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## Introduction

The following scripture has proved to be life- changing for me.

“Because you did not serve the Lord your God with *joy* and gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things therefore you shall serve your enemies...”

Deuteronomy 28:47

Truly it is not enough just to serve God, to be faithful, loyal and steadfast, but we are to *enjoy* our walk with God.

For our life to have an influence on others, we must have a relationship with God that we are enjoying and not enduring. If not, we are missing the point of the gospel that Jesus redeemed us from sin, bringing us back into fellowship with the Father. Those who are lost are searching for the inexpressible joy that we Christians are to have.

The days ahead for the Christian are going to be the most glorious in history. God is going to show His power through those who are spiritually hungry and purposing to follow Him fully.

“Paul said, ‘For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in (miraculous) power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance...’”

I Thessalonians 1:5.

1

Fellowship with God Makes Satan Tremble

“Draw me after you and let us run together...We will rejoice in you and be glad; We will extol your love more than wine... ”

Song of Solomon 1:4, NAS.

“I found out you eat all the devil’s food.” I heard these inaudible, but distinct words as I was going off to sleep. I knew this was the voice of the Lord to me, although the meaning was not clear.

Later that night, I found out. I woke up and was walking down the hall when I fainted. My wife heard the crash and came running. Several minutes later, I came around.

The next day an appointment was scheduled with the doctor, who had little success in explaining to me what happened. But God had already told me. I was abusing my body by eating junk food and living under stress. Having just returned from some out-of-state speaking engagements, I had pushed my body to the limit by eating in fast-food restaurants and drinking caffeinated drinks continually. The devil had not made me faint, but my disobedience in eating the wrong foods had put my health in great danger.

Pondering the sentence God had spoken to my spirit, I rejoiced. Oh, how I appreciated the wisdom of God! He was revealing to me Satan’s trap for me, although I had not even asked. The loving hand of God was even more clear to me. Who can comprehend His love for us? Whatever concerns us concerns God (Psalm 138:8). He hears before we ask!

This one sentence changed my life. Not only did I learn to avoid certain foods, but the Holy Spirit plainly revealed to me many foods that would build my strength and bring me in good health once again. My part was to obey and follow His wisdom. Our body is His temple. Why should it be filled with the devil’s food?

Fellowship is the Key to Victory

The secret to success in the Christian life is to fall in love with Jesus. Have a love affair with Him! He will make your life easier, not harder. God is not a hard master, the devil is. The Holy Spirit is our Helper. He is available to help us on all matters, large or small.

Jesus came into the world not to save us for heaven, but to redeem us from sin and into fellowship with God. God wants fellowship with us! He will help us manage our lives, whether it is in job-hunting, finding a mate, shopping or even decorating our home.

Let yourself enjoy the sweet Holy Spirit. He is a problem solver, a trouble-saver, and a life-giver.

“Now all things are of God who has reconciled us to

*Himself...*”

II Corinthians 5:18.

God has always desired fellowship with man.

“You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I

bore you on eagle’s wings and brought you to  
*Myself*”

Exodus 19:4.

God walked with Adam in the cool of the day before the fall (Genesis 3:8). Sin broke that fellowship separating man from God. The blood of Jesus was shed as an atonement for sin to bring us back into fellowship with God.

“Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to

*Himself* through Jesus Christ...”

II Corinthians 5:18.

## The Devil is not Afraid of You

The devil does not tremble when we say the right phrases, quote the right cliches, the right preachers, and know some Greek words. He fears only when our life is submitted to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you”

James 4:7.

The first step in spiritual authority is submitting to the authority of God.

Submitting to God is coming into fellowship with Him. When our fellowship with God is intimate, Satan flees defeated.

## Seek Fellowship With God

I was alone in the church praying one afternoon. The presence of the Lord was so intense and it was easy to find expression to God. The words of commitment flowed freely from my lips and I prayed, "Lord, it doesn't matter if I'm ever recognized before people, because all I want to do is please You." Little did I realize how abruptly the Lord would take me at my word!

A few days following that glorious time in prayer, I attended a regional meeting of a large Christian organization. I had worked with them for years, being faithful to help and support them through many difficulties. Even on this Saturday, I helped them secure special equipment they needed for this meeting.

I could not believe my ears when they had other people recognized who had given much less service, but not once was I acknowledged, or called upon to pray.

At first I felt devastated and angry, but quickly the Holy Spirit brought back to my memory the prayer I had prayed. Immediately I repented, realizing this was *His* doing. The hurt and disappointment left. The closeness of the presence of the Lord was very real. I was experiencing the fellowship of His sufferings through this rejection (Philippians 3:10).

A month later this same organization called upon me to serve with them in a higher office. I felt very honored, but when I prayed about accepting the position, the Lord would not release me. However, within weeks, they began to ask me to speak at their gatherings, which I would not have been able to do, had I been holding an office with them. The Lord always has a wonderful plan if we are willing to fellowship with Him, no matter what people do or say.

## Real Prayer is Agreeing with God

Prayer does not have to be lengthy, but to the point of knowing that your heart is in agreement with the Spirit of God. Therefore, much of prayer is to seek the mind of God. When you and God are in agreement (not just your

head, but settled in your heart) things happen!

Many prayers go unanswered because we find ourselves saying religious things that we think God wants us to say, rather than cutting through all the superficial garbage and getting to the point. God is refreshed when we simply get to the point! Sometimes it is as simple as saying, “God, You are smarter than

I, so reveal Your plan in this situation.” Then listen.

Plead guilty. Do not waste time justifying yourself. “Let God be true and every man a liar” Romans 3:4. God knows our hearts anyway, so why should we waste time trying to justify ourselves? When we plead guilty and repent, we can start fresh with God.

## What is Our Weakness?

Although we all have weaknesses, God says we have one major weakness. We do not know how to pray!

“Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses (infirmities). For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered”

Romans 8:26.

Learning how to pray will solve more problems than all other remedies. Pray in the Spirit.

“Now He who searches the hearts knows what the *mind of the Spirit* is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God”

Romans 8:27.

Only the Spirit knows the mind of God (1 Corinthians 2:11). The mind of God will solve our problems. Yielding ourselves to praying in the Spirit will help us find the mind of God.

Paul told the Ephesians to pray in the Spirit for all the saints (Ephesians 6:18). How can we pray for all the saints unless it is through the Holy Spirit?

## God Hears Desperate Prayers

I was in a northern city to speak at a convention, but I was too tired to minister. I had preached twice in less than twenty-four hours. The meeting was just a few hours away, but the long drive had worn me out. I lay on the motel bed in desperation and cried out to God for help and wisdom. As I prayed in the Holy Spirit, the Lord spoke one phrase to me, “No lion shall be there.” Perking up, I grabbed my Bible to find that familiar sounding phrase.

I quickly found it in Isaiah 35:9.

“No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast go upon it; It shall not be found there. But the redeemed shall walk there.”

I was encouraged. God was telling me that there would be no satanic resistance in the meeting. (It is common to fight satanic resistance to the Word of God going forth and the gifts of the Spirit operating.) I went to the meeting in fresh strength, knowing that God was going before me. Not once in the entire evening did I feel the resistance of satanic power and unbelief. Many were healed and ministered to. God does more when we are weak, it seems, than when we feel strong. “...My strength is made perfect in weakness” 2 Corinthians 12:9.

Jesus always healed the desperate. He never turns His back when we truly cry out to Him.

I learned something that night. There is a place in God where the pulls and temptations of the flesh as well as the onslaught of the enemy cannot touch us. It is a realm in God. At times I know I am in that place, yet other times it is obvious that I am not in His presence to that extent. But it is possible to stay in the Spirit and to live in the Spirit! A goal we must all desire! “Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you” James 4:8. Guaranteed.

Loneliness: From Whom?

Where do lonely feelings come from? The devil? Ourselves? God gives us the feeling of loneliness at times to get our attention to seek His face! To get our attention, He creates a desire for fellowship deep within us that only *He* can fill. Often I have misinterpreted these empty feelings by filling them



with phone calls, television, magazines, and movies—but all the time God was desiring my attention.

Now I've learned to respond by praying when I feel these feelings. It is important to get alone with God, even if it is only for a few minutes. God is calling us to fellowship. He wants to speak to us. Do not blow it by calling someone else to fellowship with when He is personally calling you.

“Is any among you afflicted (not referring to a sickness)? *Let him pray*”

James 5:13.

Do you have a problem? God is calling you to prayer. Don't get more wrapped up in the problem, give it immediately to God.

David responded quickly to the Lord, “When you said, ‘Seek My face’ my heart said to You, ‘Your face, Lord, I will seek’” Psalm 27:8.

## God is Speaking a Fresh Word

For too long some Christian leaders have vigorously worked to build the kingdom of God without listening to the voice of the Lord. Yet the warning from the Lord has been clear. “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it” Psalm 127:1.

There is a new hunger for God. Deep in our innermost being is a cry that is saying, “God, have Your way. Use me the way *You* want to.”

Before God moves, people must *want* Him to move. There must be an earnest desire and a crying out. “For as soon as Zion travailed she gave birth to her children” Isaiah 66:8. Many have felt an awkwardness and a frustration, but this is merely the Church in pregnancy!

Places where I used to speak, that at one time would have been satisfied with a testimony, are now saying, “Whatever God tells you to do, do it,

because we want the Spirit to move!”

What we have called the harvest, God is only calling the laborers. He is raising up spiritual “moms and dads” that will be spiritually mature to minister to the multitudes that will be brought in through this new wave of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

The Church with unity of desire must cry out for a demonstration of the Spirit of God. That which satisfied at one time will satisfy no more.

“And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in *demonstration of the Spirit and of power.*”

1 Corinthians 2:4.

It’s a new day!

2

We've Been Paralyzed Too Long

"For God has not given us the spirit of fear (timidity or paralyzation), but of power and of love and of a sound mind"

2 Timothy 1:7.

When our son was about ten months old, I was proud that his first word was "daddy." He would repeat it over and over again at home. One Sunday night after I'd finished preaching, I called several people over as I held him perched in my arm. "Say daddy!" I told him. "Say daddy!" He casually looked at me and everyone that was standing around us. Since he was determined to remain silent, one by one everyone slowly walked away until I was standing alone. When we got into the car and were driving home, all I heard was "Daddy-daddy-daddy-daddy-daddy." I felt like saying, "It's too late now, buster, there's no one here to hear you."

Through this experience the Lord spoke to me about the Body of Christ. We have been paralyzed with timidity! We don't speak up for the Lord when it counts. It is not that we don't wish to speak up, but we are frozen with fear. We've become paralyzed.

As a pastor, I continually dealt with people who would come up after a service to report a glorious "word" or prophecy that God had given them, but that they were too timid to give during the service. Almost without exception, their "word" would have tied in marvelously with the specific meeting and the message the Lord was conveying. God would have been so glorified had they yielded. However, just like our son who wouldn't say "Daddy," they did

not open their mouth until it was too late.

As an evangelist, I have experienced countless times when someone would “pop up” after a service to say he had been miraculously healed during the service. Although anyone receiving a miracle had been urged to testify, he had given in to shyness and timidity. Had he spoken publicly what God had done for him, no doubt it would have ignited faith in others.

A good, concise definition of timidity is pride. Pride keeps us from giving what God gives us because pride says, “I’ll look like a fool.” Or, “What if it doesn’t sound right?” Truthfully in protecting our pride, which wears the cloak of timidity, we quench the Holy Spirit. But God is freeing us from our paralysis.

The way to be free from Spirit-quenching paralysis is simply to obey God. The way to *stay* free is to continue to obey God. Obedience takes us over the threshold of unbelief and into faith. God says we are too easily bound by the sin of fear and unbelief. “...Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us...” Hebrews 12:1.

With Jesus asleep in the boat, a great storm came up. The disciples, waking Him, said, “Lord save us!” His answer was a surprising one. He did not thank them for waking Him up, but said to them, “Why are you fearful (timid), O you of little faith?” Matthew 8:26. Then He rebuked the winds and the sea which resulted in great calm. Before He rebuked the storm, He rebuked the disciples for being paralyzed with fear and unbelief!

Jesus always treated fear and unbelief ruthlessly, never showing mercy toward it. So should we. But too easily we doubt our faith and embrace our unbelief.

### Paralyzed Without the Bad News

A popular television talk show host interviewed three prominent “born-again” Christians. During the interview he asked them to sing the gospel song,

*Amazing Grace.* Without any accompaniment they sang, “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me...” That is as far as they got. The host interrupted them, saying, “But I am not a wretch, I’m a nice guy.” He continued to emphasize his point, as millions of viewers listened, that he was not a wretch.

For the first time I saw the reason why some reject the good news of the gospel. Before we can receive the good news, we have to first hear the bad news!!

Good, sincere, well-meaning people are often the most difficult to lead to Christ. They have not had an understanding of the bad news. The bad news is that all have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory (Romans 3:23). Before we can accept the good news of a Saviour, we have to learn the bad news that we are lost in sin.

Even after knowing Jesus Christ, we still continually have to receive the bad news as well as the good news. As God is performing changes within us, He shows us our self-centeredness and unyielded flesh. As Paul said, “...in my flesh nothing good dwells...” Romans 7:18. But as God shows us our need for change, He holds the good news of His power to change us.

“Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ”

Philippians 1:6.

## Paralyzed No More

A well-known evangelist who passed on a number of years ago, was approached by a person complaining of his methods of ministering to people who came for prayer. As the man complained, he asked how he would do it. The person said, “I don’t know.” The evangelist replied, “I like my way better.” Obviously he recognized that walking in the light that he had was better than doing nothing.

As I travel, I minister in churches full of wonderful, but “paralyzed” people. This spiritual paralysis is usually caused from being over-fed. As with after a heavy meal, one feels a grogginess and a listlessness, so too many have heard much teaching (but without direct application to their lives)

and as a result, they are too sluggish to respond to the moving of the Holy Spirit. Their spirit is dull of hearing because of their spiritually-overweight condition.

As the Spirit moves, an attitude “It’s fine if He does and it’s fine if He doesn’t” is prevalent and this lack of desire prevents God from manifesting Himself.

But God is moving with a fresh outpouring of His Spirit. If we are not prepared and listening to Him, we will be useless. There is an urgent command by the Spirit of God saying, “Get ready. Be set free from your paralysis!”

### Joy Beyond The Giants

“Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who *for the joy that was set before Him* endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”

Hebrews 12:2.

Jesus had a giant before Him, the cross. But He saw the joy beyond the cross, man redeemed and restored to fellowship with God.

We too have a cross before us, but not to be physically crucified. Our selfish will must die that we might unite with the purpose of God. When our will conflicts with the will of God, we meet the cross and we get crossed out.

God commands us to rejoice. Joy is on the other side of our cross! When we look beyond the struggle of letting go of our will, the joy of seeing God in control of our lives is before us.

