have a relationship with God that even amounts to a hill of beans. It's because something made you very hostile and very angry. It touched a nerve within you. It's frustrating to you. Something about that caused energy to well up within you. Where did that energy come from? What is it about my heart that doesn't love the light and that energizes at that particular point? Do I habitually like to wander through a shopping mall and lust after things in windows? Or do I like to try things on, and I have something in my flesh that just loves to do that? Maybe I love to spend a lot more money than God would really want me to spend. Perhaps I like the convenience of doing things *when* I want to, *as* I want to because I want to "get it over with." If there is some sort of pride or selfishness in me like that, if I love anything about myself or what I do more than I love others and love God, that will touch a nerve—and there will be energy there.

So, it's one example of 10,000 possibilities. When I find myself grated by something or annoyed seriously by something, if it touches a nerve within me, there's a very high possibility that the energy came from a place of darkness in my heart.

The rich young ruler was shattered by “...go sell your possessions and give to the poor.” Peter said, “Huh? We sold our possessions and gave to the poor. No problem.” He bragged about it the rest of his life. It was not hard for him to do that. And it wasn’t exactly like he gave up nothing. There was a business going on. They had the largest catch of fish in their lives. They had just pulled it up on shore—and *then walked away from it to let it rot*. It wasn’t like there was no cost involved, but the priority system that they had did not exalt business and commerce and materialism as god. So, it wasn’t a problem for them to turn, leave their families, leave their jobs, and come after Jesus. It wasn’t the same problem for them to enter into the great, unknown world of following the Messiah, as it must be for all of us. But for the rich young ruler, it touched a nerve. It was a serious problem for him.

There will be things that happen in our lives. Jesus said to the rich young ruler, “One thing you lack...” In other words, you have a nerve. There is something inside of you that you won’t let go of. There is “one thing you lack.” You will not let go of your independence. You will not let go of your pride or of your right to judge others. You will not let go of your selfishness and laziness. You will not let go of your fear of people speaking into your life or your fear of talking to others because “I don’t ever confront.” When any of these things that we hold to as dear are challenged in us, it touches a nerve that causes these impulses or pockets of adrenalin, passion and anger, all the things that are not the fruit of the Spirit, to come immediately to the surface. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control are not the fruit when a nerve is touched in us.

When there is one thing we lack and someone touches that, we seize up and maybe lash out. Or at least we become embittered. We begin to build walls. Maybe we are too poised and too cool to lash out. We know that would never be acceptable. We instead begin to undermine or to somehow find something to lash back at, some way to get even. Something begins to happen in our heart that is not love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, or gentleness... Those are the things to watch for. Part of the working out of the unsearchable riches of Christ is to find those things where the nerves are touched, the nerves are raw, and it causes a reaction, an act of the sinful nature. It causes jealousy, anger, resentment or any of those other sorts of things, and it begins to well up and to snowball in our hearts.

That’s a really good place to start with God, just as it was with the rich young ruler. In fact, he could not go one step further. Jesus would not relate to him for one moment more until he faced it and dealt with it.

And so it is with us. You face it; you deal with it. “Why don’t I want to go shopping with somebody else?” Not that anybody would ever have to do that every time, or anything like that, but you ask yourself, “Why would I want to waste any of God’s time if I could somehow build into other lives and receive from other lives, even in the mundane things of life?”

One Life

Well, the average person in this world would say, “We don’t have time to build this way in the Kingdom of God.” But we know for a fact, because we have every form of occupation (doctor, lawyer, Indian chief), that *everybody* has the time to build into the Kingdom of God. Seek first the Kingdom, unless you happen to be very prominent or you happen to be very hard working, then you seek that second. Jesus said to every man, to every woman, “Seek *first* the Kingdom of God.” He never asked us to do something we couldn’t do, regardless of our occupation.

So then, what is the secret that unlocks the door of how we might then be able to build together—“whether food or drink,” all the mundane things of life? The secret is to do *all* to the glory of God. How can we then build in such a way that we have intimate relationships—a hundred fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters, as Jesus said we could have? How can we do that when we are sooo busy?

Well, the answer to that question is that we can build together in the mundane things...rather than doing our things separately, and then when we finally have enough time and energy, we bounce off of each other for a brief window of time and then go back to our worlds to work out all of our busy, important things. Maybe our heart is even, “Wow, I can hardly wait to get done with my busy, important things so that I can bounce off of people again for another hour.” That’s the way most people build, and it’s one of these fundamental building blocks. Is it important to do mundane things together? And I answer you: Can you build together, day in and day out, be intimate in life and relationship, see each other in the activities of life, be able to have windows into their soul and them have windows into your soul, can you do *that* without merging your busyness?