Joy follows every trial. James said,

“My brethren, count it all *joy* when you fall into various trials knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience”

James 1:2-3.

Why should we rejoice in the midst of trials? Because there is a promotion following! Few enjoy taking a test, but without a test, there is not a promotion to the next grade.

### Giants in the Land

Moses sent twelve spies (two believers and ten doubters) into the land of Canaan to spy it out. Joshua and Caleb did not deny that there were giants in the land, but they saw *beyond* the giants—the joy of possessing the land! The other ten spies refused to

rejoice in their possibility because they dreaded the giants. Some people today can only see the negative and refuse to look beyond the present circumstance to see what God has for them. But Joshua and Caleb had confidence in the goodness of God.

“If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, ‘a land which flows with milk and honey’”

Numbers 14:8.

God gave them a tangible demonstration of what they could have if they looked beyond the giants. Of all the possibilities for a souvenir to bring back with them, they brought back a huge cluster of grapes. The cluster was so large that it had to be carried on a pole between the two men (Number 13:23.). Grapes always represent the new wine, which is the joy of the Lord! What was beyond the giants? Joy! And a huge amount.

Joshua and Caleb’s proclamation to the people was,

“Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the Lord is with us. Do not fear them”

Numbers 14:9.

1. Do not rebel against the Lord. Rebellion was giving in to the spirit of hopelessness and refusing to exert authority and take the land.

2. Nor fear the people of the land. The fear of people has thwarted the effectiveness of potentially great men more than any other thing. Fear reveals a lack of confidence in God. “...But He that fears is not made perfect in love” 1 John 4:18.

3. They are our bread. Joshua and Caleb were saying, “We’re going to eat their lunch.” Conquering the enemy will be as sure as eating a meal.

4. Their protection has departed from them. The Church needs to know that Satan has no power but to lie. God has removed the protection that Satan thought he had. “Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it” Colossians 2:15.

5. The Lord is with us. What is there to fear when the presence of God is all around? “In Your presence is fulness of joy...” Psalm 16:11.

6. Do not fear them. This is a command. God wants us to have a greater



fear of Him than man. “Sever yourselves from such a man, whose breath is in his nostrils; For of what account is he?” Isaiah 2:22.

But the people chose to rebel. Their answer to Joshua and Caleb’s confidence in God was, “Stone them with stones” (v. 10). Some people have been miserable for so long that they have joy in their misery. Rejoicing makes them mad. I wonder how they will like heaven.

Caleb had the type of heart that God is looking for in every Christian.

“But My servant Caleb, because he has *a different spirit* in him and has followed me *fully*, him I will bring into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it”

Numbers 14:24.

Joy is on the other side of every cross. Therefore God commands us to rejoice in the midst of circumstances. Jesus beheld joy beyond the cross. Joshua and Caleb saw joy (grapes) beyond the giants. James saw rejoicing in the midst of trials, resulting in the fruit of the Spirit. David said, “Weeping may endure for the night (darkest hour) but joy comes in the morning” Psalm 30:5. Jesus said,

“A woman, when she is in labor has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for *joy* that a human being has been born into the world”

John 16:21.

To the Hebrews the Holy Spirit said,

“Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it”

Hebrews 12:11.

We are the victorious Church going into Canaan. We are not a wife, but a bride. A bride is excited. She is looking forward to her life with her husband and he occupies her thoughts.

## Joy Magnifies the Lord

Many have been faithful, but not joyful. Satan is a joy robber. Since the joy of the Lord is our strength (Nehemiah 8:10), no wonder Satan would feel successful to rob our joy—reducing our strength.

The market for joy is immeasurable. The suicide rate among ages 15-24 has tripled in the last three decades, averaging 14 youth each day. There are

23 million marijuana smokers in the United States alone, and 40% of our youth have their senses dulled with alcohol and drugs.

The whole world is in a quest for joy. But the only Bible that sinners read is the faces and lives of Christians. We have the new wine! The Church must rejoice in the Lord! The new wine is found in the cluster (Isaiah 65:8).

Joy is a public announcement of victory, saying God is triumphant in my life. A popular slogan says, “I refuse to gratify the devil by becoming discouraged.” Jesus said, “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” John 16:33. He has conquered for us. We are *more* than conquerors.

How much more is God magnified through a joyful heart than a sullen heart! God is carrying our burdens. Jesus told His disciples, and tells us,

“These things I have spoken to you, that *My* joy may remain in you, and that *your* joy may be full”

John 15:11.

Jesus did not die to save a bunch of sourpusses that could hold on till the bitter end, but He has redeemed us from the bondage of sin into the glorious liberty of being a son. God wants us to enjoy Him!

“Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things... ”

Deuteronomy 28:47.

The joy of the Lord is not an option, but a command,

“Rejoice in the Lord always. *Again* I will say, rejoice!”

Philippians 4:4.

## Joy in the Camp

It is the sound of triumph and victory that makes Satan defenseless. God commanded Jehoshaphat to send out singers before the army. It was this sound of victorious worship that made the enemy slaughter one another.

“...he appointed those who should sing to the Lord, and who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army and were saying: ‘Praise the Lord for His mercy endures forever’”

2 Chronicles 20:21.

Joy and worship will be a trademark of these last days. The Church is receiving a fresh baptism of joy. Satan trembles.

### As Many as Touched Him

“Wherever He entered, into villages, cities, or the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged Him that they might just touch the border of His garments. And as many *as touched Him* were made well”

Mark 6:56.

A catholic nun came to us for prayer where we were speaking in a city. We asked her if she had been baptized in the Holy Spirit. She replied, “No, but I will be on Monday.” I’m sure she received. According to what she had been taught, she and others would be prayed for on a certain night after taking classes about the Holy Spirit. Most all received and expected to receive when hands were laid on them for the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

God is speaking to us to stop waiting for Jesus to touch us and, instead, determine to touch Him! For too long we have waited for God to drop in on us, or for the evangelist to “heal” us, while God’s presence is equally available to all. We don’t have to wait until, in a possible act of mercy, Jesus touches us. We can determine in our heart to touch Him.

“...And as many *as touched Him* were made well”

Mark 6:56.

God is a jealous God. He doesn’t want us to always look to someone else to touch Him for us. He wants us to touch Him for ourselves.

### Fervency Touches God

Our boy, at five years old, like a lot of small children, cries over anything. Three-fourths of his cries

are simply not sincere. To the ears of some, they may sound sincere, yet we parents can distinguish if he is just upset about not getting his own way, or if his cry is real. If he is hurt or has a legitimate need, we will come running. Immediately we know that *real* cry. Although we can tune out a lot of cries, an earnest cry for help is immediately recognized.

This makes me wonder, does God respond to all our prayers, or just those that are fervent from the heart?

On one occasion several years ago, my wife was feeling sick. I walked around the bed casually praying, “O Lord just heal her.” Suddenly my words were interrupted as I heard the Lord tell my spirit, “Say it with faith!” I knew I was being rebuked for simply going through a casual, faithless prayer. The Bible says, “Without faith it is impossible to please God” Hebrews 11:6. But most of us still try! James said, “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” James 5:16b.

The very nature of God commands expectancy, faith, excitement and anticipation. Which of us wants to respond to our own children who are pouting, complaining and disbelieving our very words? So too, God responds to expectancy and fervency. He will not turn away from an earnest and seeking heart, especially an expectant heart.

Jesus compared Himself to an unrighteous judge who did not fear God nor man, but gave a widow legal protection because he *feared* her constant coming to him would wear him out (Luke 18). Jesus commands us to approach Him with that attitude. Come to Him as if you are going to *wear* Him out! At the end of this parable, Jesus says,

“And shall not God avenge His own elect who *cry out day and night to Him*, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them

speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?”

Luke 18:7-8.

Will Jesus find people that are living in a realm of faith and expectancy? Will He find those who are excited about Him and

His promises, and living in the realm with God that He intended?

If we expect nothing, God will not disappoint us! Too often we simply set our sights too low. Yet if we begin to anticipate the presence of God and expect Him to manifest Himself, He will!

### It's Our Move

Electricity has always been on the earth. However, barely more than a century has passed since men learned to tap into it. Nonetheless, it was always available. To tap into the power of God requires releasing our faith. The beginning of releasing faith is simple. *Expect* something to happen! If we expect problems, they usually come, so why not expect the moving of God? I have found when people begin anticipating and expecting God to move, then He will manifest Himself.

Faith is *always* uncertain. God chooses to meet us not in the place of certainty, but when we step out on the plane of *our* uncertainty (not His). Flesh demands the safest way; the way we have seen God do it previously; the way which will be no risk to us. However, God always requires us to take risks, to move out to the end of the branch. That is where we touch God.

Peter learned a principle. He knew if he could get Jesus to tell him to do something, it would work. When he saw Jesus walking toward the disciples on the water, he said, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.” When Jesus said, “Come” Peter was indeed able to walk on the water (Matthew 14:28-29).

When we initiate our own actions, they may fail, but when we risk obeying the Holy Spirit within us, we see that it works! I have purposed to get excited not about excitement, but about what God is excited about. That is when I see results.

### Faith is a Response

After pastoring for several years, both my wife and I began to sense a restlessness and discontentment in our spirits. As we sought the Lord about these feelings, He showed us that a change was coming in our ministry. This was at least two years prior to the actual change occurring. Of course, our minds began to work overtime to figure out what the change would be. When God finally did release us, it happened very quickly. In the middle of the night, He spoke to me and instructed me to take a giant step of faith and resign the pastorate where we had been eight years. With this word from God, I was not acting on my initiative, and I am quick to say it was *easy* to take this step because God said it. Some people asked how I could leave that security not knowing what I was going to do. Yet with a word from God, I had perfect peace. The Lord opened other doors for me immediately, as I obeyed and resigned the pastorate. If I had done this on my

own initiative, there would have been reason to be fearful, but when God said it, I felt the same confidence that Peter must have felt when Jesus said, “Come.”

Faith is always a response in obedience to God. Jesus said, “I do nothing on My own initiative...” John 14:10. We must also yield to the direction of the Holy Spirit. If we move without the command of the Spirit, we have presumption, and to put it simply, presumption doesn’t work.

How do we get the initiative of the Holy Spirit? By purposing to touch God. This is where *our* initiative comes in. We must seek God or His direction and promptings. It is in prayer and seeking God where we hear His voice.

I have often pictured people standing before God on judgment day, saying, “Lord, why didn’t you tell me more?” His reply will be, “You never asked.” There is no substitute for seeking God. We all miss out on a lot that God has for us simply because we do not get familiar with the inner witness of the Holy Spirit within us.

The problem is not God speaking clearly enough. The problem is that our minds are so “loud” and active that we cannot hear His gentle voice. Most of us can testify to the fact that an “impression” from the Spirit has come to us and we ignored it because it was so slight. Then later in the day, we saw a fulfillment of it. Truly we had heard from God, but didn’t act on it because we had counted it simply as a passing thought.

I am always amazed at the amount of Christians (preachers too) *who* plan things for the kingdom of God without the slightest knowledge of whether God is involved in it or not. It is not necessarily of God to go through “open doors” just because they happen to be open. That is like eating at every restaurant we see just



because they are open for business. God wants us to pray about which doors to enter. He may tell us not to walk through any of them! If this is the case, God will have something better!

God isn't in the habit of demotion, but of promotion, as we "touch Him" and move in obedience to His voice.

5

How to Grow and Cause Others to Grow

“Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing”

1 Thessalonians 5:11.

Everyone thrives on encouragement. Encouragement brings growth and confidence. Criticism brings discouragement and despair. God commands us to encourage one another.

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching”

Hebrews 10:25.

How can we love our neighbor as ourselves without encouraging him? To love someone and not encourage him is a contradiction. A simple, uplifting comment has changed the course of many a day and life.

Children need discipline and correction, but they also need encouragement. Praise instills confidence. In fact, the direction a child is encouraged in, he will usually excel in. Many children grow up to be successes or failures depending largely upon what their fathers told them. Words of praise form an image of ourselves. What we think inwardly is what we will perform outwardly, because we will live up to what we believe about ourselves in our heart.

## Giving Out

The problem most of us have is not receiving, but *giving out!* But we do not grow as much by receiving as we grow by giving. The flow of the Holy Spirit through us releases the stagnation in us.

God has given tools of encouragement to the Church—the gifts of the Spirit. The prophetic gifts are not meant to tear down, but to build up. “But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men” 1 Corinthians 14:3. God puts great emphasis on prophecy because He puts great emphasis on people being encouraged. An encouraged church is a strong church. No wonder Paul said, “Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but *especially* that you may prophesy” 1 Corinthians 14:1.

A flower that has begun to wilt under the heat of the day will thrive miraculously with a little water. A few words to a heavy heart brings renewed life.

### Stir Yourself

Have you ever felt that the presence of God disappeared? Don’t let the Holy Spirit settle to the bottom! To make iced tea, you mix it up, pour it into the glass and add sugar. But after a few minutes you will notice something. The sugar has settled to the bottom of the glass. Stirring is needed. To a Christian, God gives the Holy Spirit. But if the Holy Spirit is not stirred up within our hearts, He will “settle to the bottom.” We must stir ourselves. “Therefore I remind you to *stir up* the gift of God which is *in you* through the laying on of my hands” Timothy 1:6. God will not stir us! That is our part.

Many have a “honeymoon” experience upon being filled with the Spirit.

However, after a period of time, the initial excitement seems to lessen. Not understanding, some think that God has left them for some reason. But God will not do for us what He wants us to do for ourselves!

For example, in a restaurant recently I watched the young parents of two small boys. As the waiter approached their table, the parents told the waiter what to get for the two boys. The boys were too young to make the decision of what food to order. However, it will not be long before the boys grow older and have to order for themselves. At first God does everything for us. But as we grow He does not leave us, but expects us to put into practice what we know. We have to assert ourselves and put in our own “order” to God. “Yet you do not have because you do not ask” James 4:2.

### Use Your Generator

Our spirit is like a car battery. If it is not charged, it will become weak. As a new Christian, I could not seem to stay encouraged. I had to ask for prayer a lot. Like a car with rundown battery, I had to have hands laid on me (as jumper cables). But there is another way to get “charged” and to *stay* charged. We have a generator! “But you beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit” Jude 20. Like a generator that keeps a battery charged, the Holy Spirit prayer language builds our faith. We *can* stay built up in God.

God wants us encouraged. The Holy Spirit is the built- in Encourager! He abides. “But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you...” 1 John 2:27.

### Allow God to Touch Your Heart

No matter how many times our heart is opened, God has to open it again. When God establishes our understanding in one truth, our heart is automatically too small for the next truth. We have to be willing to be made a new wineskin.

“And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins and both are preserved”

Luke 5:37-38.

Many of us want the new wine, but we do not want God to touch our wineskin. Tragically some are satisfied with what they have, and want nothing more. Spiritual growth and maturity have been squelched in many churches due to the aspect of human nature that becomes satisfied with what the Spirit of God did at one time.

“And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires the new; for he says, *‘The old is better’*”

Luke 5:39.

## Breaking Through the Barrier of Self-Centeredness

A few years ago when our son was two years old, we took a trip to Florida. Our daughter, who was older, rode in the back seat with her brother the entire way. Upon our return, she decided to stay with her grandparents for awhile, so my wife and I and our son drove back to Texas. We had driven the first day for hours and hours, before our son finally spoke up and said, “Where’s sissy?” In his immaturity and self-centeredness, he had not even noticed her absence.

Through this incident the Lord spoke to me about His Church. He said many have stayed immature due to being in a self-centered and self-conscious state. Just like our little boy, they remain unaware of anyone else’s need except their own.

In a self-centered state all we see is what we need. It is not wrong to want God to bless us, but it is wrong to let the blessing stop there and never move beyond us. The question of spiritual maturity is not how much we receive, but how much flows through us as we give out. A good question to ask the Lord is, “Is there someone who has a need, Lord, that you desire me to minister to?”

There are seemingly three stages of maturity:

1. Those who just make it to church.
2. Those who come to church expecting to receive from God.
3. Those who come with a motive to be a blessing and give out what God has given them.

Paul said to be prepared to give.

“How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you *has* a psalm, *has* a teaching, *has* a tongue, *has* a revelation, *has* an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification”

1 Corinthians 14:26.

## Opposite of Love

A prominent minister made an excellent point about the *opposite* of love. He described the opposite of love in three ways. The opposite of love legally, is the law. The opposite of love morally, is lust. The opposite of love emotionally, is hate.

God gave me something more. He showed me the opposite of love socially (among Christians), is self-centeredness. A Christian who lacks the motive of giving out of himself and being a blessing to others (even though he is in church), is fulfilling the opposite of love—self-centeredness.

## Be Willing to Change

As our children began to grow, my wife almost fainted one day when our daughter came into the kitchen to ask her if she could help with anything. To my wife’s knowledge, she had never remembered hearing such an offer from one of our children. This change was so refreshing.

Growing spiritually, we can go to God without a request or a demand for ourselves and ask instead what we can do for the kingdom of God. How this attitude must refresh the heart of God! As the late John F. Kennedy said, “Ask not what your country can do for you, but ask what you can do for your country.” What can we do to increase the kingdom of God?

Think how quickly the Body of Christ would be doubled if each Christian would accept the challenge to pray and intercede for just one specific soul to be saved!

Satan will not oppose the preaching of a self-centered gospel, where the fruit of preaching is only getting people to see God as a “Santa Claus” for their wants. But when people begin to pray for lost souls and conquer territory for the kingdom of God, Satan has a battle on his hands.

## Conviction is Not Repentance

Conviction, when the sweet Holy Spirit deals with us about sin, does not guarantee repentance. Looking back, I can see where the Spirit of God convicted me about a habit, sin or even a complacent attitude. Although I was moved to tears or greatly stirred at the moment, I did not repent. At the time He dealt with me, I actually *thought* I had repented, being so moved upon by His Spirit.

But repentance, coming from the military term, about-face, means to completely change to the opposite direction. When our heart truly repents, our direction changes. A man who had continually given in to a sin, asked me in desperation, “How do I know when I’ve repented?” The Lord gave me the simple answer, “When you are not doing any more what you have repented of.”

## Devout Christians

Where are the devout Christians?

“And devout men carried Stephen to his burial and made great lamentation over him”

Acts 8:2.

In whatever way God has called us, we must be devout.

It takes a whole heart to please God. Henry Ford,

responsible for the first, massive production assembly line to build automobiles, had a motto, “You cannot build a reputation on something you are *going* to do.” Christians must be devout toward the calling of God. We must repent of any casual attitude. God does not want us to “have done” but to “be doing.”

“But Jesus said to him, ‘No one, having put his hand to the plow, and *looking back*, is fit for the kingdom of God’”

Luke 9:62.

The Lord gave me this poem by His Spirit about growing in Him.

*When I was ten,*

*I began to hunger;*

*Of the things of God,*

*I began to wonder.*

*At fifteen as my stature rised,*

*My spiritual man had need of eyes; The Saviour knocked at my heart's door,*

*Then I knew I needed more.*

*At twenty-two I had to choose,*

*Did I want sin, or myself loose;*

*But the Holy Spirit made it plain,*

*To live is Christ, and die is gain.*

*At thirty-one I had just begun,*

*To see the glory of God's Son;*

*Only now as I gained momentum,*

*I saw so clear the devil's venom.*

*At forty-two compassion flowed,*

*My heart cried to see young ones grow;*

*Things that used to matter to me, Crew strangely dim compared to He.*

*At fifty-nine, the time just flew,*

*The many blessings, far from few,*

*But nothing matters when Jesus reigns, Still to live for Him and die is gain.*



*At sixty-five the world retires,  
But with strength in God I never tire; Earthly things mean less and less,  
I'll live for Him and do my best.*

*At seventy-two my strength not waning, I'm rich in God, so full, not  
fainting; It's love that counts, not skin and beauty,*

*My all for Him, not religious duty.*

*Now eighty-four still life goes on,*

*It won't be long I'm going home;*

*No death for me, just a new door,*

*I'll walk into God, and just learn more. At ninety-two, my eyes are dim,*

*But all I want is to see Him.*

*My flesh is weak, but spirit strong,*

*His way is right, He's never wrong.*

For a period of several weeks I taught and preached on the subject of seeking God for a vision. What did God want to achieve through our local fellowship? Many of the people were getting excited, yet there were a few who could not seem to grasp the importance of it.

After one meeting, one of the men came up to me saying, “Anyone who is not seeking God is a hindrance.” I knew what he was saying was true. However, it seemed more reasonable that those not seeking the Lord would neither be a hindrance or a help.

Curious, I sought the Lord to help me understand this. Immediately, He showed me in the Spirit a radiator. The inside of a radiator is made up of a large number of tubes or pipes. Then the Lord showed me that each pipe represented a person. Those who were not actively seeking God for a vision of His purpose, were like a clogged pipe which no water was able to circulate through. Therefore, they were hindering the efficiency of the “radiator.” However, when *all* are seeking God and *every* “pipe” has the Holy Spirit freely flowing through it, the full power of God can flow.

This is graphically shown in Ephesians 4:16, “...by which *every joint* supplies, according to the effective working by which *every part* does its share...”

## The Importance of Vision

The Holy Spirit defined the lack of vision for me. He said that not to seek a vision of God’s purpose for our life is defiant rebellion! A visionless and lukewarm heart says,

“Lord, I’m excited about my job, my house, my wife, my family, my new car, and my favorite hobby, but you, Lord, are not worth getting excited about.”

The Bible says, “Without a vision, the people perish.” It does not say without prayer, without church, without Bible study (of course, these are of utmost importance), but without a vision, we perish!

The devil trembles over our vision more than anything else. We may be saved and filled with the Holy Spirit, but without a vision for the increase of the kingdom of God, we are little threat to the forces of darkness. But when our vision is enlarged to increase God’s kingdom, the devil has trouble on his hands.

Our vision has to be far greater than how to get our needs met. It has to be greater than being a church member. How easy it is to fall into the rut of being a “hand-to-mouth” Christian. He is similar to the person who does not manage his life financially, by planning for retirement and making investments, but lives only for his paycheck from week to week. The Christian who sees no “plan” for his life other than getting his needs met will never know God any more intimately than someone he calls upon in the midst of a crisis.

## How Large a Vision?

A vision limited only to making heaven (with nothing for the present life), is similar to a woman marrying a man because she is crazy about his house. Her only desire is to live in his house. What a poor marriage that would be! Equally, we have rejoiced over heaven and neglected to fall head-over-heels in love with Jesus. Heaven is a byproduct of fellowship and “marriage” to the King of kings.

Recently I was ministering in a city where a good friend of mine lives. He

called me early one morning to help him unload some of his books that had arrived from the printer. The truck was filled with thousands of books with many titles. Seeing the largeness of his vision made me see clearly how small my vision was. Until that day, I thought my vision was pretty big, as I too, had written books. I'll never forget how the Lord used that experience to jolt my vision. From that day I took the limits off my own vision.

Seeing what God is doing through other ministries and Christians is so refreshing. When we are too long in our own "four walls" without a fresh challenge, our vision begins to shrink and we limit God substantially. Every Christian needs the challenge of seeing what God is doing through other people and in other places.

But our specific vision comes from seeking God. Visions are born on the knees, not in board rooms.

## What Good is Faith Without a Vision?

Our faith will cooperate with our vision. But without a vision, we have nothing to exercise our faith for. If we have a small vision, we will only need a small amount of faith to meet that vision.

Taking the limits off our vision, takes the limits off our faith. Faith has the ability to bring about the fulfillment of our vision. For example, a good car has the capability to take us to any city in the country. Faith (like the car) is available and capable, but our vision (the decision to go to a certain city) puts the car to work. Without a vision, faith (the car) will be available, but not used.

## Let God Birth the Vision in Your Heart

A friend of mine said that there are three types of people: those who make things happen; those who watch things happen; and those who say, "What happened?"

The children of Israel did not have a Canaan vision. They had a head knowledge, but not a heart knowledge. They were not "pregnant" with the vision of God to enter the promised land. Blinded by their fleshly appetites

and carnality, they refused to lift their eyes beyond their present circumstances to see Canaan by faith. This faithless and rebellious attitude prevented God from birthing the vision into their spirit.

“Our fathers in Egypt did not understand Your wonders; they did not remember the multitude of Your mercies, but rebelled by the sea—the Red Sea”

Psalm 106:7.

God finally let their murmurings be their own prophetic voice,

“As I live, says the Lord, just as you have spoken in My hearing, so will I do to you”

Numbers 14:28.

Without a vision, we too will be like the children of Israel wandering aimlessly around in the wilderness of circumstances, bound to a negative and bitter heart.

## Take a Risk

As Christians, we must be willing to take risks. Anytime we move in faith, it involves risk. God wants us to step out and meet Him in the plane of our uncertainty.

God enlarged Abraham’s vision and as a result, he had to be willing to take a risk. He had to leave his secure and familiar surroundings and go out not knowing where he was going (Hebrews 11:8).

Most everyone wants to be secure and comfortable, but there is no security without risks. The most secure people are the ones that are willing to take risks. Many people are miserable in their lives because they have held on to the security and safety of a position or a place. The “safe” way can often be defined as the way we are used to seeing God do something, the way which is comfortably familiar to us. But no faith is required in our comfortable plateaus, and without faith (risk) we cannot please God.

The Bible is full of people who had vision—who took risks. Paul took a risk when he called out to the keeper of the prison, saying, “Do yourself no harm, for we are all here” Acts 16:28. He could easily have fled to save his own life, but he took a risk, and as a result, the jailer and his whole family were saved. His vision went beyond his own need, to the needs of those lost without God.

Israel could not let go inwardly of the security of Egypt, and they kept

looking back to it with murmuring and complaining. Because they could not release from their heart the security of Egypt, they were unable to be impregnated with the vision of Canaan.

Like many today, they wanted to be delivered without intimately knowing their Deliverer (God). They wanted to be saved without knowing their Saviour. They wanted to be satisfied, but were not willing to become committed to the only One who could satisfy—the Lord.

It is in the risk-taking that change and growth comes.

## The Testing of Our Vision

It is on the mountaintop experience where God shows us our vision, but it is in the valley where the vision becomes a part of us. Just as standing high on a mountain makes it easy to see a long distance, God puts our vision plainly before us. But to get to that vision we have to go down the mountain in order to approach it. We are required to “see it by faith” for a period of time.

When Joseph received dreams from God that he would be exalted, he believed God (Genesis 37). But as God took him toward the fulfillment of that vision, everything looked the opposite. He had to rely on his “sight by faith.” From being thrown into a pit by his brothers, and consequently sold into slavery, as well as serving undeserved prison terms, he had to remember the vision that God gave him. If the vision had not been birthed in him by God he would not have made it. But what

God did inwardly in the heart of Joseph was far greater. “Until the time that his word came: the word of the Lord tried him” Psalm 105:19. God made Joseph a vessel of glory and honor.

## Our Potential

God sees unlimited potential in every human being. He has a vision of the finished product—our maturity in Him! What God can do with one person who will fully yield to Him is limitless. As it is well said, “Man can count the seeds in the apple, but only God can count the potential apples in one seed.”

When two young people fall in love, their life together holds a multitude of great potential experiences as well as children, grandchildren, etc. But they will never see that potential until they commit themselves to marriage.

We also will never see the fulfillment of what God has for us until we commit ourselves fully to Him.

## Unlocking Jesus

“Now He *could do no* mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them”

Mark 6:5.

Frequently I ask this question as I preach. “Have you ever tried to minister the gospel to a person who was not hungry for God?” (Most everyone has tried, and there is nothing harder than to minister to someone who is not spiritually hungry.) Then I ask the second question. “Have you ever ministered to someone who *was* hungry for God (whose heart God had opened) and you thought *you* had something to do with it?”

When God has opened a heart, truly we can take no credit for the results. A hungry heart unlocks the power of God. He will move any obstacle to reach a person who is truly seeking Him. It is no wonder Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled” Matthew 5:6.

A well-trained waiter will carefully watch your water glass. He continually glances in your direction to see if a refill is needed. If you are not drinking the water he remains at a distance. But should you drink what he has given you, he will quickly move to fill your glass again.

God is like the waiter. He can give us nothing as long as we are full or satisfied. Just like the waiter, He continually watches our heart for any sign of hunger or thirst. If we drink what He has given us, He is quick to give us more. For God to give us more, we must make use of what He has already given. To stay hungry for more of God is of utmost importance. Hosea said, “Let us know, let us pursue the knowledge of the Lord...” Hosea 6:3.

Jesus was “locked up” by His own hometown people. They locked up the power of God simply because they would not receive Him as God’s Anointed. They saw Him as a carpenter, a brother, and at best, a nice guy. But they did not receive Him as sent from God. Therefore the Bible says, He *could* do no mighty work there (Mark 6:5).

We determine how much God is going to manifest Himself. Speaking in various places around the country the response varies. Although I am the same person and may preach a similar message, the response can differ greatly. Although my part is to earnestly seek God, the part of the people is to come expecting to receive from God. Where people come expecting, God will meet them no matter who the minister is. He will not deny a hungry heart!

Pastors who have a mighty ministry are often “locked up” by their own congregation, because the people get used to him and cease to esteem the anointing in him. When this happens, all are robbed of experiencing what God has for them.

### Receive One Another

For too long we Christians have been intimidated by one another. But the Bible commands us to receive one another. “Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God” Romans 15:7. Equally, we are to *give* what we have received from God to one another. “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” 1 Peter 4:1. By receiving one another, we can release and unlock the power of God in one another.