I haven’t seen it happen much, if ever, where a person can live his whole life with all of his stuff and then come out of his world to do his spiritual thing and go back. I’ve never seen anyone able to keep it in two worlds and ever prosper in Christ. I’ve never seen it. I’m looking for people that walk with God in an intimate, powerful way, without all kinds of flaws and contradictions in their lives. I only know that people who have merged all

their lives into one, who have truly prospered in Christ and made an impact in people's lives on a daily basis, are in the midst as one who serves.

You don't have enough hours in your day to ignore this administration of the unsearchable riches. This administration is to draw in people on a trip to the post office, on a trip to the bank, on a trip to the store, on my chores and your chores. If we wait until these things are all done, there is not much time left, is there? We can either throw all our chores, business, and errands to the wind, which could be irresponsible, or we can merge our lives into building together in every corner of our lives, that it would all come together as one. The Kingdom of God and the kingdom of this age would not be in competition with one another, but they would become one in our hearts and in our lives. That has to be a priority, lest you find yourself with no time to do what Jesus said is the only thing that will last. This is the call. It's not this mundane extra thing that you do. It really is what *frees* you to do all the other things God has called you to do. When you merge these things in a really special way, good things begin to happen. Where two or three are gathered in My name, there I am. Jesus shows up when you begin to build recognizing the Body of Christ. "I have need of you" as opposed to "I have no need of you" (1Cor. 12).

As we build that way, as we recognize what God recognizes and walk that way, then the flowering of relationship with Him and with one another begins to happen. We cultivate it in the rocky ground of daily life, and He turns beauty from ashes. The ashes of our chores, the ashes of our busy lives, the ashes of our fears and our failures, and the ashes of our responsibilities and all the "important" daily things that we do... He builds beauty out of that if we are willing to humble ourselves and *merge our lives together*.

If you use Jesus as an example, you find Him merging everything of His life. "Christ left you an example, that you should follow in His steps," Peter said. Peter walked with Him every day. Peter knew what he was talking about. John, another one that knew Jesus pretty well, said, "Anyone who claims to be in Christ must walk as He walked." One of the things that characterized his life is that every element of his life was woven into his love for his brothers. You don't see him doing "his thing."

One example that's been pretty prominent recently for a lot of different reasons is when Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane, as we call it. In the most important, most urgent, and most painful moment of His life, the time we would normally say, "Boy, I just have to be alone with God," Jesus brought three people with Him into that garden. And He was willing to interrupt His own prayer three times to go back and talk to these men

who were sleeping. His love for them eclipsed His own agony, His own pain, and His own death sentence that was right in front of Him. He was willing to break what He was doing, even with His Father. I'm not saying it's a competition between the two things; I'm saying it's the *same* thing. He brought brothers, even at this time of total agony and pain, when they couldn't even possibly understand. And they didn't; they fell asleep.

The Key to Knowledge

Yet, that sort of heartfelt commitment to our brothers and sisters is not something to be taken lightly. To some it's a burden. To some it's something to be despised or judged. To those who really want their lives to be whole, in Christ, with one another and with God, it's really good news. For the first time, I can find a way to have time, that "whether food or drink, all would be to the glory of God." Now I can be one person instead of five. "I'm a father; I'm a worker; I'm a taxpayer; I'm a member of this and a member of that, a doer of this and a doer of that, so I have God, family, country, employment..." There are all these weird worlds that we try to figure out how to prioritize. It all ends up being something rather mystical and far off someplace, and the job doesn't get done. But God has brought, as Jesus used this phrase, "the key to knowledge." One of the implications of this phrase is that we don't live two lives. It's all brought into one thing, in the light, together.

Say that somebody walks in on me at work and hears an attitude as I'm on the telephone that they surely wouldn't expect to hear at home. Now I might resent somebody stopping in on me at work, impinging on my freedom and being so indecent as to interrupt my workday. How insensitive! Well, that's not the real problem, is it? The real problem is that I want to live in two worlds, and I don't want light in my life. I don't want to merge my worlds. I don't want to be accountable for my attitudes. I have a nice religious life over here, and everybody knows that I have to do my business over there. "You have to act that way in order to get the job done. That's just the way it works." All of a sudden, I'm a hypocrite. I've lost the key to knowledge. That's why the seemingly small things that touch a nerve actually end up being a road to a glorious relationship with God if we will humble ourselves and listen and pursue to find out why that grates me, why that irritates me. It opens up a whole new world.