Our attitude of receiving determines our destiny. Jesus ministered to those who received Him. As God is, He never forces Himself upon anyone. Those who did not receive Him, such as the Pharisees, were robbed of what He had for them.

“He came unto His own and His own did not receive Him.”

John 1:11.

The heart of God grieves when we do not receive whom He sends. Jesus, weeping over Jerusalem said, “For I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord’” Matthew 23:39.

## Unlocking Jesus Through Obedience

Elijah gave the widow at Zarephath the opportunity to unlock the power of God by *first* getting him a drink of water and some bread. As she let him know that was all she had, he said to her,

“Do not fear; go and do as you have said but make me a small cake from it *first*; and bring it to me; and afterward make some for yourself and your son”

1 Kings 17:13.

Her obedience would determine not only if she and her son would survive, but also whether Elijah would eat, because God had sent Elijah to her that she might provide for him! (v. 9). If she would obey, God promised to unlock His resources unto her.

“For thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the Lord sends rain on the earth’”

(v. 14).

God put two people together, a prophet and a widow, but He made them dependent upon one another. As they received one another and obeyed God, they saw the glory of God manifested.

Jesus Christ is incomplete without us! “Which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all” Ephesians 1:23. Our obedience to Jesus Christ, our head, unlocks His power. Our disobedience prevents the fulfillment of His purpose in our life.

Obedience to God first, is the key to never running out. Praising God

before we see our prayers answered brings quick results. Praising God before we see the answer is faith! Faith pleases God.

## A Divided Heart

While studying intently on the subject of idolatry on which I was going to preach, I had spent a lot of time looking up various definitions and scriptural references. Shortly before the meeting, I was meditating on the Lord, and I said to Him (not really expecting an answer), “I wonder what the real definition of idolatry is? He spoke clearly to me, “Whatever is foremost on your mind.”

It all became clear to me, whatever dominates our attention is an idol. Whether it is thoughts of the opposite sex, wealth, attention, or greed, whatever is foremost on our mind is an idol. Nothing hinders the flow of the Holy Spirit more than a divided heart that is distracted with other desires. “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God” Matthew 5:8.

## A Seeking Heart

Zacchaeus, a wealthy tax-collector had a seeking heart. Being short in stature, he ran ahead and climbed a tree to get a better look at Jesus. (All have fallen short of God’s glory.) When Jesus saw him, he recognized his seeking heart. He did not waste words or hand him a tract, but said, “Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house” Luke 19:5. When we seek God with a hungry heart, He quickly comes to our house (heart).

Zacchaeus received Him joyfully. His seeking heart unlocked the heart of Jesus and his joyful receptivity sealed this invitation!

## A Purposed Heart

A woman with a blood disease for twelve long years, purposed to touch Jesus. She was desperate, having spent all she had to get well, to no avail.

She pushed through the large crowd to Him with only one purpose, to touch the hem of His garment. She knew she would be made well if she did. (I believe the Holy Spirit had let her know this and she was acting in obedience to His voice.)

As she touched His clothes, her blood flow dried up and she felt in her body that she was well. So great was this release and unlocking of power that Jesus turned around and said, “Who touched My clothes?” When she told Him the truth, He said, “Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace and be healed of your affliction” Mark 5:25-34.

Jesus equated her purposed and persistent heart with faith. Truly it was! She had unlocked the power of God.

## A Broken Heart

A woman brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil to the Pharisee’s house where Jesus was dining (Luke 7:36- 50). She stood behind Him weeping, washing His feet with her tears, and wiping them with her hair. She then kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil.

Inwardly the Pharisee criticized Jesus for not being able to recognize that she was a sinner. But he could not hide his thoughts from Jesus! Jesus saw her broken and repentant heart, and rebuked the Pharisee saying,

“I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil”

(vs. 44-45).

Then He said to the woman,

“Your faith has saved you. Go in peace”

(v. 48).

He attributed her broken and contrite heart to faith! Her brokenness of heart was a more beautiful fragrance than the fragrant oil! Her heart, full of genuine repentance and pure worship unlocked the heart of God.

David said,

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart—  
These, O God, You will not despise”

Psalms 51:7.

## Do You Love Me?

In the past nearly two decades of the move of the Holy Spirit, a message that has come through loud and clear to individual Christians is “God loves me.” In fact, so reassured have many felt that they have lost their fear of God and cease to be convicted of sin, hiding behind the misconception that “God loves me, therefore He is approving of all my actions.” Of course, this simply does not add up. God never approves of sin or unrighteousness of any kind.

But now there is a new message from the Lord, “Do you love Me?” God is commanding us to put away our self-centered motives, arise from our immaturity, and be about the Father’s business. No longer can we be content to simply receive the blessings of God, but we must be willing to be made an instrument of blessing.

Jesus’ personal command to Peter three times was “Feed My sheep.” Peter had to get the message that if he really loved Jesus, his responding action would be to feed His sheep. Today, our response to Jesus as He asks us, “Do you love Me?” might be, “Lord, I love how You have blessed me” or “Lord, I enjoy listening to my favorite preacher” or “Lord, I love my ministry.” But the question has not been answered until we are willing to do His will because we simply love Him. As we let God cleanse all other motives, our life will truly be an instrument to increase the kingdom of God and not just please ourselves.

A well-known television commentator told of a country where the law states that the doctor only gets paid if the patient gets well. If the patient does not recover, the doctor gets nothing. I thought to myself how this would really keep the doctor’s motive in check. Through this the Lord challenged me. He questioned me this way, “What if your salvation (making it to heaven) depended on whether all the other people in the church made it?” My thought immediately was that I would find the weakest person I could and begin to encourage him. He then made it plain to me, that is what I should be doing anyway! “We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification” Romans 15:1-2.

Purposing to feed His sheep unlocks the power of God within us. If we really love God, that will be our desire.

The plane had leveled off at 35,000 feet on the flight from Houston to St. Louis. I welcomed the opportunity to study for the next ninety minutes. Lifting my Bible from my briefcase, I almost anticipated the next words. “Are you a minister?” the man next to me questioned. When I affirmed that I was, he immediately wanted to talk about his beliefs. Although I sensed his heart was not open, I let him talk for awhile. But the more he talked I realized how unscriptural and ridiculous his beliefs were. Having a very religious background, he twisted the simplest of scriptures into what I had to call a hopeless angle of the gospel. The more scriptures I quoted in an attempt to refute his way of thinking, the more he contorted them to fit his particular religious philosophy.

Nothing was accomplished during our conversation as far as I could see, but something wonderful happened in me. God has used this stranger to provoke me! I got off the plane in St. Louis with a new fire in my spirit. I was provoked to search the Bible more and to pray for those deceived by religious and seducing spirits.

The Bible plainly says that we are to have answers to give those in darkness. “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you

may know how you ought to answer each one” Colossians 4:6 (also 2 Timothy 2:24-26 and 1 Peter 3:15).

God is provoking His people from a state of complacency to action. To provoke means to excite to some action or feeling. It is in the midst of the blessings of God that we sometimes lose our zeal and become complacent and spiritually listless, but the Church is being provoked!

## David Was Provoked

David was provoked by the defiant spewings of Goliath. His spirit was easily provoked because he had not been in the atmosphere of fear and unbelief. His brothers, on the contrary, had been in this atmosphere for so long that they saw no hope for deliverance. David’s spirit, still fresh with the presence of the Lord, found glorious expression. “Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?” 1 Samuel 17:26. Young David was a worshiper. Living in the presence of God had kept his spirit intolerant of the vile accusations of the enemy.

As soon as David was provoked, Saul immediately tried to talk him out of his following action. This is predictable. As soon as the Spirit of God provokes us to action or change, someone will show up to talk us out of it. Saul said, “You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth” (v. 33). But David was experienced in the knowledge of God. He knew God’s anointing power through killing a bear and a lion.

David was provoked to action. His action led to a great victory for himself and all of Israel.

## Stephen Was Provoked

Have you even considered what it means to be full of God? Stephen was an example to us. He was one of seven young men chosen to conduct the business of ministering to the physical needs of the saints, so the apostles could give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word (see Acts 6:1-4). Stephen was described as being full of God in 15 different ways:

1. He was full of the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:3).
2. He was full of wisdom (Acts 6:3).
3. He was full of faith (Acts 6:5).
4. He was full of grace (Acts 6:8, Amp).
5. He was full of power (Acts 6:5).

6. He was full of intelligence (Acts 6:10, Amp).
7. He was full of the anointing (Acts 6:10). “And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the *Spirit* by which he spoke.”
8. He was full of the glory of God (Acts 6:15). The glory of God was manifested in him so much that his face shown like an angel.
9. He was full of truth (Acts 7).
10. He was full of the Word (Acts 7). Although he was a young man, his knowledge of the Word was tremendous, for in a dynamic, but short sermon (approximately seven minutes), he quoted from 15 books of the Old Testament, making reference to more than a dozen Bible characters, giving an overview of history from Abraham to the crucifixion of Jesus, describing what was happening that day.
11. He was full of boldness (Acts 7:51). He boldly accused them of resisting the Holy Spirit, referring to them as stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears.
12. He was full of fearlessness (Acts 7:51-53). He was not afraid to stand against the power of the religious leaders, although it guaranteed a sure death.
13. He was full of unselfishness (Acts 7:51-53). His willingness to declare the gospel and speak the truth to the vicious leaders, required him to lay his young life down, a totally selfless act.
14. He was full of vision (spiritual sight) (Acts 7:56). He saw beyond the natural as they were hostile against him and he said, “Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God!”
15. He was full of forgiveness (Acts 7:60). As they were stoning him he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not charge them with this sin.” This statement fell on the ears of Saul who was standing by with full consent to his death. Soon Saul was chosen by God as the Lord met him on the road to Damascus (Acts 9).

The Bible says, “For all have sinned and fall short of the *glory* of God” Romans 3:23. It does not say that we have fallen short of teaching, churches, faith or

miracles, but of the *glory of God*. To glorify Him should always be our motive and purpose. Our aim should be to glorify God in all we do and in all we say. If we aim for other things, we have aimed too low.

### Staying Provoked

To be provoked is not enough. We must *stay* provoked. Provoked to prayer, to seeking God, enlarging our vision, giving more of ourselves to God, and resisting the enemy with more intensity, is only the beginning. We must follow through with diligence. We must stay in that place of divine dissatisfaction.

The church at Ephesus had been in love, but had fallen (Revelation 2:4). The church at Sardis had been alive, but was dead (Revelation 3:1). The church at Laodicea had been hot, but had cooled off to a sickening lukewarmness (Revelation 3:16).

The Bible says,

“The slothful man does not roast what he took in hunting, but diligence is a man’s precious possession”

Proverbs 12:27.

We must follow through with the provoking that God stirred us in and not be as the slothful man who does not bother to prepare and eat the animal he hunted. Diligence is our most valuable possession, because it is through diligence that we eat and digest that truth, incorporating it into our lives. How easy it is to rejoice in what God said, then to do nothing. I heard a minister exhort the people, “You rejoiced about it; you shouted about it; but did you obey it?”

As a pastor, I saw the Holy Spirit provoke people on Sunday, but before the following Sunday they were back to “normal.” It is up to us to fan the flame of the fire that God has started. James expressed it this way,

“For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away,



and *immediately forgets* what kind of man he was”

James 1:23-24.

## Distractions

Television, which I call “Baal” has usurped the attention of the best-intentioned prayer-warriors and Bible students. Truly it can be an instrument of Satan to keep us from bringing forth fruit in God. Whatever controls our thinking and time controls our lives.

We can rest assured that as God provokes us, the enemy will attempt to distract us. Jesus tells us to seek first the kingdom of God because the distractions, which are many, will quickly cloud our vision. Distractions are not necessarily bad or sinful things, but the “little foxes” (inclusive of religious activities and events) that become the center of focus, rather than fresh daily communion with God. Stay provoked. Seek the Lord!

## Provoked to Take the Kingdom

Many Christians I meet are feeling a certain frustration. God is squeezing His people into greater avenues of faith. Not understanding this, many have felt a confusion and misdirection, not feeling the “spiritual goosebumps” that were common in the beginning of their Christian experience. With this comes a feeling of rejection that God does not care anymore. But the contrary is true. God is squeezing the Church into more faith and assertiveness.

We must take the kingdom. As a person who is rejoicing over landing a new job—he cannot stop there because the next step is to go to work! Our part is to “go to work” and press into all that God has for us, taking the kingdom with diligence.

“The kingdom of God suffers violence, and the violent take it by force”

Matthew 11:12.

For a long time, every morning I had to get the cereal and milk ready for my son. But one day I had a “revelation.” “Get it yourself,” I told him. He was old enough to accept that responsibility. What God did for us in the beginning, He expects us to assert ourselves and to do ourselves with diligence.

God is giving His people more authority and more power which will include more responsibility. The blessing of being led of the Spirit requires the responsibility of seeking God for guidance and direction.

It is time to press in to the kingdom of God and be all that God wants us

to be.

9

No More Sweat!

“...They shall not clothe themselves with anything that causes *sweat*”

Ezekiel 44:18b.

I was excited when I called a special board meeting. Next door to our growing church, a beauty shop had come up for sale. I talked with the owner who said that he would be happy to sell it to us for a very reasonable price as he wanted to see the building in the hands of Christians.

Everyone in the church knew of our desperate need of additional parking. To me, this was an answer, an adjacent building that would give us extra Sunday School rooms and parking for at least twenty more cars.

The men of the financial advisory board got caught up in the excitement that I had, and we quickly made plans to give the man an earnest money contract the next day. To us, this appeared to be an obvious answer to our prayers.

I was so excited about this. It wasn't until a few weeks later that I realized that God wasn't! The Lord finally had to speak to me through a dream that the building was *not* His will. I was too hard-headed to hear Him in any other way. I had to repent for listening to my emotions and reasoning. The Scripture speaks plainly, “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be” Romans 8:7. The carnal mind does not

necessarily mean a non-Christian mind, but rather a mind that is not yielding and submitting to the mind of the Spirit.

When I truly repented, the Lord blessed me and the man let me out of the contract.

Several months passed. Then a business on the opposite side of our property burned down. When their insurance was settled they cleared a huge lot and began to build. They built a much larger business, but they also built a much larger parking lot and covered it with beautiful blacktop.

The Lord still had not got through my thick head until the owners came over after it was built. They said, “We want you to know that the parking lot is there for you to use as much as you want.” We rejoiced! In addition, their business was closed at the time of all our services. Never did we have another problem with parking, and it did not cost us one dime!

God took care of our problem with no “sweat” to us. My “sweat” to buy the building next door would have put us in debt, and the parking would not have been sufficient anyway. God had a “sweatless” way!

## Why Not Sweat?

The very act of sweating is indicative of human effort. Jesus said, “I can of Myself do nothing...” John 5:30. And “...The words I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority (initiative); but the Father who dwells in Me does the work” John 14:10.