We enter the Kingdom with much tribulation. A sword will pierce your own heart. You want to find the real thing? You have to open your heart to be pierced. You have to. There isn't any cute, fancy, or intellectual way

to arrive at it. You have to open up your heart to be pierced, and it will be. You have to be willing to fall on the rock and face some things.

But the benefit, the fruit, the life that flows out of that is beyond your wildest imagination. Listen to Jesus, listen to the Spirit, listen to people around you when you begin to hear some faint echo off in the distance of “this one thing you lack.” Listen for that, because that’s the key to a fabulous new future for you if you are willing to face it.

Keep It Revolutionary

Something that struck a nerve in me was that we could say, “Yes, that’s a good teaching. I’ve heard that before,” and be indifferent to it in our hearts. It was revolutionary in the past. But if we aren’t applying Truth daily, allowing it, even forcing it to pierce our hearts and refine our motives and instincts, we are like the foolish and slothful man in Jesus’ parable. It is a Command to stay white hot with passion and penetrable with Truth at all times. “Keep your zeal, never losing your spiritual fervor.” We should keep our hearts forever fresh before His Throne, so that we could never sit back and say, “Yeah, that was right,” but not apply it to our lives. We must never allow our hearts to harden with lack of fervor and simple joy and obedience so that Truth and discovery that was revolutionary four years ago has been allowed to become mundane to us now. It is a choice as to whether we “plow up the fallow ground” and rototill the “hardened path.”

Something that makes me angrier than just about anything I can think of is somebody doing something just because they are “supposed to.” That person has missed God worse than the person who refuses to do it. You have to keep it revolutionary in your heart by seeing what God’s after. Am I doing this because somebody might think badly of me if I don’t? Am I doing this because everybody else is doing it? Am I doing it because it is fun, or am I doing it because this is a chance to lay down my life for someone? Do I sense that when two or three are in a car going to Wal-Mart, rather than me by myself, that Jesus has agreed to be with us and therefore I want to take full advantage of that?

Let’s use the time to pray because Jesus is here in a more special way than He has been when I’ve gone by myself. He promised He would be there with us when we do it in two’s and three’s. Do I sense that? Do I care about that? Am I more apt to sing in the car? It’s not because it’s a neat thing to do or because I like to sing or anything like that. It’s just that if I really believe what Jesus said is true, I might want to take advantage of that time to do it because it honors Him. He loves that. I want to look at the time,

when there are two or three of us together at a restaurant, as a chance where Jesus has promised a special presence, a special authority, a special leverage with Heaven because we are there together. I want to look at that and say, “How can we make a good opportunity here with one another and with our waiter or waitress?” “How can we use this to glorify God?”

To not see the spiritual reality of it and just do it is sickening to me. I think maybe it's one of the nerves that it touches in someone from the outside who says, “Oh, they do that. Oh, yuck!” What they sense is that perhaps it's possible to do it just as some kind of cheap cliché, and it makes them sick to think about just doing it for the sake of doing it as some sort of social thing. Well, it ought to make them sick. It makes me sick. *Do it because you are looking for spiritual reality and you demand spiritual reality, not just because it's the thing to do.* Go for the real thing. Find out how “whether food or drink to do all to the glory of God.” Find a way for Jesus to be honored in this. Find a way that you can help them to know Jesus better or draw on their life with Jesus to know Him better. Find a way to make that happen. Don't let it be some kind of social junk. Let it be reality, because you demand reality of your own heart and your own spirit. Demand it. Discipline your heart, your mind, and your spirit to see it God's way and to drive into that—not just on a social level. That's ridiculous. I don't even want to do it if that's what it is.

I agree with all the people that don't want anything to do with that if it's ridiculous, external nonsense. I agree with everybody that feels like that's utter nonsense if it's nothing more than just some social cliché or some cutesy way to do things. But if it's real, in the Spirit, if it's an opportunity, if it's a window into their soul and a window into my soul, and leverage with God because He is there with us to do the work of God with one another and with unbelievers, if that's what it is, then I want to take every opportunity to gain that leverage.

Even when I go to the “garden” at the time I'm most likely to be by myself because nobody else could understand, I'm going to bring Peter, James and John with me. I don't want to miss this way that God builds by being lazy or shallow or independent. I don't want just some superficial thing of “I always do this.” That's a terrible way to look at it. Don't do that.

Walking in His Steps

In part, if you make good choices, the people you hang around with are going to impart who they are to you. Simply recognize that it's God's way; it's the way that Jesus lived. Paul continually and constantly had people around

him. You can only find one or two cases in 25 years of Paul's life that's recorded where it looks like he might have been by himself. It just doesn't happen. So you pick up on the pattern, not something to copy for copying's sake, but you can kind of see that there is a way that God builds. It is "we being many are one" not "I like you so I will spend time with you, but it really revolves around me." It doesn't revolve around me. It revolves around US. We being many are one. We see that; we sense it. "I have need of you" is the cry of our hearts because it's the cry of the Holy Spirit (1Cor. 12).

So we agree with God even though we may not feel it like God feels it. In the process of agreeing with God and living like God called us to, like Jesus and others did, we begin to see the fruit of it, the impartation of those that we spend time with. It begins to change us, and we begin to see the value of the way God has called us to live with one another. Maybe we didn't see it in advance. We see that it's true, we see that it's what God wants, but we may not understand the full implication of it until we go there. Like someone said, "Step-by-step You'll lead me."

You kind of know that out there someplace is Jesus in the Heavenly City, the New Jerusalem. You see something out there that you know by God's promise is glorious. You see a hundred fathers, mothers, sisters...a hundred intimate relationships rather than just a hundred next door neighbors that you say "hi" to over a barbecue grill. Instead there are a hundred people who are your life, your heart. You see that this is what God wants. I may not want it myself—"I'm a loner." But I see that there is a Heavenly City out there, whose builder and maker is God. I see Jesus high and lifted up.

I want to be like Him. I am fascinated with Him. I'm allured by His personality, by His wisdom, by His authority, by His grace. I am allured. I'm driven to be like Him. So step-by-step He leads me. He left us an example that we should follow in His steps. So we live His way, and we begin to draw more and more into the reality of His experiences. If you follow in His steps, you begin to see the same scenery that He sees. It begins to register, "Oh, I have it now." As you choose to be with people who are walking with Him, they begin to impart to you the life that's within them, *maybe without even a word.*

If bad company corrupts good character, then good company glorifies character. So you begin to see an example. You begin to see Jesus in them, and "we see in you the beauty of our King." There is a drawing up into the image and likeness of Jesus.

They see things in you that are standing in the way of your experiencing Jesus. You didn't even know you were like that. You didn't know that you

had a short temper, or you never thought about the fact that you were impatient or that you were overly consumed with some area of worldliness. It never crossed your mind. You were innocent in the sense that you never thought about it, but you were guilty in the sense that it's keeping you from God without you even knowing it. So, you put yourself in situations where you are with people who are walking with Him, and someone says, "Hey, that's really not the way to respond to a co-worker. That's not really the right attitude towards an employer or an employee."

As the worlds begin to merge, you can begin to find the things that are separating you from God. As the nerves are touched, you find a way to draw closer to Jesus. But if you don't put yourself in that situation, then you may never understand what it is that God has for those who walk with Him. It will just be something hypothetical forever, and you have shortchanged yourself by not walking in His steps.

"Well, I don't understand it entirely." Do I walk in something before I fully understand it? Well, the answer is this question: "Is it really God's way?" If the answer to "Is it God's way?" is "Yes," then you *do* walk in it before you understand it.

There are a lot of things that Jesus said that I didn't understand at all ten years ago that I do understand now. And, there are still some things that I don't understand very well about what Jesus said. But I trust that He is where I want to be, and I need to walk in His steps in order to get where He is. I don't have to have a perfect comprehension of it nor totally understand or agree with it theoretically in order to know that if I go this way, I will begin to get what Jesus has. If I understood it perfectly, then I would already have it, wouldn't I?

Being a disciple means changing. It means letting go of some things and embracing other things that I'm not already doing. It means you walk in His ways, and you embrace what He embraces and reject what He rejects, even if your flesh says something different. As you acquaint yourself with the ways, the teachings, the life of Jesus and the administration of His life, as you walk in those things and are in agreement with those things, then you begin to see what He sees and it changes you from the inside. You begin to then say, "Oh, now I get it." Then you become very convicted and supportive of things that previously sounded obnoxious to you, or at least trivial.

You begin to see the importance of it. You begin to see, as you get in the middle of life, people who kill themselves spiritually with some of these so-called trivial things that lead to death. Someone takes on a second job, and

everyone says, “Well, they don’t really need the money, but hey, what’s the problem with working a second job till all hours of the night? It’s America; they can do what they want.” That’s true; they can. But who warned them that they were saturating their life with people in the world and saturating their time with an effort to make money? Who saw that would result in a spiritual obituary for them? Now you would not let someone die without throwing your body in front of them.