The instructions to the Levitical priests were prophetic words for the New Testament Church. They could not be clothed with anything that caused sweat.

“And it shall be, whenever they enter the gates of the inner court, that they shall put on linen garments; no wool shall come upon them while they minister within the gates of the inner court or within the house. They shall have linen turbans on their heads and linen trousers on their bodies; they shall not clothe themselves with anything that causes *sweat*”

Ezekiel 44:17-18.

Sweat was not allowed in the presence of God as the priest ministered. Linen always represents righteousness (Revelation 19:8). Linen turbans were on their heads. This typifies yielding up the striving and the reasoning mind.

Linen trousers represent the walk in the Spirit, moving in God's initiative and not their own.

Does this mean that we Christians are not to work in order to please God? No. It means that we are to let our works be directed and initiated by the Holy Spirit.

There is a "sweatless" way to please God! It is the way of following and yielding to the Holy Spirit. Many leaders initiate their own plans and then ask God to bless them. Often God, in His mercy, does. But, He is calling His people to a higher realm. It is a place of rest. If all our actions are God-initiated, how much more we will accomplish!

On the cross, Jesus cried out, "It is finished!" That is the best news that mankind would ever hear. Yet, we all have trouble with good news. Good news always causes us to predict some kind of "catch" to it. But sweat, worry, anxiety and fear all contradict the redemptive nature of God and His promises to us.

Nevertheless, something about human nature makes us feel a little better if we "sweat for God." Something in all of us wants to "earn" our way to favor with God.

God hates sweat. Sweat is a product of the flesh. Sweat is a part of the curse. "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread" Genesis 3:9. Jesus did the sweating for us. He redeemed us from the curse of the law. "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree" Galatians 3:13.

## God Has Not Called Us to a Performance

God is not asking us to perform anything, but to RESPOND to Him. When I was courting my wife, I had no interest in whether she could cook, sew, hold a job, run a mile, or clean house. I was only interested in one thing. How she could hug and kiss! I wanted someone who would respond to my love, with whom I could hold and share my deepest thoughts. All else was of secondary importance.

God, likewise, wants our response, not our performance. Too often we are too busy to let God be intimate with us. We want to perform for God, but He wants us to respond. "Let *Him* kiss me with the kisses

of His mouth” Solomon 1:2. He has redeemed us from a gut-wrenching performance, and has called us into union with Himself. This means simply walking in agreement with God. “How shall two walk together unless they be agreed?” Amos 3:3. Although we can rightly blame the devil for a lot of things, most of our struggles are not with him as much as they are with God. “For the flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things you wish” Galatians 5:17. When we truly yield to God, many struggles cease.

God never asks us to do anything that He isn’t doing *with* us. We are abiding in Him and He is abiding in us. “And they went out and preached everywhere, *the Lord working with them* and confirming the Word through the accompanying signs” Mark 16:20.

The very idea of being a Christian is not *doing* something, but is *being* planted. “He shall *be* like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper” Psalm 1:3. Some Christians have a condition of the “do somethings.” We feel guilty if we’re not doing something every minute for God. Yet, He reminds us that we are in union with Him. Enjoy it!

## Who Wants a Sweaty Lover?

When we try to please God in our fleshly efforts, we are sweaty. God says, “I do not want your sweat.” He has not called us to be a religious slave, but a glorious bride. He has called us to intimacy.

Recently, I asked the Lord why He did not speak louder to me. “You seem so hard to hear sometimes,” I told Him. His answer to me was “Lovers do not yell in each other’s ears.” When we are intimate with someone, we do not have to scream but we can softly whisper. They will still hear us. In the midst of strife and “sweat” we command God to speak. But we will not hear Him speak until we choose to be intimate with Him.

## It is Time to Rejoice

Since Jesus has done the performance and God is pleased with His sacrifice, what is there for us to do? REJOICE!

How quickly would the children of Israel have gotten to Canaan if they had simply rejoiced in the Lord! Like Israel, we have been taken out of Egypt (the world and its sin) and are being taken into Canaan (a place of rest). “There remains therefore a rest for the people of God” Hebrews 4:9.

The *lack* of rejoicing is a demonstration of unbelief! God is commanding His people to stop being mournful and rejoice. Joy not only draws sinners to God, but causes Satan to flee. He cannot cope with victory!

## When We Begin to Hear, We Begin to Rest

Hearing from God brings rest. Resting is a demonstration that we have heard God *and* we believe Him! Isaiah prophesied it plainly concerning the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

“For with stammering lips and another tongue He will speak to this people; to Whom He said, ‘This is the rest with which You may cause the weary to rest,’ And, ‘This is the refreshing’; Yet they would not hear”

Isaiah 28:11-12.

Paul refers to the same Scripture in reference to the gifts of the Holy

Spirit.

“With men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; and yet for all that, they will not hear Me”

1 Corinthians 14:21.

The gifts of the Spirit are tools to empower and equip us that we might rest in God’s ability. Resting is equivalent to hearing and obeying God. The gifts of the Spirit operate not as a result of hard work, but as a result of listening.

For example, my five-year-old son usually asks me to bring him something every time I go to the store. He knows that if he wants something he has only one way to get it—he has to talk me into it. At his age he is too young to get a job and therefore, his only means to raise money is to appeal to me. If I promise to bring him something, he believes me, and immediately begins to “rest.” He has confidence in my word. He enters into rest, by going into the backyard to play and occupy himself until I return.

“For we who have believed do enter that rest...”

Hebrews 4:3.

This is true for us. We cannot heal, nor can we perform financial miracles, but we *can* appeal to our Heavenly Father. When God promises us by telling our spirit that He is going to bring about a miracle, we can be confident it will happen. We can rest!

## He’ll Do the Work If We’ll Do the Resting

A classic example of resting is Daniel. Daniel had a purposed heart. He purposed in his heart to please God. King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that he wanted interpreted. When his magicians, astrologers, sorcerers, and the Chaldeans could not tell him what he had dreamed, he ordered to have them killed. Daniel and his companions would have been included.

When Daniel heard about the decree, he asked the king to give him time so he could seek the Lord for the dream and its interpretation. As the king granted Daniel time, he and his companions sought the Lord. “Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision” Daniel 2:19.

Daniel heard from God, sparing his life and countless others. But all he



had to do was rest! God revealed the mystery to him in a night vision (dream) as he was sleeping! Daniel loved God with all his heart and when the crisis came, he did not have to sweat, worry or get in strife, but only listen to God.

Daniel could not have bragged that he worked out the solution or stayed up all night with the problem. All he could brag on was the fact that he knew God.

The greatest thing we can desire is to know God. He will speak to us in the midst of crisis and we can rest. “But let him who glories, glory in this, that he *understands and knows Me...*” Jeremiah 9:24.

### Learn to Minister to the Lord

Before we have something to give anyone, we must *first* receive it from the Lord. As we minister to the Lord, we begin to hear His voice. If we do not take time to minister to Him, we minister to others from our own mind and not in the power of the Spirit. If we put the Lord first in our lives, letting Him have His way with us, our ministry is automatic. We minister more by what we *are* than what we *say*.

# 10

Only By the Spirit

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts”

Zechariah 4:6.

By putting our faith in the shed blood of Jesus, and repenting of our sins, we legally become Christians. Entering into fellowship with God and walking in the knowledge of Jesus Christ is the beginning of a glorious life. John said,

“But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin”

1 John 1:7.

However, in order to please God through our *actions*, we must be led of the Spirit. He is the one upon whom we can rely to lead us into all truth (John 16:13).

With every biblical truth, we must have the guidance of the Holy Spirit to apply it to our lives. If not, it will not minister life, but rather death.

“Who also made us ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the *letter* kills, but the Spirit gives life”

2 Corinthians 3:6.

Many lives have been hurt or destroyed by the legalism of a truth of doctrine resulting when people take it into their own hands to enforce a truth or make it manifest to their lives or others. Whether it is a biblical principle of faith, deliverance, submission, etc., only by the wisdom and guidance of the Holy Spirit can these truths bring life and not death. Someone rightly said, “Religion without love is the meanest thing on earth.” It is the combination of truth and love that brings growth. “But speaking the truth in

love, may you grow up in all things into

Him who is the head—Christ” Ephesians 4:15.

1. We Walk By the Spirit—It is the consistent walking in the Spirit that pleases God. Letting the Spirit direct our steps keeps us from getting into the flesh. “I say then, walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh” Galatians 5:16. The Greek word for *walk* is *peripateo*, which means *to go around in a certain condition or state*. To walk in the Spirit is to go about in the state of listening to the Spirit.

2. We Are Led By the Spirit—The Spirit of God never pushes us, but leads us. “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God” Romans 8:14.

Sitting in the cab of a large truck and trying to turn the steering wheel may be a near impossibility, but when the truck begins to move, it can be steered easily. Sometimes in frustration to know the mind of the Lord, moving and taking some steps in faith makes it easy to be “steered” by God.

3. We Have the Mind of the Spirit—To be a Christian is one thing, but to have the mind of the Spirit is another. This is something we must desire and pray for. It is the carnal mind (of Christians) that hinders the flow of the Holy Spirit in our lives. “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be” Romans 8:7. Since God is a spiritual God, we must have spiritual understanding in order to follow Him and to understand His Word. When people attempt to interpret the Bible by their own reason and intellect, they defile it.

4. We Have an Unction of the Spirit—This word, *unction* (*chrisma*), means the smearing of oil as an endowment of the Holy Spirit. It is often translated as anointing. Our spirit is made to have this unction or sensitivity of the knowledge and presence of God. Our

own spirit bears witness to truth and receives promptings and specific direction from the Holy Spirit. Simply, God speaks to the spirit of man by the Holy Spirit. “But you have an unction (anointing) from the Holy One, and you know all things” 1 John 2:20.

5. We Know By the Spirit—Following the Spirit means knowing things that are not obvious to the natural senses. Jesus knew by the Spirit when He said to Nathaniel, “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!” And again, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you” John 1:47-48. Peter knew by the Spirit that Ananias and Sapphira had lied to the Holy Spirit and kept back part of the selling price of the land for themselves (Acts 5:1-11).

6. We Understand By the Spirit—Only God can give spiritual understanding. Paul prayed for the church at Ephesus, “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the spirit (in your spirit) of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened (flooded with light)” Ephesians 1:17-18. To pray for spiritual understanding is of utmost importance for every Christian.

7. We See By the Spirit—We develop spiritual sight as we grow spiritually. Seeing by the Spirit is seeing that which our natural senses cannot tell us. When Paul was preaching at Lystra, a man crippled from his mother’s womb was listening to him. “Paul, observing him intently and *seeing* that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, ‘Stand up straight on your feet!’ And he leaped and walked” Acts 14:9-10. Jesus frequently saw and perceived the evil intents of the hearts of the Pharisees.

8. We Hear By the Spirit—There is nothing more wonderful than hearing the voice of the Spirit. Philip, when commanded by an angel of the Lord to go to the desert, heard the voice of the Spirit. “Then the Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go near and overtake this chariot’” Acts 8:29. Ananias heard the Lord speak to him in a vision

telling him to go lay hands on a man named Saul of Tarsus who was praying (Acts 9:11). Jesus said, “I can of Myself do nothing. As I *hear*, I judge...” John 5:30. Countless times Jesus said, “He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear.”

He was emphasizing that it is not enough to hear with the natural ear, but we must hear what the Spirit is saying to us.

9. We Pray By the Spirit—Praying in the Spirit is letting the Holy Spirit use our voice and mouth to pray His words. Paul prayed and sang both by the Spirit and with his understanding. “For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. *What is the result then?* I will pray in the Spirit, and I will also pray with understanding. I will sing with the Spirit, and I will sing with the understanding” 1 Corinthians 14:14-15. It is important to exercise praying in the Spirit as it builds us up (1 Corinthians 14:4), builds our faith (Jude 20), and we pray according to the will of God (Romans 8:27).

10. We Sing By the Spirit—Singing in the Spirit, is like praying in the Spirit; it builds up the inner man. Of course this is different from singing choruses of praise, but words and songs that are given to us at that moment by the Holy Spirit. “Sing unto the Lord a new song...” Psalm 98:1. It is impossible to sing and to be discouraged at the same time!

“Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and *spiritual* songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” Ephesians 5:19 (also Colossians 3:16).

11. We Worship in the Spirit—God is not looking for worship, but worshipers. (If He were looking for worship, He could buy a cassette tape.) “...true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth...” John 4:23. Worship in the Spirit is letting the Holy Spirit flow through your heart and mouth, in words of adoration to the Father. “For we are the circumcision who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh” Philippians 3:3.

12. We Overcome By the Spirit—It is through the power of the Holy Spirit that we can put to death the desires of the flesh, “...but if *by the Spirit* you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live” Romans 8:13.

13. We Are Changed By the Spirit—God continually brings growth and change in our lives. “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as *by the Spirit* of the Lord” 2 Corinthians 3:18.

14. We Have Unity in the Spirit—It is in the Spirit that we have unity with one another. Although we have various backgrounds and differences, the Spirit of God desires to keep us in the unity in Him. “Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” Ephesians 4:2. Unity in the Spirit does not mean agreeing on every single thing. That would be unity of doctrine or uniformity. But Christians can be in unity in the Spirit.

15. Fellowship By the Spirit—A common misunderstanding is confusing the fellowship of the flesh with the fellowship of the Spirit. Fellowship in the Spirit bypasses all differences of background and binds us in the love of God. In the Spirit we can fellowship around our love of Jesus and the Word, forgetting our weaknesses and “likes” and “dislikes.” We are commanded not to know one another after the flesh, but after the Spirit. “Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even

though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer” 2 Corinthians 5:16. To know someone after the flesh is uniformity, but after the Spirit is conformity to the image of Christ.

Taking the “You” Out of You

“If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me”

Luke 9:23.

The musician had more talent than I had ever seen packaged in one person. He played chorus after chorus, with difficult chord changes, with little effort. However, my spirit was grieved. Rather than the music lifting hearts to worship God, I sensed the Holy Spirit was greatly quenched. Here was a gifted musician who loved God with all his heart, but God’s Spirit was not flowing through his music, because of his “un-crucified” desire to be noticed.

The pastor walked to the pulpit, started to hand me the microphone, but quickly the musician went into another chorus and the congregation followed. The pastor, caught off guard, looked puzzled, but sang along with them. His authority had been usurped. It was obvious that the musician was in control of the service, and not the Holy Spirit.

The next day this young man asked to speak with me. “Today, I did the most difficult thing. I told God I would not play anymore. God has been dealing with me because I’ve been in control of the instrument instead of Him.” I agreed with him. I did not soften it, but encouraged him not to play it again until he was convinced that God had changed His motives. “God is taking the ‘you’ out of you,” I explained. The gift God had given him, he had to give back to God.