You learn over time to watch for things that sound trivial and you would have accepted as a normal way of life. You begin to see that there is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death. You throw your body in front of it. Even if they spit on you and step on you, you have to try. The experience of being in the middle of life begins to mold our convictions. People who are far away, who are not in the middle of life, and who have distanced themselves from walking as Jesus walked, base their convictions only on things in their own minds and on their own opinions. There is no basis for understanding God’s ways when you are somewhere else.

If I’m outside the house trying to speculate about what might be in the kitchen on the front burner, I’m foolish because I don’t know. I have to go in the house to see what’s on the front burner. I have to smell it. I have to touch it. I have to taste it. I have to be there in order to have a real conviction about what’s on the front burner. How foolish of me to speculate and form opinions and judgments about something when I’m not even in the house! So what I would say is to go in the House, walk in His steps. Go where He went. Follow His teachings. Live out His life. Sacrifice. Do what He said. Walk around, and then you will see what He sees. It will make sense to you. Your convictions will form as you see people live, as you see people die.

You won’t have to interpret Scriptures based on your mind anymore. You can experience the Life that wrote those Scriptures, and you will understand it. This, in part, is the meaning of John 7 where Jesus said, “You want to know who I am and where I came from? Do what I said.” This, in part, is the meaning of where Paul said, “The pillar and foundation of truth is the Ekklesia.” The Life becomes the light of men. I want to have light about where I am going, about what I am doing. The life becomes the light of men. Live it and see what you then understand about it. Don’t speculate and judge and make decisions externally. GO LIVE IN IT! Go in the house and taste what’s on the front burner. Then you have the right to have a conviction about it.

Until then, our challenge as disciples is to be explorers. You don't understand something? "Go find out the meaning of these things" is what Jesus said. That's what He is calling us to do. Go stick your head in the window and look around. Don't just stand outside and form judgments. Go in. Experiment. Sit on the couch. Bounce on the bed. Taste what's on the front burner. Go in and live Jesus' life and see if that doesn't allow convictions to form in you that you thought were ridiculous. You couldn't see it. You didn't understand it. Why not? It's because the *Life* becomes the *Light* of men. You have to risk. You have to go forward and experience Life in order to understand the writings of Life, namely the Scriptures.

Building Relationships With One Another

I recently read a letter that I had gotten from someone several years ago. It was, to me, a demonstration of the love of someone who loved me very much. It was someone who risked, who threw himself out in front of a car for me, who dared enough to come in my front door and tell me that whatever is on this front burner stinks. "It's burning and you better take it off the stove. You better get it right and see me within the next two days so we can talk about your recipe." What it stirred in me, which has been a theme in my mind over the last few months, is that I am convinced that the hardest thing I will ever have to do on this earth, the hardest thing that I will ever have to work on, is how to build a relationship. That is absolutely the hardest thing that God is asking me to do with regard to walking in the light, opening my life up, and being with people. It is hard to find ways and strive for ways to be creative and unique in spending time with people. I am absolutely convinced there is nothing on the face of this planet that is harder to do.

If you question that, look around at your own life, look around at the people you work with. You'll see a lot of busyness and a lot of other things going on. They go home at night, close their doors, they are by themselves, and there is *nothing*. I say that because it's true if in fact we are not seeking ways to build our lives with one another and seeking how to build those relationships. It's true. If we're not living out Scriptures about how the gates of hell will not prevail against the Church, the people of God, and the relationships that we have, it's not "church." "It's not the steeple. It's not the organization. It's the people." But it's not even the people. It's the *relationships that people have with one another* that's going to stand the test of time in those last days.

Here is the bigger picture of all that: If we are not building relationship with one another, if we are not striving to turn every corner, to turn over every stone for one another, to expose all of these things out of love and throw ourselves in front of moving vehicles for one another, if we are not doing it for those we can see right now, we are probably not doing it for our relationship with Jesus, either. You need to see that if you are not doing it with the people who live next door or the people that you bump into as you are doing laundry, then you are probably not doing it for your relationship with Jesus.

Just the practicality of living very close to each other is that you can't even go out your door without running into someone that you know. We can't ignore that or take it for granted and not see it as a very special thing God's given us. If we don't work hard at trying to build those relationships, we probably aren't working any harder and probably are working *less* in our relationship with God.