The Lord wanted to take the “self” out of this man’s gift, so that the presence of God might flow through him to bless others. He had to take his



talent to the cross and lay it down. God makes us willing to put our human ambition at the cross, only to pick it up on the other side of the cross.

It is the cross which burns the human ambitions out of our service to God, so that the glory of God can flow through us.

God wants to use “crucified” musicians, teachers, preachers and leaders. Just as Abraham had to be willing to give up Isaac, we have to be willing to lay our ministry at the feet of Jesus, having willingness of heart never to pick it up again. When the desire for our ministry decreases and the desire to please God increases, God gives our ministry back to us. Then our ministry has a fresh anointing, God being in control of it. Those listening and watching will glorify God because the presence of God will be seen in us.

In some churches it is easy to feel that a particular ministry is “owned” by a certain person. When a person “owns” his ministry or is possessive of his limelight, the presence of God is hindered from coming through. The pastor finds out who “owns” it when he suggests that someone else do it for awhile. The reaction will make it clear. But God wants us to have a servant’s heart, not a possessive heart. God takes the ownership from us. A possessive spirit (like a dog with a favorite bone) is awful bondage. True freedom from anything that could own us is knowing that we could walk away from it at any time. Then we are free to be a blessing.

## Real Freedom

Real freedom comes when we realize that we don’t have any rights, only privileges. I’m not speaking of our legal inheritance of what Jesus purchased for us through His blood. We know that Satan has no legal right to take healing, salvation, and all the blessings of the cross from us. What I am speaking of is when we truly belong to God, He gives the commands. “For you are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God” Colossians 3:2.

When we can no longer claim ownership of our right to do what we want to do, and when we want to do it, we are free. “For you were bought at a price...” 1 Corinthians 6:20. There is no greater freedom than to know that we are not in charge anymore. When we do not care about exalting ourselves, we are free from what people think, and free to obey God.

## God Burned the Isaac Out of Abraham

Abraham went up on the mountain in obedience to

God to offer up his son, Isaac, as a sacrifice. That which was dearest to his heart, he had to surrender back to God. Abraham went up the mountain *owning* his son and all that Isaac represented. Abraham had obtained the promise, but now he had to be willing to surrender the promise back to God. He was being tested. I wonder if Abraham prayed, “Lord, let me sacrifice Ishmael!” But God does not want our mistakes as an offering.

What a trauma Abraham must have gone through! But in his willingness to sacrifice Isaac, Isaac *did die within* Abraham!

“By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called,’ accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a *figurative sense*”

Hebrews 11:17-19.

Abraham received Isaac back after he became “dead” in his heart, just as if he had actually killed him and God raised the boy from the dead. Abraham went up the mountain owning everything, but when he came down, he owned nothing, but he had possession of everything. He was free. Isaac truly belonged to God, but Abraham could enjoy him, because God had control of Abraham’s heart. That which could have been idolized above God was dead. God would fulfill His promise to a “crucified” Abraham.

### The Devil Offered Jesus a Cross-Less Shortcut

The devil offered to Jesus the exact thing that God the Father offered Him. Jesus was sent into the world to purchase back what Adam (through sin and

disobedience) had thrown away. The devil had control of what Adam controlled before the fall. He said to Jesus as he took Him on a high mountain showing Him all the kingdoms of the world, “All this authority I will give You, and their glory, *for all this has been delivered over to me*, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore if You will worship before me, all will be Yours” Luke 4:5-6.

Jesus knew that He was going to purchase back what Adam surrendered to Satan’s control, but there was an expensive price to pay. It was on the other side of the cross!

It is on the other side of the cross where we begin to experience the abundance of all things.

Jesus had to be willing to lose His identity.

“But made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross”

Philippians 2:7-8.

Yet on the other side of the cross all authority was given Him. “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” Matthew 28:18. We have been purchased by His blood, “...and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation...” Revelation 5:9.

## The Cross Takes the “YOU” Out of You

The cross in our life is not our weakness, our sickness, or our habit. Rather it is our will. We get crossed out. The cross means that our opinion does not count anymore. God is not open to suggestions! John the Baptist saw it, “He must increase, but I must decrease” John 3:30. The cross removes the part of us that will get in God’s way.

When we take up our cross, we are simply saying, “Lord, have your way.”

The Devil Gives Life, Then Kills: Jesus “Kills,”

## Then Gives Life

Many lives have been destroyed as they followed the glitter of the world, only to head into destruction. The devil uses every perverted stimulant possible to offer counterfeit “life,” but that which follows is death. No one has to be educated by statistics to know that millions of lives have been destroyed by the occult, drugs, alcohol and the humanistic philosophy which is from hell itself.

Jesus commands us to give up our rights to our life at the cross. Then identified with Him, we experience the blessings of a joint-heir with Him (Romans 8:17).

## God Wants to Remove the Covetousness, Not the Wealth

A young man came to Jesus wanting to know what he must do to have eternal life. Upon claiming that he had kept the commandments from his youth, Jesus said to him, “If you want to be perfect (complete) go sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come follow Me” Matthew 19:21.

The young man went away sorrowful because he had great possessions. Jesus wanted control of his heart. Had he been willing to give up all his possessions, perhaps Jesus would have seen his willing heart and said, “You don’t have to sell them, I see that you are committed to following Me.” But the spirit of covetousness had him bound. If we are willing to lose everything, we will be free to gain everything. “For whosoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it” Luke 9:24.

## The Prodigal Went Through the Cross and Was Set Free

The first thing the prodigal son said to his father was, “Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me” Luke 15:12. But after he came to the end of himself (having a good look at the mess he had made), he saw the cross! As his heart turned back to his

father's house, his motives were drastically changed. "I'll say to my father, 'Father...*make me* like one of your hired servants.'" He went from "give me" to "make me"—from a selfish heart to the heart of a servant.

It is the mercy of God that lets us hit bottom with no where to turn. Until we can look through God's eyes at our self (even a Spirit-filled self), our heart will not cry out to God for change. When his father saw that his heart was changed he welcomed him home and celebrated. "But when he was still a long way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him" (v. 20).

The cross (coming to the end of himself) had purified the prodigal's motives. When God purifies our heart we can say, "Make me a blessing," not just "Give me a blessing."

### Sin or Self-Centered Sinner?

God has already dealt with the sin problem. Sin has been atoned for at the cross through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Since provision has been made for sin, the problem is not sin, but the self-centered sinner. Although we can temporarily change the outward symptoms of sin, only God can change the heart. When the heart of man is cleansed, the outward man follows automatically. For example, a minister friend of mine had a teenage son who always dressed sloppily and would never comb his hair. This man and his son had had many arguments over his appearance. Finally the boy was attracted to a girl at his school. Never again did the father have to mention the essentials of good grooming to him. Something happened within his heart.

God works like the microwave which cooks food from the inside out. He first deals with our self-centered heart and motives. When our heart is corrected, all other symptoms follow. Preachers (myself included) have often preached the problem rather than the answer. But the answer is letting God deal with our heart and its intentions.

When we look closely at the ten commandments, we see that the first and the tenth are amazingly similar.

The first is, “You shall have no other gods before Me.” The tenth, in effect says, that we should not even *want* to have any other gods before us as it deals with coveting, telling us not to covet our neighbor’s wife, house, field, manservant, maidservant, ox, donkey, or anything that belongs to him. Although the first commandment says not to have other gods or idols, the tenth deals with the motive, not even to covet them.

Only God can do the “surgery” needed on our heart. He not only forgives sin, but cleanses the motive of the heart. He takes the “you” out of you.

There is only one Billy Graham. For every “original” that God raises up there are thousands of imitators. But God does not run out of ideas. He is the Creator. Oh, how we limit God when we pattern our life and ministry after someone else. The grace (divine enablement) God gives to each of us is as different as we are from one another.

The day I realized that I was not called to be like someone else, I was set free. God will not anoint and put His blessing on a rubber stamp or a quick-copy duplicate of another minister. Each of us is a Designer-original!

In a day when Bible schools crank out hundreds of graduates, it is a temptation to get on the band-wagon to preach a copied, successful message that God has given to someone else. But second-hand revelations will not build the kingdom of God. Each of us must have his own revelation of truth. Only what God has made life to us will bring life to someone else.

God uses various ministers to stir our hearts. In fact, the mark of an anointed message is that we are stirred to serving God more, and to follow Him more fully. However, a common mistake is to get impressed with the person, and thereby pattern our experience after his. Those whom God used gave an account of their experience as God spoke to them. Also they may not have told their failures. God intended to use the minister not to be imitated, but that we might seek the Lord for an experience of our own.

When the mantle of God’s anointing fell upon Elisha, he took the mantle and striking the water said, “Where is the Lord God of Elijah?” 2 Kings 2:14. He did not imitate Elijah but immediately called to the *God*

of Elijah. He had to know the power of God by personal and direct experience. When he struck the water he was saying, “Lord, show me Yourself.”

When David put on Saul’s armor, he immediately said, “I cannot walk with these, for I have not tested them” 1 Samuel 17:39. David knew he could not go after Goliath in another man’s armor (experience). He had to go out in the same armor that he wore killing the lion and the bear, which was the anointing of God.

When the seven sons of Sceva attempted unsuccessfully to cast an evil spirit out of a man, they said to the spirit, “We adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches” Acts 19:13. Of course, the evil spirit recognized that they had no revelation of Jesus, but were acting on a “formula” that they had heard. The evil spirit came out and overpowered them.

## No One Ever Became Great in God by Imitation

When a new product comes on the market it is immediately duplicated by zealous manufacturers who want in on the profit.

God wants us to be zealous for *Him*, not a ministry! When Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, He was truly alone with God. But when He returned from the wilderness, having passed every test, He returned in the power of the Spirit (Luke 4:14). His wilderness experience had taught Him to know God and to obey Him. “Although He was a Son, He learned obedience through the things He suffered” Hebrews 5:8.

Power comes from being submitted to the Power-Giver. The more we obey the Lord, the more power He adds unto our lives.

God is daily revealing Himself to us. “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matthew 6). More than natural food, God knows that we have to have a daily revelation of His glorious presence to be nurtured spiritually. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth



of God” Matthew 4:4. Listening to tapes and reading Christian books and literature, wonderful as it is, will never be a substitute for personal, daily communion with God. This is a day when God wants to reveal Himself more intimately to each of us individually, and to the Body of Christ collectively. We have to desire to fellowship with Him. “Draw me unto you and let us run together” Song of Solomon 1:4.

It is so easy to feel inferior and to admire the Christ in everyone else, forgetting that God wants to exalt the Christ in us! The Bible says, “Christ in *you*, the hope of glory” Colossians 1:27. Inferiority is a vile lie of the enemy to keep us from knowing our full potential in Christ.

### A Voice Not an Echo

There are a lot of echoes in the world today; someone is always echoing back what he heard through someone else and not what he heard first-hand from God. The devil does not fear our account of another person’s revelation but he *does* fear us when we walk in the light of God. An echo is not real. It will not bring life and substance. Hearing the voice of God brings substance to our words. Studying Scripture with the knowledge of God quickening it to our spirit brings life.

John the Baptist was a voice! He carried no credentials. He had nothing to claim or say of himself. Those who came asked him whether he was Elijah, the prophet Jeremiah, or the Messiah Himself. His answer was glorious. “I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord’” (John 1:23). His identity was not important, his message was.

### Growing Through the Word

The best thing a young Christian can do is be available to hear the Word of God preached. This is how to grow and stay “clean.” “That He might sanctify and cleanse it (the Church) with the washing of water by the Word” Ephesians 5:26. No matter how much we grow and learn, we need a continual cleansing of the Word which comes through the anointed exposition of preaching. “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things” Romans 10:15.

The five-fold ministry of the apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher, have been raised up by God as gifts to the Church, “for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” Ephesians 4:12. Without them we will not be properly equipped.

A mistake that many have made when feeling the zeal of God, is giving in to a restlessness and “running ahead” to begin their ministry. Although the Holy Spirit is saying “Whoa” they are not mature enough to recognize it as the voice of God, and attribute it to the enemy trying to stop them. Of course, if they have a teachable spirit, they will soon come to the realization that it is indeed God who wants them to “sit under” the five-fold ministry until He says to go. The New Testament pattern is to be *sent* out, not run out.

“As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they *sent* them away”

Acts 13:2-3.

## Sensitive to the Spirit

Faith grows. Someone who has walked with God for many years may be able to operate in a higher level of faith than someone else. Many realms of God are grown into, rather than a formula plugged into.

As I preach, I’ve learned there must be preparation of prayer and study

(Acts 6:4). But I've also learned how easy it is to get in God's way. For example, I used to preach everything I had studied or written down. I was guilty of preaching more than twenty minutes after the Holy Spirit stopped!

It should be common that a preacher says things he did not intend to say, because the Lord will put words in his mouth to meet the variety of needs of those present. God desires above all that needs are met. Being sensitive to the Holy Spirit is a must.

## Knowing Him for Ourselves

Jesus exhorted the seventy disciples who were rejoicing that they had power over the evil spirits, "Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven" Luke

10:20. We rejoice because we are in union with Him. We are united with Him, not a doctrine, creed, movement, religion, or group, but with the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Rejoice!

13

Fruit Glorifies God

“By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit...”

John 15:8.

We were on a long trip from Texas to Indiana. Our son got restless after several hours, so I asked my wife to drive, and I got in the back seat with him. He wanted me to help him put together a construction kit that assembled into an airplane. Although it was designed for small children he had given up, and even I was having much difficulty.

He leaned against me intently watching me work with it. Finally after about thirty minutes, as I was putting on the final pieces and he said to me, “Look how good we’re doing!” Of course, he had not done one thing but watch but in his mind he was helping me. This really amused me and I did not mind giving him the credit.

This is similar to how God works with us. We lean against Him and watch Him intently, while He is furnishing the power and ability. Yet, He commends us for bearing fruit. I like to say it like this. If you learn to get there at the same time God does, it makes *you* look good.

God has one formula for bearing fruit. We must abide in the Vine.

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me”

John 15:4.

Bearing fruit is not what we know, as much as *Who*

we are hooked up to. We are in union with Jesus Christ.

## Yoked Up With Jesus

Jesus said,

“Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is *easy* and My burden is *light*”

Matthew 11:29-30.

When a young ox was trained, he was put in the yoke with a strong and more experienced ox. To learn, all he had to do was to walk along “in agreement” with the elder ox, with his neck in the yoke. Like me, the hardest part for the young ox was probably being willing to walk in unison with the experienced ox. It made life difficult for the ox only if he pulled and struggled against the yoke.

As long as we are willing to walk in agreement with God, it will be easy for us. Notice that Jesus did not refer to the yoke as treacherous, or as a concrete block, but as easy! Jesus always carries the yoke. Our part is to walk in step with Him.

Our faith, in His faithfulness, grows! Seeing He does not forsake us when we walk through difficult places, increases our faith in Him.