I say that because I'm convinced that there are very few things that are lasting in this world, that are tangible, that are real, that are worth it. Relationships are right there at the top, because when we stand before Jesus, the thing that is going to separate us from the rest of the world is the fact that we had a relationship together, and we worked at building a relationship with Jesus. It's not going to have anything to do with all the good things we did for the "church," like buying sound systems, giving money and doing all these other neat things. The fact of the matter is that those who stand before Jesus are going to be judged by whether they strove to build a relationship with Him and to hear His voice. Did they strive to have the same relationship with Jesus as He had with His Father, saying everything the Father says, doing everything the Father does? That's really going to be the measure of time. It will affect our eternal life if we are not putting into practice relationship building in the seen life, in the here and now.

It is building toward the eternal, and it does affect the eternal unseen. It's hard. When you are alone and you are separate from the people of God, you tend to struggle. You tend to spiral down and to get depressed. Imaginations come in, or you withdraw—any number of things happen. There is something about "safety in numbers." There is something in the spiritual realm that is unique about people who bind themselves together based on relationship and caring for one another and loving one another.

I don't ever want to take that for granted, but I also know that it's not going to come easily. It's going to cost me everything. I'm going to have to pay the price. But it's the only thing that's going to last. The only thing we

are going to be judged on in the last days is if we knew Him or not. The way you'll know Him is through the people in the Church who you live next door to, the people who you work with who are Believers willing to walk in the light, who are willing to lay down their lives, who are willing to strive to care about one another and to really pull out all the stops to see not only Christ formed in them but Christ formed in you also. Keep pursuing that path, and do what it takes to make that happen.

A River

One way to view relationships is “We are going to dinner at ‘so and so’s’ house. I’m going to go there and find out how things are going. During the afternoon, I’m going to do laundry with ‘so and so’ or go to the store with them to see how they are doing.” That happens frequently. But we need to take a step back, and before that happens, have the interaction with God, the transaction with God of “God, what is going on with this person? I’ve seen him. He lives close enough to me that I do know of different things he struggles with. I do know that he is married, etc. How can I make this time something of You? How can I make it be made of the deep things of God? How can I mine out those things? How can I dig for those things?” I guess turning the corner came when I realized that I will find out by asking God *first*. My mindset was that I visit with the people first and spend time there. But then I would always come away very frustrated because I thought the time was shallow and that it didn’t mean anything. A lot of the time it was because I didn’t have the interaction with God, the time before God in prayer, asking Him on a daily basis about the people around me, the co-worker for instance. Again, turning the corner was asking God, asking Jesus about the person *before* the dinners happened or *before* going to the store. It was considering ahead of time instead of just going into it.

It wouldn’t even be just “I’m about to go to dinner, so let me spend some time in prayer asking God about this dinner we are about to have.” If the air I breathe is to be praying for others, caring for them, and loving them, then there is a flow of life as I am laying down my life all the time for everyone that I can get anywhere near. It’s not even so mechanical as “Oops, I shouldn’t talk to you. I haven’t talked to God yet.” It’s not like that. It’s a life that is saturated with loving and praying and caring for others. It’s being consumed with zeal for the Father’s House, as Jesus would put it, which allows us to be able to flow into those things. You are not bouncing off of individual, mechanical situations and then wondering what to do

with it when you get there. It's your whole life and heart, and it just flows from one thing to the other. It's an accumulative effect.

There have been times when I would say to someone, "I reached a conclusion in prayer this morning about this situation."

And they said, "Well, we just talked about that last week, and a couple of weeks before that."

"You're right. But it wasn't until I was praying this morning that it emerged as a firm conclusion. It was a series of things as I kept trying to align my life with God, and He allowed me to see a little more and a little more. Step-by-step He led me, and all of a sudden, Boom! I was there. I thought of it as being the first time I really realized this, but I looked back on it, and God was building this conviction into me through other circumstances. Now it finally all jelled. Now I understand. It's like that in this situation, too."

God leads us step-by- step. We hear something; we see something; we pray; we feel something; we think about something... It's just a cumulative effect to where our life is hidden in Christ. We desperately love righteousness, love the Father and love everyone else to love the Father. So when it's time for dinner, it's not any problem. It's not jumping from one thing to another. "Oops, I can't jump from one thing to another. I'd better pray first." It's a life that's like that. By all means, pray first, too. But it's a flow; it's a river. It's not jumping from lake to lake. It's a river that moves. There's a dynamic to it.

Seeing the Unseen

In order to do anything that's worthwhile, that will have a permanent change and eternal benefit to it, the actions we take, the words we say and the thoughts we think must be motivated by seeing something in the unseen world. We've all heard 100 times that Jesus didn't say anything He didn't hear the Father saying, and He didn't do anything He didn't see the Father doing. Well, where's the Father? The Father is in the unseen. Jesus had direct connection all the time with that. I dare say there is not one person who really loves God and who really wants to follow Jesus heart, soul, mind and strength who wouldn't do anything to have that constant relationship.

Just imagine what your life would be like if you knew that every word you said and everything you did were exactly what the Father was doing and saying. You could walk with such peace, with confidence, with surety, with no fear of retaliation or what anybody would say or do to you. It would be

tremendous. You would never make a mistake. You'd get killed, but OH, what a way to go! The point is: How did Jesus heal five and walk by two, then heal one more and ignore the rest of the group? How did He heal anybody at any point in time? There was no right or wrong.

If we are able to see into the unseen, if we see eternal things, if seeing those things is what motivates us to do the practical things, then we are on the right track. If you can get a picture in your mind of someone eternally burning in the fires of hell, it will motivate you to do something in the practical about it. We have to see in the unseen if we are to be seated with Jesus in Heavenly Realms. If we see our lives from that vantage point, then certainly that has to be what motivates us to work these things out, to build these relationships. We have to see that it's more than just becoming good friends with one another and having common things to do together, or even times in the car singing and praying. We have to see that in the unseen world we are doing damage to satan. We are tearing down his kingdom and we are ushering in the things that Jesus died for. And the thing Jesus died for is a people who are being prepared, a people who are spotless and pure.

It talks in the Old Testament about the Israelites never entering His rest. That rest is being in a position where you know what God is saying and you know what God is doing. That's where the rest of God is. That's where the peace comes from. That's why Jesus could move through the countryside or through masses of people. He was at rest all the time. He was never frantic, never frazzled, and never worried. There was peace. There was rest. We need to learn to nurture that and see that in the unseen.

We need to let those unseen things motivate us to see that we need to spend time with one another. We need to come out of our closets of selfishness and fear and whatever else might motivate us to be separate from one another and not build those relationships. If we can see that, then we are on the right path to making the permanent changes that please Jesus and destroy the devil's foothold in lives. When we live for Jesus, we will love to impact one other for Him, and we will also then see change in ourselves. "Do you really love Me? Then FEED MY SHEEP."

The Consistency of Life

Monday Morning, October 22, 2001

A dinner conversation with some Saints from a few thousand miles away.... Here's part of it, joined "in progress" ☺

For our children, the "quality of life" must be the same—from the moment they get up, to the moment they fall asleep. Their lives shouldn't be compartmentalized, as is so common in both the cultural religious world, and the world at large. To many, sad to say, it seems "normal" that the home provides for one part of their children's lives, the 'church' provides for another part, and the schools provide for something else.

The quality of life needs to be the same for our children, from the moment they get up to the moment they fall asleep. Their friends shouldn't change (pagan buddies here, and youth group buddies there, and neighborhood pals here, and sports league friends there). The children's attitudes shouldn't be allowed to change, depending on their environment and their allegiances and desires. The things they do and the things they value shouldn't be like flipping channels on a television—from one department of their life to another. "*Every man must be very careful how he builds!*" saith the Lord. Authority issues, affections, conversations (heard and unheard), habits, friendships... all things must be built in consistency, if we are doing our Job with the trusts Father has placed before us, together. "Oh, come on, Mom! EVERYBODY is doing it! Why are you *CONTROLLING* me?! Let me just go this one time! Trust me!" How easily will you allow yourself to be emotionally blackmailed, duped by satan, and trash your children's lives by your foolish or naïve or lazy responses and lack of discernment? And *most* of the issues *only come up*—because most are building so poorly in the first place. If you throw a child into a piranha pool to "sink or swim"—what do YOU think will happen?

We *can* build GOD'S Way, and avoid so many of the pitfalls. But it will cost you your life. YOU will have to LOSE it, in order to find it—for yourself and your offspring and responsibilities.