## God's Voice

Recently, we attended a ministers' convention in Kansas City. The moving of the Spirit and the preaching were wonderful. Our hearts were greatly stirred. Between meetings, I went to the motel room and fell asleep. When I awakened I heard the voice of the Lord in my spirit say, “When I tell your spirit through a knowledge and witness that I am going to do something, this inner witness is equal to My coming and appearing to tell you in person.”

This really helped me. As a Christian. I do not need to be knocked over by the power of God, but simply to be open to Him. His voice is equal to Himself appearing. For example, if I told you in person that I was going to do something, it would be the same as if I called you on the phone and told you, although you could not see me. Jesus said,

“My sheep hear My voice and I know them and they follow Me”

John 10:27.

Hearing God's voice frequently comes through Scripture. I like the expression, "finding a scripture with my name on it." Although we know that the entire Word of God is His commandments and promises to everyone, on occasion God will single out a certain scripture to us personally. When this occurs, God is emphasizing, "This is My promise to you for this day or for this situation."

The devil has deceived and kept God's people from knowing who they really are in Christ. We are the head and not the tail (Deuteronomy 28:13). The Holy Spirit is reminding us that time is very short and that more will be accomplished in a short time than previously in long periods of time.

"For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness..."

Romans 9:28.

## Where's the Fruit?

Imagine getting to heaven and seeing Jesus. Perhaps you would say, "Lord, I made it!" But His response might be, "Yes, but what do you have to show Me?" You reply, "What do you mean, Lord? I'm here." He might say something like, "I gave you over 70 years of health and provision, yet I see no return on My investment in your life. Where are the souls you have led to Me? Where is your fruit? Where are those you've encouraged?"

We must have fruit to glorify God. Playing it safe and not seeking God is the lazy way out. Jesus told a parable about a man with no fruit.

"Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.'

But the Lord answered and said to him, '*You wicked and lazy servant...* you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest'"

Matthew 25:24-27.

This man thought he was being careful, but Jesus called him lazy and wicked. God has called us to bear fruit. Jesus said,

"You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain..."

John 15:16.

## Artificial Fruit: The Fooler

The opposite of fruit of the Holy Spirit is rather easy to describe, such as strife instead of peace, and sadness instead of joy. But what about the “artificial” fruit of the Spirit; that which has a similar appearance of real fruit, but upon examination is merely artificial?

### Artificial Love: Insincere Talk

True love has action and substance. Many times all the right things are said and even hugs are exchanged. Yet it is not the genuine love of God which would move the person to help you in time of need, or give necessary encouragement. “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth” 1 John 3:18.

### Artificial Joy: Silliness and Giddiness

Christians that do not have the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives often rely on the overabundance of corny jokes and silly talk, not understanding that this is not the true joy of the Lord. The true joy of the Lord is far beyond happiness or lightheartedness, and passes description. “...you rejoice with

joy inexpressible and full of glory” 1 Peter 1:8. This is not to say that there is no place for humor. True humor is from God, and Christians have the best sense of humor in the world, best described as sanctified wit.

### Artificial Peace: Passiveness

This “ho-hum” attitude fools many people into thinking they are experiencing the peace of God just because they are not worried about anything. Often they slip into things. Yet, the peace of God is to *rule* in our hearts! (Colossians 3:15). True peace is most easily recognized when conditions are encountered that are not conducive to peace.

### Artificial Patience: Laziness

Many have substituted laziness for peace, and have

the attitude that “Whenever God is ready, I am.” Yet, God commands us to ask, seek and knock (Luke 11:9), and to seek Him diligently (Hebrews 11:6). True patience is to have an attitude of excited expectancy, yet being willing to let God manifest things in *His* timing and *His* way.

#### Artificial Gentleness: Politeness

Truly the nature of the Holy Spirit is gentle. “But we were *gentle* among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children” 1 Thessalonians 2:7. A polite or socially-refined character is far different from the gentleness and compassion the Holy Spirit produces. “A soft (gentle) answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” Proverbs 15:1.

#### Artificial Goodness: Good Deeds Without God

Being nice or doing good has nothing to do with being a Christian. Countless sinners who do not know the person of Jesus are people who still do good deeds. As a Christian, our

good deeds are in response to our love for Jesus who has redeemed us, and to the Holy Spirit who is leading us and guiding us to do the deeds. “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God” Romans 8:14. Doing good does not make us a Christian any more than walking through a house makes us the owner of it.

#### Artificial Faith: Presumption

Presumption looks a lot like faith, yet it has nothing



to do with faith. Presumption is acting on your own initiative or expectation *without* the Holy Spirit giving the indication that it is God's plan. Faith is initiated by God, and in response to His initiation, results come. Additionally, faith is action and not just positive talk. Real faith is exercising and acting upon what we believe God has made real to us. "Faith without works (the exercise of faith) is dead" James 2:26.

### Artificial Meekness: Milktoast

Many have portrayed the meek character of a Christian as being soft, wishy-washy, indecisive and limp-wristed. Yet real meekness is submitting our will to a higher authority. It's when we have the power to do something, but we submit to God instead. The best scriptural example of meekness is when Jesus could have escaped the cross with one prayer, yet He chose to obey His Father and lay down His life. "Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?" Matthew 26:53.

### Artificial Temperance: Compromise

True temperance keeps the light of God shining on both sides of every issue. To keep balanced in the Scripture, every truth or doctrine must be weighed in the entire context of the Bible and not built around a certain favorite passage. Compromise looks a lot like temperance and some yield their true convictions in order to keep "peace" with another person or group.

### The Artificial Anointing: Talent and Personality

The blessing of God-given talent and a gifted personality can sometimes get in the way of the flow of the Holy Spirit. When one is gifted, it is a temptation to rely on that gift of speech, or skill on the instrument, rather than on the wisdom and power of God, being secure in his own talent and ability. Thank God for these gifts, but never let them get in the way of total dependence on the anointing of the Holy Spirit. The Lord spoke to Paul, "...My strength is made perfect in weakness" 2 Corinthians 12:9.

As a friend of mine said, “God’s problem is not our weakness, it is our strength.” When we get overconfident, we have a tendency to say to the Lord, “I can handle it now.” Yet when we are weak, we cry out to God and say, “Lord, I cannot handle it without you, You’re going to have to help me!” And He does, by His anointing.

14

God Has Given to Every Man, Muscles

“...as God has dealt to each one the measure of faith”

Romans 12:3.

Everyone has muscles. Some develop their muscles by rigorous exercise and discipline. Others exercise little and their muscles are evidence. Everyone has the same potential to develop his muscles and strength.

God has given to every person *spiritual muscles, the measure of faith*. God is an equal-opportunity Employer. What we do with our God-given measure of faith is up to us. God has put the ball in our court. If we respond to God by exercising our faith, our faith will grow. If we do not learn to respond to God by exercising our faith, our faith will not grow. “Faith without works (responding action) is dead” James 2:17.

We were traveling through Louisiana and noticed a huge billboard that was sponsored by a local church. Pictured on the billboard was Jesus hanging on the cross. Under the picture it read, “It’s your move!” Although there will always be periods of waiting on the Lord concerning certain things in our life, God is always requiring us to exercise our faith by appropriating what He has already performed for us on the cross.

## Exercising Our Faith Muscle

The counterfeit of faith is mental assent. This is mentally agreeing with a truth, without having a personal grasp on it. Multitudes of sincere people warm church pews locked in a mental assent of the gospel. Their mouths are saying and repeating wonderful words, yet their hearts are void of the

understanding of what they are saying. Therefore, their potentially powerful faith remains a useless muscle. Equally, those who have listened to the exciting and anointed experiences of teachers, have often been trapped into applying another person's experience to their lives, with no fruitful results.

Faith is not a formula, but a response (exercising the faith muscles) to God. With faith alone, we would not need God and we would aimlessly use our "formula" for whatever whim or desire we have. Therefore, faith is meant to operate with the voice of the Holy Spirit, as well as a desire to walk in union with Jesus Christ. *Faith without the Holy Spirit's guidance is presumption.*

## Resistance

What weight lifter would gain strength without the "opposition" of the weights? Resistance to opposition brings growth. We will not grow spiritually without resistance—something to exercise our faith on. When we pray for faith, God answers our prayer by giving us a mountain to exercise our faith on. Therefore, I do not pray for faith anymore. I have enough mountains. I find it to be greater wisdom to ask for strength and wisdom to be obedient.

Picture yourself going up steps. Every step gained means pushing against and resisting the lower step. God loves the overcomer, because he is willing to resist the obstacles and come up higher. Without a step to "resist" there would be no way to go to the higher steps.

When Satan opposes us, our resistance to his attacks makes us grow stronger. Every time we resist that lie or temptation, we are automatically stronger. The next time we have more strength against it. "Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been proved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him" James 1:12. Who wears a crown? Those in authority! God gives authority to those who resist temptation.

## Seeking God

Seeking God is the hardest thing to begin. Although we usually have good intentions, often we get fooled by a distraction. However, the fact that the devil is trying to distract us should make us even more eager to seek the Lord. Frequently, upon beginning to pray, the phone will ring or thoughts of things that we need to do, bombard our mind. Satan is no fool. He knows that earnestly seeking God will bring us benefits of strength, ability to hear God, and will give us more authority in our Christian walk. Although there are a multitude of qualified jobs that need to be done, we must take a step of faith and give God some quality time first. He will amaze us by redeeming and multiplying our time.

If we are weak in discipline, it is helpful to make an appointment with the Lord, having a set time that we commit ourselves to fellowship with Him. For example, setting the alarm fifteen minutes early and spending those fifteen minutes daily with the Lord, will bring life-changing results. However, some tend to overstructure things, like a husband saying to his wife, “All right, I have to spend thirty minutes with you.” Who wants that? Certainly God does not. Seeking God should be a delight, never an obligation or endurance test. Over and over again, the Lord promises to reveal Himself to those who seek Him. In fact seeking God is a command.

“So I say to you, *Ask and keep on asking*, and it shall be given you; *seek and keep on seeking*, and you shall find; *knock and keep on knocking*, and the door shall be opened to you”

Luke 11:9, *Amplified*.

## Exercising Our Spirit

The mind is the greatest hindrance to the Spirit. Our mind likes to be in charge, making it difficult to submit our anxious thoughts to the Spirit. Sometimes I find it takes several minutes of prayer and worship in the Spirit to get my heart conscious of the presence of God. But once the threshold of resistance is crossed, it ceases to be a duty or a chore. Instead, I experience the Holy Spirit rising in me and God begins to speak.

Some get bored or discouraged and stop seeking God. The runner who begins to feel weary, as he presses on, suddenly (almost miraculously) gets a second wind. Our goal as we seek God is to get over the inertia of our flesh so we can enter into the Spirit. The athlete who is struggling has to ask himself, “How much do I want to win?” We have to ask ourselves the same

type of question, “How much do I want to hear and obey the Lord?”

In prayer I have found it is best not to waste time justifying my failures or saying pious things, but rather to communicate. Communication means getting gut-level honest with God. Prayer that spouts out religious things we think God wants to hear accomplishes little. Real effective prayer takes place when our heart, not just our lips, reaches the heart of God. It is not the quantity, but the quality that God wants.

True spiritual worship is letting the Holy Spirit flow through us. Worship does not please the intellect or the flesh, especially of those who want their ears tickled. Worship is the yielding of our time, our will, and the overanxious mind unto the pure adoration of God.

There are many ways to study the Word. One way is to search out a subject or theme and follow it through the Bible, using cross referencing and study aids. Outside books are helpful at times. Additionally, to pour over the Scriptures letting the Spirit guide you where to read, will give fresh understanding of what you read.

Any muscle exercised in God will grow! It's your move!

## Rebellious Spirits

“Woe to the rebellious children, says the Lord, Who take counsel, but not of Me, and who devise plans, but not of My Spirit...”

Isaiah 30:1.

Our flesh, that unyielded will, is the devil’s only avenue in deceiving a Christian. We must recognize that flesh loves attention, sensation, and excitement. If these areas of our flesh are not crucified, they will be door-openers for the enemy to distract us.

While pastoring, I counseled a young married woman who constantly battled guilt and condemnation. She never felt that she was quite spiritual enough, and thereby could not enter into God’s rest. Not knowing the complete peace of God, she lived with a restlessness and a constant craving to “be doing” something for God. I explained to her that God wants us to “be” before we “do” and we do not work *for* God, rather He works *through* us. The Holy Spirit revealed to her the priorities for her life which were to be a desirable wife for her husband, to keep her house clean (it was filthy), and to minister to her children and her husband who needed her.

Although she readily admitted to these needs, she would not submit her flesh to God, and daily spent hours on the phone talking with anyone who

would listen. Consequently, the devil began to use this young woman to cause division in the Body of Christ. Through her many hours of daily phone conversation, she would drop seeds of discord and division to the ears of her listeners. Of course, the mature Christians would not tolerate this, but the younger and innocent Christians were perfect prey for her.

She successfully confused those young in the Lord by encouraging them to rehash the past and their old problems (which were already cleansed by the blood of Jesus), convincing them that it would help to dredge them up. Obviously, she had convinced herself that she was really helping them. But the fruit was evident. Anyone who was in contact with her for any length of time, either left the church or became so confused and backslid, that the damage was irreparable.

This whole problem began in her due to her loneliness and a desire to be the center of attention. Although God dealt with her to yield this to Him, she would always turn to the telephone and use people as her “escape” instead of God. Did she love God? Yes. But the enemy had deceived her because she refused to submit that restless area of her flesh to God.

## God, Use Me!

It is easy to pray, “God use me.” But our heart may be saying, “God use me so I can be the center of attention,” or “Use me the way I want to be used.” One man said there are two ways to pray, “Use me,” or “Make me usable.”

God deals with our motives so that as He works through us, our works will not be tainted with human flesh. Flesh and Spirit do not mix. Simply put, flesh is anything that is not energized by the Holy Spirit. No matter how sincere, enthusiastic, or excited we are about something, we have to be willing to let God initiate our plans.

Jesus was yielded to His Father’s will. His own flesh had to be “dead” to anything, except that which was energized by the Spirit of God.

## Holy Spirit or a Religious Spirit

Unyielded flesh also opens the door to a religious spirit. A religious spirit can be summarized in this way. It is a counterfeit of the Holy Spirit. For example, “God



*made me do*” something. This type of statement contradicts the nature of the Holy Spirit.

### *Rebellious Spirits*

The Holy Spirit never makes, or pushes, but leads us! He never forces us to do anything. He will deal, prompt, encourage, nudge, woo, but will never violate our freedom to choose to obey or disobey. The devil, however, is a pusher and a dominator, manipulating the will of anyone he can.

I used to get upset when someone did not readily receive a message that I gave him which I knew was from God. The Lord showed me where I was wrong to get upset. He made it plain. If I was upset when the message was not received, there was evidence that it came from me and not from God. If it is God’s message, *He* should be upset, not I! I am just the deliverer. When a postman delivers the mail, he is not upset if we are not happy with the mail we receive. His job is just to deliver it. So is ours—for God.