NOW! Catch this. The same is true for the men. “I go to work and that’s my first world. I come home and I’m with my family and that’s my second world. And, then I go to a ‘church’ meeting and that’s my third world.” It shouldn’t be like that. That’s the destruction of our adult men. Their destruction is that they live in three worlds ... or maybe four if they have a recreational or sports life with buddies that they go off and play racquetball, tennis, or whatever with. (And, pathetic as it sounds, many have made an “internet world” with invisible snuffle-uffa-guss “friends”—and zero accountability. It is a counterfeit; far too often an oozing throat culture of gossip, slander, foolish opinion, bully pulpit, and foulness of many kinds. And that is just the “christian” forums, chat rooms, and discussion lists. Think how bad the others are!) But, if a brother is living the same, from the moment he gets up to the moment he goes to sleep, then he is not going to have three different sets of friends and three different worlds. There are going to be brothers that are part of his work situation. Even if no one works directly with him, brothers are still going to be there—because any Solid brother will be introducing his co-workers to brothers at lunch and after-hours. He will do *whatever it takes* to merge his “worlds.” It will be a free flow—not totally isolated, different worlds. Never will a valid man of God slump into the philosophy, “Ok, this is my family time, this is my family night. This is my this night and my that night. My workday. My non-work day. My weekends ... well, I’ve gotta get all caught up on my housework because I had to work all week. So, as soon as that’s done, then I’ll get with my christian friends, maybe, as long as I’m not too tired. My work friends. My church friends. My church day. My day off. My free time. My vacation. My possessions. My biological possessions.”

All these different worlds! Blah! Jesus was *not* that way, and STILL IS NOT! And HE can never truly be found by those who are living that way. “How CAN two walk together, unless they be in agreement?!” “EVERYONE who claims to live in Him—must walk as Jesus walked.”

And for our children? If they have a “church” world and a home life and a school life and whatever, we are mis-raising them, and mis-representing Father’s Kingdom to them. It’s just not God’s Way. And it shouldn’t be a surprise, if you have raised them this way and lived this way, that the statistics quoted by religious leaders come to pass—You will lose 75% of your children to the world, “sowing their wild outs” to the disgrace of the Lamb of God, trampling His Blood, as well as (statistically in the “churches”) lose 50% of your marriages. And those are just the visible things—and the product of man’s way of building our families and lives and “church world.”

Good Building is a Big Part of the Answer

It's natural for the flesh to do all of that compartmentalizing. That's precisely why, unless the Lord builds the House, its builders build in vain. The way we build in our daily lives amongst the church (Acts 2:42-47, Heb. 3:12-14, Mk. 10:29-30, etc) takes about 80 or 90 percent of the variables out of the picture, as we said. Our flesh would find a hiding place in our minds and hearts and "devotions"—unless we build well. We'll get twisted and perverted, even with our best intentions (God PROMISED—Heb. 3:12-14) unless we build well. The Lord's House "is build with Wisdom." If we build well (His Way, as in the Scriptures just mentioned), then 80 or 90 percent of the variables are resolved in God's Wisdom, and God's Light (1Jn. 1:2-2:6, John 3:19-21): God's Habitat. 80 or 90 percent of the temptations and the frustrations and the odd relationships that could result in disaster—just disperse or are resolved to the Praise of His Glory. Then, with the last 10 percent, we are left just dealing with the hearts of those involved—not the confusion and contradictions that are the product of poor building. Mysteries and invisible things come up perpetually when we build according to the traditions of men. If our lives and "church involvement" are defined by creature comfort and worldly religious "attendance" schemes—rather than daily LIFE, "as we rise up, as we sit down, as we walk along the Way" (Acts 2:42-47)—we are BEGGING for trouble in our children, and every area of our own lives. And the problems, some fatal, should come as NO surprise, if we persist in lazy, undiscerning parenting—and other poor building practices with ADULT men and women. We must not be "unaware of satan's devices!" If we Build HIS Way (please READ those Scriptures again!)—90% of tragedies can be avoided, and most of the other 10% effectively Redeemed, for the Glory of the Son.

Sanitizing Our Hearts, “Conscious of GOD”

Tuesday Afternoon, April 30, 2002

A visit from Kinetico Water an hour ago reminds me of an Essential Spiritual point... I asked the serviceman what prompted their new policy of always sanitizing the tanks whenever they change the filters. I said, “Is it because you’ve found bacteria levels to be too high if you don’t sanitize also?” He said, “Wellllll, yeah, that too I guess.” I said, “That too, and what?” He said, “Welll, the factory warranty demands that we do it now.”

I thought, “You know, that’s so pathetic and is a major SPIRITUAL danger for some we know, too.” Kinetico doesn’t sanitize because there’s bacteria that could make people sick. THEY sanitize because it might void a factory warranty if they don’t. And, far WORSE, some people don’t ask for help, or get input or open their lives or be with people BECAUSE IT PLEASES GOD. They do it because their wife hassled them into it, or they don’t want to get any questions from anyone, or they want to be able to say, “Yeah, I already talked to so and so” (having given them half the information and USED them to justify their own end). Wouldn’t that be PATHETIC if anyone ever did such a heinous thing? Nah, no one would do that.... xoxoxo