Another characteristic of a religious spirit is strife. The victims of it are always on the run, driving here, calling there, or buttonholing someone. The Holy Spirit never moves outside the realm of peace and rest. Yet those “at rest” in God are accomplishing much more with a fraction of the effort. To be in the Spirit, is not necessarily equated with being “busy for God.” To be in the Spirit is to live in the presence of God, “For in Him we live, and move and have our being...” Acts 17:28.

God’s way is always peace. By listening to Him, great things are accomplished, yet we have no blood, sweat, and tears to show for it. Due to the paramount importance of intimately knowing God, there is great emphasis being placed on worship in these last days. God wants us to know how to enter into His presence and to live in His presence, listening to His voice.

A small key can unlock a large house. Great truths for the Christian walk are unlocked as God gives us the keys to open our understanding.

These are some of the keys that God has given me over a period of time. They are neither arbitrary or conclusive, but have helped me to see with greater clarity what God is saying. With the use of a simple key, access is given to see a truth in its entirety.

1. The Key to the Heart of God Is Worship: Nothing pleases God more than pure worship. Jesus said, "...true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him" John 4:23. We worship in two dimensions: In spirit, with the Holy Spirit flowing through us in adoration to Him; and in truth, by letting His truth be incorporated into our lives.

2. The Key to the Blessings of God Is a Thankful Heart: A thankful and rejoicing heart glorifies God, and keeps our heart open to receive from Him. "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord..." Psalm 92:1. God hates complaining.

3. The Key to Faith Is Obedience: Obedience opens the door to faith. Rather than trying to "work up" faith, listen to what God is telling you to do. Bible saints, noted for their great faith, were simply willing to obey God.

4. The Key to the Gifts of the Spirit Is Compassion: Before Jesus healed people He was moved with compassion. It is the desire to see people well and encouraged that makes the gifts of the Spirit operate. Followed by compassion, the power of God will rise within us to meet the need, "...but faith working through love" Galatians 5:6.

5. The Key to the Anointing Is Prayer: Time spent alone with God has always proved to increase the anointing on my preaching and teaching. Fervent prayer opens up our own hearts to be sensitive to what God is saying. Time is a sacrifice for most people, yet God redeems and multiplies the time

back.

6. The Key to Answered Prayer Is to Pray Unselfishly:

“Bless-me prayers” do not touch the heart of God nearly as much as praying for the needs of others. To pray, “Lord change them, so I can have a better life,” is not nearly as effective as a prayer with leaving your name out of it such as, “Lord, help them for their sake and for Jesus sake.”

7. The Key to Holding Ground Against Satan: I have found three things to help marvelously. 1) Stay mad (at Satan and all unrighteousness). 2) Stay on fire. Don’t let your heart “cool off toward God. 3) Stay consistent. Few battles are won without consistency. Be consistent in prayer, seeking God, in study, and in being faithful. Satan will not have a chance to hinder you, if you persevere in these areas.

8. The Key to Hearing God Is Listening To Your Spirit:

God does not speak to our mind, but to our spirit. Usually our minds are so loud that we “drown out” the voice of the Spirit. “Out of *your* innermost being shall flow rivers of living water” John 7:38. Do not expect to get knocked over by the voice of God. “Be still and know that I am God” Psalm 46:10.

9. The Key to Understanding Scripture Is to Meditate:

Meditate, from the Hebrew word, *Hagah*, means *to murmur (with pleasure or anger) or to mutter or ponder*. A famous saying is, “A page digested is better than a volume read.” Some animals, such as cows, chew their cud, which is re-chewing their food. Meditate (re-chew) what God has said. Much understanding comes through meditating rather than when we are straining to understand. “This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall *meditate* in it day and night, that you may observe to do

according to all that is written in it...” Joshua 1:8.

10. The Key to God Moving in Your Life Is Desire to Please God: God said of David, “I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do (fulfill) all my will” Acts 13:22; 1 Samuel 13:14.

11. The Key to Overcoming Is Wanting God More than Your Weakness: When desire to please God becomes greater than the desire to give in to the temptation, victory comes.

12. The Key to Deliverance Is Repentance: When there is true repentance, the devil has no more ground to stand on. The devil cannot stay where God’s light shines.

13. The Key to Authority Is Submitting to The Authority of Jesus Christ: “Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you” James 4:7. God gives His authority to those who are obedient.

14. The Key to Love Is Forgiveness: Unforgiveness blocks the flow of the love of God. After unforgiveness, bitterness hardens the heart. Forgiveness frees the heart to love again.

15. The Key to Miracles Is Expectancy: An expectant heart is a heart full of faith. Faith with expectancy pleases God.

16. The Key to Power is Unity and Agreement: There is great power when hearts unite and agree. Jesus said, “Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father who is in heaven” Matthew 18:19. When we agree with God, we are in agreement with power.

17. The Key to Boldness Is Not Caring What People Think:  
The fear of people’s opinions keeps us bound to timidity and weakness. God said to Paul, “I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you” Acts 26:17. God delivered him from the fear and opinions of the people so he would be free to minister to them.

18. The Key to Mental Health Is Get Your Mind Off Yourself: Self-centeredness is the root cause of most mental problems. Think of others. Pray for others. Do for others, as unto the Lord.

19. The Key to Compassion Is Suffering.: To suffer in any area of your life always makes you more aware and compassionate of anyone who would suffer in the same way. Praying for people, especially those you have difficulty loving, brings more compassion for them.

20. The Key to a Victorious Life Is to Fall in Love with Jesus: Put Him before everything and everyone else. Fall in love with the Person of Jesus, not just what He can do for you. Loving Him comes before serving Him.

## Enjoying God

“Because you did not serve the Lord your God *with joy and gladness of heart*, for the abundance of all things, therefore you shall serve your enemies...”

Deuteronomy 28:47-48.

With a smile I have often referred to the Holy Spirit like Dr. Pepper, the soft drink. As the commercial goes, “So misunderstood.” God is misunderstood. Few people understand that God wants us to enjoy Him and He wants to enjoy us. Deceived, we have protected ourselves from getting too intimate with Him, thinking He is going to make life rough on us. Yet He is our best Companion and His intelligence, if heeded, will not only spare us a lot of trouble, but lead us into success in every area of our life.

Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as the Helper (John 14). He will help us with anything we let Him, even if it is finding a lost button for our shirt.

My wife doesn’t read the newspaper with the fervency that I do. But one day she was prompted by the Lord to look at the paper. Quickly she was led to read a small ad that told about a woman selling designer clothes. The next morning, we went to the address given in the paper. The lady pointed out that most of the clothes still had the labels on them. Also, she was my wife’s exact size. There were designer jeans, slacks, silk blouses, suits, shoes and even swimming suits. The clothes were of excellent quality and the prices were next to nothing.

The lady told us, “I have a quirk. I am a compulsive buyer. I buy expensive clothes knowing I’ll never wear them. I don’t know why I do it.”

We went home with a back seat full of hundreds of dollars worth of clothes and spent very little. This happened three years in a row. Each year my wife was drawn by the Holy Spirit to the same ad which ran only once every 365 days. The third year, the woman told us she wasn't going to have any more sales. But we were moving anyway. These had been times of financial need for us and God had used a most unlikely source to provide, and in style. "The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just" Proverbs 13:22.

God is setting His people free from bringing a "grocery list" before Him or treating Him like a mail order catalog. There is a greater way! Choose to enjoy God for who He is. His presence is better than a promise. Jesus said,

"Therefore do not worry saying, 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you"

Matthew 6:31-33.

When I learned to desire intimacy with God, I began hearing His voice more and watched Him direct my life more. God is practical! If we can learn to hear Him in practical things, we will be better equipped to hear Him for spiritual direction.

We do not need more knowledge about the Book of Revelation as much as we need to become more acquainted with the Author of the Bible who dwells within us. Not only will He illuminate our understanding of Scriptures, but will show us how to walk in the Spirit.

Before we bought our home, we looked for a year and toured countless houses. One night the Lord spoke to me one word, *auf wiedersein*. It sounded to me to be German, but I did not know what it meant. About two weeks later we heard about a home that had just gone up for sale. As soon as we saw it, we knew immediately that it was the right home for us. We proceeded with the loan approval and paper work. As

the days approached for the closing I met the man who was selling the home to us. (The realtor had done all negotiating.) He told me that he was German, which was obvious from his accent. He had moved from Germany to Texas. I asked him what the word *auf weidersein*, meant. He replied, "That means farewell." This was a sweet confirmation to us from God that this indeed was the right home for us. We knew we were in His perfect will.

### Expectancy

Many do not hear God because they do not expect Him to speak. Yet God moves in accordance with our expectation of Him. He has taught me to expect to hear His voice the first thing upon waking up in the morning. Nearly every morning this happens. Usually He speaks a phrase or one word or a scripture.

For several years, I have been prompted by the Lord to keep a diary. This is not to record daily events necessarily, but rather to record everything that God says, whether it be a vision, dream, a specific scripture, or a word that He has given someone else to tell me. Also, my wife and I frequently ask the Lord questions about direction for our lives and we are careful to write down anything He speaks. When we look back over the past diary entries, it is amazing to recollect how everything that God spoke, accurately came to pass. The Bible plainly says that we are to ask God for wisdom.

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose (expect) that he will receive anything from the Lord"

James 1:5-7.

Often people are healed during the preaching of the Word because of the presence of God. Expectant hearts release His power. When a lot of people are in a state of expectancy, anything can happen. When Paul was preaching



at Lystra, he saw a man listening who had faith to be made well. He commanded him with a loud voice, “Stand up straight on your feet!” Acts 14:10. The man who had been crippled from birth leaped up and walked! The Word preached had built up his expectancy.

## Falling in Love Again

It is easy to fall in love. Few have that problem. But to stay in love is another thing. God rebuked the church at Ephesus for falling *out* of love.

“Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have *left* your first love”  
Revelation 2:4.

They had not *lost* their first love, they had *left* it! So many books have been written concerning whether our salvation can be lost. But the Bible does not say we lose it, but rather leave it. This occurs when our hearts cool off and we leave that place of intimacy and fervency where we once knew God. God tells us how to fall in love again. “Remember therefore from where you have fallen; *repent* and do the first works...”  
Revelation 2:5.

What are the first works? What did we do when we fell in love? We were excited! We enjoyed their company. We thought about them all the time. We talked about them constantly. We anticipated time spent with them. We were affectionate with them.

As newborn Christians, we were excited about God. We talked to Him continually. We talked of Him to nearly everyone we saw. We read and studied the Bible. We could not wait to get to church. We prayed and worshiped with enthusiasm. No one could dampen our childlike faith.

God is desirous that we return to that first love, that He may once again reveal Himself to us. If we do not heed His call, the warning is clear,

“...I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent”

Revelation 2:5.

The lampstand always represents the prophetic flow of revelation and understanding. We must return to that pure, first love and enjoy intimacy and fellowship with God again.

## Repenting for Enduring

Lukewarmness causes spiritual blindness. The church at Laodicea thought they were doing great (always a characteristic of spiritual blindness), but God said,

“Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked”

Revelation 3:17.

He also commanded them to repent.

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent”

(v. 19).

The next portion of Scripture refers not to sinners but to Christians who were filled with the Holy Spirit, spoke in tongues, and in today’s language, may have had a large cassette-tape library. Nevertheless, God says to these believers,

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me”

(v. 20).

God was emphasizing, “I used to have fellowship with you, but now I am on the outside of your heart again. I am knocking on the door of your heart because I want to come in *again* and fellowship with you.” They too, had left their first love and slipped into the quicksand of lukewarmness.

Without intimacy, any relationship becomes an endurance. Who would

want his spouse to say, “I’ve stuck it out for 40 years? We have done this to God if we have ceased to enjoy His presence. Serving God without enjoying Him is missing the point of the gospel. It is one thing to be married, but entirely another thing to be happily married.

The gospel means good news. We are in fellowship with God. The Lord told Israel,

“Because you did not serve the Lord your God *with joy and gladness of heart* for the abundance of all things, therefore you shall serve your enemies...”

Deuteronomy 28:47.

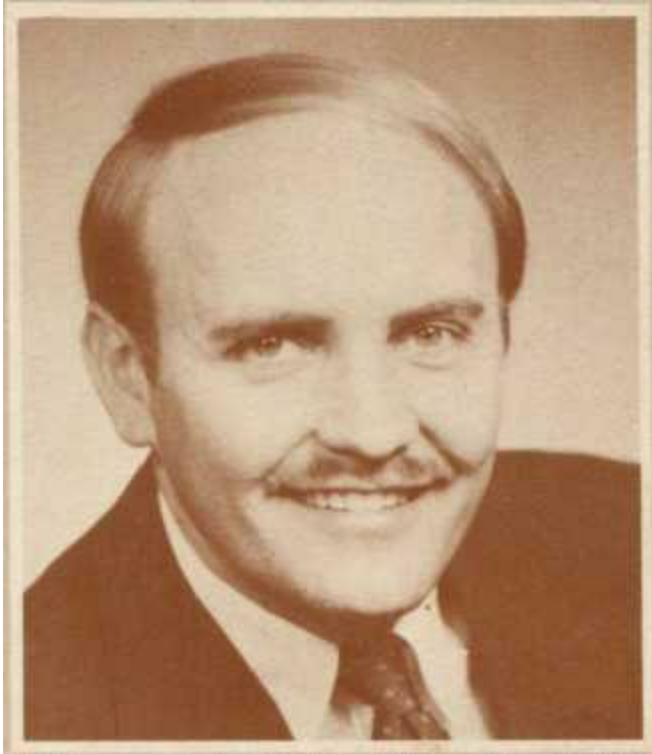
If we do not enjoy God we leave room for the enemies of fear, unbelief, doubt, and depression, etc. to occupy our lives. God wants us to enjoy His presence. To Joshua, God said, “Then shall you turn to the land of your possession and enjoy it” Joshua 1:15. David said, “In Your presence is fullness of joy: at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore” Psalm 16:11. Also, “For the Lord takes pleasure in His people” Psalm 149:4.

We have not only been saved from hell, we have been brought into fellowship with God.

All this and heaven too!!

## About the Author

Steve Sampson is an evangelist who travels widely with a ministry of encouragement. He preaches and teaches the Word with a God-given wit and wisdom.



Miracles of healing and the prophetic gifts frequent his ministry.

For a period of several years he traveled full time as a coevangelist with a Catholic priest, Father Duane Stenzel.

He has also written three timely books, *Lord, Have a Heart and See It My Way!*, *The Sword of the Spirit*, and *Be Prepared! The Best Is Yet To Come*.

He and his wife pastored for eight years in Beaumont, Texas, before traveling full time. They are the parents of two children and presently make their home in Birmingham, Alabama.